

SECOND EDITION

The Ecumenical Movement



An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices

Edited by Michael Kinnamon

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Introduction

FOR CHRISTIAN CHURCHES AROUND THE WORLD, THE PAST ONE HUNDRED YEARS CAN BE described by the term “ecumenical.” After centuries marked by suspicion, hostility, and separation, Christians have begun to recapture “the simple biblical truth that the church as the people of God and the body of Christ must exemplify in this world how God gathers [people] together from the ends of the earth in order to live as a new humanity” (W. A. Visser ’t Hooft). Churches representing nearly two billion members are now engaged with one another in theological dialogues, councils of churches, various forms of collaborative mission, shared action for justice and peace, common prayer, and other expressions of ecumenical life. Thanks in part to generations of ecumenical conversation, the global church has broken free from patterns of western domination, and many Christians share a vision of the church as a community that bears witness to God’s reconciling love, not only by what it says and does, but by the way its members live with one another.

But in the face of new sources of division, can this ecumenical movement maintain its coherence and momentum? Challenged by a rapidly-changing global landscape, can the movement’s leaders find structures, methods, and priorities that are appropriate for the early years of the twenty-first century? At this critical juncture, this book brings together “texts and voices” that reveal both the profound legacy of the ecumenical movement and the spiritual, theological basis on which it can build to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow.

The noun “ecumenism” and the adjective “ecumenical” are derived from the Greek word *oikoumene*, which is used in the New Testament to mean the Roman Empire (e.g., Luke 2:1) or, simply, the whole inhabited world (e.g., Matthew 24:14). Gradually, the term came to refer to the whole church, as opposed to that which is divisive (hence the title “Ecumenical Patriarch” for the one whom Orthodox Christians regard as first among the leaders of Orthodox Christianity), or to the whole faith of the church, as opposed to that which is partial (hence the frequent reference to the Nicene Creed as the ecumenical confession of faith). It is fitting, therefore, that the word is now used to designate a modern Christian movement concerned with the unity and renewal of the church and its relationship to God’s reconciling and renewing mission throughout creation.

While this movement has its roots in the nineteenth century—through such developments as the YMCA and YWCA, the various Bible societies, and the Student Christian Movement—the symbolic beginning of modern ecumenism was a world missionary conference held in Edinburgh in 1910. (Mission, proclaiming salvation in Christ with a common voice, was the initial driving impulse of the search for unity.) From that conference flowed streams that carried the movement’s continuing priorities:

- I. *common service*, which found early expression in the Life and Work movement whose first world conference was held in Stockholm in 1925 (see, especially, chapter IV in this anthology);
- II. *common fellowship*, which was embodied in the Faith and Order movement whose first world conference was held in Lausanne in 1927 (see, especially, chapters II and III);
- III. *common witness*, which found expression through the International Missionary Council whose first world conference was held in Jerusalem in 1928 (see, especially chapters V and VI).

To these three priorities must be added a fourth (although, in fact, it is indispensable to each of the others): *common renewal*, which found particular expression in various lay-driven movements, including the World Sunday School Association (later the World Council of Christian Education) and in forms of “spiritual ecumenism” (see, especially, chapter VII). All four of these priorities, which continue to set the parameters of the ecumenical agenda, have been structurally integrated in the World Council of Churches (WCC) and in regional, national, and local councils around the world (see, especially, chapter VIII).

A desire to show the full range of the ecumenical agenda is what makes this book unique. Most theological libraries include anthologies dealing with faith and order or mission and evangelism; but, until the first edition of this anthology was published in 1997, no volume had brought together key statements from all four streams of the movement. Unfortunately, the priorities named above are still often seen as competitive rather than complementary! The conviction behind this book, however, is that there exists what may be called an “ecumenical vision” which regards reconciliation of church doctrines and structures, common witness and service in the name of Jesus Christ, and shared ministry for justice and peace as responses to the gospel that help define and complete one another. This vision has, naturally, shifted over the course of the past century in response to changing social and historical circumstances; but as chapter I in particular will demonstrate, this vision retains its essential contours from the beginning of the movement to the present.

This second edition includes several dozen new texts, many of them produced since the first edition was sent to the printer in the mid-1990s. Of course, classic documents from the movement’s earlier decades have been retained, but many short excerpts have been removed in favor of fewer, but fuller, texts—which means that the new edition is not simply an expansion of the previous one. It is my hope that these changes will make the anthology not only more up-to-date but more useful in seminary classrooms and workshops, and as a reference tool for persons engaged in ecumenical research and ministry.

Several editorial decisions help explain the selections that follow:

1. The anthology includes not only official reports from conferences and dialogues, but also statements by individual leaders who communicate the passion and vitality of the ecumenical vision. “Our minds are nourished,” wrote the early ecumenical leader, Adolf Keller, “not mainly by visible minutes, resolutions embodying compromises, statutes, resounding proclamations, busy committees, or the files of an ecumenical bureaucracy, but by the invisible sources of the ecumenical spirit.... Therefore we must seek to hear

prophetic voices also, to discover the hidden forces of inspiration and of unofficial wisdom, to trace out the spiritual dynamic which follows its own channels and is not always manifested in ecclesiastical ideas, resolutions, and programs.” Chapters I and IX, in particular, lift up such “prophetic voices.”

2. I have attempted to include seminal, widely-influential texts—statements which helped push the movement to new levels of commitment and purpose, define ecumenical thinking on a particular topic, or represent significant convergence on disputed issues. The selections include a number of reports and speeches from the early decades of the twentieth century (materials not easily accessible), but the great majority of the texts date from the past forty years, primarily because of their relevance for contemporary readers.
3. The desire to choose widely-influential documents means that most selections come from international assemblies, consultations, and dialogues. Many of the selections were produced at or for events sponsored by the WCC, sometimes called the “privileged instrument” of ecumenism; but this is by no means intended simply as an anthology of WCC materials. Extensive anthologies exist, however, of the reports from church-to-church dialogues. Thus, only a sampling of the most influential of these dialogues is included in this anthology.
4. Obviously, the literature from a global movement of the churches is vast! In order to be comprehensive, and yet keep this volume to a manageable size and cost, some texts that are easily accessible through the internet have not been included in this anthology.

One obvious difficulty for a volume of this sort is that the experience of ecumenical gatherings is generally far richer than the reports they produce! In the words of the WCC’s first general secretary, Willem Visser ’t Hooft, “An ecumenical document which represents the outcome of a spiritual struggle cannot have quite the same significance for those who have not shared in that struggle as it has for those who have participated in its creation.” At the heart of the ecumenical movement is a meeting of life with life across barriers that have often prevented such encounters. I can only hope that the exhilaration of such meetings can be glimpsed on the pages of this anthology, and that readers who are not involved will be motivated to participate.

* * *

My own background touches on these different streams of the ecumenical movement. I have served on the staff of the WCC’s Faith and Order Commission, chaired the Justice and Advocacy Commission of the National Council of Churches (USA) before becoming that council’s general secretary, and been a participant/consultant at international conferences of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. Perhaps more importantly, I have taught ecumenical and interfaith studies at various seminaries in the United States and India and taken part in numerous local and regional expressions of ecumenism.

This book would not have been possible without the contributions of four persons: Rev. Brian E. Cope, who was co-editor of the earlier (1997) edition; Dr. Antonios Kireopoulos, my former colleague at the National Council of Churches, who contributed significantly to the initial stage of this edition, including the suggestion that it include a chapter on future directions; my wife, Mardine Davis, who took scanned, often garbled, material and formatted it for subsequent editing (a laborious task!); and Michael West, publisher at the WCC, who kept faith with this project over several years. The book is dedicated to the students in my courses on ecumenism over the past three decades, many of whom have given outstanding leadership to the ecumenical movement.

Michael Kinnamon

CHAPTER ONE

The Ecumenical Vision: Toward an Integration of Unity, Mission, Justice, and Renewal

Introduction

While many of the selections in the anthology are official documents produced by ecumenical conferences or committees, all of the materials in this introductory chapter were written by individuals. Readers will discover in later chapters that the “ecumenical vision” is certainly lifted up in such corporate texts as the 1920 Encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Decree on Ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council, and the WCC’s Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, but there is something particularly compelling about the witness made through passionate, personal statement.

The downside to this approach is that the choices are necessarily subjective. What I have tried to do is select inspiring and insightful sermons, speeches, and essays by widely recognized leaders of the ecumenical movement, statements that speak of ecumenism as a whole unity, mission, justice, and renewal—and don’t simply focus on one of its various streams. I have also made an effort to draw from different historical eras and to include women and men from diverse confessional and cultural backgrounds—although it is simply a fact that European and North American men dominated the movement’s leadership positions until at least the 1960s.

The entries in this chapter show a number of important shifts in the way ecumenism is conceptualized. The later essays, for example, generally:

- *focus not only on overcoming barriers to ecclesial communion but on realizing genuine community among all humans under God;*
- *show greater awareness of how racism, sexism, and other forms of injustice and discrimination divide both church and world;*
- *pay nearly as much attention to cultural as to confessional differences;*
- *show a greater willingness to claim diversity as constitutive of Christian community;*
- *speak not only of common service to those in need but of the shared struggle for social transformation in response to the gospel.*

Readers may find it useful to compare the statements of, say, Temple and Potter or de Diétrich and Raiser in order to see these changes more clearly.

At the same time, however, the selections in this chapter reveal a striking continuity of vision and are marked by several common motifs. Notice, for example, how these texts:

- *are rooted firmly in scripture (see, e.g., de Diétrich and Potter);*
- *speak of ecumenism as a spiritual calling (see, e.g., John Paul II and Gregorios);*
- *emphasize the importance of personal relationships (see, e.g., Oduyoye and Campbell);*
- *insist that ecumenism is a renewal movement requiring repentance and a recognition that Christians need one another (see, e.g., Bliss and Congar);*
- *resist any separation of the “vertical” and “horizontal” dimensions of Christian faith (see, e.g., Visser ‘t Hooft, Thomas, and Tutu);*
- *show a willingness to face difficult tensions (see, e.g., Athenagoras and Raiser);*
- *acknowledge that the movement is dependent on the initiative of God (see, especially, the sermon, an ecumenical “classic,” by Temple).*

Most of these texts could easily have appeared in other chapters of this anthology. Mott was the leading figure in the development of the International Missionary Council (chapter V); Söderblom was the one person most responsible for the early Life and Work movement (chapter IV); Germanos and Temple were closely identified with the genesis and growth of Faith and Order (chapters II and III). Readers may find it useful, therefore, to refer back to this chapter when reading later ones.

1. John R. Mott, "The Summons to Cooperate," 1931

It has been said that John R. Mott did more to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ than any person since the apostle Paul. He was the major figure at the Edinburgh world mission conference of 1910, just one of his many roles as a true pioneer of modern ecumenism. • The Present-Day Summons to the World Mission of Christianity, Nashville, TN, Cokesbury, 1931, pp. 168, 171-72, 178-79, 187-88.

The world mission of Christianity has led the way in cooperation between Christian denominations, between nations, and between races. The world context of this undertaking to make Jesus Christ known and obeyed affords the necessary setting in which to realize the true place and possibilities of united fellowship, thinking, and action on the part of His followers. Here we come to see that the dimensions of the task are so vast, the issues at stake so great, and the difficulties so baffling that nothing short of union in plan, in organization, in intercession, and in sacrificial effort will avail. . . .

What is the design and significance of this extensive organization of the forces of the world-wide mission of the Christian faith? Why these nearly thirty national councils, and the International Missionary Council, the product of so much corporate thought, prayer, and sacrificial effort? Why the multiplication of union mission projects the world over? Why the various national federations of churches and recent movements toward the organic union of churches in different parts of Asia, Europe, Anglo-Saxon America, and Latin America? Were the striking developments in cooperation and unity designed to be simply ends in themselves? Or merely symbols of a wonderful and truly Christ-implanted idea? Rather have they not been called into being by the Ever-Living and Ever-Creative God Himself for great ends and great achievements?

It is highly significant that the growth in volume and momentum of this movement toward closer cooperation and unity synchronizes with the recent startling development of divisive movements and influences among men. It comes also at a time when the world mission is confronted with the greatest combination of difficulties which it has ever been called upon to meet. If ever Christian forces needed to present a united front to all that opposes, it is now. And yet the alarming fact is that it is entirely possible

that the Christian forces may lose out through failure to combine, or through failure on the part of the Christians who have already united in various organizations to realize the implications of real cooperation and union and, therefore, to pay the sacrificial prices necessary. The most serious factor is not so much the divisive and other sinister forces which oppose the Christian Church but the divisions in the ranks of the Church itself and the apathy, indifference, and lack of heroic response with which Christians meet the summons to a far closer cooperation and unity. Without doubt our divisions are still our greatest handicap. . . .

A failure to achieve closer cooperation and unity means the impoverishment of the leadership of this Christian enterprise. When the various Christian groups unite in an organization or program it makes the experience, knowledge, insight, statesmanship, creative personalities of all the groups more accessible and available for each. From the nature of the case, not to do so weakens each group. In one country in the Orient I found nineteen separate denominational theological seminaries with an aggregate of some 600 students. Two-thirds of these institutions were in or near one city, and most of the others were not very far distant. In answer to inquiries I was told that in only two or three of these seminaries was there in the chair of Church History a man who would be regarded as a front-line or highly competent authority on the subject. The situation with reference to the chair of Apologetics was not much more favorable. The result is that in each of these subjects, and doubtless it would be more or less true of certain others, the students of only a few denominations are having the benefit of the best instruction. This means that the future leadership of the churches in this field will in so far suffer. . . .

The greatest common enemy of all religions is the prevailing and spreading secular civilization. This secular world is a unified world. Our best Christian thinkers among theologians, philosophers, psychologists, and educationalists are coming more and more to see the need of joining forces and working much more in concert to meet the secularist position.

Incomparably the most serious aspect of continued divisions and aloofness among Christians, and of failure to give unmistakable impression of unity not only in name and spirit but also in Christlike attitude and service, is that we rob the Christian religion of its mightiest apologetic. On the authority of Christ this triumphant apologetic is the one He had in mind when He prayed, "that they all may be one. . . that the world may believe." In this prayer He revealed that such unity or oneness is possible and obligatory. "Christ," as Bishop Brent said, voicing his dominant life conviction, "wills unity." Every extension of

the visible fellowship of Christians will increase the power of the Church to witness to its Lord. If an unbelieving world in these days sees a growing unity in the international field and in other relations, and at the same time observes Christians of different communions, nationalities, and races unable to demonstrate that they love and trust one another enough to unite, what other conclusion can it form than that the Church has lost her way and vacated her spiritual leadership? . . .

2. Nathan Söderblom, Sermon at the Closing Service, Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work, Stockholm, 1925

Söderblom, the Lutheran archbishop of Sweden, was the driving force behind the Life and Work movement and its first world conference in 1925. Like Mott, he was a recipient of the Nobel prize for peace. • The Stockholm Conference 1925: Official Report, ed. G.K.A. Bell, London, Oxford UP, 1926, pp. 741-45.

The old Gospel for the twelfth Sunday after Trinity, which the law of the Church in this country requires us to consider to-day, has been read from the altar. It tells us (Mark 7: 31-37) how Jesus said sighing to a man who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech: "Be opened." "His ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain." The event made such an impression on those who were present that the meaning of the words on the lips of Jesus has been preserved in its Aramaic form even in the Greek text and in all translations: "*Ephphatha*." To-day the message to the Church and congregation of Christ is "*Ephphatha*."

Ephphatha, open our ears and hear.
Ephphatha, open our mouth and speak.

I

The Church will surely listen. The Church is too ready to adapt itself to what is said in what are known as ecclesiastical or well-minded circles. Jesus acted otherwise. "If your righteousness doth not exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven." The

Church listens too much to man, too little to God. Let no one imagine that he hears the voice of God better because he turns a deaf ear to what is said and heard in his own day. Woe unto you, says Jesus, because you do not learn from the signs of the times.

Jesus mentions (in Luke 8) what stops up the ears. In the first place temptation and resistance. In the second place cares and riches and pleasures of this life. In the third place, and perhaps this holds good of most people, the enjoyment of the good things of life. In order to hear we have to watch and pray.

When the multitude heard only a thunder or the voice of an angel (John 12: 29), Jesus heard the voice of the Father and spoke and acted accordingly. What is perceived in the questions that have occupied our prayers, our consideration and our counsels before now and which have now compelled us to come together in Stockholm? Answer: terrifying thunders have rumbled around, a confusing turmoil rages round us: the tranquillizing voices of angels are also heard, but do they speak truth? We must now search our hearts and ask ourselves: Have we during these days heard somewhat better than before what the heavenly voice has to say to us?

II

Ephphatha, loose the string of the tongue and talk. There is talking enough in Christendom. There is preaching without end. Luther's rule is seldom followed: "Erst das Maul aufmachen, dann etwas sagen, dann das Maul zu machen." The boy wakes during the sermon and asks his father: "Is he not through yet?"—"Yes, he is through, but he cannot stop." Hear from St. Paul how things ought to be in our churches (I Cor. 12: 22): "If there come in one that believeth not or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all. And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a 'truth.'"

Very little has been recorded of what Jesus said. But Jesus thought for thirty years about what He was to say. And what He said is heard through the ages. Our lips often hold their peace when they should speak, while many times they speak when silence would be better. The right words said at the right moment, how often have we longed for them during the last few years in order that they might comfort the conscience of Christendom and give voice that should be heard over the whole world to dumb lamentations, a dumb sense of sin, a dumb striving after righteousness.

But words are not enough. Words are cheap. We must give ourselves. "The waste of life lies in the love we have *not* given, the powers we have *not* used."

Our first action must be that we, as Christians and members and servants of the Church, must acknowledge our obstinate deafness and our loquacious dumbness. Our next action must be that Christianity, following the Master's example, should show the world its spiritual unity.

Otherwise, according to Jesus' own words, the world cannot believe that He came in God's name. The divisions and silence of Christendom impeded the Saviour's work.

He was Himself the everlasting Word of God. He spoke through the service in which He gave His life. Logos, the eternal truth of God, was made flesh and blood in Him, voice and action in us; and through us and through the congregation on earth, God's living Word wishes to speak the will of God and carry out the will of God in our communities.

A Swedish workman writes: "Preachers and priests sin greatly in not preaching against the social and economic injustices. It is a shame that the Christians did not become friends of peace until they were frightened into it by the experiences of the war and their terror of a Bolshevik revolution. Why did not the Bible teach them? I hope that a blessing may rest on the Ecumenical Conference." Such an expectation involves a terrible responsibility.

A spokesman for millions of working and thinking men greeted our meeting with the following words:

Multitudes of people have again and again been turned away mourning because when a testimony of faith in the imperious rule of the Christian spirit was demanded to check and shame the passions and the follies of blind men, that testimony was not delivered, but something so feeble, so temporizing, and so false was given out instead.

And this correspondent goes further. He is not content with strong words. He continues:

The state of the world to-day once more calls for the aid of the Christian spirit, not only as a judge and a healer, but as a guide. Whilst men and nations in their distress of fear run hither and thither seeking safety where the experience of centuries shows there is no refuge, it is the duty of the Church to rally them to a confidence in the inner light and its attending moral courage, so that they may walk with firm confidence in the ways of the Spirit which are the ways of both honour and life.

3. Germanos of Thyateira, "The Call to Unity," First World Conference of Faith and Order, Lausanne, 1927

No one is more responsible than Germanos of Thyateira for the early involvement of Orthodox churches in the ecumenical movement. It is generally assumed that he drafted much of the 1920 encyclical found in Chapter II. • Faith and Order: Proceedings of the World Conference, Lausanne 1927, ed. H.N. Bate, London, SCM, 1927, pp. 18-23.

... That those who believe in Christ and acknowledge Him as their Head must form one body, is self-evident according to the Orthodox Church. For the primary will and intention of the Saviour and Founder of the Church was that all who believed in Him "Shall be one fold with one Shepherd" (John 10: 16.) Our Lord, foreseeing the divisions that were to occur among those who were to believe in Him, asks during His last moments on earth of the Father who sent Him that He keep them in unity, "that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be on be in us" (John 17: 21). This unity of the faithful, a reflection as it were of the unity that is in God, was to be the most significant incentive for those who had not received the revelation to recognise the divine mission of Jesus and, being converted, to believe in Him—"that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17: 21). And even as our Lord, so the Apostles conceived of the Church as being, from the beginning, a unity; to this the phraseology used by the Apostles when speaking of the Church bears witness, as for instance when they call it "the building of God," of which the corner-stone is Jesus Christ, and also "body," having as its head Jesus Christ. The wonderful picture especially which St. Paul draws of the Church leaves no doubt that the recreative force of the Holy Spirit in the body of the Church may then only be considered complete when each part keeps secure the bonds that tie one to the other, by means of its communion with the common Head, Christ; that is, when they form a unity.

In this way, the Orthodox Church, regarding as it does the unity of the Church as being the will of its Founder, recognises at the same time that through absence of unity the work of the Church both external and internal throughout the world is greatly hampered.

Its external work is hampered because the principal mission of the Church, which is like leaven destined to leaven the whole lump and to draw into its fold all the nations, is frustrated. For it is not well known that the first question that comes to the lips of those who are called to enter the bosom of the Church is, "Which of the many churches am I to enter?" And if they should happen to enter one or other of the Churches, the moment they come into contact with some Church other than the one they have entered they are so far confused as to be perpetually troubled by doubts as to whether they have "chosen the good part," or are drawn from the one to the other in turn. I do not even mention here the scornful comments of those outside the Church, which are heard by all those who have any relations with them.

Its internal work is hampered because, whereas modern conditions demand a united front against the subversive elements of the world which threaten the Christian edifice, the division of the Churches or, which is the same, of the striving forces of Christianity seriously impairs the strength of their array. And even if we only take into account the recreative activity of the Church among its own members, it is obvious that it more fully achieves its purpose when it is undertaken by a united Church than by a Church divided and, at times, at variance.

Hence the Orthodox Church at all its gatherings prays for the reunion of all, and never ceases to hope that that which is considered humanly impossible, the reunion of the Churches, is not also impossible to God. But what does the Orthodox Church understand by the reunion of the Churches?

Although the Orthodox Church considers unity in faith a primary condition of reunion of the Churches, yet it rejects that exclusive theory according to which one Church, regarding itself as the one true Church, insists that those who seek reunion with it shall enter its own realm. Such a conception of reunion, amounting to the absorption of the other Churches, is in every way opposed to the spirit existing in the Orthodox Church, which has always distinguished between unity on the one hand and uniformity on the other. The Patriarch of Constantinople, Photios, had already established the rule which in its practice the Orthodox Church has followed ever since. "In cases where the thing disregarded is not a matter of faith and does not involve disobedience to any general or catholic decree, a man capable of judging would be right in deciding that neither those who observe them nor those who have not received them act wrongly" (Encyclical Letter to Pope Nicholas I).

As a consequence, only those things which have a direct reference to the Faith and which are by general

consent accepted should be considered obligatory and as making for unity. Hence the Orthodox Church, following the advice of Augustine, *in dubiis libertas*, concedes to theologians freedom of thought as regards things which are not essential and which have no connection with the faith of the heart. But whilst it does not forbid such freedom, and willingly recognises that the nature of these questions is of such a kind that the solutions given to them are necessarily in the realms of doubt and probability, yet it stands by the principle that it is necessary to have agreement in essential things. *In necessariis unitas*.

But what are the elements of Christian teaching which are to be regarded as essential? The Orthodox Church holds the view that it is not necessary that these should be discussed and determined at the present time, since they have been already determined in the old symbols and decisions of the seven Ecumenical Synods. Consequently, the teaching of the ancient undivided Church of the first eight centuries, free from every question which did not have a direct relation to these things which were to be believed, must to-day also constitute the basis of the reunion of the Churches. The soundness of this basis has been universally recognised in the discussions on reunion which in past years have taken place between Orthodox, Old Catholics and Anglicans. I may be permitted to say that no true Orthodox theologian would be found to deviate from this principle, and to enter upon a discussion of subjects which, according to his convictions, have already been decided, except in cases where such discussion has for its sole purpose the justification of the faith held by his Church.

But while the Orthodox Church stands inevitably by the basis laid down, it has at the same time no intention of putting forward as a condition of reunion anything that, after the first period mentioned, either is believed on the authority of Holy Scripture and tradition or has been defined in local councils and synods. And though we do not deny that there have existed in the past, and still exist among Orthodox theologians, those who insist on the acceptance by others of these more recent decisions also, yet those who judge aright confine themselves to those decisions alone to which the common Christian conscience of East and West had, of old, come. And when we take into account how small is the number of decisions they officially made, it becomes evident that there is a very wide field of discussion remaining open to the Orthodox theologians and to those who are outside the Orthodox Church but who are impelled by the same desire for reunion of the Churches. And thus, subjects such as the nature of the Church, its common creed, the significance of Holy Scripture, the meaning of the sacraments, all of which are due to be discussed at our Conference, are clearly to be included

among the number of these about which the Orthodox theologians may formulate an opinion. In doing so, he performs a duty towards his own Church, inasmuch as he is thereby contributing to the removal of obstacles which stand in the way of its unity.

My friends, at this moment when, having called down upon us the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we are about to undertake our labours, let us call to mind the deep signification of our mission, being at the same time fully conscious that we all of us have a grave responsibility for the wasteful divisions of the Churches, and feel repentance for the neglect we have hitherto permitted of this duty, and devote ourselves to this work without prejudice and with the requisite tranquillity. Above all, let us cast aside all selfishness, and human calculations, and rather be animated with respect for the convictions of others, and beyond everything else, with love. Let us not forget that, apart from all the points that divide us one from the other, there exists a common bond which binds all these gathered here, and that is faith in our common Saviour and Redeemer, our Lord. I am not of those who are so far confident as to imagine that the questions of the reunion of the Churches is one which requires only a short period of time and a short discussion and exchange of views; for that which long centuries have divided cannot be reconciled in a single day. . . .

4. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "The Confessing Church and the Ecumenical Movement," 1935

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, one of the most famous theologians of the 20th century, was an enthusiastic supporter of the early ecumenical movement. The Confessing Church, in which Bonhoeffer was a leader, and its struggle against Nazi-dominated Christianity in Germany were major influences on the development of ecumenism. • No Rusty Swords, ed. Edwin H. Robertson, trans. Edwin H. Robertson and John Bowden, New York, Harper and Row, 1965, pp. 326-38.

Preliminary observation: From the beginning, the struggle of the Confessing Church has been of deep concern to Christian churches outside Germany. This has often been noted with suspicion and condemned both by churchmen and by politicians. It is understandable that this should have been a surprise for the politicians, and one that could give rise to false interpretations, for the evangelical ecumenical world has never been so much in evidence on the occasion of a church dispute as in the past two years, and the position of ecumenical Christianity on a matter of faith has never been so clear and unambiguous as here. The German church struggle marks the second great stage in the history of the ecumenical movement and will in a decisive way be normative for its future. It was less understandable, on the other hand, that in our church people should on the whole have been so unprepared for and so nonplussed at this turn of events that they were almost ashamed at the voices of our foreign brethren and felt them to be painful, instead of rejoicing at their fellowship and their testimony. The anxiety and confusion called forth by the outlawry of the political concept of internationalism in church circles had made them blind to something completely new which had begun to thrust itself forward, the evangelical ecumenical world. Under the onslaught of new nationalism, the fact that the church of Christ does not stop at national and racial boundaries but reaches beyond them, so powerfully attested in the New Testament and in the confessional writings, has been far too easily forgotten and denied. Even where it was found impossible to make a theoretical refutation, voices have never ceased to declare emphatically that of course a conversation with foreign Christians about so-called internal German church matters was unthinkable, and that a judgment or even an open attitude towards these things was impossible and reprehensible. Attempts have been made on a number of sides to convince the ecumenical organisations that nothing but scandal would attach itself to such goings-on. Ecumenical relationships have been largely regarded from the viewpoint of church-political tactics. In this, a sin has been committed against the seriousness of the ecumenicity of the Evangelical Church. It is just an expression of the true power of ecumenical thought that, despite all the fear, despite all the inner defences, despite all the attempts, honest and dishonest, to disinterest the ecumenical movement, the ecumenical movement has shared in the struggle and the suffering of German Protestantism, that it has raised its voice again and again. . . .

In all this, the spokesmen of the ecumenical movement have begun from two recognitions: first, that the struggle of the Confessing Church is bound up with the whole preaching of the Gospel, and secondly, that the struggle

has been brought to a head and undergone by the Confessing Church vicariously for all Christianity, and particularly for western Christianity. This recognition of necessity led to a twofold attitude. First, the natural inward and outward concern, which could not be prevented by any sort of objection, in this struggle regarded as a common cause. Prayers have been offered in countless foreign churches for the pastors of the Confessing Church, numerous conventions of Clergy have sent messages to the Confessing Church to assure it of their inward concern, and in theological seminaries young students have thought every day in their prayers of the Confessing Church and its struggles. Secondly, such concern can only consist in the churches' firm attitude of brotherly help and common attention to the Gospel and the right of its being preached throughout the world without hindrance or intimidation.

Because this support was governed by a sense of the responsibility of the church and not by any arbitrariness, on the one hand all attempts to make a church-political business here by confusing and muddling the situation had of necessity to fail from the start. On the other hand, for the same reason, the spokesmen of the ecumenical movement could preserve the moderate and pastoral bounds of their task and continue their way unerringly.

The ecumenical movement and the Confessing Church have made an encounter. The ecumenical movement has stood sponsor at the coming-to-be of the Confessing Church, in prayer for her and in commitment towards her. That is a fact, even if it is an extremely remarkable fact, which is most offensive to many people. It is extremely remarkable, because an understanding of ecumenical work might a priori have been least expected in the circles of the Confessing Church, and an interest in the theological questioning of the Confessing Church might a priori have been least expected in ecumenical circles. It is offensive, because it is vexatious to the German nationalist for once to have to see his church from the outside and to have to allow it to be seen from the outside, because no one gladly shows his wounds to a stranger. But it is not only a remarkable and an offensive fact, it is still more a tremendously promising fact, because in this encounter the ecumenical movement and the Confessing Church ask each other the reason for their existence. The ecumenical movement must vindicate itself before the Confessing Church and the Confessing Church must vindicate itself before the ecumenical movement, and just as the ecumenical movement is led to a serious inward concern and crisis by the Confessing Church, so too the Confessing Church is led to a serious inward concern and crisis by the ecumenical movement. This reciprocal questioning must now be developed.

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The Confessing Church represents a genuine question for the ecumenical movement insofar as it confronts the latter in all its totality with the question of the confession. The Confessing Church is the church which would be exclusively governed in all its totality by the confession. It is fundamentally impossible to enter into conversation with this church at any point without immediately raising the question of the confession. Because the Confessing Church has learnt in the church struggle that from the preaching of the Gospel to the taxing of the churches the church must be governed by the confession and the confession alone, because there is no neutral ground, divorced from the confession, within her, she immediately confronts any partner in conversation with the question of the confession. There is no other approach to the Confessing Church than through the question of the confession. There is no possibility of common tactical action outside of the question of the confession. Here the Confessing Church seals herself off hermetically against any political, social or humanitarian inroads. The confession occupies her whole sphere.

To this confession as it has been authoritatively expounded in the decisions of the Synods of Barmen and Dahlem, there is only a Yes or a No. Thus here too neutrality is impossible, here too an assent to this or that point outside the question of the confession remains excluded. No, the Confessing Church must insist that in any responsible church discussion it is taken seriously enough for this claim to be recognised and accepted. It must further insist that in any conversation with it the solidarity of the churches be shown by the partner in the conversations not entering into discussions with it and with the churches which it accuses of heresy at one and the same time, indeed that even for the ecumenical partner in the conversations the conversations be finally broken off where in its responsibility as a church it declares that they are broken off.

This is an unheard-of claim. But this is the only way in which the Confessing Church can enter ecumenical conversations. And this must be known if the Confessing Church is to be understood and its remarks rightly interpreted. If the Confessing Church departed from this claim, the church struggle in Germany (and with it the struggle for Christendom) would already have been decided against her. Seeing that the ecumenical movement has taken up conversations with the Confessing Church, it has consciously or unconsciously heard this claim, and the Confessing Church may gratefully start from this presupposition. At the same time, however, the ecumenical movement has by this allowed itself to be driven into a severe internal crisis, as the characteristic claim of the Confessing Church remains at the same time precisely within

the sphere of the ecumenical movement. The questions of the Confessing Church, which the ecumenical movement declares that it has already heard, stand open there and can no longer be suppressed.

II

Is the ecumenical movement, in its visible representation, a church? Or to put it the other way round: Has the real ecumenicity of the church as witnessed in the New Testament found visible and appropriate expression in the ecumenical organisation? This question is generally put today with great emphasis by the younger generations of theologians who take part in ecumenical work. And the importance of the question is immediately clear. It is the question of the authority with which the ecumenical movement speaks and acts. With what authority doest thou that? they ask. This question of authority is decisive, and it is not without the most serious internal damage to the work that it remains unanswered. If the ecumenical movement claims to be the church of Christ, it is as imperishable as the church of Christ itself; in that case its work has ultimate importance and ultimate authority; in that case there is fulfilled in it either the old hope of evangelical Christianity for the one true church of Christ among all the nations of the earth or the titanic and anti-Christian attempt of man to make visible what God would hide from our eyes. In that case, the unity of this ecumenical church is either obedience to the promise of Jesus Christ that there should be one flock and one shepherd or it is the kingdom of false peace and false unity built on the lies of the devil in angelic form. In that case, the ecumenical movement stands in this dilemma, in which any church stands.

It is indeed understandable, if there have been long-continued attempts to avoid answering this question; it is indeed more pious to confess ignorance where one knows nothing of these matters than to say a false word. But now this question has been raised afresh by the Confessing Church and demands clarity. Now it can no longer be left open in *docta ignorantia*. Now it threatens every word and every deed of the ecumenical movement, and in this lies the first service of the Confessing Church to the ecumenical movement.

There is evidently the possibility of not understanding the ecumenical movement in its present visible form as a church; it could indeed be an association of Christian men of whom each was rooted in his own church and who now assemble either for common tactical and practical action or for unauthoritative theological conversation with one another, leaving the question of the result and the theological possibility of such action and such conversation to their

doubtful and unexplained end. A beginning might at least be said to have been made, and it would remain for God to do what he would with it. This action might have only a neutral character, not involving any confession, and this conversation might only have the informative character of a discussion, without including a judgment or even a decision on this or that doctrine, or even church.

The internal progress of ecumenical work over recent years lies in the fact that a break-through of the purely tactical-practical front of theological questioning has been achieved, a break-through for which the Research Division in Geneva and a man like Dr Oldham deserve especial thanks. Ecumenical work thus now has largely the character of theological conversation. This is a contribution by the work of recent years which is not to be underestimated. But one should not labour under the delusion that the construction of ecumenical thought which might be called "theological conversation" is *in the first place* based upon specifically theological presuppositions which are generally accepted, and *in the second place* surmounts the present crisis of the ecumenical movement.

In the first place: theological conversations are said to be carried on between "Christian personalities." But where do we get the criterion for judging what a Christian personality is, or even for judging what an un-Christian personality is? Is not the judgment and the verdict which is so much avoided in decisions of church doctrine here expressed at a much more dangerous point, namely in a verdict on individual people and their Christianity? And is not a verdict at this particular point something which the Bible forbids, whereas it demands a decision on the true or false teaching of the church? Does not the unavoidable law under which ecumenical work stands rear its head here, namely that of testing and separating the spirits, and would it not be more humble to effect this separation on the level of the doctrine of the church than to descend as judge into the hidden and ambiguous depths of personality? There can be no serious conversation without mutual clarity about the character and authority of the discussion. Now if, as is happening from the most responsible ecumenical positions, the lack of authority in this conversation is stressed still more strongly, by the most important factors being regarded no longer as Christian personality but only as mutual interest and the ability to contribute something to the debate, then in principle the non-Christian is accorded the same rights in questions of the church of Christ as the Christian, and it remains doubtful how far the word "ecumenical" is being used rightly, and how far the matter is relevant to the church.

In the second place: there is the very great danger, which has already become acute, as any expert knows, that just

this theological conversation, necessary as it is in itself, will be used to obscure the real situation. Theological conversation will then become a bad joke by concealing the fact that it is properly concerned not with unauthoritative discussion, but with responsible, legitimate decisions of the church. With the question of the Confessing Church we have already gone beyond the stage, necessary in itself, of theological conversation. The Confessing Church knows of the fatal ambivalence of any theological conversation and presses for a clear church decision. That is the real situation.

The question of the authority of the ecumenical movement takes all constructions of this nature to their logical conclusion and tears them apart from within. Either the necessity of a separation of the spirits will be recognised as a presupposition of ecumenical work, in which case the character of this separation will have to be discussed and it will have to be taken with real seriousness, or such a separation will be rejected as a false and invalid presupposition, in which case the concept of ecumenicity in the New Testament sense and in that of the Reformation confessions is destroyed from the start. The group against which this part of the discussion is directed has its representatives in a large number of German, English and American ecumenical theologians and finds wide acceptance in ecumenical working groups.

The strongest argument of this group lies in the presupposition that ecumenical work would collapse the moment the question of its character in terms of the church were seriously put, i.e. where any claims had to be made in matters of judgment or in doctrinal decisions. This is to say that ecumenical work up till now has been carried on with an intentional shelving of the question of the confession and that it could only continue to be carried on in this way. During recent years, particularly since August 1931, and thanks to the Geneva Research Division, we have seen the fundamental theological questions emerge again and again at all the ecumenical conferences, and it is clear that the internal development of ecumenical work itself presses towards this clarification; the words and actions of the ecumenical movement are underlined. But this development can now no longer be held up by the entry of the Confessing Church. It is no use making other attempts at saving the situation. There is only one way of safety for ecumenical work, and that is for it to take up this question boldly, just as it is put, and to leave everything else in obedience to the Lord of the church. Who knows whether simply because of this task of breaking the peace the ecumenical movement will not come out of the struggle strengthened and more powerful? And even if it must go through a severe collapse, are not the commandment and the promise of God strong enough to bring the church through, and is not this

commandment more sure than false rest and illusory unity, which one day must come to grief? Historical speculations have an end in the commandment of God.

And the ecumenical movement has not withdrawn itself. At the conference in Fanö it spoke the true word of the church and therefore a word of judgment, albeit with hesitations and inward doubts, by condemning the doctrine and actions of the German Christian régime on quite definite points and by taking the side of the Confessing Church. This word arose simply from the needs of the situation and in responsible obedience to God's commandment. With the Fanö conference the ecumenical movement entered on a new era. It caught sight of its commission as a church at a quite definite point, and that is its permanent significance.

Thus the question is raised and waits for an answer, not today or tomorrow, but it waits: Is the ecumenical movement a church or is it not?

III

How can the ecumenical movement be a church and base its claim on this? That is the next question the Confessing Church has for the ecumenical movement. There can only be a church as a Confessing Church, i.e. as a church which confesses itself to be for its Lord and against his enemies. A church without a confession or free from one is not a church, but a sect, and makes itself master of the Bible and the Word of God. A confession is the church's formulated answer to the Word of God in Holy Scripture, expressed in its own words. Now unity of confession is a part of the true unity of the church. How then can the ecumenical movement be a church?

It seems that only a unity of confession, say of world Lutheranism, opens up this possibility. But from this point of view, what is to be our verdict, say, on relations with the Church of England or even Eastern Orthodoxy? How can churches which stand on such different confessional foundations be one church and say a common, authoritative Word?

Almost the only help towards this problem in ecumenical circles is as follows:

According to Scripture, there is one holy, ecumenical church; the existing churches are each in themselves a special shape and form of the same. Just as twigs sprout from the roots and trunk of a tree and it is only all these things together which make up the whole tree, as only the body with all its members is a whole body, so too only the community of all the churches of the world is the true ecumenical church. The significance of ecumenical work is, then, the representation of the riches and the harmony of

Christendom. None has a claim to sole validity, each brings its own special gift and does its own special service for the whole; truth lies only in unity.

The attraction exercised throughout the whole Christian world by this idea, which is drawn from a great variety of spiritual sources, is quite astonishing. It is as it were the dogma of the ecumenical movement, and it is hard to say it nay.

Yet this is the construction which the Confessing Church must destroy, as it serves to obscure the seriousness of the ecumenical problem and that of the church as a whole.

True and biblical though this statement that there is only truth in unity may be, the statement that unity is possible only in the truth is equally true and biblical. Where one church by itself seeks unity with another church, leaving aside any claim to truth, the truth is denied and the church has surrendered itself. Truth bears within itself the power to divide or it is itself surrendered. But where truth stands against truth, there is no longer harmony and organism, men can no longer entrench themselves behind the general insufficiency of human knowledge, and they stand on the borders of anathema. The romantic, aesthetic liberal idea of the ecumenical movement does not take the truth seriously and thus offers no possibility of making the ecumenical movement comprehensible as a church.

Now the question of the truth is none other than the question of the confession in its positive and limiting sense, the question of the *confitemur* and the *damnamus*. It would be wise for the Christian churches of the West not to want to overlook this experience of the Confessing Church, that a church without a confession is an unprotected and a lost church, and that a confessing church has the only weapon which does not shatter.

Thus the ecumenical movement is being driven to a last crisis on which it threatens to founder; for how will unity be possible where claims to final truth are uttered on every side? It is understandable that after previous, often by no means simple, conferences, people have been unwilling to take this step, to allow themselves to be driven into such a hopeless situation. The conversation, hardly begun, would, they say, be broken off all too quickly.

On this it must first of all most emphatically be said that there is in fact a situation in which a conversation between churches must be regarded as having been broken off. The Confessing Church knows about this situation at the moment perhaps better than any other church in the world. The conversation between the German Christian church and the Confessing Church has finally been broken off. That is a fact which cannot be denied. It is at the same time no reflection on Christian or un-Christian

personalities, but it is a verdict on the spirit of a church which has been recognised and condemned as being anti-Christian. It is an understandable consequence that such a conversation, once broken off, cannot be continued on any other ground, say that of an ecumenical conference. The representatives of the Confessing Church and the German Christians could not be partners in conversation at an ecumenical conference. The ecumenical movement must understand that and did understand it at Fanö. It was one of the great moments of the conference when Bishop Ammundsen raised his episcopal voice for the absent representatives of the Confessing Church immediately after the German Christians. It was not a matter of personalities here, but of churches; it was a matter of Christ and Antichrist—there was no neutral ground. The ecumenical movement would offend against its own task and against the Confessing Church were it to wish to evade so clear a decision.

Now it is pure doctrinairism to wish to conclude from this that such an attitude would make it equally impossible to sit together with, say, representatives of Anglicanism or of a semi-Pelagian Free Church theology. Such talk knows nothing of the significance of the living confession, but regards the confession as a dead system which is from time to time applied schematically as a standard against other churches. The Confessing Church does not confess in abstracto; it does not confess against Anglicans or Free-churchmen, it does not even confess at this moment against Rome; still less does the Lutheran today confess against the member of the Reformed Church. It confesses in concretissimo, against the German Christian church and against the neo-pagan divinisation of the creature; for the Confessing Church, Anti-christ sits not in Rome, or even in Geneva, but in the government of the National Church in Berlin. The church confesses against this because it is from here, and not from Rome, Geneva or London, that the Christian church in Germany is threatened with death, because it is here that the will for destruction is at work. The songs of the Psalter against the godless and the prayers that God himself will wage war against his enemies here take on new life. The living confession remains our only weapon.

Living confession does not mean the putting of one dogmatic thesis up against another, but it means a confession in which it is really a matter of life or death. A naturally formulated, clear, theologically based, true confession. But theology itself is not the fighting part here; it stands wholly at the service of the living, confessing and struggling church.

It is clear that despite all theological analogies the ecumenical situation is fundamentally different from this. The Confessing Church faces the churches alien to a confession

not as though they were deadly enemies, which sought its life, but in the encounter it helps to bear the guilt for the brokenness of Christianity, it shares in this guilt and in all the false theology it may encounter recognises first of all its own guilt, the want of power in its own preaching. It recognises God's incomprehensible ways with his church, it shudders before the gravity of a cleavage in the church and before the burden which it is laying upon subsequent generations, and it hears at this point the call and the admonition to responsibility and to repentance. In the face of this picture it will experience afresh the whole need of its own decision and in this situation its confession will be first a confession of sin. . . .

5. William Temple, Sermon at the Opening Service, Second World Conference on Faith and Order, Edinburgh, 1937

Archbishop of Canterbury and recognized theologian, Temple was one of the great Christian leaders of the century. He was a prominent figure in the early development of Faith and Order, Life and Work, the International Missionary Council, and plans for the WCC. • The Second World Conference on Faith and Order, Edinburgh 1937, ed. Leonard Hodgson, London, SCM, 1938, pp. 15-23.

Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ (Eph. 4:13).

The unity of the Church, on which our faith and hope is set, is grounded in the unity of God and the uniqueness of His redeeming act in Jesus Christ. The "one body and one spirit" correspond to the "one God and Father of all." The unity of the Church of God is a perpetual fact; our task is not to create it but to exhibit it. Where Christ is in men's hearts, there is the Church: where His Spirit is active, there is His Body. The Church is not an association of men, each of whom has chosen Christ as his Lord; it is a fellowship of men, each of whom Christ has united with Himself. The Christian faith and life are not a discovery or invention of men; they are not an emergent phase of

the historical process; they are the gift of God. That is true not only of their historical origin, but quite equally of the rebirth to that faith and life of each individual Christian. Our unity in dependence for our faith upon the unique act of the one God is a perpetual and unalterable fact. If we are Christians, that is due to the activity of the Holy Spirit; and because He is one, those in whom He is active are one fellowship in Him—"the fellowship of the Holy Ghost."

But there is no human heart possessed wholly and utterly by the Holy Spirit; and most of us, "who have the first-fruits of the Spirit," are still governed also by self-will. Our surrender is not absolute; our allegiance is not complete. Consequently the historical form and outward manifestation of the Church is never worthy of its true nature. What marks it as the Church is the activity within it of the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of the Father and of the Son. But in the Church as an actual society in history this is not the only power at work; the various forms of human selfishness, blindness and sloth are also characteristic of those who by the activity of the Spirit are united to Christ. It is as though a lantern were covered with a dark veil. It is truly a lantern, because the light burns in it; yet the world sees the light but dimly and may be more conscious of the veil that hides it than of the flame which is its source. So the world may see the sin of Christians more clearly than the holiness of the Church, and the divisions which that sin has caused more clearly than the unity which endures in spite of them.

When that happens, and in whatever degree it happens, the witness of the Church is weakened. How can it call men to worship of the one God if it is calling to rival shrines? How can it claim to bridge the divisions in human society—divisions between Greek and barbarian, bond and free, between black and white, Aryan and non-Aryan, employer and employed—if when men are drawn into it they find that another division has been added to the old ones—a division of Catholic from Evangelical, or Episcopalian from Presbyterian or Independent? A Church divided in its manifestation to the world cannot render its due service to God or to man, and for the impotence which our sin has brought upon the Church through divisions in its outward aspect we should be covered with shame and driven to repentance.

We do not escape from sin by denying the consequences of our sin, and we cannot heal the breaches in the Church's outward unity by regarding them as unimportant. To those who made the breaches, the matters involved seemed worthy to die for; it may well be that in the heat of conflict, such as tormented the sixteenth century, men so zealously upheld what seemed to them neglected truths that they became blind to supplementary truths which were dear to their opponents. It is seldom that in any human

contention all the truth is on one side. We may look back with a calmer wisdom and see how here or there a division which occurred could have been avoided by a more conciliatory temper and a more synthetic habit of mind. But it does not follow that we should now take all the divisions as they stand and merely agree to co-operate while still maintaining separate organisations. For in practice those separate organisations are bound to become competitors, however much we wish to co-operate; and the separation will hinder the free interchange of thought and experience which should be a chief means of the process whereby the Body of Christ “builds itself up in love.”

So we come to the second great evil of our divisions. The first is that they obscure our witness to the one Gospel; the second is that through the division each party to it loses some spiritual treasure, and none perfectly represents the balance of truth, so that this balance of truth is not presented to the world at all. God be thanked—we have left behind the habit of supposing that our own tradition is perfectly true and the whole of truth, and are looking to see what parts of the “unsearchable riches of Christ” we have missed while others have them; and so we are learning increasingly one from another. This mutual appreciation is the way alike of humility and of charity; and it is leading us to perpetually fuller fellowship.

In part our progress is due to the pressure of the needs of the world. It is not the task of the Church to solve political problems or to devise contrivances for mitigating the effects of human sin. But it is the Church’s task to proclaim that the most oppressive evils under which the world groans are the fruit of sin; that only by eradication of that sin can these other evils be averted and that the only Redeemer from sin is Jesus Christ, “Very God of Very God begotten; Not made, being of one substance with the Father; Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was made Man.” To Him, the Conqueror of death and sin, to Him, the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world—we call the world that its sins may be removed, that its divisions may be healed, and that it may find fellowship in Him.

That proclamation, that invitation, we are bound as a Church to make. And the world answers: “Have you found that fellowship yourselves? Why do your voices sound so various? When we pass from words to action, to what are you caning us? Is it to one family, gathered round one Holy Table, where your Lord is Himself the host who welcomes all His guests? You know that it is not so. When we answer your united call, we have to choose for ourselves to which Table we will go, for you are yourselves divided in your act of deepest fellowship, and by your own traditions hinder us from a unity which we are ready to enjoy.”

What is our answer to that retort? Is it not true that Christians who have lately been converted in heathen lands, and even the ordinary lay-folk who are rather detached from our denominational preoccupations, are more ready to come together in face of the resurgence of paganism than are the leaders of ecclesiastical organisations, intent upon the maintenance of their tradition and upon keeping their organisation in being and in working order? If it is true that in its deepest nature the Church is always one, it is also true that to-day it is the so-called “churches” rather than any forces of the secular world which prevent that unity from being manifest and effective.

Here is matter for deep penitence. I speak as a member of one of those churches which still maintain barriers against completeness of union at the Table of the Lord. I believe from my heart that we of that tradition are trustees for an element of truth concerning the nature of the Church which requires that exclusiveness as a consequence, until this element of truth be incorporated with others into a truer and worthier conception of the Church than any of us hold to-day. But I know that our division at this point is the greatest of all scandals in the face of the world; I know that we can only consent to it or maintain it without the guilt of unfaithfulness to the unity of the Gospel and of God Himself, if it is a source to us of spiritual pain, and if we are striving to the utmost to remove the occasions which now bind us, as we think, to that perpetuation of disunion. It should be horrible to us to speak or think of any fellow-Christians as “not in communion with us.” God grant that we may feel the pain of it, and under that impulsion strive the more earnestly to remove all that now hinders us from receiving together the One Body of the One Lord, that in Him we may become One Body—the organ and vehicle of the One Spirit. . . .

In this world movement of churches towards fuller unity and more potent witness we have our own allotted task. In what spirit do we approach it? How shall we seek to express in this enterprise the graces of faith, of hope and of love? Of these love is the greatest, but in part at least it is rooted in faith and sustained by hope. Love, for us who are assembled here, means chiefly two things—an ardent longing for closer fellowship, and a readiness both to share our own spiritual treasures and to participate in those of others. Ten years ago our main concern was to state our several traditions in such a way that others should understand them truly; and that must still be our aim. But the divisions which we seek to overcome are due to the fact that our traditions are just what they are and none other; division cannot be healed by the reiterated statement of them. We are here as representatives of our churches; true, but unless our churches are ready to learn one from another

as well as to teach one another, the divisions will remain. Therefore our loyalty to our own churches, which have sent us here, will not best be expressed in a rigid insistence by each upon his own tradition. Our churches sent us here to confer about our differences with a view to overcoming them. As representatives of those churches each of us must be as ready to learn from others where his own tradition is erroneous or defective as to show to others its truth and strength. We meet as fellow-pupils in a school of mutual discipleship. The churches desire, through us, to learn from one another. That is the humility of love as it must be active among us here.

It will be sustained by hope. Hope springs from the experience of the last ten years. But even were it otherwise, hope should be strong in us because the goal which we seek is set before us by God Himself. The hope which arises from that knowledge is altogether independent of empirical signs of its fulfilment. Even if our cause were suffering defeat on every side, we should still serve it because that is God's call to us, and we should still know that through our loyal service He was accomplishing His purpose even though we could not see the evidence of this. But in His mercy He gives us not only the supreme ground of hope, which is His call, but also the manifest tokens of His working in the churches that are spread throughout the world.

Let us never forget that, though the purpose of our meeting is to consider the causes of our divisions, yet what makes possible our meeting is our unity. We could not seek union if we did not already possess unity. Those who have nothing in common do not deplore their estrangement. It is because we are one in allegiance to one Lord that we seek and hope for the way of manifesting that unity in our witness to Him before the world.

Thus our hope is based upon our common faith. This faith is not only the assent of our minds to doctrinal propositions; it is the commitment of our whole selves into the hands of a faithful Creator and merciful Redeemer. If the word be thus understood we are already one in faith, but also, alas!—and this perhaps is the more relevant to our purpose—one in the weakness and incompleteness of our faith. We are one in faith, because to commit ourselves to Him is the deepest desire of our hearts; we are one in the weakness of our faith, because in all of us that desire is overlaid with prejudice and pride and obstinacy and self-contentment. "Lord, we believe; help Thou our unbelief."

Meanwhile our witness is enfeebled: the true proportion and balance of truth is hidden from the world because we cannot unite in presenting the parts enshrined in our several traditions. We still wait in hope and faith for the movement of the Spirit which shall bring us all to a perfect man—the "one man in Christ Jesus" grown to full

maturity—who shall be the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ.

Our faith must be more than the trust which leads us to rely on Him; it must be the deeper faith which leads us to wait for Him. It is not we who can heal the wounds in His Body. We confer and deliberate, and that is right. But it is not by contrivance or adjustment that we can unite the Church of God. It is only by coming closer to Him that we can come nearer to one another. And we cannot by ourselves come closer to Him. If we have any fellowship with Him, it is not by our aspiration but by His self-giving; if our fellowship with Him, and in Him with one another, is to be deepened, it will not be by our effort but by His constraining power. "The love of Christ constraineth us." To that we come back. Because He died for all, all are one in His death. Not by skill in argument, not even by mutual love that spans like a bridge the gulf between us—for the gulf though bridged is not closed by any love of ours—but by the filling of our hearts with His love and the nurture of our minds with His truth, the hope may be fulfilled. It is not by understanding one another, but by more fully understanding Him, that we are led towards our goal. We can help each other here, and learn one from another how to understand Him better. But it is towards Him that our eyes must be directed. Our discussion of our differences is a necessary preliminary; but it is preliminary and no more. Only when God has drawn us closer to Himself shall we be truly united together; and then our task will be, not to consummate our endeavour but to register His achievement.

6. Suzanne de Diétrich, "The Church 'Between the Times,'" 1958

An early leader in the World Student Christian Federation and a founding staff member of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, de Diétrich was also "the pioneer of ecumenical Bible study" (H.-R. Weber). • The Witnessing Community, Philadelphia, Westminster, 1958, pp. 165-71, 178-80.

"That the world may believe" (John 17:21).

Sign and Token

The church is seen in the whole New Testament as a new society which, in an alien world, is a sign and token of the Kingdom to come. By the Spirit operating in and through it, it belongs to the world to come. Made of men whose redemption is still a reality waited and hoped for (see Rom. 8:22-25), it belongs to the present era, it shares in the sins of this world. The tension of this twofold divine and human nature marks its whole historical existence. It is "holy," set apart for the service of God, sanctified by Christ. Yet it is still in the grip of the adversary, whose divisive work operates not only from without but from within, seeking to distort or destroy its witnessing function in the world.

Thus it is constantly to be reminded of its calling. For it is meant to be an exemplary society, a challenge to the surrounding world. Its life is to be based on an attitude that is in fundamental opposition to the current standards of the world: "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves" (Luke 22:25-26; see also Mark 10:42-45). Not domination, but service; not pride, but humility; not self-defense, but hatred overcome by love; duplicity and lust overcome by singleness of heart: such are the new commandments laid down by the Lord of the church. And he has lived them. Therefore, the call of the apostles is a call to be conformed to Christ as over against being conformed to the world. This is the basic principle of all church ethics (see Rom. 12:1-2; Phil. 2:5; I Pet. 1:13-17, 2:11-12).

Two concepts illustrate this and will be studied now more closely: the Petrine concept of the People of God and the Pauline concept of the church as Christ's body on earth.

The New People of God

The First Letter of Peter takes up the very words of Exodus 19, and applies them to the church. This lays stress first of all on the continuity between the Old and the New Israel. As Old Israel was set apart to be God's "own possession; . . . a kingdom of priests. . . a holy nation," so the New Israel is to be "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people" (Ex. 19:5-6; I Pet. 2:9; see also I Pet. 2:5). In the Old Israel, the claim of the sovereign God was on the total life of his people. Such is his claim on his church. There cannot be a reserved sphere governed by other rules, a secular versus a religious life, a Sunday versus an everyday religion. There cannot be cleric versus lay, with varying standards. Every Christian participates in the holy priesthood of his Lord and Savior. Every Christian is to offer "spiritual sacrifices"—a dedicated life. Every Christian

is to proclaim God's "wonderful deeds" and to bear witness in word and deed as Christ's ambassador in and to the world (see I Pet. 2:10; II Cor. 5:14-20).

There is one point on which the New Israel differs from the Old: the new "race" is in no sense an ethical or geographical entity. It is a race born from above, a nation whose citizenship is in heaven. The church of God is a pilgrim People marching toward the Kingdom of which the Promised Land was a sign and a symbol (see I Pet. 1:17; Heb. 11:8-16, 13:14). This means that the church is universal by the very nature of its calling. It is a brotherhood sealed with the blood of its Lord and Savior. There is a priority of our belonging to God's People over all other allegiances based on family ties, class interests, or nationality.

The integration of Jews and Gentiles in the one church of Christ was a tremendous event which came as a shock to the Palestinian Christians of Jewish origin. We know what a fierce battle Paul had to fight when he declared that the Gentiles were saved by Christ alone and need not submit to the Jewish law. This was essentially a theological issue, but it had far-reaching consequences for the universality of the church. "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3:27-29).

Here again the continuity with the Old Israel is stressed; for the true succession acknowledged by Christ and by the apostolic church is that of faith. All heirs of the Kingdom! This is the common status of God's People, and it would be strange indeed that those who are to sit together at the celestial banquet should not sit at the same table on earth! (see Matt. 8:10-11; Eph. 2:13-22).

How often in the history of the church has national, racial, or social prejudice gained the upper hand! Is not nationalism one of the most dangerous and subtle idols of the modern world? We like to believe that the problem was less acute in Jesus' time, but this is not true. Jesus stood in the feverish atmosphere of the Zealot movement, and lost his popularity by taking a firm stand against the Zealots. He stressed the primacy of the Kingdom of God in unequivocal terms, and the apostles followed his lead.

Are we not constrained to ask ourselves whether the very existence of "national" churches is not a denial of the vocation of the one church of God on earth? The church on earth is submitted, it is true, to limitations of time and space. It shares the life and concerns, the cultural background, of the people among whom it stands as God's witness. This is a condition for an effective communication of the gospel, the very law of incarnation. The betrayal begins

when the national churches claim total autonomy; when they allow the standards and categories of the world to take the upper hand over their own; when national, racial, or social prejudice invades them; when the ideologies and slogans of the world blur the one message they have to proclaim throughout the ages: “Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles” (I Cor. 1:23). A church living in isolation is in constant danger of losing sight of the absolute primacy of God’s claim over all earthly claims, and of the fullness of the gospel. We all need to be strengthened and called to order by our sister churches all over the world.

The Body of Christ

The image of the body brings in a new element because it stresses the *organic* character of the relation between Christ and his church, and of the members of the church with one another. Let us examine some of the implications of this figure.

First, the body is our medium of communication with the outer world. To reveal God’s will on earth, Christ took a body (Heb. 10:5-9). To say that we are his body is to say that the church is the place where God’s will is now to be revealed, where the life of Christ is to be manifested in word and deed. It is to be his voice, his healing hands, his wandering feet. He has chosen to work through it, he has delegated to it the power he has received from his Father: “He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives him who sent me” (Matt. 10:40). “Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven” (Matt. 18:18). “As the Father has sent me, even so I send you” (John 20:21).

It is to the immediate disciples, and through them to the whole church as a body, that Christ speaks these words which fill us with awe. The responsibility of representing him and speaking in his name lies on the fellowship of the believers.

Secondly, the body is an organic unity which cannot be divided without damage to the whole. Life flows from the stem to the branches, from the head to the members. Christ is the vine, he is the body. We are incorporated in him. A branch cut off withers and dies. A member cut off ceases to exist. To belong to Christ is to belong to his church. In the perspective of the New Testament, a Christian living in isolation is unthinkable—a contradiction in terms.

Again, the life of the body implies diversity in unity. This is Paul’s dominant thought in both Romans, chapter 12, and I Corinthians, chapters 12 to 14. There are many gifts and corresponding functions. God is the giver.

Therefore, no one can pride himself on his gifts nor disregard the gifts of others. And fullness of life is attained only when all members of the body are healthy and contribute to the life of the whole.

We are here given some precious indications as to the life and structure of the church. There is a diversity of ministries, that is, of “services.” If there is a hierarchy of functions, it can only be according to the measure of the Spirit that God bestows. Those who are leaders should consider themselves as those who serve, in all humility and love (see Rom. 12:3-11; I Col. 12:4-31; Luke 22:26). And of all gifts, the greatest—without which all others are of no avail—is love. This is the recurring note in all the apostolic letters, as in the saying of Jesus himself (see I Cor. 13; Phil. 2:1-8; I John 3:14-18, 4:7-12; John 13:34).

The very insistence of these letters on “mutual subjection,” on forbearance, each counting others better than himself and seeking their interest rather than his own (Eph. 5:21; Phil. 2:3-4), shows that failure to fulfil the law of love has been one of the stumbling blocks of Christian communities from the very beginning. But it was also considered as the decisive test of their discipleship. The danger of taking pride in one’s own gifts while disregarding those of others was always looming on the horizon, as is shown by the chaotic assemblies at Corinth. Paul firmly reminds the churches that “God is not a God of confusion but of peace” (I Cor. 14:33; see also the entire chapter). Every gift must be used for the building up of the church.

Furthermore, the unity of the church is seen at the same time both as something given and as a goal to be attained. Unity belongs to the very essence of the church! “There is one body and one Spirit, . . . one hope. . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all” (Eph. 4:4-6). The passage is probably referring to the unity of Jews and Gentiles, but the truth it states remains the same for the church throughout the world. It is not in our power to make the church one, for its unity is God-given. We can only *manifest* this unity in word and deed. In fact, the church has still to be “built up,” “until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Eph. 4:12-14). This growth is to be a growth in the truth and a growth in love. Only thus can we attain “mature manhood” in Christ.

Looking at our churches we must humbly confess that we are still “babes in the faith,” “tossed to and fro,” and divided. Is it not, at least, one of the gifts of the Spirit to this century that we have become more acutely aware of the

sin of division and of the stumbling block these divisions place on the path of all missionary endeavor? The unity our Lord prayed for is no less than the perfect unity of the Father and the Son. This unity should not be understood, first of all, as “mystical.” The nurture of the Son is to do the Father’s will and to achieve his purpose. Our oneness with Christ and with one another is the condition to be fulfilled if the world is to believe in him.

It is the “otherness” and “oneness” of the church as a community governed by the Spirit, it is the quality of its fellowship, that alone can convince a sceptical world, tired of words, of the truth of its message, of the reality of God’s power and mercy. . . .

Then and Now

We have tried to sketch the history of God’s People over a span of about two thousand years. Since then, nearly another two thousand years have gone by, and another story might be written! In some ways, the twofold temptation of the church remains the same throughout the centuries: the temptation to conform to the world—the salt losing its savor, therefore becoming useless; and the temptation to live in self-contented isolation—the salt kept in the salt bag, again useless.

It has been said of the twentieth century that it would be “the century of the church.” In some ways this is true. The ecumenical movement and the laymen’s movements springing up in so many countries are concrete signs that the Spirit is at work in this generation, and that the church is awakening to a new consciousness of its task throughout the world and in all spheres of life. At the same time, forces hostile to Christianity have grown in strength and scope. In a number of countries minority churches are struggling for their existence. In others, outward success may be enticing the church to drift along unconsciously in the comforts of the present life and to become this-worldly in the wrong sense. We are still a “stiff-necked people” running after other gods—only the name of these gods has slightly changed.

The call of the hour is to *be* the church. We have seen what it means: a People that proclaim by word and deed the sovereign Lordship of Christ and the power of his resurrection; a free People whose treasure cannot be taken away from them by earthly powers, and who look beyond the crisis of history to its final consummation. A distraught and despairing world is in need of this firm word of faith and hope. At the same time, God’s People must stand with both feet on the ground, in the everyday “here and now” assigned to them by their particular calling. They must do this not only as individual members of a family or a

congregation, or as members of a certain profession, but also as responsible citizens of a given country, set in the wider context of a world of nations.

It is on this point that our situation differs from that of the first century. We are answerable, together with our fellow men, for the evils of the society within which we live. Here the message of the prophets of old will complete that of the apostolic church. The prophets lived responsibly in the turmoil of history, proclaiming relentlessly the Lord’s judgment on all unrighteousness and his mercy on those who repent and believe. We are not “prophets”; but we have to project the clear light of God’s word on the conditions of our time. We must try to go, as the prophets did, to the roots of evil. This often implies working for changes in existing structures in the social as well as the political sphere.

This is, we believe, the “prophetic” task of the church. It is set as a watchman over the city to denounce unrighteousness, to defend the defenceless, to remind the state of its mission to maintain law and order. It is to help its laymen to work effectively in their respective spheres for a better order, for only the specialist can unravel the intricacies of modern industry, trade, and politics and suggest constructive solutions. The Bible offers no ready-made blueprints that we can follow; there lies our difficulty. Its ethics are not static, but dynamic; they are not a set of rules, but a demand for concrete obedience to the Lord of the church here and now, in every new situation. Every generation, in communion with the long chain of witnesses who have preceded it and under the guidance of the same Spirit, must grasp anew the tasks that the Lord of the church sets before it. What the Bible offers is a vision of God’s saving purpose for man and society. It presents us with an on-going dialogue between God and his People. It is in listening to this dialogue, humbly, prayerfully, steadily, that God’s Word spoken to other generations in other circumstances, will become a living Word to the men and women of *this* generation in *their* circumstances. For his Word passeth not.

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev. 3:22).

7. Kathleen Bliss, "Lay Reflections on *Oikoumene*," 1963

Kathleen Bliss, a Church of England educator, was a long-time member of the WCC's central and executive committees and the only woman among the main speakers at the council's first assembly in 1948.

• *The Sufficiency of God, eds Robert C. Mackie and Charles C. West, Philadelphia, Westminster, 1963, pp. 174-86.*

. . . The feature of the [WCC] symbol most worthy of contemplation is surely the word *oikoumene*. How fortunate is the World Council of Churches not to have put its own name to what has become so widely identified as its own sign. Taking a very ancient symbol of the Christian Church, it has kept also a very ancient word. It is salutary for committees in particular to remember that neither they nor the organisation they represent are the *oikoumene* which can mean nothing less than the whole Church in the whole world. The ecumenical movement is other than, and greater than, the institutions and organisations which have become its chief expression. The large volume of the History of the ecumenical movement is a dangerous volume if to any reader it seems to indicate that the story reaches its end or even its climax with the foundation of the World Council of Churches. This event is not an arrival at a destination: it is a point on a long, long journey, a wayside station where energies are replenished, maps consulted, and the journey taken up with new companions and new energies. Every Christian belongs in the ecumenical movement who, looking beyond the narrow confines of his parish or group, nation or tribe, sees and greets as a brother on the journey another man, another church, another co-operator in a new task, another seeker of the unity of the Church in Christ its Head. Every impulse belongs to the ecumenical movement which carries the Church out into the world, whether to the ends of the earth to preach the Gospel and heal the sick, or to the world physically so near and yet in other ways so far, the world of a technical civilization operating under impulses which seem to allow little place for the Church as institution or the Gospel as inspiring faith.

The ecumenical movement—the search for the recovery, first as a vision, a driving concept in church life, and then as a reality, of the whole Church in the whole world—has been carried forward on the shoulders of great men: many of them have been spiritual and intellectual giants.

Their story has often been written and credit given also to the innumerable other men and women whose devotion and sacrifice and plain hard work contributed so much to the whole. But the birth and growth of ideas is more subtle than historians and biographers sometimes allow. If we have learned from Martin Buber and his exponents to understand the statement that the truth is not in the I or in the Thou but between the I and the Thou, then we would expect that the birth of ideas is generated by what we as Christians would unquestionably call the work of the Holy Spirit operating between men. Precisely because the ecumenical movement has brought men from the structures of their own churches and as representatives of their churches into a free association with no hierarchy or authority, no precedents or rules (beyond those of procedure), its driving force has had to be the free engagement of minds and spirits. The Roman Catholic observer who said of the ecumenical movement "We have the authority of the undivided Church: but you know one another" was saying something more profound than perhaps he meant: for "knowing," in Old Testament parlance, is a way of begetting: it is creative, not sterile; and the true begetting of the ecumenical movement has been a begetting not of institutions but of ideas. . . .

God forbid that we should be the instruments of killing the ecumenical movement by ossifying ideas and entombing them in paper and crushing those who might be the future begetters with the sheer weight of our own whited sepulchres! Our question therefore is: How can we keep the ecumenical movement in control of its institutions? How can we maintain or create the conditions in which, through communication of mind to mind and spirit to spirit, ideas have their birth and grow over widening circles of the Church's life? That is a question to which time and thought has to be given, but perhaps a small contribution to that thinking can be made by an attempt to trace the history of one ecumenical idea—the vocation and ministry of the laity.

. . . The ecumenical movement as we know it had its origins in the impulses of the Evangelical revival. This revival imparted to those who were touched by it not docile piety but the freedom and authority and new obligation to act and speak as under the direct, uninterrupted control of the Spirit of God. The Evangelical revival was in curious ways the spiritual counterpart of the Enlightenment. As the Enlightenment set free the human mind to pursue knowledge unhampered by the strait-jacket of formalized and institutionalized thought, so also the Evangelical revival gave men not just a subjective religious experience, but a sudden apprehension of the whole world in a different way. This is a constituent in many conversions. All

sorts of things seemed possible. It touched men of learning and authority, and practical men working with their hands, with the same sense of freedom to respond and act, passing like a contagion from one to another. Out of this were born the lay movements of the nineteenth century and the conventions and the student camps.

It is astonishing to see the speed with which the fire leapt from country to country, continent to continent, carried often by laymen whom nobody now remembers. These lay movements provided for Christian men and women the outlet for this Evangelical fervour in mission and service. While missionary expansion thrust out into the non-Christian world, the lay movements spread not only into the whole of the mainly Protestant West, but significantly into South America and into the world of Orthodoxy in Russia, the Balkans and the near East. While, at times and in places, the lay movements seemed to provide for some of their members a broad road from the churches to a kind of undenominationalism which left the churches just where they were in relation to one another, and thence by declining stages to a pale shadow of Christian belief and action, they also provided precisely the opposite, namely a standing-ground from which men and women could see the Church in a new light and work to make the actual churches become what this vision disclosed. It is extremely difficult to think that John R. Mott could have done the things he did if he had been anything other than a layman.

Profoundly influenced, like J. H. Oldham and many others of the ecumenical pioneers, by the evangelism of Dwight L. Moody and his associates, Mott decided to give his life, in his own words, "to the service of Jesus." Signing the Princeton Pledge, which was the forerunner of the missionary commitment of the Student Volunteer Missionary Union, he put without facetiousness or indecision in the space labelled "Chosen field of service" "The world." It was as a YMCA secretary,¹ working especially among the "student Y's" already established and bringing new ones into being, that Mott made that encounter with the Orthodox which is of such extreme importance to the later development of the ecumenical movement. Untrained in theology, and never suffering from the disease of being the parson *manqué* which prevents so many lay people from seeing and pursuing the fullness of their lay vocation in freedom,

Mott, from his standing-ground in the YMCA, could see the importance of helping the Orthodox to be themselves and to come into relation with others. Mott was by common consent the chief founder of the World's Student Christian Federation in 1895, and served it as secretary and then as chairman (giving almost his whole time to it) from that date till 1928. During this period he and the secretaries of the national movements associated with the WSCF created relationship between the members of different churches who came into those movements totally different from the old undenominationalism of half a century before. This new ecumenical fellowship was based on the principle of bringing everything into the encounter instead of leaving every disagreement out. Thus Bishop Gore who, with Tissington Tatlow, played so important a role in getting the Anglo-Catholic wing of the Church of England at Edinburgh in 1910, could write to the SPG that in the Student Christian Movement there was to be found something quite different from the undenominationalism and the possible compromise of principle which they feared. To bring and hold together disagreeing opposites was part of Mott's genius. The devotion, fire and missionary commitment which made him not only the organiser but the powerful evangelist that he was came to him from the Evangelical revival. But he acquired from his personal friendships with many great churchmen a spiritual awareness of the essential marks of the Church. Mott's contribution to the emergence of the ecumenical perception of the role of the laity was, in my view, that he was one of the main creators of the cradle in which it could be born, for he was the leader of a company of men who held the emphasis on personal commitment and individual initiative characteristic of the Evangelical revival, the lay movements and the missionary movements, in the closest possible proximity with the catholicity and order of the unbroken tradition of Christendom, which was the carrier of so much of the concept of *oikoumene* from the earliest centuries across a great leap of time to the present day. The ecumenical emphasis on the laity calls on the individual layman to see the world as the place where God wills him to live out his faith, and on the churches to recognize the laity as the Church in the world and to equip them for their task. In no aspect of ecumenical endeavour do "evangelical" and "catholic" more greatly need one another.

The great contribution of Edinburgh 1910 to the ecumenical idea which we are here pursuing was that it moved out of the realm of missionary demonstration designed merely to elicit interest and support (which all previous missionary conferences had been) into the realm of planning by responsible church leaders of the missionary strategy of the Church. Mott, as chairman of the preparatory

1. Writing of his times as YMCA secretary to students in Lahore J. H. Oldham says: "So far as I know Mott had nothing to do directly with this appointment. Indirectly he probably may have had a good deal. He had already sent out hand-picked very able Americans to man YMCAs in Bombay, Madras and Calcutta, as well as Brockman to China—probably the most influential foreigner in China in any capacity—and Galen Fisher, also outstanding, to Japan. . . . I, of course, saw a good deal of his able lieutenants in India."

commissions, and Oldham, appointed secretary to the conference two years before it took place, worked to put into leading positions in the conference men who had never co-operated before, and successfully engaged them in an enterprise which did more than anything else to make mission and outreach a part of the essential thinking of the leaders of the Church. True, the constituent bodies were missionary societies, but the executive committee in Britain (for example) appointed a delegation which included the archbishops and seven diocesan bishops, the moderators or presidents of the Church of Scotland and all the Free Churches. Continental and American churches also sent leading church-men—hardly a free-lance body of missionary enthusiasts! While so many forces were tending to isolate the Church, as was clearly described in a Church of England report of 1902 on the role of the laity, the missionary movement was not only itself going out into the world, but was turning the eyes of the Church's chief leaders towards that *oikoumene* which is by its original use “the inhabited world.”

The official aim of the Edinburgh conference was “to consider missionary problems in relation to the non-Christian world.” Hidden in this was the assumption that there was a Christian world—the West—and outside it in Asia and Africa a non-Christian world occupied by other religions. Hence the omission of the whole sub-continent of South America from Edinburgh's purview. One of the commissions was called “Unoccupied fields,” which meant “geographical areas where the Gospel has not yet been preached.” The continuation committee and later the International Missionary Council provided, it is true, a means of consultation and joint action, and it is in this light that they are usually seen as new ecumenical achievements. But, equally important, they provided a means of continual study of the relationships between the missionary enterprise and aspects of the developing life of the countries in which that enterprise was carried on. Missions were deeply committed both to education and to medical work. This was an outreach of the work of the Church which brought with it a host of problems which in the IMC were objectively studied by a series of commissions and enquiries on which distinguished educators served along with men like Tom Jones who was shaping the social policies of Britain. It became customary to listen to the advice of the lay expert and not to rely solely on the collective wisdom or unwisdom of committees. . . .

It was the Oxford conference [1937] which began to spell out the role of the laity as the spearhead of the Church's mission in a world of secularized ideas and secular institutions. Oldham, in the preparatory volume for Oxford, described the main task of the conference thus:

“If the Christian faith is in the present and future to bring about changes as it has done in the past in the thought, habits and practices of society, it can only do this through being the living, working faith of multitudes of lay men and women conducting the ordinary affairs of life. . . . We stand before a great historic task: the task of restoring the lost unity between worship and work.” Many prophets had spoken these last words: the achievement of Oxford was to begin to spell out their meaning in specific areas of the life of community and state. . . .

The decision to set up a “department on the laity” followed logically from the meetings of a special commission and section respectively at Amsterdam [1948] and at Evanston [1954]. In its short life this department has succeeded in carrying its theological reflection on the vocation and ministry of the laity deep into the membership of many of the churches, thanks in large measure to an exemplary clarity and brevity of statement. But as ideas spread more widely they usually lose depth and there is need for constant replenishment of the content of the “lay idea” if we are not to be landed with a naïve “laicism” quite as objectionable as the “clericalism” it is now fashionable to deplore.

The problem of size may defeat the World Council of Churches in its laudable endeavours to get an adequate number of lay men and women on to its central representative bodies. Increases of membership will mean cuts in the size of delegations and an increase of those one and two member delegations which are almost always (inescapably) clerical. But the presence of the essential “lay aspect” of the Church does not depend mechanically on the substitution of soft collars for dog collars at meetings. It depends on the steady determination of the churches (including not least the clergy) to live by the vision of the Church as the community of Christ interpenetrating the life of the world as the bearer of that Gospel whose fruit is to make “a new creation” and render man fit for communion with God and community with other men. Far from relegating worship to the periphery, this vision brings worship to the centre. The importance of the liturgical movement for this growing awareness of the “lay character” of the Church's being in the world, has only just begun to be explored. The importance of the Orthodox is not just that they have lay theologians and lay movements of an exciting kind, but that in ways the West finds hard to understand their worship has retained the place of the laity as active participants in the worship of a community transcending all differences, even that of time.

This little essay has perhaps shown that ideas develop by starting in one place or group and springing to another. We cannot departmentalize them. As the organisational centre of the ecumenical movement grows in size and in

pressure of work it needs an increased, not a diminished, belief that it is not the *oikoumene*. The Spirit blows where it wills in the whole Church and the whole world and to catch the whisper of its breathing needs stillness at the heart of our activity.

8. Yves Congar, "Ecumenical Experience and Conversion: A Personal Testimony," 1963

A Dominican priest and prolific theological scholar, Yves Congar was one of the most influential of the pioneering Roman Catholic ecumenists. He played a significant role in the drafting of key documents at Vatican II. • The Sufficiency of God, op.cit., pp. 71-87.

... The ecumenical dialogue has, in the first place, obliged me and helped me to renew the Christian man within me. It has, as it were, compelled me to become more Christian and more catholic. The questions put to me, the witness I have had to bear, the obligation I have been under to attain a certain level of truth, all this has shaken me from a comfortable and commonplace conformity and made me re-examine many matters in depth.

First, it has meant for me an expansion both mental and spiritual. Merely to know a foreign country does that for you especially if you speak the language. You become less provincial. The mind is, as it were, fertilized by contact with another world. For example, German language and thought have often had this effect on Frenchmen, as French language and thought also has had upon Germans. But in the ecumenical dialogue the new worlds opened up to us are spiritual worlds inhabited by other Christians. We have to get to know these worlds. Books tell us these things, but we cannot appreciate the validity of what they say except in the light of personal experience. This experience has moreover something more to contribute than books; nothing can take the place of direct contact with living reality. It may not be necessary for such contacts to be numerous, but they are indispensable as a means of reaching authentic knowledge. I for my part shall always remember the first time I stayed in a theological college or in an Anglican religious community and the simple but lasting impression made by Evensong or Compline. Or again the first meetings between Catholic students and members of

the French SCM. I know how much my understanding and love of the Orthodox Church owe to personal friendships. Father Portal, a few months before his death, bore witness to the part that "friendship in the service of unity"² had played in his life and work. For all of us, the Orthodox celebration of the liturgy has opened the door to a certain understanding of the scriptural texts, and to that world of tradition and saintliness of which the Orthodox Church is the hallowed sanctuary.

The discovery of another spiritual world does not uproot us from our own, but changes the way we look at many things. For myself, I remain a Latin Catholic, a fact I do not hide from myself or from others, but ecumenism has freed me from certain narrowness of outlook, characteristic of the Latin and of the Mediterranean man by bringing me into touch with Eastern Christians, Scandinavians, Anglo-Saxons and with their respective traditions. I have kept my Latin anthropological make-up but have looked critically upon its limitations. Moreover, in and through this very experience I have learned that not a few causes of historical conflict are really matters of mental outlook, or, as I should say today, of anthropology. In *Chrétiens Désunis* (1937) I devoted much space to this theme, unaware that at the very same time a report sponsored by the Edinburgh Conference had given currency to the concept of "non-theological factors" as causes of division, an idea of such promise for the future. Their decisive importance can be granted without failing to recognize the absolute primacy of matters of doctrine. Experience shows that ideas become deflected in different mentalities and so in vocabulary and even in their expression. And at the same time we remain closed or show ourselves open to possibilities of understanding and eventual agreement according to our disposition. Now where disposition is concerned, we are to a great extent conditioned by mentality, culture, spiritual practices and group attitudes, and the historical background of the milieu to which we belong. It is with all this conditioning that we live as Christians in the group and in the tradition where we have received it. For each of us this is something to be venerated and cherished, but like all things human it is relative, and like all historical reality, a medley, whereas Christianity on the other hand is absolute, unique and pure.

And so in the face of all this that is not the truth itself and can even prevent its diffusion, we must acquire a wholesome sense of relativity. Knowledge of others, which is only complete if it is first-hand and factual, awakens this sense. It thrives on the study and more especially the knowledge of history. I have devoted much study to history, still do and, God willing, will continue to do so. At

2. Fr F. Portal "Le rôle de l'amitié dans l'union des Eglises," a lecture given in Brussels 1925 and published in *La Revue Catholique des Idées et des Faits*.

first I had scruples about doing so, being over-concerned to remain true to the doctrinal vocation of a preaching friar of the Dominican order. I have since then realized that history is one of the best means of approach to truth and of service to that same truth. It liberates what is true from much that surrounds and even clothes it—much that is debatable, sometimes false, and prevents what is true from being admitted by concealing it. Neglecting the finer points, my experience can be summarized as follows: every time I have had a look myself, I have discovered something other than what I was told and that was regarded by this or that group as a certainty. I looked into the matter of the Great Schism, and I realized that one could not speak as if a legitimacy accepted without dispute had been, at some precise moment, rejected by Eastern Christians, who should bear all responsibility for the break. It was much more a question of gradual “estrangement” between two different worlds. I looked into the question of Luther, whose writings I turn to, in one way or another, almost monthly. I know, alas, that Luther has still today a bad reputation among Catholics, except perhaps in Germany. I know there is some justification for this. But I also know that one does not thus do justice either to his basic intentions or to his religious thought. In fact I know that nothing really worth-while with regard to Protestantism will be achieved so long as we take no steps truly to understand Luther, instead of simply condemning him, and to do him historical justice. For this conviction which is mine I would gladly give my life. But Catholics as a whole, and Protestants and Orthodox as well, have obviously not made experiments similar to mine: they live their religion on a plane that is more sociological than truly personal and soundly critical.

In their sociological form, the “orthodoxies” which nourish endless controversies, prevent one from seeing and incorporating the element of truth contained in what they combat and which must be reabsorbed into that total truth in which every mind may have communion. The foregoing remark can be widely applied in the whole field where East and West, or the ancient Church and the Reformation, confront each other historically. I have long dreamt of what a research centre might be, founded by some generous Maecenas, endowed with a first-rate library, whose fortunate students, Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants and Anglicans, would be under obligation to write, let us say, a history of the papacy or of Luther, and only publishing works signed by all of them. Perhaps thus would we escape from a situation where each, against the other, holds to a truth which the other fails to recognize. But is it not just this recognition of the other’s truth, this reconstruction of a total truth and this communion within, which we pursue in our ecumenical encounters, quietly and unostentatiously,

yet in a way that, little by little, makes worthless polemics give way to a real consensus of opinion?

The ecumenical dialogue passes judgment also on our clerical shortcomings and forces us to be rid of them. Not being involved individually, we do not even realize how full of them we are: be it a certain complacency which thinks it has the answers to all the problems, be it an apologetic, even apostolic haste that is rather sordidly triumphant. Sometimes true spiritual depth is to be found in a mind that does not know the truth but seeks it, whereas superficiality, a lack of any serious spiritual commitment is apparent in one who goes forward armed with a ready-made orthodoxy whereby all errors are known and refuted. The whole truth is known and formulated: it is simply a question of looking out from shelf or drawer the appropriate article. . . . This little game soon proves unplayable when one enters into dialogue with a real man.

In such a dialogue, on the one hand, by listening to the other person, I am led to rediscover in the depth and fullness of my own tradition that portion of the truth that he rightly seeks to honour and that I was in danger of overlooking. On the other hand, in setting before him my convictions, I tend to present them and consequently to conceive and live them, so that they embrace what is valid in the standpoint of the other. It is not that I give in on principle to his point of view. On the contrary, I criticize it. Ecumenism is in no sense the syncretized product of Luther plus Calvin plus St Thomas Aquinas, or of Gregory of Palamas plus St Augustine. But envisaged from the theological point of view, which is our main interest, ecumenism implies a striving after two aspects of Christian truth which sometimes seem in opposition, but which should be jointly arrived at and kept together: fullness and purity.

We are compelled to take into further consideration, and to have more respect for, those points which our opponent considers we underrate. This formula often used before the 1939 war is still valid. The new development that the ecumenical movement has undergone in the World Council of Churches (characterized by the transition from “inter-confessional” relations to a dynamic community of obedience to the same call) has not robbed it of any of its fruitfulness: for one must, sooner or later, come back to moments of dialogue *between*. . . . It is a case then of each asking the other: “Have you taken seriously this or that aspect of the truth?” For example, Protestants would say to us: “You always give us the impression with your ecclesiastical and sacramental system of wanting to limit the operation of the Holy Spirit. Have you taken seriously God’s perpetual presence? Don’t you speak of grace as if it were a *Thing*, contained in a receptacle or secreted through some ritual process, whereas it is always God’s initiative,

his good pleasure, his promise?" And on our side, we would say to our Protestant friends: "You always give us the impression of thinking that to attribute something to one of God's creatures as a gift from him, amounts to withdrawing it from God, who as its sole author must remain its sole possessor. Have you taken seriously God's gifts, that for us are certainties: the holiness of his Mother, ministries as an inheritance of that of the Apostles, the indefectible visibility of the Body of Christ manifest in the Church, etc?" On their side, the Orthodox would say to us: "Have you taken seriously the active role of the whole body of the Church as such, have you, in your scholasticism, taken seriously the mystic, religious and mysterious character of religious knowledge?" And we would ask them: "Have you taken seriously the evidence in favour of the existence of the pastoral office of St Peter as supreme and universal, an office which ensures for the Church, for the image of the Kingdom of God, the visible unity of its militant existence?"

Such mutual questioning is one of the ways by which ecumenism helps us each and all alike to make progress towards a fullness of understanding. Indeed is it enough to say it helps us; should we not rather say it obliges us? There exists, we believe, an ontology in encountering and in working together. Alone, I never go to the end of my own demands; I hold on to certain reserves of tolerable comfort, of a protective mediocrity. By contrast, in the presence of others, under their eye, receiving the impact and as it were the challenge of their good faith, I am forced to honour the undertaking my principles involve and to give finality to the truth which is mine. That is what one experiences in the inner councils or re-examinations of life that are part of any real community. Ecumenical encounter is the base of a similar process.

Dialogue and mutual questioning compel us by the same impulse to consider the *purity* of our Christian standpoint, for by it we are always led back to this criterion of Christian authenticity. There again, we are under compulsion, for if when alone we may perhaps allow ourselves a compromise, a certain tolerance, others deprive us of these, obliging us to verify the quality of the materials with which we work: gold and silver, or hay and straw, as St Paul puts it (I Cor. 3.12). It can come about that being with them we recognize ideas and facts that we might have been slow to rediscover alone. Personally, through ecumenical discussion or by reading Orthodox or Protestant studies, I have become aware either of certain perceptions or of certain requirements in the realm of what is specifically Christian, for example, in things eschatological. But many of my friends or colleagues tell me they have made similar discoveries directly at the source without owing anything to ecumenism. In truth, it is hard to say that one owes nothing to it, for it exerts its

influence also through its promptings, by suggestion that is even conveyed indirectly and at a distance. Thus in France few priests and even comparatively few theologians have read Barth; nevertheless it is fair to ask whether the tremendous response in our midst today to the theme of the Word of God, the kind of intense and gladdening joy that so many priests today experience in their ministry, would be what it is had there been no Barth. Ecumenism, said Dom Clement Lialine, works by shock. I myself am conscious of having profited in many fields from shocks received twenty-five years ago, when, on the points at issue, I had not even had any discussion and was pursuing my quest within the framework of the Catholic tradition alone.

Dialogue indeed entails a return to one's sources. What we receive from "the other" is a shock, but it is in our own tradition that we rediscover what was concealed there, what we implicitly took for granted, but had not clearly discerned. Later, when we have acquired a taste for it, when we have experienced the immense benefit that results from it, we make a habit on all occasions of returning to the source whence comes freshness and abundance. On the specifically ecumenical plane, however, this return to the source is possible because on the one hand we all have the same roots and come, partly at least, from the same springs. On the other hand, with this or that group, the treasure of Christianity is clothed in a certain tradition (in varying degrees of faithfulness to, and authenticity of, that tradition itself, it is true). This two-fold fact, however, provides sufficient grounds for this group and that to transcend the formulas that have been an obstacle historically, and to progress by deepened loyalty to their Christian beliefs, towards a common place of agreement. There exists therefore for both parties a possibility of living out their religious loyalty in passing beyond the sociological plane of that loyalty in order to enter into the depths of its roots and sources. Thus there is the possibility of reaching a point which could be a point of encounter. For a long time I have liked to quote, applying it specifically to ecumenism and in particular to the Catholic endeavour in that sphere, a fine passage from Etienne Gilson written concerning the philosophical opposition between Thomism and Augustinism:

One should allow opponents whose conclusions are in conflict the necessary time to understand one another better, to understand themselves better, and to meet again at some point still today undetermined but assuredly situated beyond their present standpoints.³

3. "Reflexions sur la Controverse S. Thomas-S. Augustin," in *Mélanges Pierre Mandonnet*, Paris, 1930, t.I, p. 371.

Where ecumenism is concerned, intellectual forces are not the only ones encountered. Each original reality has its order of existence, its laws, and so, when situated within its order, it asserts its value when experienced in accordance with its laws. That is the profound theme of Pascal's fragment on the three orders of body, mind and of charity (or wisdom or holiness).⁴ Ecumenism too has its "order" and it is felt as an authentic Christian value in an original experience which brings with it its own light and power. It is difficult to analyse an experience; one makes it. It entails a second birth, or rather it is itself a process of rebirth. One becomes thereby a different person. It is what takes place at, say, the beginning of love or when one has undergone the blessed experience of sacrifice, of the Cross, of humiliation or poverty accepted lovingly for God's sake. Or again, when in prayer one has found peace in the midst of storm, where but for prayer one would have been uprooted and swept away.

The ecumenical climate is characterized by that fidelity in depth of which we have spoken. It calls for that readiness to go beyond which is implied in this very fidelity, and does so under the stimulus of discussion, and through the return to our sources, in the feeling that we are responding to a divine impulse in which we joyfully participate. In such a climate many things are possible which were otherwise impossible. We are living through this great moment of truth. On points on which theology had remained unyielding for four centuries, within boundaries created by polemics, hemmed in by mutual ignorance and distrust—or should I not rather say by neglect of our own deepest resources—we have begun to discover possibilities hitherto unsuspected. Works like those of H. Küng on Justification, or of M. Thurian on the Eucharist—the two most acutely controversial topics of the sixteenth century—are unthinkable were it not for the ecumenical climate and the possibilities it opens up. But one rediscovery entails another. One and all we come to a broader conception of truth. Year by year and decade after decade, we advance towards that "point still today undetermined" of which Etienne Gilson spoke. It cannot but be very slow, for the movement must spread to the whole of theology and to all theologians. Such progress is almost imperceptible if one seeks to measure it on a short time scale. When I return month by month to the same coastline I see no change; I find the cliff apparently intact, and yet the sea is eating it slowly away. Were I to return after ten years, I would see that its outline had changed and that part of the cliff had fallen away.

Psychologically, ecumenical experience brings with it the joy of meeting, of being together, diverse and even heretical in each other's eyes, yet assembled in a similar and

harmonious response to God's call. Ecumenism has no meaning and would not exist without this new factor of an impulse and call of God that will be recorded in history as one of the characteristic features of religion in the twentieth century. It is extremely difficult, perhaps even impossible, to conceive of ecumenism within the categories of classical theology alone; it is something new or, better, it is a movement, something that is not achieved, not defined, but that is daily in process of formation and definition. Ecumenism is not so much a matter in which formal revelation is concerned (except in those of its aspects which come under dogma and revealed ecclesiology) but belongs rather to the history of salvation, a free and open message from the God of Grace, translated into vocations. Work carried on in this ecumenical atmosphere is inseparable from the spiritual experience found in obedience to the ecumenical vocation. This experience is also one of a truly evangelical readiness to refuse nothing that is of God. On every page of the Gospel is a call to welcome what in man is of God or perhaps for God, beyond the limits ratified by law, beyond the categories of sociology, religion or morality. This readiness, accompanied by a true humility and deeply serious intent, I personally have encountered in nearly all "other" Christians with whom it has fallen to me to discuss, especially in the various organs of the World Council. What a joy it is to feel that between oneself and another no barrier is interposed to prevent the practical acceptance of a truth however onerous it may be!

This can only be a living experience when it means a search for God himself, unconditional surrender to Jesus Christ, as a striving after holiness, by union with that which is the centre and source of all: the reality of Jesus Christ, as Lord and Saviour. This is why prayer, prayer by common intention and even, where possible, prayer together, constitutes the culminating point of ecumenical experience and activity. C. S. Lewis has finely said: "The man who lives the Christian life most faithfully in his own Confession is spiritually nearest to those who are not under the same obedience. For the geography of the spiritual world is very different from that of the physical world. It is the lukewarm and indifferent in each region who are furthest away from every other country."⁵ If that is true, then one can understand that, devoting themselves utterly in obedience to such a call from God and in consecration to the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, those who take part in the ecumenical movement find, in this very participation, a way of sanctification and unification in their life which they cannot but feel to be blessed by God.

4. *Pensées*, L. Brunschvicg's edition, fragment 793.

5. *The Problem of Pain*, Introduction to the French edition: Paris, 1950, p. 28.

It is a way to conversion. It asks not less faith, but more. Ecumenism does not live by a purpose made up of doctrinal liberalism and of discarding, but of growth in a fuller and purer truth. And this it does by the hard road that encounters opposition from others, and leads to self-interrogation by each of us as we come face to face with our sources and with the truth. What have we ever yielded that should have been upheld? To whom have we ever yielded if not to the truth, which none has a right to resist, before which, on the contrary, it is such a joy to bend in obeisance. Ecumenism demands a profound moral and even religious conversion. But it is not for everyone to bring about, only the ecumenically minded: rather as a democracy can only be built by democrats, and fascism only introduced by fascists. It is a question of really reforming ourselves. As for me, who committed myself to the task thirty years ago, I reckon to have scarcely begun that reform and, like any Christian life, am destined to complete it only at my final passing to the life of light eternal. . . .

9. Athenagoras I, Remarks at the World Council of Churches Headquarters, 1967

Ecumenical Patriarch from 1949-72, Athenagoras I was a leading figure in Orthodox involvement in the ecumenical movement. This address was delivered on the occasion of his historic visit to the headquarters of the WCC. • Orthodox Visions of Ecumenism, ed. Gennadios Limouris, Geneva, WCC, 1994, pp. 34-36.

. . . Brothers and beloved children in Christ, we have come to you along with the honoured persons who accompany us, to bring you the greetings, good wishes and blessings of our Holy Ecumenical See and of ourselves. We come not as strangers to strangers, but as members of the same family, to this our common home, in witness of our Church's profound awareness that it is one of the founding Churches of this Council and—along with the other sister Orthodox Churches—a deeply engaged and active member of it in the inter-Christian dialogue of love and unity. But at the same time, we come to bear witness to the fact that our Ecumenical Patriarchate is conscious of how much it has owed in the past, owes now, and will also owe in the future to the

World Council of Churches—and most rightly so, for this Council is destined to act in all things against the sin of division within the Christian Church, and to serve the holy purpose of Christian unity by bringing closer together the various denominations. At this moment, some relevant and appropriate words of a 14th-century Byzantine theologian come to my mind:

How fruitful and pleasing a thing it is for brothers to live together, and how joyful and profitable a thing for them to struggle with unanimity towards deep spirituality; and miserable and fruitless it is for those who are united in the Spirit to be in conflict with one another.

If it is true that where two or three are gathered together in Christ, He is directly present in the midst of them, then how much more so, when two or more nations are gathered in Him, is He there present to bestow all goodness upon them. That is why we are torn asunder in our hearts on account of the division of the Churches; for being members of Christ, having access to and communion with One and the Same Head, and being fitly framed together, we nevertheless do not think in harmony, nor more forward to the same goal.

We are happy to be able to confirm to all of you that now, as always, such is the thinking of our holy and great Church of Christ, and of the Orthodox Church in general.

The Orthodox Church, suffering on account of the divisions in the one flock of Christ, has ever longed for sincere and understanding collaboration between the Christian Churches and denominations, and has prayed and prays daily to the Lord, “for the peace of the whole world, the stability of the Holy Churches of God, and the union of all.”

The Orthodox Church does this so much more because it believes that today, more than ever, the Christian world has had enough of sterile verbal exchanges. The Kingdom of Christ is a kingdom of love, and we must return to that love if we are to be able to bind up the wounds of the past, wounds which were inflicted upon the Church of Christ by a spirit that distorted the truth, or by human deviations, or the flames of discord. No Christian Church had the right to remain in isolation, to proclaim that it has no need to be in contact with other Christian brothers, and that s=those who live outside its frontiers are deprived of bonds which link them with Christ. On the contrary, the more a Church has the consciousness that it alone possesses the truth, and remains faithful to the word of Christ, the tradition and

the mission of the One Ancient and Undivided Church, so much the more must it, and has it the obligation to, enter into dialogue and collaboration with all the other Christian denominations. It must do this in a spirit of love, humility and service, in accordance with the example of Christ, so as to advance the victory of truth and the building-up of the Body of Christ. Christendom must feel anew the impetus of this Spirit of Christ, which is rooted in Christian unity and, in its turn, is established on the foundation of love, so that it may spread its beneficent influence to the world and to all mankind.

Our collaboration in the World Council of Churches has as its goal an increase in love and the common study—undertaken in a spirit of total fidelity to the truth—of the differences which separate the Christian Churches, in order that we may build up Christian unity. In collaborating within the World Council of Churches, we do not aim at setting aside our theological differences, nor at achieving superficial understanding, nor disregarding the points that divide us. But we do aim at a spirit of reciprocal and sincere understanding, in the authentic spirit of Christ, and at directing ourselves towards the preparation of the way that will one day make it possible for the Holy Spirit to enable all members of the Body of Christ to receive Communion with the same Bread and from the same Chalice. In a world that is torn asunder, full of suffering, and threatened with dire catastrophe; in a world that is plunged into unparalleled and hitherto unheard-of spiritual and moral confusion; in a world that lacks guidance and a sense of orientation, this collaboration of the Christian Churches and denominations is an urgent need of the times, and an obligation that we have to history.

Our Ecumenical Patriarchate—in the position that it took from the very beginning, in its historic Encyclical of 1920 on the formation of a League of Churches, and in its subsequent collaboration in the Ecumenical Movement—has undoubtedly been, and still is, an ardent preacher of the true ecumenical ideal, and true ecumenical dialogue to foster Christian unity. For this reason, so as to encourage the ecumenical spirit, it has taken initiatives in Christian reconciliation in all directions. And for this reason a new era in relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church has opened up into one of sincere collaboration with His Holiness Pope Paul VI. For this reason it cultivates and promotes bi-lateral relations with member churches of the World Council of Churches, such as the Anglican, Old Catholic and Post-Chalcedonian Churches, and the Lutheran Church.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate, in working in these directions, is firmly convinced that it is also promoting

the work of the World Council of Churches. Therefore we greatly rejoice when we see communication and cooperation constantly increasing between our World Council of Churches and the great Roman Catholic Church.

As we examine the present position of the movement of ecumenism towards Christian unity, we can observe that the Spirit of God has led it to an important point, to a point that is one of increasing maturity and, simultaneously—as always happens in things divine—one also of crisis.

Today we find ourselves facing the temptation to content ourselves with what has already been achieved, thus allowing the ecumenical movement—narcissistically and in total contradiction of itself—to stagnate; on the other hand is the possibility of the ecumenical movement's being inspired to new dynamic action, and thus justifying itself as a movement that leads to its own renewal and to the task of the renewal of the churches, a renewal which is a fundamental presupposition for their meeting on the one divine road that leads to unity. . . .

10. Willem Visser 't Hooft, "The Mandate of the Ecumenical Movement," Fourth Assembly of the WCC, Uppsala, 1968

If one person deserves to be called the greatest ecumenist of the 20th century, it would be Willem Visser't Hooft, general secretary of the WCC from its founding until his retirement in 1966. As one colleague put it, no other leader "possessed the acumen, imagination, statesmanship, experience, daring, energy, and languages necessary to bring [the World Council] into being." • The Uppsala Report 1968, ed. Norman Goodall, Geneva, WCC, 1968, pp. 316-22.

Where Do We Stand Today?

. . . It seems to me that the present ecumenical situation can only be described in the paradoxical statement that the ecumenical movement has entered into a period of reaping an astonishingly rich harvest, but that precisely at this moment the movement is more seriously called in question than ever before. And once again the basic issue is that of the relation between the Church and the world.

I need not develop why we can speak of the success of the ecumenical movement. We need only to think of this Assembly in comparison to earlier ecumenical world conferences. Who would have dared to believe in 1925 or even in 1948 that by 1968 we would have reached the point at which practically all Eastern Orthodox Churches would bring their much-needed contribution, at which Africa, Asia and Latin America would have such a distinctive word to speak, and in which through a great network of close fraternal relationships the Roman Catholic Church, after having elaborated its own position concerning the central ecumenical issues, would enrich and stimulate our discussions so greatly? We are near the point when Söderblom's dream will come true: that all churches of Christendom can speak out together on the great problems of mankind. And as the various main streams of the ecumenical movement have joined together we have a greater opportunity than ever to act in the field of evangelism and mission, of faith and order, of life and work as one well-coordinated world-wide Christian movement. But at this very moment there are many inside and outside our churches, particularly among the younger generation, who have their deep doubts about the relevance of the ecumenical movement and turn away from it with a sense of disappointment. So our very success is ambiguous. And once again it is the decisive issue of the relation between the Church and the world which claims the centre of the stage.

For we hear it said that the ecumenical movement as it has developed over the last forty or fifty years is unable to help the churches to perform that mission which they should perform in the world of our time. That world requires radical renewal. But how can churches speak convincingly of radical renewal if they are not radically renewed themselves? That world needs a thorough transformation of its traditional structures, but do not the churches exemplify that traditional structures resist such transformation? That world must become a world-wide responsible society, but are the churches themselves living as a responsible society in which full solidarity in service and mission is practised and in which all members, including all laymen and women, are able to bear their full share of responsibility for the common life?

Or again, this world needs effective unity. But is the relationship which the churches have in the ecumenical movement more than a pale reflection of the unity they should have? And is the progress toward full unity not so slow that it reveals rather a fear of unity than a great and passionate conviction about the essential oneness of the people of God? And must we therefore not admit that the ecumenical movement has had its time, and that we

have now entered into the "post-ecumenical" age in which Christians will have to make their contribution and render their service to the world through other, less cumbersome channels?

Such questions are being asked in many places, and we have every reason to take them seriously. It is inevitable that they lead also to a new discussion within our own ranks. Once again we have to face the old issue of the true relation between the Church and the world and between the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the Christian faith. My hope is that at this Assembly we will deal with it positively and ecumenically. Positively in the sense that we give a clear sense of orientation to our movement, ecumenically in the sense that we will truly listen to each other and not write others off as brothers who are so weak in the faith that they do not deserve our attention. And also ecumenically in that the generations do not treat each other as strangers; that the older ones do not pretend that all the real questions have already been answered in ecumenical history and the younger ones do not claim that ecumenical history is a tale told, if not by an idiot, at least by a spokesman of the hopeless establishment.

As a contribution to the discussion of these crucial questions I would now make the following points:

1. No Horizontal Advance without Vertical Orientation

I believe that, with regard to the great tension between the vertical interpretation of the Gospel as essentially concerned with God's saving action in the life of individuals, and the horizontal interpretation of it as mainly concerned with human relationships in the world, we must get out of that rather primitive oscillating movement of going from one extreme to the other, which is not worthy of a movement which by its nature seeks to embrace the truth of the Gospel in its fulness. A Christianity which has lost its vertical dimension has lost its salt and is not only insipid in itself, but useless for the world. But a Christianity which would use the vertical preoccupation as a means to escape from its responsibility for and in the common life of man [humanity] is a denial of the incarnation, of God's love for the world manifested in Christ.

The whole secret of the Christian faith is that it is man-centred because it is God-centred. We cannot speak of Christ as the man for others without speaking of him as the man who came from God and who lived for God.

This is a very practical truth. For on it depends the relevance of the Christian witness in the world. Let me illustrate this by referring to one of the most important problems on our agenda.

We are all deeply concerned over the problem of international social justice with its different aspects of the increasing danger of famine-conditions in large parts of the world, of the slow pace of development and of the growing tension between the affluent nations and those which live in conditions of poverty. We are profoundly disturbed by the fact that the attempts to deal with this most acute human problem are quite inadequate, so that, as Dr Prebitsch has said, the decade of development has become the decade of frustration over development. It is not that we do not know what should be done. The experts, including several who have participated in our World Conference on Church and Society and its follow-up meetings, have worked out specific plans which would go a very long way in meeting the need. But these plans are not being carried out. Why not? Because they require that much larger amounts be made available for this purpose and that much closer collaboration be achieved between all the nations concerned. And the governments are at present not able to promise more aid and to enter into more far-reaching agreements because there is no sufficiently strong and clear public opinion which would back them up in such a course of action. For public opinion in the West is today rather tired of the issues of development. There seem to be so many urgent tasks in our immediate environment. And the arguments used to "sell" development seem to have lost their force. The economic argument that development is good for the growth of trade is not very convincing when the Western world is so obviously able to make tremendous progress on the basis of its own inherent strength. The political argument that we cannot afford to let the tension between the rich and the poor parts of the world grow to the point of explosion carries little weight when a few great powers have the means to dominate the international political situation. And so we seem to be condemned to let the situation drift, and hand to our children a world in which there will be famine and despair and as an inevitable result even more violence than we have already known in our time.

What can the churches do about this? They can adopt resolutions and reports. But will that make much difference? The crisis is a crisis of motivation, of fundamental attitudes. The deep trouble lies underneath the political and economic level. The root of the matter is that at a time when history requires that humanity should live as a coherent responsible society men still refuse to accept responsibility for their fellow-beings.

Now we can, of course, seek to awaken a sense of solidarity with and sympathy for the needy. We do so with some success. And we must go on doing this. But that is not the radical operation which is needed. That does not

lead to a changing of the structures of world-economy; that does not lead to a full acceptance of responsibility, so that the economically-weak in one part of the world are as a matter of course assisted by the economically-strong in other parts of the world, just as this happens in our modern welfare-states. No, what is needed is nothing less than a new conception of humanity.

New in relation to our present situation, not new in an absolute sense, for as we look all over the place for the vision of humanity which we need, we are like the explorer who sought a new country and discovered his own country. For it is in our Holy Scriptures that the unity of mankind is proclaimed in the most definite manner.

The churches have not taken that proclamation seriously enough. They are largely responsible for the false impression that Christians are advocates of the Church and leave the advocacy of humanity to the philosophers, the humanists, the Marxists. But the fact is that the vision of the oneness of humanity is an original and essential part of the biblical revelation. Centuries before Alexander the Great's *Oikoumene* began to give Mediterranean man an idea of a wider human family, Israel had already recorded its insight that all men are made in the image of God, that they share a common task: to have dominion over the earth, that all were together included in the covenant of God's patience, made with Noah; that all are to be blessed in Abraham. And the Second Isaiah had already prophesied in one of his songs concerning the Servant of Jahveh that he would be "a covenant of humanity" and a light to the nations. (For it seems clear that in Isaiah 42:6 the word *am* really means "humanity.") This prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He is the manifestation of God's love for the whole of mankind. He dies for all and inaugurates the new humanity as the second Adam. When it is said that God makes all things new this means above all that through Christ God re-creates humanity as a family united under his reign. Mankind is one, not in itself, not because of its own merits or qualities. Mankind is one as the object of God's love and saving action. Mankind is one because of its common calling. The vertical dimension of its unity determines the horizontal dimension.

So Christians have more reason than anyone else to be advocates of humanity. They are not humanitarians in the sentimental sense that it is nice to be nice to other people. They are not humanists in the aristocratic sense that learning and culture constitute a bond between the privileged few of all nations. They are on the side of all humanity because God is on that side and his Son died for it. So they do not get so easily discouraged when the service of mankind proves to be a much tougher task than was anticipated. They do not say: We will let you have economic

justice if you fulfil my conditions. For it is their very *raison d'être* as followers of Christ to ensure that his suffering brothers receive what they need.

It seems to me that no amount of resolution-making and moralising can help us in our present predicament if we do not first recover in theology, in our teaching, and in our preaching the clear biblical doctrine of the unity of mankind and so give our churches the strong foundation for a new approach to the whole question of world economic justice and to a better and more convincing motivation for development aid. It must become clear that church members who deny in fact their responsibility for the needy in any part of the world are just as much guilty of heresy as those who deny this or that article of the faith. The unity of mankind is not a fine ideal in the clouds; it is part and parcel of God's own revelation. Here if anywhere the vertical, God-given, dimension is essential for any action on the horizontal, inter-human plane.

2. The Ecumenical Movement and the Churches' Need for Each Other

It is not difficult to understand why the question is raised whether the ecumenical movement should be so largely in the hands of the churches. Churches stand not only for the great common Christian tradition, but also for the many separate and historically conditioned traditions, not all of which have theological dignity. From a purely sociological standpoint churches must be classified as institutions which offer the most tenacious resistance to attempts at reformation and renewal. How then can an ecumenical movement which seeks to speak to the condition of our rapidly changing society and which would proclaim the need of renewal in all spheres of life lean so heavily on the churches? Should we not reverse the direction which the ecumenical movement took in the 1930's, give up the struggle to mobilize the churches for their new common tasks and follow the exhortations of the prophets of the "post-ecumenical" era in order to concentrate our attention exclusively on the urgent tasks in the world without wasting time on efforts to renew the Churches?

I feel the force of this question. In a sense we have asked for this reaction. For we have in all our churches and in the World Council talked so much about renewal and about the true mission of the Church, but we have made so little real progress toward the realization of that renewal and the true accomplishment of that mission, that the reaction is inevitable. Was it then a mistake to form a World Council of Churches and so to give the churches a central place in the ecumenical movement? I am convinced that it was not a mistake and that the 1937 decision holds good in

1968. In the ecumenical movement there has always been an important place for movements which are not dependent on the churches. They have pioneered; they must continue to challenge and stimulate us. But an ecumenical movement which would not be supported and carried by the churches would become a castle in the air. It would not be a movement representing the faith in the incarnation. It would deny one of the basic discoveries of ecumenical history that the *una Sancta* is not a beautiful ideal, but a God-given reality which demands concrete manifestation. It would not be more truly involved in the decisive spiritual, cultural, social battles of our time. It would be less, not more, concerned with the real world of human history. In order to act in society Christians must have identity with recognizable structures of common life. If the world, as Stockholm said, is too strong for a divided Church, it is surely too strong for Christians who do not seek to live as a people with a peculiar calling and thus fail to incarnate the mandate which they have received from their Lord. We do not have a chance to make a real impact on the great decisions which mankind has to take in the field of international economic justice, of peace and war, and so many other fields unless we use the tremendous spiritual potentiality still largely hidden in the Christian churches.

But it must be added immediately that the churches also need the ecumenical movement. For it is largely through that movement that the pressure for true renewal is exercised. God knows that they need that pressure. The Amsterdam Assembly spoke of the mutual correction which the churches are meant to receive from each other. We may gratefully say that in the course of the last twenty years there have been signs that this process of correction in which the World Council can play a decisive role, is actually in operation. The gifts of the Spirit are being shared. East and West, younger and older churches, and since Vatican II the Roman Catholic Church and the other churches receive gifts from each other "for the upbuilding of the body." But still it is only a small beginning. At the present moment we need especially a far more intensive dialogue between the churches of the Eastern Orthodox and those of the Western tradition—a dialogue which requires much imagination and patience on both sides, but which can lead to a great enrichment and deepening of the ecumenical movement. If we really lived according to the pattern of I Corinthians 12, if we really had a common market for the *charismata*, we would not need to worry about lack of new life in our churches. The time has come for the churches to open their eyes and discover the unspeakable gift which God offers them in the new opportunities for living together as members of the one body which receives the many gifts from the one Spirit.

3. Church Unity Is Important

It is natural that many inside and outside the churches wonder whether we, in the ecumenical movement, do not attach an exaggerated importance to the question of church unity. Some have no interest in that question because they consider that the differences between the churches are disappearing anyway. They find Christians in other churches with whom they feel closer kinship than with many in their own church. Others feel that church unity might aggravate the institutionalist tendencies in church life and create even less flexible structures than we have today. I believe that we must hold on to the original conviction of the ecumenical movement, that it belongs to the very nature of the people of God to live as one reconciled and therefore united family, and that it belongs to its witness to present to the world the image of a new humanity which knows no walls of separation within its own life. Even the best cooperation and the most intensive dialogue are no substitutes for full fellowship in Christ.

But I wonder at the same time whether it is not largely our own fault that so many conceive of unity in terms of uniformity and centralization and are therefore afraid of it. Should we not have learned after these decades of common life in the ecumenical movement that the Holy Spirit has used very many different forms of church order for his work of inspiration, conversion and prophesy? And have we given sufficient attention to the indisputable fact that the earliest Church knew several quite distinct types of church order? My point is simply that there seems to be no really urgent reason to identify unity with acceptance of one and the same church order. Do we not discover in our increasingly pluralistic cultural situation that what is good for one continent or region is not necessarily good for another? And must we not draw the conclusion that there can be real fellowship in faith and in sacrament even when structures differ?

In any case it remains a central part of the mandate of the ecumenical movement to maintain, as New Delhi put it, that unity is both God's will and his gift to the Church; that it must be made visible in each place and that the faithful in each place must be united with the whole Christian fellowship in all places and all ages. I hope that Uppsala will not merely confirm this insight, but develop its implications so clearly that all churches may be encouraged to make a much greater effort for the promotion of true unity.

11. M.M. Thomas, "Search for Wholeness and Unity," WCC Central Committee, 1973

A pioneer in the ecumenical movement in Asia, Thomas was moderator of the WCC's central committee from 1968 to 1975. This address shows his extraordinary ability to synthesize various strands of the movement. • Towards a Theology of Contemporary Ecumenism, Madras, CLS, Geneva, WCC, 1978, pp. 257-65.

Commitment to Wholeness

... Before the formation of the World Council of Churches in 1948, the churches were coming together in separately organised movements to express respectively their common concern for unity, witness and service; the fellowship of the World Council represented a coming together of these streams into one integrated movement. By New Delhi '61, the organisational integration was over, the real revolution that took place within the ecumenical movement in the sixties, as I understand it, was the beginning of an integration at spiritual and theological depth of those traditionally separate concerns. They have interpenetrated each other so much that Church unity, world mission and the struggle for social justice and world community are now seen as impossible to deal with in isolation from each other. . . .

This must be disturbing to all groups which have been used to treating unity, evangelism and social justice in isolation from each other; and there is indeed "a conservative backlash," with staunch advocates of the classical Faith and Order movement challenging its linkage with the unity of mankind, conservative evangelicals getting nervous about including social liberation and humanization in the gospel of salvation in Christ and demanding a preoccupation with numerical church growth that ignores church unity and maturity, and—thirdly,—Christian ideologists of people's liberation opposed to setting social ethics in the context of the gospel of forgiveness at the Cross and of the eschatological Kingdom and to any priority at all being given to the Church. When you have a "conservative" reaction from three such mutually exclusive fronts, the ecumenical boat really faces rough seas. . . .

I think the situation calls for a radical exploration of a theology of ecumenical fellowship which can affirm that in this integration of the three dimensions we are not changing our original course but only bringing it to its true fulfilment. As Visser 't Hooft points out, in its concept it is

nothing new, for even as early as Stockholm 1925. Söderblom emphasized the dimension of “ecumenical fellowship realized in common service to the world.” The Message from the Amsterdam Assembly already spoke of the obligation of the churches “to stand by the outcaste, the prisoner and the refugee.” The Evanston section on Evangelism said, “without the Gospel, the world is without sense, but without the world the Gospel is without reality.” Dag Hammarskjöld, in his speech at Evanston, specifically described the Cross of Jesus Christ, “the centre of the world’s history where all men and all nations without exception stand revealed as enemies of God, and yet where all men stand revealed as beloved of God, precious in God’s sight,” not only as the “unique fact on which the Christian churches base their hope” but also as “that element in their lives which enables them to stretch out their hands to people of other creeds in the feeling of universal brotherhood which we hope one day to see reflected in a world truly united.”⁶ As Nikos Nissiotis has written, the important point is to affirm the discontinuity within the continuity which exists “between the Word of God, the humanity of Jesus and the humanity of the human race as a whole,” and to recognize that the Gospel exists for the world and to be communicated to it only as “it is given by the Spirit as a reality to a distinctive community”⁷ At Utrecht, Jürgen Moltmann said, “It is Christ who sends his Church and she has him behind her in Word, Sacraments and Brotherhood. But Christ also awaits his Church among the starving, the captive, and the humiliated of this world.”⁸ The relation between Christ’s presence in the Church, his sending of the Church and his awaiting in the poor of the world needs to be clarified much more in the days to come.

Incidentally, in connection with the relation between the ethics of liberation and the fellowship in Christ between the oppressed and the oppressor, discussed at Utrecht, Hendrik Berkhof reports⁹ that he lost his belief in a fellowship in Christ between the oppressors and the oppressed after he was told first hand by the representatives of the oppressed at Utrecht that it was impossible. And he gives their argument thus:

There are different fields of experience. Within the pattern of the oppressor-oppressed relation there is no experience of fellowship. But there is a fellowship in Christ which is beyond this experience. It is a given participation in God’s love towards sinful men. It

embraces both the oppressors and the oppressed. However, for the time being this reality stands apart from the tensions and oppositions in which we are involved. It is an invisible reality, not a matter of experience but of hope. In its power we continue our dialogue and conflict. It enables us to say hard truths to one another without writing one another off.

A brief comment on this is in place. I do not know whether I (and other members of the Central Committee or of the staff from the Third World) belong to the oppressor group or the oppressed group. In India, where 40% of the people live below the starvation level, I belong to the group which must be considered as sustaining the oppressive system, but in the world economic system I belong to a poor nation. I find myself an oppressor in some roles and an oppressed in others; most often I feel myself as an oppressor. So the classification here is a little too neat. The truth is that we are all more or less alienated from the poor and the oppressed of the world, and are seeking together to overcome our alienation by being with Christ in his solidarity with them.

But I am much more concerned about the rigid compartmentalization of the different fields of experience which considers the politics of liberation as following totally the laws of the Order of Necessity, with the Order of Christ relegated to a realm “beyond” and totally “apart” from it “for the time being.” To my mind this after-politics Christ is only slightly different from after-death heaven. No doubt Necessity, which is the momentum of accumulated sins of our collective past embodied in structures of collective life, is most real and makes conflict inevitable; and there are situations and times when sinful necessities are so much in control that the fellowship in Christ can be affirmed only in darkness, as Miguez Bonino said at Utrecht.¹⁰ But divine forgiveness, which enables the oppressed and oppressor to repent and enter into a fellowship of mutual forgiveness and trust, should be able to bring from “beyond” a new element breaking the reign of Necessity and transforming it at least to some extent. The relation between Necessity and Grace is more dialectical than the picture painted by the report on Utrecht by Berkhof. In fact, now that the Christian imperative of transforming established power-structures in societies and between societies (and even in the churches and in inter-church relations according to the Bangkok Conference) in favour of the poor, the oppressed and the weaker sections of people has been accepted by the WCC this question of the role of the fellowship in Christ within the necessities of power-politics has become a very crucial one.

6. August 20, 1954, mimeographed.

7. *What Unity Implies*, Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1969, pp. 15f.

8. *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. XXIV, No. 4, October 1972, p. 436.

9. In *Risk*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 1972, p. 26.

10. *The Ecumenical Review*. Vol. XXIV, No. 4, October 1972, p. 469.

This is highlighted for this Committee by the very illuminating report *Violence, Non-violence and the Struggle for Social Justice*¹¹ which will be presented to us later for our serious consideration. It is the conclusion of a study authorized by the Addis Ababa Central Committee in pursuance of the Martin Luther King resolution of the Uppsala Assembly. We can grapple with the issue presented in that report only if we consider politics itself as an area of infinite possibilities for spiritual renewal—if also of spiritual degradation. If the oppressor and the oppressed confront each other as a self-contained system of collective power versus a self-righteous movement of collective revolt, politics remains an area of inevitable war and violence. But if they see themselves—to use Metropolitan Anthony Bloom's phraseology—as “locked together in a single tragedy,” and are prepared therefore to respond together in repentance to the offer of Divine Forgiveness and Fellowship in Christ, “it breaks through the awful logic of human power—the endless chain of wrong, retribution and new wrong—and transmutes it, despite itself,”¹² giving events a new direction. Not that, in a world of collective decisions and the impersonality of structural violence often sanctioned by religion, power-politics can ever be eliminated from the struggle for social fellowship in justice, but it can be made less violent, or even non-violent, depending upon, among other factors, the prophetic and reconciling ministries of the Church in the situation.

Chaos or Complementarity?

The second source of the theological crisis we face as a fellowship of churches arises from the variety of cultural and ideological milieux in which we live in our different situations. One of the younger advisers at Utrecht, Frederike Schulz of the D.D.R., found the Utrecht attempt to define the concept of Christian fellowship a complete failure. She writes: “We come from different traditions and have different criteria. Therefore it is unlikely that we shall be able to agree on what constitutes the distinctive characteristics of Christian fellowship. Obviously we are all agreed in theory that we confess Jesus Christ as Lord, but in speaking of Jesus Christ we do not all mean the same thing.” The differences are not merely various aspects of the same thing, but “entirely different things with entirely different contents.”¹³ She is thinking of the meaning of the confession of Christ expressed in practical action. But the same may be true of theological, liturgical and artistic expressions of the mean-

ing of the confession of Christ in different cultural and ideological milieux. If this is the case, ours is no longer a unity in diversity but a new disunity.

In fact, no less a keen scientific student of religions than Wilfred Cantwell Smith of Harvard, speaking largely with the western situation in mind, has said that there is a total collapse of both metaphysics and philosophical and biblical theology, leading to “so much diversity and clash, so much chaos in the Christian Church today that the old ideal of a unified or systematic Christian truth has gone; for this the ecumenical movement is too late.” He predicts that “Christianity as a coherent historical structure” will disintegrate, shattering “all orthodoxy and, therefore, all heresy” and leaving only communities of personal Christian faith with an “open variety of optional alternatives.”¹⁴ Add to this the legitimate struggle of churches in the non-western world to express their Christian identity in terms of their own cultural identities closely related to different religions and secular ideologies, and we seem to be faced with a crisis of faith itself, or at least of our unity in a world-wide fellowship.

Speaking of Black Theology, the Bangkok Conference recognized how difficult it is to universalize living contextual theologies. It said, “Proper theology includes reflection on the experience of the Christian community in a particular place, at a particular time. Thus it will necessarily be a contextual theology; it will be a relevant and living theology which refuses to be easily universalized because it speaks to and out of a particular situation.”¹⁵ The Louvain '71 meeting of Faith and Order was exercised about this, within strict limits, in its discussion on “Unity and Plurality” and “the Local Church and the Universal Church” but much more daringly in the launching of the programme of reflection on the content of the Gospel message aiming to enable us together to give a coherent account of “the hope that is in us.” Lukas Vischer, in asking for authorization of the programme, was conscious that we are probably living in “a period when we have to stress the diversity of possible forms of belief,” which perhaps makes an agreed statement of faith impossible. But “the question of truth in the Church” cannot be evaded and needs clarification; it is necessary to know “how the one hope is related to the diverse forms in which it is expressed.”¹⁶

This is well stated, and the effort is worth undertaking, even if it fails to produce an agreed coherent statement. For many, reckoning with the lack of philosophical categories

11. See *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. XXV, No. 4, October, 1973.

12. Charles West: *The Power to be Human*, New York: Macmillan, 1971.

13. *Risk*, Vol. 8, No. 3. 1972, p. 27.

14. *Questions of Religious Truth*, London: Victor Gollancz, 1967, pp. 34f.

15. *International Review of Mission*, Vol. LXII, No. 246, pp. 183f.

16. *Faith and Order-Louvain 1971*, Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1971, p. 210.

commonly accepted all round as in the early centuries, the only statement we can make is in biblical categories; many feel that not logical coherence but existential relevance is the criterion of Truth, or that Truth is to be expressed primarily not in statements but in non-verbal symbols and worship, or in evangelistic and political action, or lived in community. There is a great deal of validity in these arguments and in the implied struggle of the ecumenical movement to express the criterion of Truth in the Church and for the world in various living forms other than the theological. But this does not invalidate the common effort to state our common faith. Of course in this effort there is need to take full account of the thinking of theologians in Asia, Africa and Latin America who are seeking ways of confessing the faith in indigenous terms. . . .

12. Philip Potter, Report of the General Secretary, Sixth Assembly of the WCC, Vancouver, 1983

A Methodist minister from the West Indies, Potter gained prominence as an ecumenical youth leader and then as director of the WCC's work on mission and evangelism. He served as the Council's third general secretary from 1972-84, where his gifts as a biblical scholar were widely appreciated. • Gathered for Life: Official Report, Sixth Assembly, World Council of Churches, ed. David Gill, Geneva, WCC, and Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 1983, pp. 194-208.

. . . There is a profound sense in which the Church is by its very nature always in the wilderness on its pilgrim way to the City of God or, as the Letter to the Hebrews puts it, to the world (*oikoumene*) to come (2:5). The Church is the people of God called and consecrated through the Exodus in the death and resurrection of Christ.

It is called to participate in the sufferings of Christ for the salvation of our broken, divided world. At the beginning of the Church's history it was seen as a community of people scattered all over the Roman Empire, having no legal or social status, and subject to harassment, persecution and death. It was to such diaspora churches that the First Letter of Peter was addressed. We have been drawing from that Letter one of the "Images of Life" in our

Bible studies in preparation for this Assembly—the image of "The House made of Living Stones" which is intended to be an image of the Church. I invite you to meditate on what it means to be "the house of living stones" in a hostile world which nevertheless yearns to be such a house, a living community of sharing in justice and peace. This biblical meditation should help us to reflect on what we have learned during these thirty-five years of the existence of the World Council of Churches about the nature and calling of the churches and about the Council as a fellowship of churches.

Peter exhorts the diaspora churches:

Come to him, to that living stone, rejected by people, but in God's sight chosen and precious: and like living stones be yourselves constantly built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Pet. 2:4-5)

Christ is God's delegated and precious living stone. The Psalmist declared, "the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone" (118:22); so Christ, rejected and crucified, is now the risen, life-giving Lord. That is the foundation of our faith and the basis of the World Council of Churches.

Actually, according to the Gospels, it was Jesus himself who drew attention to this Psalm, which is the last of a group of Psalms called *Hallel* (Praise) and sung during and after the great feasts at Jerusalem (Pss. 111-118). Ps. 118 was sung after the Passover—the meal which served as the binding force of the people of Israel on the eve of the Exodus. Jesus quoted this verse of Psalm 118 in his controversy with the religious authorities who plotted his death (Mark 12:1-12), on the eve of what Luke called his exodus (Luke 9:31). He spoke to his disciples of being rejected and killed and of rising again after three days (Mark 8:31). In recalling his experience with Jesus and what he learned from it, Peter is saying to the diaspora churches in Asia Minor, as he says to us today, that confessing Christ means entering into his sufferings and sharing his risen life. He invites them and us to keep on coming day after day to Christ the living stone, so that we may ourselves become living stones, share his life and continue his ministry of suffering for humankind in joyful hope.

But becoming living stones means that believers and communities of believers do not remain isolated, alone, petrified, dead. They are made alive and are being built into a house, an *oikos* which is enlivened by the Spirit. Christ is the cornerstone, and the Spirit enables those who come to Christ to be built into his house.

A Living House

The word “house” was rich in meaning for the peoples of the ancient Middle East. It signified community, nation, culture, way of life, structure as well as environment. Abraham was called by God out of his father’s *bayith*, or *oikos*—that is, out of his nation and culture—to form a new *oikos*, a house based on faith in and obedience to God (Gen. 12:2; 15:6; 17:12-13). This new house, this new people of God found themselves swallowed up into “the house of bondage” in Egypt. They were delivered from Pharaoh (a word which comes from the Egyptian *per-aa*, the Great House) through the Exodus, and were made “the house of Israel.” That is to say, they were given a way of life based on their deliverance from Egypt and directed by the liberating word of the Covenant (Ex. 19-23). As a means of keeping the house of Israel fully and continuously conscious of the nature of their existence and task there was established the house of God, the place of worship, the temple, where people offered their life and their labour to God and received God’s renewing grace.

The drama of Israel was that again and again they lost their loyalty to the founder of the house and accommodated themselves to the ethical and spiritual attitudes of the surrounding cultures or *oikoi*. They also failed to live as a household according to the covenant, to share a common life in truth, justice and peace. Hence the prophets again and again challenged them, as for example, Jeremiah when he told them:

Do not trust in these deceiving words: “This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.” For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly execute justice one with another, if you do not oppress the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers for ever. . . Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, says the Lord. (Jer. 7:4-7, 11)

For Jeremiah, the people of God, the house of Israel, are founded on certain qualities and obligations: justice and mercy, and utter loyalty to God, the Lord of the house. These are based on the Torah, the Law, the words of the Covenant. A house is truly built on those qualities which enable its inhabitants to live together in community and in common wellbeing, *shalom*. Where these qualities are lacking, the house cannot stand. Institutions and structures acquire a demonic character when people lose that strength of being, that clear integrity and sense of purpose

which enable them to discern, correct and change their situation. There comes a time, therefore, when existing structures have to be destroyed in order that new structures, a new *oikos*, can be built up based on a new covenant and enabling people to be responsible for themselves and for one another before God (Jer. 31:27-34). This is what Jesus meant when he said that the old temple would be destroyed in his crucifixion and that he would rebuild it in three days through his resurrection (John 2:19-21).

Peter affirms that in the crucified and risen Christ this new house has been built and that all who come to him are living stones forming an integral part of the house, sharing a common life and offering their whole life and that of all to God in the Spirit and through Jesus Christ. He goes on to adopt in a new way some of the other ancient images for Israel when he calls believers “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people” (1 Pet. 2:9a). Believers, as living stones, overcome the separations of racism and become the true human race made in the image of God. Both women and men become the priests of the king and ruler of their lives, offering themselves and the world to God through their worship and their witness. Nationalism with all its exclusivist attitudes gives place to a community consecrated to God and his purpose to unite all nations in their diversity into one house. All are the people of God as a sign of God’s plan to unite all peoples into one human family in justice and peace. It is this house which is called to proclaim the wonderful deeds of God who called it out of darkness into his marvellous light (1 Pet. 2:9). This is Peter’s way of confessing the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.”

It is this image and understanding of the living house which has motivated the ecumenical movement. As is well known, the word ecumenical is derived from the Greek word *oikoumene*, meaning the whole inhabited earth. It is a word which came into common use when Alexander the Great was conquering the world of the Middle East and beyond. The intention was that peoples should give up their cultural isolation and participate in a cosmopolitan life through which they would discover their true humanity. That was the *oikoumene*. When the Romans conquered the Hellenists, their rulers were hailed as lords and saviours of the *oikoumene*.

Against the background we can understand how this word was appropriated by the Greek translators of the Old Testament and the writers of the New Testament. In Psalm 24:1 we read: “The earth is the Lord’s and its fullness; the world and those who dwell on it.” Not Caesar, but Yahweh, the one who has been and is present in the world, is the Lord and Saviour of the *oikoumene*, ruling it in truth, justice and peace, and manifesting his purpose through the

covenant people, the house of Israel. God's purpose is that the whole *oikoumene* will recognize him as the true Lord and Saviour. It is through God that true humanity becomes a promise and a reality. In the New Testament we are told, for example, of Paul and his companions preaching at Thessalonica and of their forming a house church. They are accused before the city authorities as "people who have turned the world, the *oikoumene*, upside down . . . and are acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus" (Acts 17:6-7).

The ecumenical movement is, therefore, the means by which the churches which form the house, the *oikos* of God, are seeking so to live and witness before all peoples that the whole *oikoumene* may become the *oikos* of God through the crucified and risen Christ in the power of the life-giving Spirit. The World Council of Churches was formed in 1948 precisely to be a means of enabling this process to take place in the totality of the life and witness of the churches in response to the totality of God's claim on the life of the *oikoumene*. What then have we learned during this ecumenical journey of thirty-five years about the nature and calling of the churches which have committed themselves to the fellowship of the World Council of Churches? . . .

A fellowship of confessing

First, we have been learning to be a fellowship of confessing. In fact, according to its basis, the World Council is "a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

After centuries of separation the churches have been drawn together in a fellowship of confessing communities which live "according to the scriptures." It is through the biblical renewal of the past fifty years that the churches themselves have been heeding the words of Peter: "The time has come for judgment to begin with the house of God" (1 Pet. 4:17). That was the revolutionary discovery of Martin Luther, the 500th anniversary of whose birth we celebrate this year. He brought back to the centre of the life of the Church the sovereignty of God's judging and redeeming word, that it may constantly be reformed in order to become a true house of living stones.

Through the World Council the churches have been constrained to share with one another the ways in which they confess their faith and have, through mutual correction, from time to time become conscious of their own failure to live up to the claims of the gospel. The ecumenical movement is first of all a call to the churches to penitence, a change of heart and mind in the direction of the offer and

demand of Christ, the living stone, and a greater openness to confess together their faith boldly and joyfully in the storm of the world's life. . . .

A fellowship of learning

Secondly, we have gained a fresh understanding of the churches as a fellowship of learning. Of course, this has been a characteristic of the Church from the very beginning. Peter uses a very moving image to describe what happens to those who are baptized—who, as in the early Church on the eve of Easter, put off their old clothes and descend into the waters of baptism and are crucified with Christ and rise from the waters in the risen Christ and put on new clothes. Before he evokes the images of the house of living stones, he writes:

Put off all malice and deceit, and insincerity and jealousy and recrimination of every kind. Like newborn babies, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation: for you have tasted that the Lord is good. (2:1-3)

The Christian is like a newborn baby who eagerly sucks at its mother's warm breast to receive the food which will enable it to grow and be a person in its own right. Learning is that intimate process of tasting the goodness of God, what God has done and wills to be done that the world may become truly a home (*oikos*). Peter quotes Psalm 34 which describes how we learn the goodness of God in the travail of our existence with others in the world.

Learning in the Bible is a process by which people relate to God and God's way of truth, righteousness and peace, that they may in obedience practise that way in relation to each other and extending to the nations. Moses declares:

The Lord said to me: "Gather the people to me, that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to reverence me all the days that they live upon the earth and that they may teach their children." . . . And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and ordinances, that you might do them in the land which you are going over to possess. (Deut. 4:10, 14)

And the prophet Isaiah prays to God:

My soul yearns in the night, my spirit within me earnestly seeks thee. For when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants learn righteousness. (Isa. 26:9)

In these and many other passages in the Old and New Testaments we discern that learning does not simply mean acquiring knowledge or skills, or being intellectually equipped, or just memorizing some catechism of faith. Rather it means so entering with our whole being and with all the people into a relationship with God through God's self-revelation, that our horizons are widened and our wills are strengthened to be right with God and with one another in word and deed. Isaiah indicates clearly the global motivation of learning; he says that when believers yearn for God, like the baby at its mother's breast, this is no individual or parochial matter. They do so as those who dwell in the *oikoumene* and whose life should be governed by righteousness—right relations with God and others. Learning involves a global consciousness of God's will and way. This is a concept which is incredibly difficult to communicate through present mass media and educational structures and programmes. . . .

A fellowship of participation

Thirdly, we have become acutely aware that the churches should be a fellowship of participation. In fact, in New Testament Greek, *koinonia* was the word for "fellowship" and "participation"; it meant a community which is bound together in mutual support, service and sharing. Peter's image of the house of living stones also points to this *koinonia*. He speaks of "a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (2:5), and later of "a royal priesthood" (2:9).

One of the great merits of the Reformation was the discovery, based on the very word of Peter, that everyone—woman and man alike—is a priest before God, offering the life of the world to God and receiving his or her life through the eucharistic sacrifice of Christ for the life of the world. But it is one of the curiosities of our history as churches that this conviction that we are a holy, consecrated priesthood, a priesthood which owes its allegiance to the king and ruler of our lives, has degenerated into a kind of individualistic, pietistic religion. This has, on the one hand, destroyed a sense of our mutual accountability and our common bond as the house of living stones. On the other hand, it has exposed the churches to various forms of hierarchical and institutional exclusiveness, with a concentration of power in bureaucratic ways which are alien to all that God has ordained and promised to the ancient people of Israel—that all the earth was God's and that they should be a kingdom of priests (Ex. 19:6). God willed that people should act as priests of the king and ruler of the earth sustaining and caring for the earth as God cares for them. Instead we have followed the ways of the rulers of the earth and created stratified and petrified structures of power in

the churches, thus depriving us of our true priesthood to the world and of being living, dynamic stones fitted into a growing habitable house for all.

This has been a persistent concern of the ecumenical movement. We have reminded each other that the Church is, as Peter affirmed, the people, *laos*, of God, and not principally the ordained ministry which, though indispensable, constitutes less than 1% of the house of living stones. We have endeavoured to encourage the churches to recognize that young people are not the church of tomorrow but of today. More insistently in recent years we have painfully tried to come to terms with the fact that the house of living stones is a community of women and men fulfilling a common ministry of witness and service to the world. We recall that the first account we have of the Lord's Supper, what we call holy communion, is given by Paul when he rebukes the rich, upper-class members of the church in Corinth for excluding the poorer and socially despised members (1 Cor. 11:17-34). We are also learning to recognize the right and privilege of the disabled to participate as living members of the body of Christ.

Our communion in the body and blood of Christ, our spiritual sacrifices, the offering of the gift of the spirit we have received demand that we exorcise the heresies of magisterial authority and power in the Church and become a true priesthood of all believers among whom the gifts and functions are not imposed but mutually accepted, whether ordained or lay. At the heart of our divisions as churches is this disparity and concentration of power in the life of the churches, which weakens our credibility in a world which is full of power-grabbing and individualism. The challenge to the churches and to the Council is, therefore, how far we are willing to be obedient to the convictions of our faith that we really become a priesthood of the whole house of living stones, dedicated to God and God's kingly rule, sharing God's gifts as we offer them to the world. That is what is involved in being a fellowship of participation exercising, in love, our priestly task by being with and among the people.

A fellowship of sharing

Fourthly, we have experienced the blessing of the churches being a fellowship of sharing. Since the end of World War II, while the World Council of Churches was still in process of formation, churches have shown a clear will to share their resources as a demonstration of being a house of living stones, crossing the barriers of division caused by war and political conflicts, and meeting human need wherever it arose and with no other motive than caring love. We are now in a difficult process of developing, within the Council itself, a means by which we can show the inter-related

character of our sharing of material, technical and above all spiritual resources.

Peter develops his image of the house of living stones by urging the diaspora churches:

Above all hold unflinching your love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins. Practise hospitality ungrudgingly to one another. As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace. (1 Pet. 4:8-10)

God's grace, his self-giving love, has been manifest in Christ, he who gave his body and blood for us and for the world. We share his grace through his gifts, *charismata*, which are for the good functioning of the house. That is why we are called stewards, *oikon omoi*, "economists" whose basic understanding of policy is love. Peter also reminds us that Christ's bearing of our sins in his body means that we might die to our selfish rebellion from God and become "alive to righteousness, justice" (2:24), a term which for Peter who was brought up in the Hebrew tongue meant right relations with God and therefore with one another—the relationship of sharing the life which God has given us.

It has become fashionable to accuse the World Council and some churches of being too involved in social and economic concerns. This very accusation raises the question of how the churches themselves relate to one another. There is far too little real sharing within and between the churches, not only of material and technical resources which so much dominates our thinking, but of all the gifts of grace which we have received. We have learned in the ecumenical movement that our disunity as churches is in large measure due to our incapacity to practise this genuine sharing of gifts. We tend too much to hang on to the inherited forms of power and prestige and to the petrifying habit of self-sufficiency or of obsequious begging.

There is another element in this fellowship of sharing. Within and around the churches are Christian groups or communities which are seeking to use the gifts of the Spirit in ways which are renewing and enriching for all, often to the point of suffering and even death. But the gifts of these groups are not well shared among themselves and with the churches in each country. The churches are sometimes very aloof from these groups, and the groups are equally aloof from the churches' institutional authorities. This is a particularly acute issue for the World Council, because many of its programmes are carried out with the active groups which dare to use their gifts for the life of the world in personal, costly ways. This has often exacerbated the relations between the churches and the Council. How do we get out of this impasse? How can we together develop a fellowship

of sharing, remembering that fellowship and sharing are in fact one reality, *koinonia*, the communion in the body of Christ for the life of the world? This is one of the critical issues to which I hope this Assembly will address itself.

A fellowship of healing

Fifthly, we have been learning that the churches are called to be a fellowship of healing. The Council and the churches have been greatly helped to understand this through a series of consultations around the world on "Health, Healing and Wholeness." The operative understanding of health now emerging is that it is "a dynamic state of wellbeing of the individual and of society; of physical, mental, spiritual, economic, political and social wellbeing; of being in harmony with each other, with the material environment and with God." It is this holistic approach to health which has caught our attention, and which is demonstrated in the healing ministry of Jesus.

Scientists have discovered that matter, and especially the body, is not a mechanistic phenomenon. Therefore, when any part of the mechanism is not functioning properly it cannot be treated in isolation. The body is indeed an organism in which both body and mind, our social and natural environment play a decisive role. We have to be enabled to participate in the process of understanding the interconnectedness of the house of our bodies in terms of the house of our environment. We must be permitted to share in the process of healing, through mobilizing the stronger elements to support the weaker. Above all, our total state of being in living fellowship with God is essential for health, even if the body dies. There is a healthy and an unhealthy way of dying.

This view of health challenges the separations we have created by our present ways of looking at the world and of operating, whether in church or society. We divide the soul from the body, the mind from matter, rational thought from feeling. These dualisms have played havoc with our world, but even more in the churches which have developed these dualisms in systems of dogmas, ethical norms, and attitudes towards persons and society which are quite alien to our biblical and especially Christian heritage. Pursuing his image of the house of living stones, Peter refers to Isaiah 53, saying that it was by the wounds of Christ's whole self-offering that we are healed (2:24). In this way he calls us to live for righteousness, justice, being in right relations with God and with one another and, we must add, with our environment.

The image of the house of living stones is relevant here, because it calls for an understanding of our life as churches in which the house is made up of the living stones being fitted together and functioning as a whole beyond

the separateness which marks our existence. The only separateness which our faith entertains is that separateness or holiness which means our total devotion and orientation to the triune God, whose inner being and manifestation as Father, Son and Holy Spirit is that of mutual exchange, co-inherence within the divine life. It is this co-inherence in our life together which makes for wholeness and peace, that integrated wellbeing, when even death is swallowed up into victory.

There is a great need in this area for the churches and the Council to rethink their theological and ethical systems and their style of life, and to overcome their indifference to the natural environment. The image of the house of living stones includes the whole *oikoumene*, the whole cosmos in which people and all living things have their being.

A fellowship of reconciliation

Sixthly, we have become deeply mindful of our calling as churches and as a Council to be a fellowship of reconciliation. We have, indeed, been entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18). This is particularly urgent at a time of fierce confrontation, the hurling of anathemas between nations and peoples, especially the powerful ones, and the helpless drift to the apocalyptic annihilation of the *oikoumene*. As Peter reminds us, the churches are diaspora communities, barely tolerated minorities, ignored, reviled or persecuted if they take a stand for the way of reconciliation. When, therefore, Peter calls these scattered communities to become a house of living stones, and to assume the sufferings of Christ for the world, he is calling for a courageous confrontation with the forces of evil and destruction in the world.

Peter does not shirk the fact that reconciliation is not possible without bringing out, rather than pushing under the table, the things which are contrary to God's purpose for his creation. In his image of the stone, he also quotes from Isaiah 8:14-15. It is instructive to quote the full passage:

The Lord said: "Do not call conspiracy all that this people call conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. But the Lord of hosts, him you shall regard as holy; let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he will become a sanctuary, and a stone of offence, and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many shall stumble thereon; they shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken."

Isaiah warns the house of Israel that they should not be seduced by the power games that were going on in the

surrounding nations, nor should they make alliances, or for fear be submissive to one side of the conflicts or another. They should expose the conflicts between the powers as denials of the covenant purpose of God, because the outcome of such conflicts is that all will be broken on the rock of offence to God's will and purpose. . . .

A fellowship of unity

Seventhly, we have tried to be attentive to the prayer of our Lord that we should be a fellowship of unity. I have mentioned this central calling and task of the ecumenical movement and of the churches at this point, because many are all too prone to say that the World Council is indifferent to our primary task of becoming what we are in the work of God in Christ, one house of living stones offering the eucharistic sacrifice as one people who are destined to offer the sacrifice of their lives for the unity of the *oikoumene*. On the contrary, I have mentioned this essential calling of the churches here precisely because all that has been said before is about the confession of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

We can claim notable advances in the way towards unity, especially during these thirty-five years. We started timidly and with much mutual suspicion by covenanting to stay together. We tried to describe as openly and honestly as possible to each other the major doctrinal blocks to unity. We moved from there to consider our given unity in the undivided Christ whose crucified and risen life we share, and pledged to let this Christ do his work among us as we seek to be obedient to him. We have since expressed the goal of unity in each place and in all places and all ages in one eucharistic fellowship expressed in worship and in common life in Christ that the world may believe. We have gone further and engaged in bilateral and multilateral discussions between the different communions, and the Council has assisted in bringing these together into a forum of assessing where we are and where we are going. We see the way forward in working for conciliar fellowship, expressed in various ways, however feebly, not least in the World Council. And we have now asked the churches to facilitate a process by which the congregations can be involved in receiving convergent statements on baptism, eucharist and ministry.

The reactions so far received on this long march towards unity are mixed. But they certainly are marked by the fact that the churches have not yet sufficiently advanced in being a fellowship of confessing, of learning, of sharing, of healing, of participation and of reconciliation to overcome the stumbling blocks which have deeply divided them. Unity consists in the living stones being constantly built into the house of the living God and not

in rearrangements within static structures. It is an inter-related process in which the diaspora churches are engaged.

I hope that therefore all that we say and decide during this Assembly will be judged by whether it promotes the unity of God's people as the house of living stones and as a sign and sacrament of God's design to unite all peoples as the *oikoumene* under the loving rule of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

A fellowship of expectancy

Finally, we have learned afresh during these years that the churches are a fellowship of expectancy. Their existence is not an end in itself. They point to and are called to be a sign of the kingdom of God. Their constant prayer is: "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The image of the house of living stones is based on an act of celebration:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Pet. 1:3-5)

At this Assembly we shall be overwhelmed with the dangers facing our world. Some may be tempted to adopt an attitude of resignation as though all that is necessary is that we keep the faith and let the world go up in flames, an attitude which often goes along with accommodation with the deathly military policies of the powers. Many will be impatient that we are not doing enough and urgently enough to proclaim the gospel to the world, or to work for peace and justice for all, or to achieve the unity of the churches. We are called to be steadfast in faith, and we will not shrink from speaking and acting boldly in hope and love.

Nevertheless, we can only do this as we celebrate our faith in Christ the living stone and as living stones being fitted together into the house of God. Our worship, our prayers, our sharing of our faith with one another will be central to all we say and do. But, as Peter tells the diaspora churches, our living hope as those born anew through the living and abiding word of God (1:23) and as those who taste that the Lord is good, must make us enter into the sufferings of the world as we share the sufferings of Christ. The way ahead is one of pain and suffering, of persecution and death for many. It is the way of faithful living by the deeds of God, but it is also the way of joy. As Peter says:

Rejoice in so far as you share Christ's suffering, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. (1 Pet. 4:13)

13. Paulos Mar Gregorios, "Human Unity for the Glory of God," 1985

Metropolitan of Delhi of the Orthodox Syrian Church of the East, Gregorios held many significant ecumenical positions, including associate general secretary of the WCC (1962-64), and president of the Council (1983-91). This excerpt is taken from an article on the Basis of the WCC. • The Ecumenical Review, vol. 37, no. 2, 1985, pp. 209-12.

The glory of God and the Triune Name came into the WCC Basis in 1961. The New Delhi Assembly marked the beginning of a new era. The WCC was no longer to be a largely Trans-Atlantic, largely liberal Protestant association of churches. The International Missionary Council had become integrated with the WCC. The IMC represented the conservative and pietistic elements in the Protestant churches. Their full integration into the Council meant strong support for its biblical orientation as well as for the emphasis on personal commitment.

At the same time, a large number of Eastern Orthodox churches also came into the Council membership. The emphasis on worship, e.g. on the glory of the Triune God, was partly in order to satisfy the perceptions of the Orthodox, among whom the concepts of the glory of God and the tri-unity of God played a more central role than in most of the other churches. . . .

The Triune God

In our time, and for ordinary Christians, the Triune nature of the One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, does not seem understandable or relevant. And hence this part of our Basis often becomes reduced to a largely meaningless liturgical or ritual phrase.

There are three aspects of the Triune nature of God that we need to reflect upon:

a) the integral relation between our faith in Christ and our acknowledgment of the Trinity;

b) the importance of God's unity for the unity of the church; and

c) the need to go beyond Christomonism, to an understanding of the Triune God's action in the world, as the action that brings unity to the church, to humanity and to the whole of creation.

a) Incarnation and the Trinity

The trinitarian understanding rises right out of the heart of the Christian faith. As the early church reflected on who this Jesus of Nazareth was, and on the apostolic proclamation that this human person was none other than the eternal Son of God incarnate, difficulties of understanding arose. If Christ is God and he did the will of his Father who is also God, the faith in the One God seems endangered. The only logical possibility is to deny the divinity of Christ, as many rational thinking Christians do today.

To other Christians, to deny the divine Person in Christ is to deny the Incarnation and therefore the heart of the faith of the church. For, if the human person of Jesus Christ is not the second person of the Trinity, where is the faith of the church?

This polarization is already at the centre of the World Council of Churches as an ecumenical fellowship. What the Basis of the WCC affirms many theologians today directly or indirectly deny. They begin with a discussion of the human Christ, ostensibly as a starting point, since the humanity of Christ is evident and accessible to study and observation; while the divine Person in Christ remains, for many people, a matter of speculation, which is what some take faith to be. Christology ends up being a mere discussion of Christ as a human person through whom God becomes transparent to us. Christ himself as a divine person is not so much denied as ignored.

One could almost say that it is the absence of an adequate affirmation of the Trinity that leads to this ignoring of the Godhead of Christ. In the attempt to make theology accord with the requirements of the logic of non-contradiction, the teaching about the Trinity is the first casualty and the divinity of Christ quickly disappears.

The doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation belong together, and have since at least the fourth century been recognized as the basic foundation for the Christian faith. The twin doctrine, at least for the Eastern Orthodox, constitutes a test of any authentic Christian faith: It is the scandal or stumbling block which trips up the unbeliever. And it is a matter for reflection in ecumenical circles whether, by ignoring the doctrine of the Trinity, we slip into an unwitting heretical Christology. The Basis of the WCC was devised to avoid this trap, but when this part of the Basis is taken to be a mere liturgical formula, serious

theological consequences follow, and unbelief can thrive at the heart of the church and in the bosom of the WCC.

b) The Triune God as model and pattern for Christian unity

It should not be deduced from what has been said that the doctrine of the Trinity is a rationally comprehensible one—either within the logic of non-contradiction or within any other logic, including dialectical logic. For the very concept of numbers like one and three can never be capable of grasping the ineffable reality of God. We may develop conceptual formulae like three-in-one, or three *hypostases* in one *ousia*, but they are at best only human verbal constructions to denote something beyond human comprehension or comprehension by anyone but the Infinite One.

These verbal constructions, however, bear witness to an ultimate reality whose true nature will always elude us. And yet they are important insofar as they do impart meaning to life. By affirming that oneness and threeness as well as all manifoldness are in God, we can derive guidance for the kind of unity that we seek to find in the church of Jesus Christ. Uniformity, homogeneity and non-differentiation are not necessary aspects of the unity of the church.

Diversity belongs to the heart of unity. And yet not all diversity—certainly not the diversity of chaos and non-relation. Diversity must be united by a particular kind of relation. In the case of God and in the case of the church, that relation lies in the dialectic of freedom and love in the community of mutual submission and commonality of being and action.

The unity of God is not primarily a structural one, nor an organisational one, though structure and organization can exist within that unity for the sake of community and the commonality of being and action.

God is a community of three persons, linked by commonality of being, purpose and action, united in a mutual love that pours oneself out for the sake of others. It is from the overflow of this mutual love that the creation has come into being, and humanity has appeared on the earth.

There is no analogy in creation that fully explains the Triune being of God. But that unity, which is also the personal unity in love, has to be manifested in a divine human community. That is our common calling as the church. The church, the body of Christ, is to exist on earth, as an expression, however imperfect it may be, of the community of love that God is. This community is characterized not only by mutual love that binds Christians together, but as an outflowing love that pours out the love of God in sacrificial service that reaches out to the whole of humanity and to the whole of creation. This is the true basis of the twin quest of the WCC—for the unity of Christ's church, for the unity and wellbeing of all humanity and

the harmonious wellbeing of the whole of creation now threatened by nuclear war and ecological catastrophe.

This means that (a) the unity of the church we seek to manifest is the unity of love in community, unity of self-understanding, unity in a common calling to glorify or make evident the true goodness of God; (b) this unity of love comprehends the whole of humanity in compassionate sacrificial service, both in works of love for the needy and in the struggle for peace, justice, dignity and unity of the whole human race; and (c) this unity also seeks that the works of humanity are such as not to destroy or disrupt the beauty and harmony of the created order, but to maintain and enhance that beauty and harmony in such a way that the whole created order, with humanity and the church in it, manifests the glory of the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

This understanding of our Basis justifies the emphases that have come out of the Vancouver Assembly on the unity of the church with a passionate commitment to justice, peace and the integrity of creation. All four emphases have their ground in our understanding of the trinitarian confession in our Basis. All four are integral parts of our common calling, to the glory of the One True God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

c) Beyond Christomonism

The uniqueness of Christ has often been so stressed in recent ecumenical theology—to the extent of overdoing it to the point of Christomonism. Christians are in Christ, as members of his body, the church. But Christ does not exist apart from the Father and the Holy Spirit. To be in Christ is to be restored to the bosom of the One True God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Christ is the anointed One, anointed by the Holy Spirit, and doing the works of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Triune God always acts together, in creating, in redeeming, in sanctifying, in fulfilling and perfecting.

We confess that Christ is consubstantial (i.e. sharing in one being) with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and also consubstantial with us human beings. Christ is not simply God. He is, by the Incarnation, just as much a human person. In his person divine being and human being are inseparably and unconfusedly united. There is now, in Christ, no “totally otherness” between God and humanity. In him the two are one united reality, one Person, one loving divine-human community. The Father and the Spirit abide in this one divine-humanity and work through it, to complete the process of creation which has been redeemed and restored in Christ. And this community also abides not merely in Christ, but in the whole Triune being of God.

But neither the works of God nor therefore the works of the church can be limited to this divine human

community. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, as well as the divine human community which abides in the Triune God, work for the healing of the nations, for peace and justice in humanity, and for the unity and integrity of creation.

This divine human community of the church has dimensions that transcend that of a mere sociological entity composed of believing and baptized persons now living on earth. One such dimension is the presence of the vast cloud of witnesses, the great company of saints, who have left their physical bodies and thus their visibility in the earth, and are at the same time present with us in our worship and in our work, praying and worshipping with us, prompting us to do the works of God.

The other dimension, which makes the church more than a mere sociological entity, is the mysterious presence of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who abides in it and in whom the whole community abides.

The recovery of an awareness of these two transcendent dimensions of the church should make a considerable difference to our worship and our work. The Lima liturgy and the worship at the Vancouver Assembly were genuine efforts to recover this awareness. It was a healing awareness at Vancouver, but it has yet to penetrate and pervade the worship of the churches and of WCC meetings and staff work.

The community, thus united with the departed and with the Holy Trinity on the one hand, and with the whole of humanity and the whole of creation on the other, constitutes the divine presence on earth. When either pole of the community's existence is ignored, forgotten or underplayed, the worship and work as well as the being of the community becomes unauthentic.

This is the tremendous struggle that has to go on in the life and worship and work of the churches and of the World Council—the recovery of the church's authentic being as the divine presence mediating between God and God's creation. The quest for the unity of the church, the quest for justice and peace in humanity, and the quest for maintaining and enhancing the integrity of creation are but aspects of recovering this authenticity of the divine human community that is the church.

Conclusion

The Holy Spirit, which abides in the divine human community, and also works in the whole creation, bringing it to perfection, is groaning with the church and with the whole creation, that the New and the Authentic may be born. The birth pangs have been there for a long time and are now intensifying. May that Holy Spirit restore to the church authentic worship, authentic love in community, and

authentic compassion and love for the whole of humanity and for the whole created order. To open ourselves to that Spirit is our common calling, to the glory of the One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

14. Mercy Amba Oduyoye, "The African Family as a Symbol of Ecumenism," 1991

Oduyoye is a widely recognized African theologian and former deputy general secretary of the WCC. This paper was presented at a meeting of the Societas Ecumenica, a European society composed of persons from ecumenical institutes and professors of ecumenics. • The Ecumenical Review, vol. 43, no. 4, 1991, pp. 466-71, 475, 477-78.

... The traditional African family is an ever-expanding, outward-looking community structured as concentric circles in which relationships are moderated by convention. Bifocal and parallel systems of authority for male and female ensure participation of all. This model of organization and relationship is reflected in traditional political structures and more recently in the African Instituted Churches (AIC). The cohesion of the African family and the quality of relationships expected has become the basis of the whole society.¹⁷ It has symbolized for me the meaning of being in one KIN-DOM. Its unity is not marked by uniformity—rather it is founded on commitment to the founder and hence to her ideals and the well-being of the community that names her name and honours her symbol. The family symbolizes for me a caring community within which I can find mutual commitment. Can this understanding of the family produce elements which could aid our search for a meaningful ecumenism? This is the question I shall attempt to deal with. There are no perfect models for the unity of Christians, and this offering does not deal with a model. It is looking for human attempts at community that reflect what we yearn for and which Jesus prayed for. A symbol works from the known to the known and that is why I want to talk about what I know. . . .

17. J.S. Pobee, *Towards an African Theology*, Nashville, TN, Abingdon Press, 1979, p. 79.

The African Family

The family model being used in this presentation is the Abusua, an association of households who name themselves by the same name or claim descent from the same woman. Chronologically diverse and spatially dispersed, they still count themselves as one. They are one blood because they are descendants of one woman. Wherever they move to, their first preoccupation should be to discover where the Abusuapanini (the head of the family) lives and make their presence known to the whole Abusua in that new place through this head of the family. If it happens that there is no representative of the Abusua they belong to, they look for a related group. By custom no Akan is expected to operate as an individual isolated from the Abusua. Knowing genealogies, family history and movements of various members and groups becomes indispensable for one's survival and sense of rootedness and connectedness. A person must belong to a group, and associate with its symbol. Each Abusua has such a symbol (mostly from the animal world) which is carried as the "masthead" of their Akyeampoma (the staff of office of the spokesperson/ambassador of the clan). Wherever one goes the symbol is the same and serves as a unifying factor and a mark of identification. The symbol has historical, political and religious significance for the group and so it is a bonding factor.

From such an understanding of the family, my unspoken response to the question "Do you have a family?" has always been "But of course, I was not cut out of a tree." "Family" in the Euro-American cultures has moved from meaning wife, husband and their children to a word that refers exclusively to children. Childless persons or even couples become persons with no family. By the organization of the community described above, not having children cannot be tantamount to not having a family. People from the same Abusua are related under the rubrics of grandparents, parents, brothers and sisters. There are no aunts and cousins. Where the group is matrilineal as the Asante are, uncles (mothers' brothers) feature prominently, otherwise it is considered taboo to begin to distinguish between siblings and cousins, mothers and aunts, fathers and uncles. The Abusua is conceived as an indivisible unity from which one cannot separate oneself. Any attempt to dissociate oneself from the group or any member of it is frowned upon and the ritual of separation is constructed in such a way as to make it impossible for anyone to fulfill all the conditions. By the same measure one cannot be excluded from the family except by a ritual which in fact symbolizes one's death: exile marked by a gunshot at the ground near one's feet.

Quarrels are expected to have a short lifespan; conflict resolution processes have been set in place to contain and

resolve the inevitable differences that arise in the course of human relationships. Such differences as arise are not allowed to brew into disruption. The wholeness and integrity of the Abusua is of supreme importance, hence the premium laid on the acceptance of responsibility for its weaker members. The Abusua is one's support group. As an organ committed to group welfare, its members are brought up to be committed to the group and to one another. Within the Abusua, sharing joys and sorrows comes naturally. Being together around meals, informal, ceremonial as well as ritual, celebrating events of the stages of life as well as of individual distinctions and successes is family business. Meetings of Abusua are held to plan all these and to discuss common concerns, debate solutions to problems and provide care for the weak and the vulnerable. These meetings happen to this day. The Abusua, when manifested at the level of lineages and households, may even operate as an economic unit with interests vested in communal assets and assistance in safeguarding the "private" property of members. The Abusua is a unit of mutual interdependence that adjusts itself naturally to new membership by birth and associate membership by marriage, while assigning those who come as economic associates, the place of wards.

The biological family, the Abusua in Ghana, though much larger than the Western nuclear family, shares some of the characteristics of the latter, especially that of the rural family in the West. A family in such a situation with its livelihood vested in agriculture will operate in very much the same way as the Abusua. The land, crops and animals are jointly owned and cared for and the family unit ensures that the individual member is also provided for. In the case of the Abusua even the "departed" maintain an interest in the total well-being of the group and that of the individual person. The living keep the memory of the departed alive through narration of genealogies, praise singing and ritual sharing of communal meals and everyday token acts signifying the livingness and the continued presence of the departed. Both material and spiritual welfare interlace and are the concern of the whole Abusua.

Whether patrilineal or matrilineal, the smallest unity of the African family is the mother and young children. It is the counselling unit that lays the foundation for the proper functioning of the individual within the Abusua. The Abusua is also structured as a religious community operating in ever-wider units. At the different ritual levels, leaders can be either women or men and are generally also heads of the units. Within the Abusua, interaction among persons is intense, deep and broad. As a corporate body the Abusua takes on a corporate personality that reflects all that the Akan holds dear and shirks all that the Akan abhors. There is nothing harmonious about the existential

experience of being an Abusua, only a conscious and consistent effort to live in harmony recognizing the inevitability of conflict. It is the intimacy and closeness inherent in this model of human relatedness that I believe need to be found in the church.

The Christ Clan

The *oikos* of God, I submit, may be envisioned as the people of God inhabiting this earth and organized into households of prayer that name themselves with distinctive names. The Christian Abusua makes up a unit that can communicate and care, because they own one source and one symbol. The vision of visible unity of the clan of Christ in our days (since the second world war) has become an over-riding concern of all the households that make up the Christ clan. Within an Abusua what counts most is the nature of the relationships, and this the world sees in how one group acts towards another. We may honour the same mother and deal wickedly with the other one; we remain ontologically "family," but calling ourselves by that name becomes a lie existentially. The whole church is ONE ABUSUA—our denominations become expressions of the family by households and history of the development of individual households of the Abusua. . . .

The African family, henceforth referred to as the Family, may be used as a symbol of what Christians mean by ecumenism, and *oikos*, a household whose ruling morality and ethics are of Christ, whose religion is the religion of Jesus of Nazareth, and whose faith is anchored in the Christ of God. The ecclesia, the church (of Christ or of God) becomes a kin-group, a community of Christ believers, called together by and around the Christ event.

The Family is a community within which the members feel at home. To be separated is to experience alienation and exile, and therefore one surrenders individualism in order to promote full individuality. It is a group within which the "self" is as important as the "other" for one defines the other. Whereas cooperation is the norm of the family, competition that results in drawing out the best in the individual is not frowned upon. In practice, inclination and choice are recognized as the basis for assignments of responsibility and training so that while ascribed positions are the base, people can only hold to them if they prove themselves competent and worthy: While orthodoxy is the norm, heterodoxy and deviance or dissent do not result in excommunication, rather lengthy and careful dialogue over moot points is the style of conflict resolution. Solidarity is the rock on which the family is built. This however does not preclude a variety of opinions and life-styles. Diversity is consciously recognized and celebrated as a healthy sign

of livingness. New life in the form of births and marriages that bring in in-laws are expected and celebrated, as space is made for such persons to contribute to the total well-being.

The Christ family remains open to associates and cooperates with all who go about God's business. In the same way as the Akan family has an open-door policy towards the outside and specific mores and norms exist to regulate these interactions, so the church seeks modes and levels of relating to other households of faith. The flexibility that marks the structure and relationships of the Family makes it a delicate yet resilient organism that has to be continually nurtured so that it might continue to be a living and life-giving matrix. It is very vulnerable because it is founded on loving the other as self. When the other or the total environment changes the Family reaches a crisis. It comes under stress which tests and judges its adherence to the lofty ideals which it regulates itself. When confronting new situations created by contact with others, the Family has shown a large measure of elasticity, especially where religious faith is the issue.

A pertinent example is the coming of Islam and Christianity to Africa. African Traditional Religions not being aggressively missionary and welcoming other approaches to the Divine have made it possible for people of diverse faiths to feel at home in the biological family. Moreover it is not only a matter of co-existence, it is one of pro-existence as "ministry" within the family is exercised according to the traditional rites as well as the rites of the "missionary religions." In the Family members live and spread the "good news" embodied in their chosen religion. The acceptance of diversity in the expression of faith in the one God is another element the Christian *oikoumene* needs to examine, and perhaps appropriate.

The Family is a community in which to grow. It is the family and later the wider society that shapes one into a human being. Human goodness is engineered in the context of the family and it is within the family that one learns the first life maintenance skill, personal habits, ways of handling conflict and how to participate in joint decision-making. The church is often given the designation family, creating the impression in Africa that it operates like an *Abusua*. Africans see it as an *Abusua* of Christ, the coming together of "relatives" of Christ to be a new community that does the will of God. The Christian *oikos* present the profile of a family when confessional households, and others who name themselves by Christ, recognize each other as relations and accept responsibility one for the other. . . .

The Ecumenical Agenda

There is a twofold agenda in the current ecumenical concerns. The agenda has included efforts at making visible to the rest of the world the church's oneness in Christ by their acceptance of one another as making efforts to be disciples of Christ. Internally the movement focusses on how the church is ordered to show the unity of the humanity that Christ shares. Within the church the participation of young people, of children and of women has become an "ecumenical issue," as if the church is made up of adult males especially called and empowered to be the church. A perspective of this search for internal integrity is evidenced in the women's argument for the recognition of the full humanity of women and its implication for the ministry of the church. It is again the issue of the relationship between baptism, discipleship and the basis of authority in the household of God.

In this respect the church instead of a principle of wholeness has opted for fractious policies by adopting the rules of the patriarchal family in which women bear no rule. Here we may turn again to the African family. A family meeting is made up of all those who have contributions to make. Children and young people are not excluded for even when they do not have sufficient experience or knowledge to help resolve conflicts or deliberate on issues, they are expected to sit and learn about the family by their "passive participation." There are family structures in which women may be heads, moderators or priests, and even if they rarely achieve this, the fact remains that there are no rules barring their leadership. The ontology on account of which some Christian communities exclude women from leadership is incompatible with the salvation brought to all and the responsibility of all to be emissaries of Christ. The visible unity and integrity of the church continues to flounder on this issue.

Witnessing against other human barriers is weakened. The church cries against the human community's discrimination on the basis of race and class and has become an advocate for the poor, the infirm and people with "disabilities" arising out of our definition of the norm of human "wholeness." Just as the world remains oblivious to the fact that human beings have two hands, and structures tools for the right-handed only, in the same way it takes some doing to press home the fact that being woman is a handicap, or rather it has been turned into a handicap for one's journey towards total humanity.

While the church is quick to point to the plight of the "handicapped" and to minister to their needs, and rightly so, the handicapping conditions of women's lives are ignored. The patriarchally organized, hierarchy-riddled church conveniently forgets when it comes to exercising

authority that humanity is made up of two genders. The exclusion of women from certain aspects of African religious ritual, attributed to the inauspiciousness of menstruation, cannot be faulted by the church that follows similar injunctions derived from Hebrew religion, in spite of the rhetoric of discontinuity from Hebrew religious rituals. No one asks what exactly is the theological basis which attributes impurity to a creative biological phenomenon. Nor do we ask for the rationale for the “churching” of women after childbirth. The internal brokenness of the church cries out for healing and wholeness to a blind and deaf church sagging under the weight of patriarchal models of authority.

If we can reconceptualize ecumenism on the model of Jesus’ ideal of the family which extends beyond the Western sociological meaning of the extended family, beyond the Akan *Abusua*, to encompass all who hear and obey the call of God for a journey into freedom—the heritage of the children of God—we shall be better placed to resonate with the promptings of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of unity. From such a posture we are more likely to see our way clear in the structural maze in which our moves towards visible unity have been caught. As a family, the church is concerned with the spirituality, traditions and preoccupations and predicaments of all who name themselves by Christ.¹⁸ . . .

Ecumenism Is Wholeness

The church of our experience consists of traditions in isolation, but at New Delhi in 1961 the member churches of the World Council of Churches who met there agreed to a mutual recognition of the authority of each to represent the whole, just as the Akan understanding accepts. The analogy I present here has been stimulated by this insight.

I have seen the complex lineages that make up the *Asenie Abusua* only once, but I have always been aware that there is more to us than the four branches I had come to know. At the death of one of the oldest surviving members who is *Nana* (grand-uncle, i.e., mother’s mother’s brother) representatives from every lineage of the *Abusua* scattered throughout Ghana were present for the funeral. I saw for the first time what a minority the branch in *Asamankese* was. And yet while recognizing that we were not the only *Asenie* in Ghana, that had been the whole family for me. When in *Kumasi* the mother house was my “home.” The funeral of *Nana* was significant for another reason. I saw the unity in the prayers to our common ancestors calling them to join in this family occasion and heard messages being sent through the recently dead *Nana* to those who had gone before and whom he was going to soon join. There was also all the

retelling of “how we do things.” It was clear that though dispersed, the traditions were linked and kept us together since we shared the same reference points. Though many, we were one. The wholeness of the *Abusua*, even when not experienced daily, is a reality to be relied upon, cherished and celebrated. It is felt through its manifestations in the many towns and villages where its members find themselves. . . .

The positions of the Diet of Worms and the Council of Trent have no place in the African family. Final breaks and excommunications are incompatible with the spirituality that underlies the community. Those who share the same spirit cannot be separated. In our theology we proclaim that between the one and the many there is a flexible and living notion—one in many and many in one. In spite of secularization and individualism, new forms of households of care and solidarity are developing in the Western world, confirming the position of this paper that the family can be a positive symbol for the search for terms in which to conceive the unity of the church. It is not an exotic, folkloric African phenomena. The caring embracing family is a primordial human need and experience.

When the *Abusua* meets, one’s specific mother-line melts into it and all the women become *mother*, much in the same way as one prays in ecumenism for all to be gathered in Christ. Denominations and confessions take a back seat while our unity in the Spirit comes to the fore and takes over our whole being. We may never agree in *toto* on how to live out our oneness; but we agree on our common descent and the need to be faithful to our common heritage. The church as a family transcends the various traditions that have sought to transmit the gospel in the different centuries through different confessions. If Christians (all Christians including those in Africa) can affirm this caring orientation of church as family, and those who hold authority would permit it, then these soundings from the African family may be mapped out and transmitted to foster the ecumenical reaching out for the visible unity of the one body of Christ, the church.

18. Julio de Santa Ana, ed., *Separation without Hope*, Geneva, WCC, 1978, pp. 171-89.

15. Emilio Castro, "The Unity of the Church," 1992

A leader in the work for unity and mission in Latin America, Castro served as the WCC's fourth general secretary (1985-91). This essay lifts up central themes of his ministry. • A Passion for Unity, Geneva, WCC, 1992, pp. 1-4, 9-13.

The central calling of the ecumenical movement is the quest for the unity of the church. It is a quest which looks to the kingdom of God and participates in human conflicts in the name of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are called to present the witness of a united church which can symbolize, anticipate and serve the reconciliation and unity of all humanity and the whole of creation.

Growing in the One Tradition

This quest for unity involves a concerted effort to overcome great ecclesiological and doctrinal differences which are rooted in the history of the church. The churches have been drawn together in the forum constituted by the World Council of Churches because of two presuppositions which are at first sight contradictory. The first is that in God the church is a single reality and that all of us who confess the name of Jesus Christ have to work to make this reality visible. The second is that we meet as separate churches, confessions and communities, each of which claims that its liturgical and community life represents a fullness of the church which *a priori* it cannot recognize in the other church organizations.

On the one hand, we are convinced that we have to be together and grow together and move forward together because of the prayer of Jesus Christ in whom we are *already* one. On the other hand, we acknowledge that the unity we discern is *not yet* sufficient to enable us to partake together at the common table of the Lord or recognize each other's ministries or mutual reality as churches.

The ecumenical pilgrimage is a commitment to growth within the unity that already exists in God. The church is one, and our growth must be within this trinitarian reality, in which the Holy Spirit makes us one with the triune God. Our unity is growth in prayer, in common worship, in the solidarity of the cross in which the sorrow and joy of some is the sorrow and joy of the others.

The growth of the confessional families has led some people to propose the vision of a "communion of communions" as a model for the unity we seek. The encounter of these confessional families, each with its distinctive realities, would manifest the universality and catholicity of the church. But no matter how we assess this model, let us be careful not to use the term "communion" in a way that detracts from its basic theological sense of *koinonia* in God—a spiritual reality of a unique kind that cannot be divided into segments nor kept in watertight compartments.

We have to grow in the one tradition—communion—of the one church. We may differ about the claims of each of our churches to be the repository of that tradition, but we must affirm that this unity of the church in God exists as something made evident in a pilgrim people who celebrate, serve and confess one and the same faith, one and the same love, one and the same worship. This tradition is expressed and nourished through the text of the Bible, the common affirmation of central doctrinal truths, common liturgical celebrations and the recognition of the different gifts—ministries—God gives the church so that all may be done "in order" and "for edification" and for witness and service to the world.

On each of these elements we will have practical or conceptual divergences to overcome. But the reality of the communion that is nourished and manifested and served by these elements is present in all our churches as the evidence of God's sovereign freedom and faithfulness. We believe in the one church because God created it that way, and has promised to preserve it through the centuries. The Reformers called it the "church invisible." We are seeking to grasp and proclaim that reality and to make it visible! In the ecumenical pilgrimage we are surprised by the dawning of a unity which is nothing less than the presence of God's own self among God's own people.

We are growing in the trinitarian life, in the mystery of the joy of belonging each to each other. The real difficulty lies in the proclamation and articulation of this new reality and the relation of this living reality—both existential and ontological—with the visible authority of the churches. Ideas like conciliarity and primacy need to be analyzed and placed in the service of the primary and fundamental reality which is the common spiritual tradition in God. Thus it is essential for the WCC to call Christians to a new quest for possible forms of expressing the unity they already experience in common prayer and worship of the living God and to devote our energy and effort to describing the unity we seek and elaborating possible models for unity.

The Wealth of Diversity

But the unity of the church is not just the overcoming of confessional differences. It is increasingly apparent that the WCC is a place of encounter in which various expressions of the Christian faith, from the diversity of social, political and cultural contexts in which the church of Jesus Christ is rooted, meet in lively dialogue. Any WCC meeting is a forum not only for the classical confessional theological positions, but also and increasingly for the spiritual and theological currents which attempt to express the gospel faithfully in the most varied contexts. It is more and more difficult to suppose that there is a “centre” which might somehow “certify” the different cultural expressions of the faith as authentic. Instead, there is a recognition that we belong to each other in loyalty to a common tradition and, in some instances, acknowledgement of a primacy of unity that must be at the service of the missionary embodiment of the gospel in the various peoples and cultures of the world.

In the words of Nikos Nissiotis:

It is through the local church that the catholic and universal church is made manifest in practice. The local church represents the vanguard of the latter in the world and its point of contact with the world. Every ecclesiological idea of the *ekklesia* as the mystical body of Christ becomes real through the local church in which the historical life, the liturgy, the missionary, charitable, catechetical and social activities take place. As part of the one catholic church, the local church possesses the fullness of the grace and of the truth of Christ, because of the presence of the qualitative idea of catholicity. (“La présence dynamique et la mission de l’Eglise locale dans le monde d’aujourd’hui,” Chambésy, 1981)

The novelty here is not the cultural diversity of Christianity itself, but the explosion of this diversity and our awareness of it, thanks to increased travel and communication. The New Testament already displayed this contextual richness of the gospel in the accounts of Peter’s encounter with Cornelius and of the travels of Paul, the evangelist to the Gentiles. Cyril and Methodius struggled mightily to preserve the culture of the Slavic peoples while introducing them to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The peoples of Central and Eastern Europe today are able to worship God in terms of their own heritage because of those pioneers who affirmed not just the right but the duty of every mission to forge links with national realities.

Today we see this wealth of the gospel manifested in the situation of the church in diaspora and mission

throughout the world. For some this raises fears of anarchy, of diversity so great that it might obscure the central Christian substance, of the apparent disintegration of a unity that has come about through the centuries and which is central to their idea of the church. Others are concerned about the possibilities of untamed nationalism, blessed in the name of the Christian faith, creating conflict between nations. But it is precisely the ecumenical encounter on a worldwide scale that enables us to take precautions against these dangers—dangers which do not arise where minority churches oppose the powers-that-be and call for justice for the poor and marginalized, but when these same churches come to be part of the structures of power and unthinkingly retain a theological rhetoric that was appropriate to a situation of weakness but in association with power turns them into sectarians and imperialists.

The embodiment of the gospel in different cultures is not in the first instance a danger. It is above all a responsibility to leaven society as a whole with the leaven of the Christian gospel. It is a missionary responsibility to succeed in becoming all things to all people so that the gospel can speak authoritatively to the soul and the culture of every people. When we seek the unity of the church we are seeking the harmony of all these riches in a disciplined and enthusiastic ecumenical dialogue, in which all churches will inspire and be inspired, correct and be corrected.

The World Council of Churches takes on new importance as an international forum in which all paternalist pretensions are censured and we are challenged to overcome our provincial limitations in dialogue with the experience of the church of Jesus Christ in the most varied circumstances. Any model of visible unity for the church must acknowledge the wealth of this diversity and ensure that each local church has pastoral and missionary freedom. . . .

Unity in the Midst of History

The search for the unity of the church cannot be located outside history. It is not merely an intellectual exercise of comparing doctrines in the hope of overcoming differences, but it is an effort to discover the form of Christian obedience that is appropriate for our times.

We cannot ignore history because the divisions that reveal themselves in doctrinal and canonical divergences have historical, social, political and cultural roots. But the central reason for locating the theme of unity among human conflicts is that this is where the biblical vision locates it. The aim of history revealed in Jesus Christ, according to the letter to the Ephesians, is “to gather up all things in him” (Ephesians 1:10). The vision in Revelation 21 of a new Jerusalem, a new heaven and a new earth, speaks to

us of the transformation of the whole of reality. The people of faith, the church, is called as a witness to the saving and liberating purpose of God for all creation (Ephesians 3:8-11). The unity to which the Lord calls us is a unity for the benefit of the world, so that the world may believe (John 17:21). The church is called as a priestly people to intercede for the salvation of the whole world (1 Peter 2:9). The one church is a parable and a reality anticipating the one humanity. It is an encouragement for every attempt to overcome any of the barriers which divide humanity.

In the experience of the World Council of Churches, this encounter between the quest for the unity of the church and the vision of the kingdom of God as the aim of our efforts takes place within the actual conflicts which divide humanity, ensuring a continuing tendency to disagreement and controversy in ecumenical life. Our journey takes place in the midst of the sunshine and shadow of efforts to be obedient to the heavenly vision. Thus the World Council has placed itself in the service of peace. This seems logical for those who think of themselves as following the Prince of Peace. Already at Amsterdam a central consideration was the need to ensure peace between the great power blocs of East and West. But Amsterdam also revealed the limitations of the WCC in this area. It had little to say about Palestine in the year when its partition took place and nothing about the conflict between the Netherlands, the host country for the Assembly, and Indonesia.

We acknowledge that there is ambiguity in our choice of human conflicts. Sometimes this results from our ignorance of facts or the limitation of our perspectives. More often it is a consequence of pastoral considerations. The WCC always offers a *public* platform, where criticisms are welcome as they help us to remain constantly watchful -even in situations when the criticisms are unjust and we cannot answer them, because silence is the best way to serve peace in that situation.

When we adopt positions which we think point towards the kingdom of God and show solidarity with those who are suffering, we constantly run the risk of division. We are comforted to see that at times history vindicates controversial positions taken by the World Council. But even before such vindication, the discussions within the WCC offer a unique service, as delegates speak in freedom across ideological barriers in impassioned but respectful debate and struggle to a conclusion which, though it may seem to satisfy no one fully at the time, anticipates a later resolution of the problem.

Our unity will continue to be tested as we are confronted by future areas of disagreement. Will we have the courage to affirm that all war is anti-Christian? Jacques Ellul criticized the Amsterdam Assembly for not having

the courage to speak clearly about non-violence as the only possible way for humanity. The credibility of the gospel is at stake in our service for peace. The fact that our unity in the ecumenical family has been able to resist and overcome divergences on how to address the conflicting factors in different situations invites us to believe that together we dwell in the love of God in the mystery of the Trinity.

The WCC has also encouraged the proclamation of the gospel by its member churches, recognizing that the message of reconciliation has been entrusted to the churches for proclamation throughout the world (2 Corinthians 5:18-21). But the message of reconciliation in Jesus Christ's way, following the model of the cross, obliges us to take sides on behalf of the poor and the weak. No reconciliation can be brought about from a position of distance, neutrality or neglect. Work for reconciliation starts with suffering and identification. Therefore proclaiming reconciliation always requires costly solidarity.

Perhaps in the history of the WCC the most vivid example of the impact of participation in human conflicts on the quest for unity has been provided by the Special Fund to Combat Racism. There has never been controversy about the purpose of the struggle against racism, nor about solidarity with the churches and people suffering from racial oppression. But the methodology for engaging in this struggle and expressing this solidarity can be and often is controversial. Yet again and again WCC Assemblies and Central Committees have decided to risk controversy and ambiguity to make it absolutely clear that unity in Christ is unity in hope with the oppressed and the poor. Unity within and between the churches of the World Council of Churches has to be linked with the ecumenical responsibility of judging all realities from the standpoint of the coming kingdom, the saving purpose of God.

Diakonia, Christian service, has been a constant dimension in the search for the unity of the churches in the World Council of Churches. Christians cannot seek to unite or celebrate their unity without facing the world and trying to meet its needs. Without accepting naively the old slogan that "doctrine divides, service unites," we must be grateful that the possibility and reality of mutual service have become important instruments in the growth of trust, the display of mutual love and better service to the world. Common witness through our proclamation and our service reflects the unity that already exists and nourishes the unity we seek. At the same time we must be prepared to find ourselves in situations where the type of services we feel called to offer creates controversy and even division among the churches. Our unity is strong enough to generate service to humanity. It must also be strong enough to stand up to disagreements on the type of service to be given

and to engender a degree of trust which will allow us to have confidence that the aims we are pursuing are the same, even when our methods may temporarily be opposed.

For example, there is the issue of service to human rights victims in situations of dictatorship. How can we best serve the victims but also ensure the ministry of the church in such countries? In Latin America we have sometimes faced, if not conflicts between the churches, then at least serious differences in the pastoral emphases appropriate in particular circumstances. Another example arises when we are confronted by forms of *diakonia* addressed to the situation of interdependence prevailing in the world of today, such as the condemnation of foreign debt or of the complicity of our economic systems in oppressive situations. Here we shall be setting standards of service in which we shall not always agree as to the handling of information and the methods used.

The unity of the church will be a parable of the unity God is preparing for his creation insofar as it faces reality, embraces historical conflicts and sets its course by the coming kingdom, the love kindled in the heart through its relationship with the living Christ, and the fervent hope which is the fruit of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the community of believers.

What we have learned in the quest for unity in the service of God's eschatological plan raises challenging questions about the community which the WCC constitutes and its capacity for service. Let me sum up by mentioning a number of areas on which I believe the WCC must focus in the years ahead:

- We need to recover a passion for unity, discerning in the depth of our faith its demand that we recognize that being in Christ implies being with others and for others. Every aspect of every WCC programme must be seen as serving this vision, passion and conviction.
- We need to progress in the quest for models to express the growing reality of our common belonging to the same ecclesial tradition. This means giving content to the idea of conciliar communion and placing on the agenda for discussion the relation between the perennial tradition of the church and the exercise of authority in the actual churches—not just as a theological problem about the recognition of holy orders, but as a practical recognition of the type of authority needed to acknowledge, serve and celebrate existing unity.

- In all the dimensions we have mentioned, a closer and more direct relation with and among the churches is essential. The WCC's working structure enables it to adopt a prophetic stance, serving the churches by generating ideas and challenges to them. But we must also listen more closely to what the Holy Spirit is already doing within each church community.
- We need to deepen the eschatological vision of the coming kingdom as support and inspiration for our ecumenical pilgrimage. This does not mean simply projecting things into the future or postponing the possibility of church unity till the coming of the kingdom of God. Eschatology is an anticipation, an earnest of the promise of that kingdom in the presence of the Lord of the church, in the receiving of the Holy Spirit. The eschatological vision of the reuniting of all things in Christ is the inspirational model, the object of our efforts and God's promise for the ecumenical task.
- We need to maintain watchfulness in prayer, the invocation of the Holy Spirit, because the unity of the church and service to the world are miracles of God. We began by affirming the enduring tradition of the church, the faithfulness of God, the reality of being the church in the mystery of the Trinity itself. The experiences of the WCC have confirmed again and again the faithfulness of the Holy Spirit. We have learned to live out the tension of our separation in the expectation of its being overcome through the action of the Spirit of God. We have learned to live in *epiklesis*, in the permanent invocation of a presence which alone is capable of guaranteeing the WCC's place in the perennial tradition of the church, in its fundamental reality in the triune God.

16. Konrad Raiser, "Ecumenism in Search of a New Vision," 1992

Raiser was the WCC's fifth general secretary (1993-2003). This address, delivered in New York in 1991, summarizes several of the key motifs from his widely influential book, Ecumenism in Transition.

- *Unpublished manuscript.*

I

The topic for this lecture was phrased deliberately not as an appeal or a call but rather as an affirmation. I understand the present somewhat confused and confusing situation of the ecumenical movement as the result of a process of searching for new orientation. The uncertainties, tensions, misunderstandings and contradictions are an inevitable part of this process, however much they might irritate us and create the impression that the ecumenical movement is paralyzed.

What is more, I am convinced that some elements at least of a new vision can already be discerned, even though one needs some imagination to put them together and to establish the links and some inner coherence.¹⁹ I am thinking for example of the decisive move from the static concept of unity to the dynamic notion of communion/*koinonia*; there is the emergence of a new understanding of the wholeness of mission including its cosmic dimension. A further element is the effort to recover the relational meaning of justice in terms of sharing and solidarity. The conciliar process for justice, peace and the integrity of creation, leading up to the affirmations of the world convocation in Seoul, was another important step in the search for a new and inclusive vision. Finally, the theme of the Canberra assembly of the WCC, invoking the Holy Spirit for the renewal of the whole creation, indicates the need to widen the scope of our ecumenical question beyond the traditional focus on Christ and the church.

This may be sufficient to give some substance to the claim which is implicit in the theme of this lecture. But in order to make explicit the vision implied in these elements, we have to get a better understanding of the present situation as a phase of transition. It might be helpful to take a brief look at an earlier example of a fundamental reorientation in the ecumenical movement.

The ecumenical movement came into being at the start of this century because a few people had a vision of the future of church and society. This vision was expressed in different terms.²⁰ John R. Mott was guided by the goal of the evangelization of the world in this generation; Nathan Söderblom was inspired by the belief in the universal character of the church and sought to establish international friendship through evangelical catholicity; Archbishop Germanos spoke of the need to supplement the emerging League of Nations by a league (*koinonia*) of the churches; and lastly, Bishop Brent envisioned the possibility of achieving unity among the separated churches

through careful theological dialogue. The movement did not gain its full momentum, however, until they discovered that these were only different expressions of one integrated vision concerning the calling of the whole church to bring the whole gospel to the whole world.

Initially, this vision focused on the assumption that Christian culture and Christian values could be extended throughout the world, since this was believed to be the safeguard of a humane order. The events of the 1930s, and in particular the destructive effects of the second world war involving the Christian "civilized" parts of humanity, led to a fundamental reassessment of the basic vision. The "special" notion of the extension of Christendom received its final blow with the communist take-over in China. It was progressively replaced by the notion of salvation history as the inner meaning of world history. Affirming Christ as the Lord of history helped to re-establish a sense of coherence.

The transition from international order based on Christian values to universal history centred in Christ was the first major reorientation of the ecumenical vision. For the following three decades this "Christocentric universalism" (Visser 't Hooft) has served to provide clear guidance to the ecumenical movement. It has made it possible for the ecumenical movement to transcend its origins among the historic churches in the north and to become more and more global in its outlook. The Uppsala assembly in 1968, with its underlying "motif" of the unity of the church and the unity of humankind, marks the culmination of this phase of the ecumenical movement where the vision of the one church in one world achieved its most convincing inner coherence.

II

We are the inheritors of this vision, but it is obvious, twenty years later, that it has lost much of its power to inspire, which at the time not only energized people and churches in the framework of the World Council of Churches, but served as a frame of orientation also for the Roman Catholic Church in its post-conciliar period. What are the reasons for this apparent loss of ecumenical faith?

The vision of the one church in one world obviously responded to a particular perception of the situation of the world. For the first time in human history the basic unity of humankind seemed about to become a tangible reality, and the Christian churches through the ecumenical movement were seen to be, potentially at least, a decisive factor in the building of world community. Since then basic changes have taken place in the global situation which have undercut the guiding assumptions on which this vision was based.

Historical analysis of these changes is only just beginning and we are far from a clear understanding. However

19. Cf. the theme issue of *The Ecumenical Review*, "Towards a Vital and Coherent Ecumenical Theology," vol. 41, no. 2, April 1989.

20. This historical process has been described and interpreted by W.A. Visser 't Hooft, *The Genesis and Formation of the World Council of Churches*, Geneva, WCC, 1982.

some factors do stand out clearly. The first of these is the emergence of an ecological consciousness, i.e. the awareness of the fragility of the processes by which life is regenerated and sustained and which are now threatened by human over-exploitation of natural resources, by pollution and sheer waste. In the twenty years between the first and second UN conferences on the environment, this awareness of the ecological threats has increased to the point that the basic interdependence between nature and humankind and among all parts of human society is no longer perceived as a promise but rather as a trap. The sense of impending catastrophe seems to paralyze the human capacity to react.

Similarly the emergence of a unified global economic and financial system, which initially promised to provide the framework for world development, is more and more turning into a menace, threatening the survival of growing sectors of the population in many nations in the south. The accumulation of power and wealth in the hands of a few is accompanied by the growing impoverishment of the majority. The cold logic of the transnational system has indeed brought about a unity of humankind, but it is a unity of dependency and not a sustainable interdependence. The debt crisis—which is far from being resolved—is the clearest expression of this situation which challenges the earlier ecumenical vision of global unity.

Two further elements should at least be mentioned briefly. The first concerns the emergence of renewed fervour among the adherents of the major world religions. Even apart from fundamentalist tendencies, which are present among all religious communities including the Christian churches, this religious renaissance calls into question basic assumptions about the distinction between religion and society or politics, and even threatens religious liberty as a basic human right. More and more civil conflicts are being fuelled by opposing religious loyalties and there is reason to believe that religions, including Christianity, are among the root causes contributing to human division rather than being factors in building world community. The unresolved question of the Christian response to religious plurality touches the very core of the notion of “Christocentric universalism.”

The last element concerns the political dimension of world community. Now that the bipolar system of power blocs—which has been the dominant feature in world politics for the last forty years—has disappeared, we can see the extent to which this antagonism was a stabilizing factor as long as the threats to world peace could be contained through the system of deterrence. The result of this fundamental change is not a more unified and peaceful world, but a growing fragmentation and the aggressive assertion of national and ethnic identities. The militarization of politics

on the world level as well as in the interests of so-called “national security” has meant that the structures of world governance have remained underdeveloped and are pitifully weak. Humankind does not yet seem mature enough to manage the unity which has come upon it.

People are responding in many different ways to this condition which is radically different from the situation twenty years ago. On the one hand, there is the tendency to fundamentalist and apocalyptic attitudes which often goes along with fatalism. On the other, we find that cynicism is spreading among those who still benefit and find themselves on the winning side. Among those in the seats of power, the dominant concern seems to be to keep things together at all costs for fear of chaos, to maintain the functioning of the system, or simply to preserve their own power and privileges. If need be, unity is maintained by force. This reveals the structural violence built into this pattern of unity. At the same time, we have seen the emergence of peoples’ movements resisting the dehumanizing rationality of the global system. The non-violent revolutions in Eastern Europe have kindled the hope that the spiral of violence can be broken, but they have also exposed the true face of the culture of violence in which we are caught.

III

Much more careful analysis is needed before we can arrive at a clear diagnosis of our present world condition. But the foregoing reflections may be sufficient to explain why the vision of global unity has lost much of its plausibility and its inspirational momentum. However, the examination has to be broadened to include also the traditional understanding of church unity. This is all the more sensitive and risky since the vision of Christian and church unity constitutes the rock bottom of the traditional expression of the ecumenical vision and is considered to be the primary *raison d’être* of the WCC. It is surprising that, to my knowledge, very little research has been done to clarify the “archaeology” of this central element of the ecumenical vision. “Unity,” in spite of the factors that have discredited this notion on the social and political levels, still seems to have an unquestioned positive ring in the ecumenical movement. However the question of how to reconcile the affirmation of unity and the recognition of diversities has become one of the crucial issues in ecumenical discussion.²¹

Again I will have to limit myself to a few observations. The notion of unity is part of a pattern of mind which has

21. On this issue of unity and diversity, cf. Michael Kinnamon, *Truth and Community: Diversity and Its Limits in the Ecumenical Movement*, Grand Rapids, MI, and Geneva, WCC, 1988.

entered Christian thinking and practice through its inculturation in the classical Greco-Roman world. The positive valuation of unity over against diversity in philosophical and political orientation is a heritage which, in its Christian adaptation, has deeply shaped European and Western culture. The orientation of thinking and practice towards achieving and maintaining unity almost inevitably leads to hierarchical systems of order which feminist analysis has described as one of the crucial features of "patriarchy." The logic of non-contradiction brings about an exclusivist understanding of truth and easily leads to the stigmatization of the irregular as heresy. Many of the divisions in Christian history are not so much the result of deliberate separatism as of a rigid understanding of unity which perceived diversity as a threat. We also know how often the interests of political and ecclesiastical unity mutually reinforced one another.²²

In view of this questionable ancestry of the key notion of "unity," it is surprising that the question has been so seldom asked as to whether it is a suitable concept to express the ecumenical vision. We should have discovered long ago that the biblical tradition does not share our approach to the issue of "unity"; indeed the term is hardly used as a concept in the biblical writings. What we find instead is the concern for building and maintaining communion between people and communities who remain different. Unity in biblical terms is not something empirically given but rather a continuous, living process which presupposes existing diversities.²³ The image of the body and its members comes to mind immediately to exemplify this relational understanding of unity over against the hierarchical tendencies of the dominant pattern.

Of course ecumenical discussion has not been unaware of these dangerous implications of the traditional concept of unity. Thus the goal of Christian unity has again and again been described as unity in diversity, and any implication of uniformity has been rejected. And yet there is a difference, whether we speak of unity in diversity or of diversities related to one another in communion. In the first case the crucial question inevitably arises as to the limits of diversity; the maintenance of unity becomes the criterion for the recognition of the legitimacy of diversities. In the second case the crucial question becomes: how much "unity" is necessary and sufficient in order to maintain communion, and where does the pressure for unity

become a threat to the expression of diversities within a living community? The assumption that Christian unity must be based on a unity in faith, and that this unity has to be achieved through the building of doctrinal consensus, has not only led to a situation where the search for unity is more and more removed from the experience of Christian people; by over-extending the requirements of consensus, the consciousness of doctrinal differences is in fact being reinforced. The lack of an ecumenical hermeneutics of unity developing further the notion of the hierarchy of truths or the Reformation criterion of *saiths est* is making itself acutely felt.

If we follow this critical approach to the implications of the notion of unity further, we begin to discover in the early Christian tradition a mystical and sacramental or an eschatological understanding of unity. Unity is essentially a predicate of God. It is revealed in the oneness of the Father with the Son (John 17:21) and shared in the sacrament of communion through the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 10:16ff.; 11:18ff.; 12:12ff.); it is the mystical experience of living in Christ (Gal. 2:20), being incorporated into Christ's body. Unity is an eschatological reality when God will dwell among God's people, when God will be all in all (1 Cor. 15:28).

This dynamic understanding of unity enabled the early church to agree upon a canon of holy scriptures which presents anything but a unity of doctrine. It allowed a rich diversity of liturgies and church order to exist side by side, and the synodical structure proved strong enough to maintain communion between churches following diverse traditions, even without a centre of unity. Over against the rational (and political) interest in emphasizing the monarchical unity of God, the trinitarian confession acknowledged the relational nature of divine unity as the communion of distinct persons, particularly through the later notion of perichoresis, the mutual co-inherence of the three persons. Even the Chalcedonian Christological formula refrained from defining the unity of the person of Christ, limiting itself to the famous negative statements which emphasize that the two natures are neither to be separated nor to be confused, thus respecting the mystery of the divine-human union. The eschatological understanding of history reckons with the discontinuity between cross and resurrection. Human history remains finite, limited by death, and the web of human histories interacting with each other will merge into a genuinely universal history only in eschatological perspective.

These rather quick and general observations, which would need to be differentiated, are certainly not new or original. The fact that all unity among churches is ultimately rooted in the trinitarian communion of God has

22. For this critical analysis of the notion of unity, cf. Christian Duquoc, *Des églises provisoires: essai d'écclésiologie oecuménique*, Paris, 1985.

23. The understanding of the unity of the church as a living process is developed in the study by Christian Link, Ulrich Luz and Lukas Vischer: "Sie aber hielten fest an der Gemeinschaft. . . Einheit der Kirche als Prozess im Neuen Testament und Heute," Zürich, 1988.

been acknowledged in ecumenical discussion since the famous statement on the “unity we seek” of the New Delhi assembly of the WCC in 1961. But what is surprising, against the background of early Christian tradition, is the fact that the dominance of the unity concept has not been questioned more critically. The shift towards the biblical notion of *koinonia*/communion could be significant, provided *koinonia* is not immediately interpreted again in hierarchical terms but is unfolded in the direction of living coherence.

IV

No diagnosis leads immediately into therapy. The critical discernment of the limitations of the earlier ecumenical vision which has been carried through here only regards the key notion of unity and should be extended to the other guiding concepts like mission, service, development. It is an important step, but it needs to be supplemented by the risky move from analysis to reconstruction. Many experiences in recent years have convinced me that the ecumenical impulse is as much alive among people as ever. They may represent only a minority within their churches—as they probably always have—but they have been seized by the discovery of the reality of Christian communion in prayer and witness, in sharing and solidarity, a communion which transcends the particularities of tradition and culture and which sustains them in their faith. They share a vision but often lack the language to express it. If the organized ecumenical movement has a *raison d’être*, then it is the task of enabling Christian people to acknowledge together this gift of communion in the worldwide body of Christ and to witness to it together in word and deed in a language which is both faithful to the tradition of the church and sensitive to the basic features of the human situation today.

In that sense, we are not searching for an entirely new vision; rather, our search is about a new language, new symbols to express and translate the basic vision which is implied in the ecumenical calling. I found it helpful in my own explorations to go back again to the original meaning of the ancient Greek word “oikoumene.” It was one of the decisive insights reaffirmed at the time of the Uppsala assembly that the scope of the oikoumene—meaning the whole inhabited world—goes beyond the community of Christian churches and embraces the whole human community. Unfortunately the controversies in the 1970s about this “secular” understanding of the oikoumene has had the consequence—at least in Germany—that the term “ecumenical” is again understood as referring only to matters of concern between the Christian churches. The oneness of unity, mission and service in the world, strongly

emphasized in the original ecumenical vision, is again broken up. Ecumenism has become church-centred and is largely separated from the human concerns in society, economics and politics. So we have to recapture this wider notion of the oikoumene and the ecumenical calling of the churches in the world.

However, our new awareness of the ecological threats obliges us to transcend even the oikoumene of the inhabited human world. God’s oikoumene embraces all of God’s creation, shaped into a “house” (*oikos*) to be inhabited by all living beings but also to be cared for and to be kept habitable for the generations to come. The understanding of the oikoumene has to overcome its anthropocentric character and to include a time dimension as well. An ecologically conscious theology of creation has begun to rediscover how biblical thought recognizes the relational, interdependent character of all life which is sustained by the life-giving power of God’s spirit. The shalom of the divine sabbath is being acknowledged again as the “crown of creation.” This was also the intention which led the WCC at Vancouver to adopt the phrase “integrity (i.e. shalom) of creation” and it is therefore not surprising that the biblical order of the sabbath, including the sabbath year and the year of release or jubilee, have been rediscovered as powerful ecumenical symbols. On this same basis I have proposed to interpret “oikoumene” as the “one household of life” and to begin by spelling out the rules of living together in shalom as members of this one household where God through the Spirit dwells among God’s people (Eph. 2:19-22).

I cannot here go into the rich biblical material which would support this choice of a key metaphor for a new ecumenical vision—a metaphor which expresses the inter-relatedness of all life and helps to unfold the notion of *koinonia*/communion both in its vertical and its horizontal image. I want to emphasize, however, that this metaphor can serve to liberate our thinking about the church as a social reality from the traditional dependency on the symbolism drawn from political life or from the logic of the economy in terms of growth through competition in the field of supply and demand. It can open our minds for the rich symbolism that is hidden in the language of the parables of Jesus and drawn from the everyday interchange between human existence in community and the processes of life in creation (cf. the metaphor of the salt, the leaven, the seed, etc.). Thus the “round table” in the “open house” as an expression of “neighbourliness” among ordinary people and as a symbol of “hospitality” turning towards the “other,” becomes a mark of the Christian community as a “household” within civil society which is itself dependent on the processes of sustenance and regeneration in the “one household of life.” . . .

While I must refrain from spelling out in more detail the potential programmatic implications of these comprehensive perspectives, I will conclude by pointing to a few areas where I can see a certain shift of emphasis on the ecumenical agenda:

- We should begin to take seriously the experiences of all those Christians, young and old, who have been drawn into profound fellowship with each other while remaining rooted in their different church traditions and contexts. They are witnesses to a new reality which has grown between the churches; it is both spiritual and social/human and is not owned by any one of the existing churches. The ecumenical movement should understand itself as trustee of this gift of communion and constantly strive to open new spaces for expressing it.²⁴
- We should concentrate on working out an ecumenical hermeneutics, i.e. explore the rules, criteria and the basic elements of a common language which is coherent enough to sustain communion and communication while affirming the value of diverse expressions of the truth of the gospel.²⁵
- We should move from the posture of confrontation, exposing all the injustices of the global system, to an attitude of reconstruction, empowering people to shape their own lives in community. This implies spelling out the “house-rules” of the one household of life, and in particular, rediscovering the creative and constructive function of law both within communities and between nations.²⁶
- We should take seriously the commitment of the Seoul convocation to a “culture of active non-violence which is life-promoting and is not a withdrawal from situations of violence and oppression

24. Cf. the concluding section of the statement by the Canberra assembly. “The Unity of the Church as *Koinonia*: Gift and Calling,” no. 3.2. In particular the call: “On the basis of convergence in faith in baptism, eucharist and ministry to consider, wherever appropriate, forms of eucharistic hospitality.” In *Signs of the Spirit*, ed. Michael Kinnamon, official report of the seventh assembly of the WCC, Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, and Geneva, WCC, 1991, p. 174.

25. This has been further explored in my article “Beyond Tradition and Context: In Search of an Ecumenical Framework of Hermeneutics,” in *International Review of Mission*, vol. 80, nos 319-320, July-October 1991, pp. 347-54.

26. Cf. in this regard the new study by Charles Villa-Vicencio, “A Theology of Reconstruction, Nation-building and Human Rights,” Cambridge UP, 1992.

but is a way to work for justice and liberation.”²⁷ This implies as a priority the development of an ethic of peace-building and, in practice, the task of conflict-resolution and mediation.

These examples are simply indications. Only further common exploration can show whether this direction is viable. In any case, the ecumenical search for a new vision is underway.

17. Desmond Tutu, “Towards *Koinonia* in Faith, Life and Witness,” Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order, Santiago de Compostela, 1993

Former Anglican archbishop of Cape Town, former general secretary of the South African Council of Churches, former president of the All Africa Conference of Churches, and recipient of the 1984 Nobel Peace Prize, Tutu is one of the great figures in the church of the 20th Century. • On the Way to Fuller *Koinonia*: Official Report, Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order, eds Thomas F. Best and Günther Gassmann, Geneva, WCC, 1994, pp. 93-102.

Towards *Koinonia*

. . . Our Lord prayed solemnly for the unity of His followers because the credibility of His own mission depended on it. Hence it cannot be a matter of indifference for Christians, this issue of the reunion of Christians. We have no option but to work and pray that we might all be one. And yet there seems to be a universal inertia in the ecumenical movement. There are conversations, discussions and plans galore, but hardly anywhere has anything of much significance actually happened. There have been near betrothals and engagements but hardly any nuptials, least of all consummations. We have had failed attempts or near attempts. There have been CO CCU, ARCIC, CUC (in South Africa), conversations between say Anglican and Methodists, Anglicans and Orthodox, Anglicans and Lutherans, Anglicans and Baptists, etc. and such bilateral talks could be replicated for other denominations, confessions

27. See the final document of the Seoul Convocation, *Now Is the Time*, Geneva, WCC, 1990, p. 29, para. 2.3.2.3-5.

or communions. Often and often a remarkable degree of agreement of consensus has been reached, and yet, and yet. . . . they have somehow lacked something to propel them to take the logical next step—organic union, becoming one, in any sense that is of significance to their members or to the world looking on with desultory and waning interest. It has seemed that toes have been dipped in the water and then the courage or the will to take the plunge into the stream has failed.

Often we have heard people say that the world has been impatient of ecclesiastical tinkering with church structures; that the world was shouting an agenda for the churches, that God's children were hurting out there and it was almost obscene to appear to be obsessed with domestic trivia when God's children were hungry for justice and food and peace. The Church deserved to be marginalised if it was consuming its energies on academic pursuits or interest to a peculiar elite, as if the scriptures had declared that "God so loved the church. . . ." rather than "God so loved the world. . . ." This particular concern for justice, for getting priorities right, was an important corrective but it was posing a false set of alternatives. It should never have been a question of either unity or justice. It should have been a case of "both . . . and." It was God who indeed loved the world who set the agenda for the Church which Christ loved so much that He had bought it with His own precious blood to present it as a pure bride for Himself, that the Church was intended to be God's agent for justice and peace.

People did grow impatient with what seemed an unconscionable concentration on apparently academic theological issues. They felt we ought to get on with the business of redeeming the world, making it more hospitable for human beings, making it a more humane environment where there was room for love, for compassion, for joy and laughter, peace and prosperity, sharing and caring—in short the kind of world which clearly was becoming more and more what God intended it to be, a part of His Kingdom.

Our experience which would probably be repeated elsewhere has been that you really should not separate church unity from the pursuit of justice, or even more starkly, that that pursuit is made infinitely more hazardous and difficult, perhaps even impossible when the church is divided. When our church held a consultation on mission our overseas partners declared categorically, "Apartheid is too strong for a divided church."

Some of our more exhilarating moments in the struggle for justice, peace and freedom in South Africa have occurred when the churches have been involved in united witness against the iniquity of the vicious system

of apartheid. I recall how an ecumenical group of about fifty clergy were arrested in Johannesburg for demonstrating against the detention of a colleague. As we waited in the cells below the Magistrate's court for our case to be heard, we held a prayer service. The late Rev Joseph Wing, the General Secretary of the United Congregational Church and Secretary of the Church Unity Commission and known affectionately as Mr Church Unity, broke down and with tears streaming down his face said, "I have been working many years for church unity. I have never experienced it to such an extent as now." We even took a collection because Leah, who had disobeyed her husband and joined our protest march, had met a young woman who would go to jail unless she paid her fine. It was a rare moment when a church collection had such immediate and dramatic results. When the South African Government banned most popular political organisations it did not think that the churches would do anything particularly significant. It must have been shocked when an impressive phalanx of church leaders representing a very wide spectrum of church affiliation descended on Cape Town and was arrested as it left the Anglican Cathedral of St George to march on Parliament next door. At the height of apartheid's repression when its perpetrators should have expected that the stuffing had been knocked out of our people, they must have been totally flabbergasted by the Defiance Campaign to disobey all apartheid laws under the aegis of the Mass Democratic Movement. The churches participated in all this through the South African Council of Churches' inspired "Standing for the Truth Campaign." Church leaders, especially in Cape Town, were trying to get arrested with varying degrees of failure. Those were heady days. The South African Government realised that it would have to increase the level of repression to an intensity that would be quite unacceptable to the international community. A reasonably united church witness together with the resilience of the people must have helped to persuade Mr de Klerk to undertake his remarkable and very courageous initiatives, including the release of Nelson Mandela and others, and then announce to Parliament on February 2nd 1990 the unbanning of political groups such as the ANC, PAC, SACP, etc. The subsequent exciting developments in South Africa therefore are in part due to the witness of the churches, a witness more potent because it was relatively united. There might indeed have been no apartheid in South Africa had some churches not sought to provide theological justification for this immoral and evil system.

From our experience then there can be no question at all that a united church is a far more effective agent for justice and peace against oppression and injustice. It may be that we will find our most meaningful unity as we strive

together for justice and peace. Just imagine what could happen in Northern Ireland and elsewhere if the churches could indeed speak and act as one, for religious differences have exacerbated political, social and economic differences.

It may be that we should sit far more loosely to huge international schemes and conversations and invest our resources more and more on regional, national and, even more effectively, on local initiatives and schemes. It would be what could be called ecumenism at work, a kind of bottom up approach. There is no reason why Anglicans in Namibia should not go ahead into a far closer relationship with Lutherans than might necessarily be the case in say the Republic of South Africa, because their experience during the liberation war threw them willy nilly into a close network of cooperation to survive as they ministered to people facing a common enemy. It may be that we should not expect to see spectacular developments at the international—what you might call the macro—level. It will happen mostly on the micro level as Christians face together the daunting problems in their locality. Sometimes the momentum will slacken because the enemy or the problem has been dealt with. Perhaps we must expect fluctuation in ecumenical zeal and enthusiasm. Facing a common enemy or problem tends to concentrate the mind. We must not be over-agitated when the zeal flags.

Our unity is ultimately like that of the divine Trinity. Some theologians made a distinction between the essential Trinity and the economic Trinity the Trinity of revelation, of salvation and sanctification, i.e. what we might call the Trinity at work. Maybe we should consider making a like distinction—the essential ontological unity of the Church and that unity as revealed in praxis.

The Faith and Order Commission has done a superb job with *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. A very substantial consensus has emerged about what the churches believe regarding baptism, the eucharist and ministry. I once asked when I was still a member of the Standing Commission, “Just what is sufficient consensus, such that the churches would be willing to take the leap of faith to embrace one another?” That is still a pertinent question. How much agreement is considered sufficient to justify going forward? It just might be that we cannot be argued into oneness, just as you cannot argue someone into faith in Jesus. Perhaps having done all we could cerebrally, we have to be like Philip and Andrew in their evangelistic method and say, “Come and see!” Come and experience what it can be to be one.

I once suggested that those churches which through cooperating in witness found that they had developed strong links, should go ahead and take the risk of behaving as if they were united, and then let the theologians sort

out the mess, such as it might be. In fact in a way so-called united churches, or rather congregations or parishes, are doing precisely this kind of thing. They may be anomalies in relation to their church policy but they could blaze the trail in their awkward ecclesiastical untidiness.

Do we accept the validity of one another's baptism as the sacramental act by which each person is grafted into the body of Christ? Do we think we mean much the same things about our faith when we recite the Apostles' and the Nicene Creeds? If the answers to these questions have been in the affirmative, then we share crucial elements that constitute conciliar fellowship. In addition we share belief that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are a unique record of God's saving revelation. So far as I can tell, almost every denomination declares that even if it does not accept the sacramental validity of the ministerial orders of others, it acknowledges their efficacy in so far as God somehow vouchsafes His grace through those ministers.

I wonder how long we are going to keep making this distinction between an almost juridical *validity* and efficacy without seeming to be ridiculous to the world watching us appear to be fiddling whilst our various Romes are burning? I have sometimes tried to imagine what would happen to say Anglicans if all their threefold ordained ministers were swept away in a special flood and only those churches remained whose orders Anglicans did not recognise as valid. Would the surviving Anglicans refuse to receive invalid sacraments? I wonder? What of Roman Catholics if say only Methodists or any others whom they did not believe stood in the apostolic succession ministerially? Don't we say God is not bound by His covenanted means of grace? Why don't we come together to pray that God will supply to all our churches, whatever it may be that we believe the others might be lacking?

We should each hold on to the things that we have believed made us distinctive. I am fond of the Adam and Eve story—when God remarks that it is not good for man to be alone. Then Adam is asked to choose a mate from among the animals. He rejects all of them and it is only when God produces that delectable creature, Eve, from his rib that Adam exults and finds fulfilment. The story speaks fundamentally about how we need other human beings in order to be human for none of us comes into the world fully formed. In our African idiom we say “a person is a person through other persons.” We are made for interdependence. We are different so that we may know our need of one another. We are made for complementarity. Consequently we should realise that we seek unity not uniformity, which thing we have asserted ad nauseam, and yet somehow we seem to give the impression that we cannot stand diversity in theology, liturgy, styles of worship, polity, etc. etc. We

forget again that our unity is meant to reflect the unity of the triune God, a unity in the diversity of persons. Most of us tend to be appalled by what is untraditional, unfamiliar and what is peculiar in theological thinking, in liturgical practice, in the ordering of church life, et al.

The unity of the Church is supposed to be celebrated as a foretaste of the Kingdom of God that is surely characterised by glorious diversity in which God calls people from all nations and races to worship Him. We might have something to say to those who are worried about political schemes that would obliterate their distinctiveness if we hold up a paradigm of unity in diversity and so stem the tide of fragmentation and fissiparousness. We could too, as the body of Jesus Christ where there is neither Jew nor Greek, etc., whose members although many form one body, put forward an example of profound unity where peculiar identity is not done away but is subsumed under a unity that transcends all that tends to separate.

When in September 1989 we had a massive march in Cape Town against the police shootings of those who had been protesting against the racist elections, I marched with a Jewish rabbi on one side and a Muslim imam on the other. In our common quest for justice and peace we realised that our ecumenism was intended to embrace the oikumene, the inhabited world and all its denizens, that God's concern was for all His people whatever their faith or ideology, for the Bible depicts God making the Noahic covenant with all humankind. We worship a God who could regard an Assyria as the rod of His anger and who could exalt a Cyrus to the position of being His "anointed," that His mercy and compassion were not the preserves of Christians alone. The rabbis tell how, after the episode of the Red Sea when the Egyptians were overwhelmed and the Israelites were celebrating their deliverance, Yahweh said, "How can you rejoice when my children have drowned?"

Yes indeed, God so loved *the world*, not the Church. . . . We cannot be serious about winning the world for God if we are not concerned about Christian unity. And we cannot be serious about ecumenism if we are not in earnest about interfaith dialogue. We must be unambiguous in calling for secular states in which all religions are treated equally and even-handedly with none enjoying unfair advantages over others. This will almost always be in those countries where Christians are a majority. We hope that adherents of other faiths will want to do likewise in those countries where they are dominant, but whether they do or not we are obliged by the imperatives of our faith to do what is right in our situations. Religious freedom and religious tolerance are precious things. We must be vigilant to resist the backlash of conservative Christian fundamentalism in the face of the proselytising zeal of other faiths. Christianity

must be commended to non-believers ultimately by the attractiveness of the lives of its adherents and not because it enjoys the patronage of the State.

One of the most wonderful things about being harassed and in trouble with your government because of trying to be obedient to your Lord and Master, is discovering the exhilarating reality of being a member of the Church of God. Ecclesiology comes alive. You realise that our Lord's promise to Peter to those who have left all to follow Him that they will have sisters and brothers, etc. more than they can number, is not frivolous. That it is true—you have all this family round the globe most of whom you will not meet this side of death and that they are praying for you, and that they love you, and uphold you. It is almost a physical sensation and you recall the vision in Zachariah when Yahweh promises that the restored Jerusalem will be so populous that it would not have conventional walls, but that Yahweh would be like a wall of fire round Jerusalem. We have experienced a like wall of fire in the love, prayers and concern of our sisters and brothers around the world. That is the deepest level of our *koinonia*, sharing in the life of the Spirit at this intimate level and that one of the most important things that has come out of WCC has been the ecumenical prayer cycle. When I was General Secretary of the SACC in some of our darkest moments of apartheid's harassment, I received the newsletter of a Lutheran parish in Alaska, no less. And there I heard that we were being prayed for and the newsletter contained our names. We were being prayed for by name in Alaska—well how could we not eventually win?

I once asked a solitary contemplative to tell me a little about her life. At the time she was living in the woods in California. Her day started at 2.00am, and she said she prayed for me. Well, well—here was I being prayed for at two in the morning, in the woods in California and I thought, "What chance does the South African Government stand?" Part of the South African Government's harassment led to its appointing a judicial commission, the Eloff Commission, to investigate the SACC. The purpose was so to discredit us that none of our overseas friends and partners, nor our South African member churches, would want to touch us with the proverbial barge pole. As it happened the Government was hoisted with its own petard for through making a few international telephone calls we had the most impressive array of overseas church leaders and delegations to descend on South Africa in a long time, to testify on behalf of the SACC. That was a tremendous act of solidarity and the Government ended up with considerable egg on its face.

Thank you dear friends for your love and support of economic sanctions and other forms of pressure, together with your fervent prayers, which have brought us to this point when a new South Africa is about to be born. You have a substantial share in that victory.

We need to help the churches develop their best and greatest asset—their spiritual resources. We should do all we can to develop and support the growing retreat movement for deepening our spiritual life. We must become more and more in our churches power houses of prayer where vigils and fasts are normal, matter of course occurrences. We should grow in holiness and in stillness and contemplation for we are exhorted, “Be still and know that I am God.” Our warfare is not against flesh and blood. To take on the powers and principalities we have to put on the whole armour of God. As we grow closer to God, so we will draw closer or, rather, we will be drawn closer to one another. An authentic Christian existence is quite impossible without an authentic spirituality when we put God where God belongs—first and in the centre of our personal and corporate lives. Such a spirituality, such an authentic encounter with God, will invariably send us away to look with the eyes of God, to hear with the ears of God, and to feel with the heart of God, what is happening in God’s world so that we can become God’s fellow workers. His agents of transfiguration to transform the ugliness of this world, its hatred, its alienation, its poverty, its hostility, its hunger, its fears and anxieties, its competitiveness, its evil, injustice, wars—all in to their glorious counterparts so that there is more caring, more joy, more laughter, more compassion, more sharing, more justice, more peace, more love.

Friends, sisters and brothers, we are members of one family, God’s family, the human family. An important characteristic of the family is that it shares. We have benefitted from the generosity of our friends in the more affluent parts of our globe. Thank you. And yet we must admit that there is something not right when the poorer countries are having to pay out to the richer a great deal more than they are receiving because of the enormous debt burden they are carrying. . . .

We have received so much from the north and have given hardly anything in return. I want to suggest that the West might consider a small gift we in Africa just could offer. It is the gift of *ubuntu*—difficult to translate into occidental languages. But it is the essence of being human, it declares that my humanity is caught up and inextricably bound up in yours—the Old Testament spoke of the bundle of life. I am because I belong. My humanity does not depend on extraneous things. It is intrinsic to who I am. I have value because I am a person and I am judged not so much on the basis of material possessions but on spiritual

at tributes, such as compassion, hospitality, warmth, caring about others.

The West has made wonderful strides in its impressive technological achievements and material prosperity. But its dominant achievement success ethic is taking its toll. People feel worthless, are often considered worthless, if they do not achieve. The worst thing that can happen to anyone is to fail. You must succeed at whatever cost. Profits, things, are often prized above people. *Ubuntu* might remind us of a biblical truth—all that we are, all that we have is gift. We are because God loved us, loves us and will love us forever. We don’t have to do anything to earn God’s love, we don’t have to impress God. We can do nothing to make God love us less. We can do nothing to make God love us more.

Friends, sisters and brothers, Christianity is not a religion of virtue. Christianity is a religion of grace. Can we help as the Church to transform our societies so that they are more people friendly, more gentle, more caring, more compassionate, more sharing. Then we will see the fulfilment of that wonderful vision:

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!” And all the angels stood round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen. (Rev. 7:9-11)

18. John Paul II, “*Ut Unum Sint*: Encyclical on Commitment to Ecumenism,” 1995

This encyclical letter from the Roman Catholic pontiff affirms that promoting Christian unity is “an organic part of [the Church’s] life and work” which must pervade all that it does. The encyclical, thus, builds on the spirit of Vatican II’s Decree on Ecumenism (see Chapter II) • Ut Unum Sint: Encyclical Letter on Commitment to Ecumenism, Vatican City, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995.

5. Together with all Christ's disciples, the Catholic Church bases upon God's plan her ecumenical commitment to gather all Christians into unity. Indeed, "the Church is not a reality closed in on herself. Rather, she is permanently open to missionary and ecumenical endeavour, for she is sent to the world to announce and witness, to make present and spread the mystery of communion which is essential to her, and to gather all people and all things into Christ, so as to be for all an 'inseparable sacrament of unity'."²⁸

Already in the Old Testament, the Prophet Ezekiel, referring to the situation of God's People at that time, and using the simple sign of two broken sticks which are first divided and then joined together, expressed the divine will to "gather from all sides" the members of his scattered people. "I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Then the nations will know that I the Lord sanctify Israel" (cf. 37:16-28). The Gospel of John, for its part, considering the situation of the People of God at the time it was written, sees in Jesus' death the reason for the unity of God's children: "Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad" (11:51-52). Indeed, as the Letter to the Ephesians explains, Jesus "broke down the dividing wall of hostility . . . through the Cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end"; in place of what was divided he brought about unity (cf. 2:14-16).

6. The unity of all divided humanity is the will of God. For this reason he sent his Son, so that by dying and rising for us he might bestow on us the Spirit of love. On the eve of his sacrifice on the Cross, Jesus himself prayed to the Father for his disciples and for all those who believe in him, that they *might be one*, a living communion. This is the basis not only of the duty, but also of the responsibility before God and his plan, which falls to those who through Baptism become members of the Body of Christ, a Body in which the fullness of reconciliation and communion must be made present. How is it possible to remain divided, if we have been "buried" through Baptism in the Lord's death, in the very act by which God, through the death of his Son, has broken down the walls of division? Division "openly contradicts the will of Christ, provides a stumbling block to the world, and inflicts damage on the most holy cause of proclaiming the Good News to every creature."²⁹

28. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion," *Communio Notio* (28 May 1992), 4; AAS 85 (1993), 840.

29. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1.

The Way of Ecumenism: The Way of the Church

7. "The Lord of the Ages wisely and patiently follows out the plan of his grace on behalf of us sinners. In recent times he has begun to bestow more generously upon divided Christians remorse over their divisions and a longing for unity. Everywhere, large numbers have felt the impulse of this grace, and among our separated brethren also *there increases from day to day a movement*, fostered by the grace of the Holy Spirit, *for the restoration of unity among all Christians*. Taking part in this movement, which is called ecumenical, are those who invoke the Triune God and confess Jesus as Lord and Saviour. They join in not merely as individuals but also as members of the corporate groups in which they have heard the Gospel, and which each regards as his Church and, indeed, God's. And yet almost everyone, though in different ways, *longs that there may be one visible Church of God*, a Church truly universal and sent forth to the whole world that the world may be converted to the Gospel and so be saved, to the glory of God."³⁰

8. This statement of the Decree *Unitatis Redintegratio* is to be read in the context of the complete teaching of the Second Vatican Council. The Council expresses the Church's decision to take up the ecumenical task of working for Christian unity and to propose it with conviction and vigour: "This sacred Synod exhorts all the Catholic faithful to recognize the signs of the times and to participate actively in the work of ecumenism."³¹

In indicating the Catholic principles of ecumenism, the Decree *Unitatis Redintegratio* recalls above all the teaching on the Church set forth in the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* in its chapter on the People of God.³² At the same time, it takes into account everything affirmed in the Council's Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae*.³³

The Catholic Church embraces with hope the commitment to ecumenism as a duty of the Christian conscience enlightened by faith and guided by love. Here too we can apply the words of Saint Paul to the first Christians of Rome: "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit"; thus our "hope does not disappoint us" (*Rom 5:5*). This is the hope of Christian unity, which has its divine source in the Trinitarian unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid., 4.

32. Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 14.

33. Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae*, 1 and 2.

9. Jesus himself, at the hour of his Passion, prayed “that they may all be one” (*Jn* 17:21). This unity, which the Lord has bestowed on his Church and in which he wishes to embrace all people, is not something added on, but stands at the very heart of Christ’s mission. Nor is it some secondary attribute of the community of his disciples. Rather, it belongs to the very essence of this community. God wills the Church, because he wills unity, and unity is an expression of the whole depth of his *agape*.

In effect, this unity bestowed by the Holy Spirit does not merely consist in the gathering of people as a collection of individuals. It is a unity constituted by the bonds of the profession of faith, the sacraments and hierarchical communion.³⁴ The faithful are *one* because, in the Spirit, they are in *communion* with the Son and, in him, share in his *communion* with the Father: “Our *fellowship* is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 *Jn* 1:3). For the Catholic Church, then, the *communion* of Christians is none other than the manifestation in them of the grace by which God makes them sharers in his own *communion*, which is his eternal life. Christ’s words “that they may be one” are thus his prayer to the Father that the Father’s plan may be fully accomplished, in such a way that everyone may clearly see “what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things” (*Eph* 3:9). To believe in Christ means to desire unity; to desire unity means to desire the Church; to desire the Church means to desire the communion of grace which corresponds to the Father’s plan from all eternity. Such is the meaning of Christ’s prayer: “*Ut unum sint.*”

10. In the present situation of the lack of unity among Christians and of the confident quest for full communion, the Catholic faithful are conscious of being deeply challenged by the Lord of the Church. The Second Vatican Council strengthened their commitment with a clear ecclesiological vision, open to all the ecclesial values present among other Christians. The Catholic faithful face the ecumenical question in a spirit of faith.

The Council states that the Church of Christ “subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the Successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him,” and at the same time acknowledges that “many elements of sanctification and of truth can be found outside her visible structure. These elements, however, as gifts properly belonging to the Church of Christ, possess an inner dynamism towards Catholic unity.”

“It follows that these separated Churches and Communities, though we believe that they suffer from defects,

have by no means been deprived of significance and value in the mystery of salvation. For the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as means of salvation which derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church.”³⁵

11. The Catholic Church thus affirms that during the two thousand years of her history she has been preserved in unity, with all the means with which God wishes to endow his Church, and this despite the often grave crises which have shaken her, the infidelity of some of her ministers, and the faults into which her members daily fall. The Catholic Church knows that, by virtue of the strength which comes to her from the Spirit, the weaknesses, mediocrity, sins and at times the betrayals of some of her children cannot destroy what God has bestowed on her as part of his plan of grace. Moreover, “the powers of death shall not prevail against it” (*Mt* 16:18). Even so, the Catholic Church does not forget that many among her members cause God’s plan to be discernible only with difficulty. Speaking of the lack of unity among Christians, the Decree on Ecumenism does not ignore the fact that “people of both sides were to blame,”³⁶ and acknowledges that responsibility cannot be attributed only to the “other side.” By God’s grace, however, neither what belongs to the structure of the Church of Christ nor that communion which still exists with the other Churches and Ecclesial Communities has been destroyed.

Indeed, the elements of sanctification and truth present in the other Christian Communities, in a degree which varies from one to the other, constitute the objective basis of the communion, albeit imperfect, which exists between them and the Catholic Church.

To the extent that these elements are found in other Christian Communities, the one Church of Christ is effectively present in them. For this reason the Second Vatican Council speaks of a certain, though imperfect communion. The Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* stresses that the Catholic Church “recognizes that in many ways she is linked”³⁷ with these Communities by a true union in the Holy Spirit.

12. The same Dogmatic Constitution listed at length “the elements of sanctification and truth” which in various ways are present and operative beyond the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church: “For there are many who honour Sacred Scripture, taking it as a norm of belief and of action, and who show a true religious zeal. They lovingly believe in

34. Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 14.

35. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 3.

36. Ibid.

37. No. 15.

God the Father Almighty and in Christ, Son of God and Saviour. They are consecrated by Baptism, through which they are united with Christ. They also recognize and receive other sacraments within their own Churches or Ecclesial Communities. Many of them rejoice in the episcopate, celebrate the Holy Eucharist, and cultivate devotion towards the Virgin Mother of God. They also share with us in prayer and other spiritual benefits. Likewise, we can say that in some real way they are joined with us in the Holy Spirit, for to them also he gives his gifts and graces, and is thereby operative among them with his sanctifying power. Some indeed he has strengthened to the extent of the shedding of their blood. In all of Christ's disciples the Spirit arouses the desire to be peacefully united, in the manner determined by Christ, as one flock under one shepherd.³⁸

The Council's Decree on Ecumenism, referring to the Orthodox Churches, went so far as to declare that "through the celebration of the Eucharist of the Lord in each of these Churches, the Church of God is built up and grows in stature."³⁹ Truth demands that all this be recognized.

13. The same Document carefully draws out the doctrinal implications of this situation. Speaking of the members of these Communities, it declares: "All those justified by faith through Baptism are incorporated into Christ. They therefore have a right to be honoured by the title of Christian, and are properly regarded as brothers and sisters in the Lord by the sons and daughters of the Catholic Church."⁴⁰

With reference to the many positive elements present in the other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, the Decree adds: "All of these, which come from Christ and lead back to him, belong by right to the one Church of Christ. The separated brethren also carry out many of the sacred actions of the Christian religion. Undoubtedly, in many ways that vary according to the condition of each Church or Community, these actions can truly engender a life of grace, and can be rightly described as capable of providing access to the community of salvation."⁴¹

These are extremely important texts for ecumenism. It is not that beyond the boundaries of the Catholic community there is an ecclesial vacuum. Many elements of great value (*eximia*), which in the Catholic Church are part of the fullness of the means of salvation and of the gifts of grace which make up the Church, are also found in the other Christian Communities.

38. Ibid.

39. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 15.

40. Ibid., 3.

41. Ibid.

14. All these elements bear within themselves a tendency towards unity, having their fullness in that unity. It is not a matter of adding together all the riches scattered throughout the various Christian Communities in order to arrive at a Church which God has in mind for the future. In accordance with the great Tradition, attested to by the Fathers of the East and of the West, the Catholic Church believes that in the Pentecost Event God has *already* manifested the Church in her eschatological reality, which he had prepared "from the time of Abel, the just one."⁴² This reality is something already given. Consequently we are even now in the last times. The elements of this already-given Church exist, found in their fullness in the Catholic Church and, without this fullness, in the other Communities,⁴³ where certain features of the Christian mystery have at times been more effectively emphasized. Ecumenism is directed precisely to making the partial communion existing between Christians grow towards full communion in truth and charity.

Renewal and Conversion

15. Passing from principles, from the obligations of the Christian conscience, to the actual practice of the ecumenical journey towards unity, the Second Vatican Council emphasizes above all *the need for interior conversion*. The messianic proclamation that "the time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand," and the subsequent call to "repent, and believe in the Gospel" (*Mk* 1:15) with which Jesus begins his mission, indicate the essential element of every new beginning: the fundamental need for evangelization at every stage of the Church's journey of salvation. This is true in a special way of the process begun by the Second Vatican Council, when it indicated as a dimension of renewal the ecumenical task of uniting divided Christians. "There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without a change of heart."⁴⁴

The Council calls for personal conversion as well as for communal conversion. The desire of every Christian Community for unity goes hand in hand with its fidelity to the Gospel. In the case of individuals who live their Christian vocation, the Council speaks of interior conversion, of a renewal of mind.⁴⁵

Each one therefore ought to be more radically converted to the Gospel and, without ever losing sight of

42. Cf. St. Gregory the Great, *Homilies on the Gospel*, 19, 1: *PL*, 1154, quoted in Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 2.

43. Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 4.

44. Ibid., 7.

45. Cf. Ibid.

God's plan, change his or her way of looking at things. Thanks to ecumenism, our contemplation of "the mighty works of God" (*mirabilia Dei*) has been enriched by new horizons, for which the Triune God calls us to give thanks: the knowledge that the Spirit is at work in other Christian Communities, the discovery of examples of holiness, the experience of the immense riches present in the communion of saints, and contact with unexpected dimensions of Christian commitment. In a corresponding way, there is an increased sense of the need for repentance: an awareness of certain exclusions which seriously harm fraternal charity, of certain refusals to forgive, of a certain pride, of an unevangelical insistence on condemning the "other side," of a disdain born of an unhealthy presumption. Thus, the entire life of Christians is marked by a concern for ecumenism; and they are called to let themselves be shaped, as it were, by that concern.

16. In the teaching of the Second Vatican Council there is a clear connection between renewal, conversion and reform. The Council states that "Christ summons the Church, as she goes her pilgrim way, to that continual reformation of which she always has need, insofar as she is an institution of human beings here on earth. Therefore, if the influence of events or of the times has led to deficiencies . . . these should be appropriately rectified at the proper moment."⁴⁶ No Christian Community can exempt itself from this call. . . .

21. "This *change of heart and holiness of life, along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians*, should be regarded as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement, and can rightly be called 'spiritual ecumenism'.⁴⁷

We proceed along the road leading to the conversion of hearts guided by love which is directed to God and, at the same time, to all our brothers and sisters, including those not in full communion with us. Love gives rise to the desire for unity, even in those who have never been aware of the need for it. Love builds communion between individuals and between Communities. If we love one another, we strive to deepen our communion and make it perfect. *Love is given to God* as the perfect source of communion—the unity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit—that we may draw from that source the strength to build communion between individuals and Communities, or to re-establish it between Christians still divided. Love is the great undercurrent which gives life and adds vigour to the movement towards unity.

46. *Ibid.*, 6.

47. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 6.

This love *finds its most complete expression in common prayer*. When brothers and sisters who are not in perfect communion with one another come together to pray, the Second Vatican Council defines their prayer as *the soul of the whole ecumenical movement*. This prayer is "a very effective means of petitioning for the grace of unity," "a *genuine expression of the ties which even now bind Catholics to their separated brethren*."⁴⁸ Even when prayer is not specifically offered for Christian unity, but for other intentions such as peace, it actually becomes an expression and confirmation of unity. The common prayer of Christians is an invitation to Christ himself to visit the community of those who call upon him: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (*Mt* 18:20).

22. When Christians pray together, the goal of unity seems closer. The long history of Christians marked by many divisions seems to converge once more because it tends towards that Source of its unity which is Jesus Christ. He "is the same yesterday, today and forever" (*Heb* 13:8). In the fellowship of prayer Christ is truly present; he prays "in us," "with us" and "for us." It is he who leads our prayer in the Spirit-Consoler whom he promised and then bestowed on his Church in the Upper Room in Jerusalem, when he established her in her original unity.

Along the ecumenical path to unity, pride of place certainly belongs to *common prayer*, the prayerful union of those who gather together around Christ himself. If Christians, despite their divisions, can grow ever more united in common prayer around Christ, they will grow in the awareness of how little divides them in comparison to what unites them. If they meet more often and more regularly before Christ in prayer, they will be able to gain the courage to face all the painful human reality of their divisions, and they will find themselves together once more in that community of the Church which Christ constantly builds up in the Holy Spirit, in spite of all weaknesses and human limitations. . . .

23. Finally, *fellowship in prayer leads people to look at the Church and Christianity in a new way*. It must not be forgotten in fact that the Lord prayed to the Father that his disciples might be one, so that their unity might bear witness to his mission and the world would believe that the Father had sent him (cf. *Jn* 17:21). It can be said that the ecumenical movement in a certain sense was born out of the negative experience of each one of those who, in proclaiming the one Gospel, appealed to his own Church or Ecclesial Community. This was a contradiction which could not escape those who listened to the message of salvation and

48. *Ibid.*, 8

found in this fact an obstacle to acceptance of the Gospel. Regrettably, this grave obstacle has not been overcome. It is true that we are not yet in full communion. And yet, despite our divisions, we are on the way towards full unity, that unity which marked the Apostolic Church at its birth and which we sincerely seek. Our common prayer, inspired by faith, is proof of this. In that prayer, we gather together in the name of Christ who is One. He is our unity.

“Ecumenical” prayer is at the service of the Christian mission and its credibility. It must thus be especially present in the life of the Church and in every activity aimed at fostering Christian unity. It is as if we constantly need to go back and meet in the Upper Room of Holy Thursday, even though our presence together in that place will not be perfect until the obstacles to full ecclesial communion are overcome and all Christians can gather together in the common celebration of the Eucharist.⁴⁹ . . .

19. John of Pergamon (John Zizioulas), “The Self-Understanding of the Orthodox and Their Participation in the Ecumenical Movement,” 2010

Metropolitan John of Pergamon, known to the readers of his many theological writings as John Zizioulas, is one of the most influential Orthodox theologians of his generation. He has served as a member of the WCC’s Faith and Order Commission and of various international dialogues. • The One and the Many, Alhambra, CA, Sebastian Press, 2010, pp. 322-32.

. . . On the level of theology, a decisive factor contributing to the continuing full participation of the Orthodox in the WCC was, in my view, the support given to the Ecumenical Movement by the eminent and deeply respected in conservative Orthodox circles Russian theologian, the late Fr G. Florovsky, whose role was decisive, particularly at the Evanston Assembly. Florovsky was the first one, as far as I am aware, to raise the question of the Orthodox participation in the Ecumenical Movement at a theological level. Up to that time the Orthodox limited themselves to the assertion that only the Orthodox Church is the *Una Sancta*, avoiding to raise the question of what the other

participants in the Ecumenical Movement ecclesiological were. When pressed to give an answer they would usually repeat Khomiakov’s view, shared by many emigre Russian theologians of this century, namely that we Orthodox can only say what we are ecclesiological, and it is only God who can decide about the fate of the others. The Toronto statement of 1950 did not simply have a negative function, namely to protect the Orthodox—and Roman Catholics—from a loss of their ecclesiological identity, but must be seen against the background of what we may call an “ecclesiological agnosticism” expressed by Khomiakov and many Orthodox with regard to the non-Orthodox members of the WCC.

Florovsky took the matter further, and the step he made must be taken into account even today. First, he insisted that the true catholicity of the Church requires the co-existence of both, Eastern and Western Christianity. Speaking of the “catholic ethos” of the ancient undivided Church, he made the point that this was due to the creative exchange between Greek and Latin Christianity, an exchange which ceased to exist after the great schism of the 11th century. His slogan “ecumenism in time” did not aim at an assertion of traditionalism, but expressed the conviction that the division between West and East has affected seriously the catholicity of the Church.

Furthermore, in an article in *The Ecumenical Review* Florovsky took the bold step of raising the question of the limits of the Church, thus addressing the issue of the ecclesial character of the non-Orthodox bodies. Comparing and analysing with his remarkable patristic scholarship the ecclesiologies of Cyprian and Augustine, he distinguished between the “canonical” borders (St. Cyprian’s position) and the “charismatic” borders (St. Augustine’s view) of the Church, not hesitating to accept as his personal view that of St. Augustine: the Church is not exhausted by her canonical borders; there is charismatic life beyond these borders (who can deny the holiness of persons like Francis of Assisi, he wrote); there is, in other words, some kind of ecclesiality beyond the canonical borders of the Orthodox Church.

These views of Florovsky were so advanced that I myself found them difficult to accept when I was writing my doctoral thesis, not because they appear to be unacceptable, but because they call for a great deal of explanation and investigation of the fundamental and still unresolved problem of the relation between the “canonical” and the “charismatic” in the Church. In any case, this position of Florovsky does not seem to have enjoyed a following, and the question still remains open whether the Orthodox participate in the Ecumenical Movement not recognising any ecclesiality in their non-Orthodox partners,

49. Cf. *Ibid.*, 4.

or whether they do so by implicitly admitting that there is some kind of ecclesiality in the latter. Some extremely conservative Orthodox would deny the use of the term “Church” with reference to any other group outside the Orthodox Church, while others would allow this use with the understanding that the word “Church” is used by these non-Orthodox groups to define themselves, and not by the Orthodox to define these groups—in other words the word “Church” does not carry the same ecclesiological meaning when applied by the Orthodox to their own Church as it does when applied by them to the non-Orthodox bodies. In the latter case “Church” can mean anything from an “incomplete” or “deficient” ecclesial entity to an entirely non-ecclesial one.

All this is possible because of the famous “Toronto Statement.” This statement allowed such an ecclesiological ambiguity, which made it possible for the WCC to develop and work without being hindered by it. Indeed, as history has shown, the WCC can exist without clarifying the position of its members with regard to the ecclesial status of their fellow-members. There seems to be no compelling reason why we should force the member churches to state clearly what they believe about the ecclesial status of the others. But this is only half of the story of the Toronto statement. The other half has to do with the question of the ecclesial character of the WCC itself. And this point, although different from the previous one which concerns the ecclesiality of the non-Orthodox members, is still dependent upon ecclesiology. Without clarifying our Ecclesiology the Orthodox cannot answer the question of the ecclesial character of the WCC. Let me offer some remarks on this:

I. Some Fundamental Orthodox Ecclesiological Principles (Relevant to Our Subject)

(1) The Church is one and only one, and she is an historical entity. We cannot be satisfied with an “invisible” Church or an “invisible” and “spiritual” unity. Bulgakov’s plea to approach the Church as a “spiritual” reality, as “experience of life” can be misleading. The Orthodox expect that the other Christians will take the visible unity of the Church seriously, and it is indeed gratifying to see that since Nairobi at least the call to visible unity has become central in the ecumenical agenda and language.

(2) The Church is also an eschatological entity. This is not a statement to replace the previous one concerning the historical character of the Church. It is meant to remind us that the historical entity called Church is constantly called to reflect the eschatological community, to be a sign and image of the Kingdom. Without an eschatological

vision the Ecumenical Movement will deteriorate into an ephemeral secular affair. The Orthodox wish to be there as a constant reminder of the eschatological vision of the Church. Whatever we are as historical entities each of the Church-members of the WCC must be constantly judged by what the Kingdom calls us to be, by what we shall be. It is encouraging to see such study programmes in the WCC agenda as that called “the Church as a prophetic sign of the Kingdom,” but is doubtful that such an eschatological vision marks the Ecumenical Movement in its entirety and in a decisive way.

(3) The Church is a relational entity, and this means several important things. The first is that the Church is not a petrified entity transmitted from one generation to another as an archaeological treasure. Some Orthodox would tend to give to this “conservation” of the past the utmost priority. And yet, if we take such an attitude—which is not what the Fathers did—we shall soon end up with a Church unable to relate to the problems of each time and incapable of carrying on the saving work of Christ in history. The Church is only where the Spirit is, and where the Spirit is the past relates to the present and the present is opened up to the future. All this is implied in what we call Reception of tradition. What we have inherited from the Fathers, be it dogmas, ethos or liturgy, must be received and re-received all the time, and in this process the past becomes existentially, and not simply mentally or ritually, present. The agenda of WCC seems to have paid attention to the problem of Reception, and yet it is questionable whether this is being done satisfactorily. This is so because the Orthodox, on the one hand, do not seem to be willing to let their tradition (dogmatic and otherwise) be challenged enough by the problems of the day (cf. their reaction to what is named “horizontalism”), while the non-Orthodox, on the other hand seem to be totally unwilling to take into consideration what has traditionally been conveyed to us (cf. the way in which the issue of the ordination of women has been decided by them). The Orthodox are there in the Ecumenical Movement to remind us of the importance of tradition, but also of its creative re-reception. The Ecumenical Movement has to see the mystery of the Church against the background of reception all the time.

The relational character of the Church concerns also her structure and ministry. It would be a mistake to think of the Church as an unstructured entity, but it would also be wrong to think of her structures as valid in themselves, apart from the *koinonia*, which they are meant to convey. The same is also true of the Church’s ministries. This is what we are taught by Trinitarian theology, and Pneumatology in particular, as the basis of ecclesiology. The

concept of *koinonia* is gaining ground in the agenda of the WCC, and this is a good thing. It is too early to say where this new approach will lead us. One of the dangers that the Orthodox would wish to see avoided is a kind of sanctification of diversity at the expense of unity. . . . It is in any case important to underline the critical significance of this concept for the Ecumenical Movement. Orthodox ecclesiology will have to make a crucial contribution on this matter, on which, I personally believe, the future of the Ecumenical Movement will depend a great deal.

(4) The Church is a sacramental entity. This is another point on which Orthodox participation in the Ecumenical Movement would focus its contribution. This point is probably the most difficult one owing to the fact that it involves eucharistic fellowship which the Orthodox deny to the non-Orthodox. The discussion of the problem does not have to be repeated here. What seems to be crucial is that eucharistic fellowship should not cease to be the goal (the Orthodox would say the ultimate goal) of the Ecumenical Movement. The importance in keeping this issue alive and central lies in the fact that through it the WCC will maintain its non-secular character, which otherwise it may lose. BEM is a good beginning, and it has revealed a great potential for further progress. Protestant Churches have made through this document a big step towards sacramental, particularly eucharistic, thinking, and this in itself is quite significant. The question that the Orthodox will soon have to answer, if this sacramental thinking continues to mark the problematic of the Ecumenical Movement, is to what extent recognition of Baptism implies recognition of ecclesiality.

These are but a few, yet fundamental, ecclesiological principles that the Orthodox carry—or should I say ought to carry?—with them in the Ecumenical Movement. This is how they understand the Church, and this is how they would like their ecumenical partners to think of the Church. They do not wish to see the WCC turn into a Church of this kind. They do wish, however, it to be a “fellowship of Churches” aiming and working towards conformity to this kind of Church. Unity will be restored in a healthy way when this “fellowship,” encouraged, supported and built by the WCC, will be constantly inspired by and aspiring to the right “model” of the Church indicated by the above principles. This may mean, in final analysis, that the ecclesiological pluralism proposed by the Toronto statement will have to be rejected. The WCC must not become a Church, but it must eventually acquire a basically common idea of the Church. We cannot go on for ever and ever holding different or contradictory views of the Church. It was wise to begin with the ecclesiological “laissez-faire” of Toronto but it would be catastrophic to end with it.

II. The “Ecclesial” Character of the WCC

The WCC cannot be turned into a Church but it must acquire an ecclesial vision shared by all its member churches. This seems to be the conclusion of the previous section. But how would the WCC perform this mission? Is it simply by organising meetings, publishing books etc.? Or is it rather through the fact of being a “fellowship,” i.e., of being an event of communion? If the latter is the case, as it in fact seems to be, the question of its ecclesiological significance appears to be inevitable. For you cannot build up a fellowship through which the consciousness of the *Una Sancta* would emerge before the eyes of those not having seen it before without acquiring some experience of the reality of the *Una Sancta*. If the means by which you come to experience the true Church is through the fellowship, sometimes painful as the lack of intercommunion can show, then this fellowship must inevitably carry an ecclesiological significance.

Here the options before the Orthodox are limited: either they regard the WCC as a mere organizer of meetings in which case Church unity will emerge through theological persuasion and conversion, or they accept it as a fellowship through which—i.e. through being and working and reflecting theologically and suffering and witnessing, etc. together, and above all by sharing a common vision of what the Church is—they will come to the point of confessing not only one Lord but also one Church, the *Una Sancta*. There is logically no other alternative laid before the Orthodox with regard to their participation in the Ecumenical Movement. It seems to me that there are indications that the Orthodox have in fact opted for the second of these two alternatives. These indications include the following:

(a) The Basis of the World Council of Churches. The Orthodox more than anyone else have insisted from the beginning that the basis of WCC be narrowed down as much as possible, and they have in fact succeeded in bringing it down to the confession of faith in the Holy Trinity. They now express the desire to limit membership of the WCC to those accepting and practising Baptism. This is all very good, but what about its implications for the nature of the WCC? If the WCC acquires its identity—this is what the basis means—through confession of faith in the Trinity and Baptism, these things constitute lines of demarcation from other communities or organizations. The WCC, therefore, cannot be considered “as a pagan or a tax-collector” (Matt. 18:17); there is something to it stemming from faith in the Triune God and from Baptism, otherwise what is the point in insisting that the WCC should be made up only of such people? Are such things as Trinitarian faith and Baptism sufficient to make up an ecclesial reality? Certainly not. Yet

that they are totally insignificant ecclesiological would be hard to accept.

(b) The Confession of the Creed. The Orthodox attach great significance to the Creeds, and rightly so. Particularly the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed is the object of reverence and the basis of ecclesial unity for the Orthodox. We have not come to the point of making this Creed the sole basis of credal confession in the WCC, but there has been some progress in this matter. Is this totally irrelevant ecclesiological? The Orthodox would say that until all Protestants accept the seven Ecumenical Councils there can be no ecclesial reality in them. This is so. But is the movement in that direction totally void of ecclesiological significance? This is a question that cannot be avoided.

(c) Common action in facing contemporary issues. Ethics cannot be separated from faith anymore than Orthodoxy can be divorced from Orthopraxis. We act as Christians not because of some impersonal moral imperative but because we believe in a God who not only orders us to behave in a certain way, but offers Himself as love for His creation and wants us to share this love. It is because we believe in a God who is communion as Trinity that we are called to be persons of communion. All moral issues have for us a theological basis. This means that in acting together in the WCC on ethical issues we share and express the same faith. This is not necessarily the case in all ethical action, for many Christians do not make necessarily the connection between faith and ethics. Here the WCC is often seen to act as a humanistic or sociological entity. This is what made the Orthodox at Uppsala accuse the WCC of "horizontalism." The more, however, it relates its social, ecological etc. activities with faith the more the question is raised whether our common action is ecclesiological irrelevant. Father Borovoy has rightly underlined the statement of early ecumenists: "to act as if we were one Church." He rightly recognizes ecclesiological significance in such a statement, for although acting as if is a conditional expression, it nonetheless indicates a common motivation and perhaps a common vision. And what we are looking for together affects to some extent what we already are.

Some Conclusions

The question of Orthodox self-understanding was raised at the beginning as a matter of self-consciousness vis-à-vis the WCC. This is still the case with many Orthodox and with the Orthodox Church officially as a whole: it is a question of "us" versus "them" (the WCC). This is not inexplicable. A great deal of responsibility for this attitude of the Orthodox belongs to the WCC itself which has often tended to push the Orthodox to the margin and treat them

as a troublesome minority. The WCC documents were often written by Protestants, and the Orthodox were simply called to comment on them. Majority votes have often frustrated the Orthodox and made them want to produce their own separate statements. It would be totally unrealistic to ignore the fact that the Orthodox feel at times that they belong to the WCC only nominally and constitutionally, while they remain strangers spiritually. There is, of course, a great deal of responsibility for this situation that belongs to the Orthodox themselves. When staff positions are offered to them, they are unprepared to fill them with appropriate candidates. Very often they display a negative spirit at meetings, as if they were seeking confrontation rather than co-operation. There is also in certain quarters a spiritual terrorism against ecumenism which paralyzes church leaders who fear that they may lose their "good reputation," since genuine Orthodoxy has become identical with negativity and polemic. All this contributes to the formation of Orthodox self-consciousness in opposition to or vis-à-vis the WCC.

But what about Orthodox self-consciousness as it emerges from within the membership of the WCC? For it is undeniable that for decades now the Orthodox Church is an integral and organic part of the Ecumenical Movement and the WCC, and as such it has been forming its self-consciousness not vis-à-vis but as part of the WCC. What, in other words, is Orthodox self-consciousness in relation to the WCC when it is considered not as "them" and "us" but as simply "us"?

The answer to this question is that, in my view at least, the relation between the Orthodox and the non-Orthodox within the WCC is and will always be a dialectical one. This is due to the fact that the Orthodox will always feel as sui generis Christians in relation to the West. This is the sad consequence of the gap between West and East produced by the great schism and deepened by centuries of estrangement and autonomous existence. Both sides cultivate this gap even in our time. On the Orthodox side there is a growing self-consciousness of difference or even superiority over the barbarian West, while in the West books are written to show how the Orthodox world (grouped together with Islam!) is totally incompatible with the civilized West. All this affects the formation of Orthodox self-consciousness, and although the WCC has no responsibility whatsoever for this matter it should do its best to convince the world that the gulf between Orthodoxy and the West can and must be bridged. Here is an item of priority for the agenda of the WCC. We must turn the dialectic between West and East into a healthy and creative one. If the dialectic between Orthodoxy and the West becomes within the WCC a healthy and creative one, Orthodox

self-consciousness will emerge as bearing the following characteristics:

(1) The Orthodox will never depart from their conviction that the Orthodox Church is the *Una Sancta*. This is due to their faith that the Church is an historical entity and that we cannot seek her outside the tradition historically bequeathed and appropriated. Unless they have reasons to move to another Christian confession or Church, i.e. as long as they remain Orthodox, they will identify the *Una Sancta* with their church. But ecumenical experience is taking away all triumphalism from such a conviction. The *Una Sancta* transmitted in and through tradition is not a possession of the Orthodox. It is a reality judging us all (eschatological) and is something to be constantly received. The Ecumenical Movement offers the context of such a re-reception which takes place in common with the other Christians. This amounts to an overcoming of confessionalism: the *Una Sancta* is not statically “enclosed” in a certain credal “confession” calling for “conversions” to it.

(2) The Orthodox will have to keep pressing for a common stance on or vision of the *Una Sancta* in the Ecumenical Movement. In the process of ecumenical reception the “fellowship” of the member Churches will have to grow into a common vision and recognition of what the true Church is. This will be done through the intensification of ecclesiological studies as well as constant reminders of the significance of being and acting together as a matter of common faith and ecclesial vision. In this respect the Toronto statement will have to be stripped of its ecclesiological pluralism. I do not agree with the view that the WCC should not develop an ecclesiology. On the contrary I believe this to be a priority for it.

(3) With regard to the ecclesiological significance of the WCC itself, the Orthodox will not be in a position to accept the WCC as a Church, i.e. as a body that can be identified through the marks of the *Una Sancta*, for it lacks the presuppositions of such marks, at least from the perspective of Orthodox ecclesiology. But we must distinguish between being a Church and bearing ecclesiological significance. Anything that contributes to the building up of the Church or to the reception and fulfilment of the Church’s life and unity bears ecclesiological significance. In this respect the Ecumenical Movement and the WCC in particular are strongly qualified candidates, for they have as their primary object and *raison d’être* the restoration of the unity of the Church. This makes it imperative for the WCC to keep the unity of the Church at the centre of its life and concerns. It is this that makes it ecclesologically significant.

Finally the question must be asked: does bearing an ecclesiological significance amount to having an ecclesial character? At this point terminology becomes extremely

delicate. If by “ecclesial character” we wish to mean a “Church,” then in accordance with what was stated above such an ecclesial character should be denied. If on the other hand having an “ecclesial character” means participating in the event of a “fellowship” through which the Church’s unity is being restored, such a character clearly belongs to the nature of the Ecumenical Movement and the WCC. Denying, therefore, a priori and without explanation an ecclesial character to the Ecumenical Movement and the WCC would turn these into totally secular entities.

The Orthodox participate in the Ecumenical Movement out of their conviction that the unity of the Church is an inescapable imperative for all Christians. This unity cannot be restored or fulfilled except through the coming together of those who share the same faith in the Triune God and are baptized in His name. The fellowship that results from this coming together on such a basis and for such a purpose cannot but bear an ecclesiological significance, the precise nature of which will have to be defined. . . .

20. Joan Brown Campbell, “One Shepherd, One Flock,” 2010

Campbell is a former general secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA. This sermon is taken from a collection of sermons preached during her many years of ecumenical leadership. • Living into Hope, Woodstock, VT, Sky-light Paths Publishing, 2010, pp. 27-32.

I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they too will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. (John 10: 14-16)

I grew up in a loving but very strict Presbyterian family, the grand-daughter of a Bible professor at Muskingum College in New Concord, Ohio. When we were little children, Grandfather—no diminutive “Gramps” for this Calvinist soldier of the faith!—expected my sister and me to memorize great swaths of scripture. Each time he came to our

home he would test us to see if we had learned the passages he had assigned. Family lore maintains that when I was five years old, I could repeat from memory the first chapter of Genesis. But when I asked Grandfather *why* he required these enormous feats of memory, the answer made less sense than the gruelling act of memorization. We memorized scripture, he explained, to prepare us for that day when, for our faith, we might end up in prison without a Bible. This scenario seemed highly improbable to the daughters of a middle-class doctor. But learn the Bible we did—the King James Version, of course—and those texts are engraved on my memory to this day.

My forays into jail for various protests were short-lived and allowed little time for reciting the Bible. But over the course of my ecumenical life, I have encountered those who have, in fact, been imprisoned for their firmly held beliefs and all of them—every single one—declared that they had drawn strength from the memory of Bible texts that flooded in on them and gave them peace. So perhaps Grandfather was right. The faith of my childhood was passionate and disciplined and it has, over the years, stood me in good stead. But it was a faith with limits that was biblically grounded and replete with rules. It was a very conservative faith that allowed little room for ambiguity.

To mature in the faith meant that I needed to explore for myself the complexity of biblical truths. It meant that I needed to give myself permission to question and then to believe anew. It meant that I needed to move beyond my purely Presbyterian roots to a sense of the unity of all God's children. And from there, it was just a short hop to the larger world—the embrace of the ecumenical was inevitable. My rootedness in the Bible was the very thing that allowed me to move beyond my limited, childlike faith to the profound reality that no denomination or communion or faith possesses the whole truth. Jesus's gift of life is the starting place. His truth is not denominational and—though this may be a radical thought—it may in fact be true that we are called to embrace not just our own faith but also the unfamiliar faiths of others.

One of our great illusions is that we believe that somehow we can attest to God's love amid our foolish divisions and carefully drawn denominational differences. We are fearful, after all, of losing our distinctiveness as Presbyterians or Lutherans or Methodists or Catholics. But we really don't have to worry; we are not likely to lose our identity, or our sense of who we are, if we take the risk of being one, as Jesus prayed we would be. After all, we are each unique and distinctive in God's eyes. God knows us and claims each and every one of us as his own: "I know my own and my own know me," insists Jesus the Good Shepherd (John 10:14). But lest we become prideful, he also acknowledges others who are not part of our flock.

God never told us to divide ourselves up. Our job is simple: to know the voice and the call of our shepherd. It is the shepherd's job to define who is in the flock and who is not. "I lay down my life for the sheep" says Jesus, "I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd" (John 10: 15-16). At the time this gospel was written, scholars think, there was division and disunity among the groups of people who followed the teachings of Jesus. So the future prospect of unity would have been a freeing and liberating reality to people of faith in the first century, just as it is to us today.

Think of the time, energy, pain, and suffering that human beings have put in to figuring out who is in and who is out. We have separated people by race, by gender, by class, by denomination, by national identity, by age, by sexual identity, and by a thousand other petty details—all of them feeble and faithless attempts to undo Jesus's command that we love one another. We have resorted to war and violence to justify our divisions and draw lines around our little flocks and separate insiders and outsiders, enemies and friends.

What we have not done very much is to listen carefully to the passage about the good shepherd. There is only one shepherd, it proclaims, so there can be only one flock—a worldwide flock that the shepherd calls us to feed, house, clothe, nurture, and love, beyond boundaries, accidents of birth, and faith systems that are unfamiliar to us. Following our shepherd is the way to justice and peace. The question for our day is not only "Can we hear the shepherd's voice?" but also "Are we prepared to respond to it? Will we abandon our divisions and put our energy and our imagination into serving God's people everywhere?"

To work for unity is no small thing. It is to involve ourselves in the lives of people whose faces we may never see, whose names we may never call. In the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, the civil rights movement gained momentum as African Americans struggled against social and economic discrimination. Martin Luther King, Jr., became the movement's recognized and respected leader until his assassination in 1968. He lived a life of commitment to unity through racial justice and reconciliation that flowed not just from the color of his skin, not just from his personal experience of suffering, but from his Christian heart and soul that saw the glory of God. He internalized the future of God's flock, where there were no more tears, no more senseless killing, no more divisions.

In one of Dr. King's final speeches, given at New York City's Riverside Church on April 4, 1967, he called for our loyalties to be "ecumenical rather than sectional"—it was the only way, he insisted, to serve and to save humankind. For all ecumenists, for all those who pray for unity and renewal of

our broken human community, both serving and saving the broken human community are part and parcel of our calling. For it is the cries of God's people, the groaning of creation that makes the sin of our disunity incandescently clear.

If we are to bring an end to racism and poverty, then we need more than Presbyterians or Episcopalians or Disciples going it alone. If we are to be peacemakers, then Roman Catholics and Protestants, Buddhists, Jews, Hindus, and Muslims all need to find common ground. If we are to be agents of reconciliation, then we Christians must model a table fellowship that is gracious and hospitable and welcoming. Jews and Muslims also pray for unity, so that the children of Abraham might together serve the purpose of the God who is father of us all. One flock is the only way to go.

Is this just unrealistic talk? Fine for theologians and academics and church bureaucrats, but highly improbable in the real world in which most of us live?

How dare we think that if unity does not come by our prayers, our hands, then we have a right to give up! Who hopes for what they see? We hope for what we do not see, and we wait—and work—for it with patience. Every January for more than a century we have observed a week of prayer for Christian unity. It would be easy to say, "If it has not come in all this time, then what hope is there?" But is it just possible that our work joins with all that has gone before to create an unending prayer for unity? Isn't it possible that our work continues to create a climate where division offends us and unity attracts us? Ours is not to complete the task; it is to run with perseverance the race that is set before us, trusting that God will intercede for the saints according to his will. If we cannot trust, then there is in fact no hope. But if we can trust, then we dare to commit ourselves anew to the quest for the unity of the church and the renewal of our broken human community.

In 1998, on one of his many visits to the National Council of Churches, Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity spoke to this very question of the hopelessness of our time. The search for Christian unity, he said, is like climbing a very steep mountain. When the climb begins, the mountaineers are cheered and lauded for their courage, their bravery, their willingness to risk their lives. But as they proceed up the mountain and out of sight, the crowd forgets them and the climbers are alone with only their vision to inspire them. They come to a point where they must either turn back or press forward. If they decide to go forward, there will come a time when they cannot go back. In order to sustain life, they must proceed. As Cassidy remarked, we are at that point, too. We are out of sight of the cheering crowd, with only the vision of the mountaintop to sustain us.

Perhaps we can turn to Dr. King for inspiration and guidance on our journey. In his very last sermon, delivered on April 3, 1968, in support of striking sanitation workers at Mason Temple in Memphis, Tennessee, he said:

We've got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been to the mountaintop. . . . I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people will get to the promised land. And I'm happy tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.⁵⁰

Like those who have gone before us up the mountain, we call return to the vision of unity that Jesus articulated in the story of the good shepherd and make it our vision too. That vision can sustain us as we continue to work toward an ecumenical, interreligious dream.

As people of faith, as members of the human race, we believe in a God whose way is to integrate, to heal, and to make whole. It is the ecumenical, interfaith way. We believe in a God large enough to have created worlds unknown to us. Our faith encourages a way of life steeped in renewal, redemption, and rebirth—which in turn provides the freedom to care, to risk, to step out into the unknown. That is the kind of faith found in people who understand themselves to be related to God, the ultimate reality that religion affirms. The interfaith pilgrimage is God's gift and challenge to us, for ultimately, we all belong to the same flock and the same shepherd.

50. Martin Luther King, Jr., *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James M. Washington, New York: Harper Collins, 1986, p. 286.

CHAPTER TWO

The Unity of the Church: Toward a Common Definition

Introduction

The goal of the ecumenical movement, inspired by Christ's prayer in John 17, is the unity of the church. What may be the seminal ecumenical document, the 1920 encyclical of the (Orthodox) Ecumenical Patriarchate, encouraged "the preparation and advancement of that blessed union which will be completed in the future in accordance with the will of God," and called, as an interim step, for "a league (fellowship) between the churches." Seven decades later, the seventh assembly of the WCC (which defines itself as a "fellowship of churches") spoke of the church as a foretaste of communion with God and one another, and lamented that the historical churches "have remained satisfied to co-exist in division." Both texts, as well as others that lift up a vision of Christian unity, are included in this chapter.

Ecumenical contact has made clear, however, that the churches have not only been divided; they have been divided over what it would mean to be united! Some churches, and many individual Christians, have historically insisted that unity is primarily a matter of spiritual harmony. Others have emphasized agreement concerning the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. For others, episcopal structure is of decisive importance to the realization and maintenance of unity. The church is visibly one, they have argued, when its bishops are in communion with each other and in continuity with the early church.

A particularly influential formulation of what unity requires is the (Anglican) Lambeth Quadrilateral. According to this understanding, seen in the second text below, unity demands a) a mutual recognition of scripture as the rule and standard of faith, b) a mutual recognition of the Apostles' and Nicene creeds as the sufficient statement of Christian belief, c) a common celebration of the sacraments of baptism and holy communion, and d) a mutual recognition of the historic episcopate as the "best instrument" for preserving unity and continuity. The continuing significance of this framework can be seen in various statements included in this chapter.

The first real definition of the unity of the church developed through ecumenical dialogue was set forth at the WCC's third assembly in 1961. This now-classic New Delhi Statement speaks of the church being one when it lives as a "fully committed fellowship" of "all in each place." Subsequent

WCC assemblies added flesh to this skeleton, especially the gathering in Nairobi (1975) where the one church was envisioned as “a conciliar fellowship of local churches which are themselves truly united.” What is new in this is the idea that churches, separated by geography and culture, should from time to time come together in councils in order to speak with authority on issues of common concern. Nairobi stressed that locally united churches—with their distinctive cultural, social, political and historical contexts—“should manifest a rich diversity,” a point also made by the Uppsala assembly (1968) in its discussion of “catholicity.” Substantial portions of the reports from New Delhi, Uppsala and Nairobi are included in this chapter.

At the same time these definitions were being written, an alternative, though not necessarily contradictory, perspective was beginning to be advanced as a result of the Roman Catholic Church’s entry into ecumenical discussions. The idea of “organic union” (as New Delhi’s vision is often called) among churches in regional or national settings is at odds with Catholic ecclesiology. Far preferable, as Rome sees it, are bilateral conversations aimed at the reconciliation of theological differences between global church families (e.g., the Lutheran World Federation or the Anglican Communion).

Perhaps the first major expression of what this might mean for concepts of unity came in a 1970 speech by the then-president of the Vatican’s unity secretariat, Jan Willebrands (included below). Unity is best thought of, said Cardinal Willebrands, as a “plurality of types” within the communion of the universal church. Other churches, adopting this basic position, have spoken of unity as a “communion of communions” or “unity in reconciled diversity,” formulations of which can be found in this chapter.

The favored term in current discussions of the meaning of unity is koinonia, a Greek word usually translated as “fellowship” or “communion.” Koinonia, as used in the New Testament, focuses more on the quality of relationships among Christians than on institutional structures. Perhaps most importantly, koinonia is not a static image but one that enables Christians to think of unity as a deepening and expanding of life together. The selections from the WCC’s Canberra assembly (1991) and the World Council’s Porto Alegre assembly (2006) all use koinonia as their organizing concept.

Another way to approach this set of readings is to recognize that various models of unity reflect different understandings of what it is that primarily divides us. For some, division is primarily manifest in the existence of separate church communities and structures, each with its own ecclesial identity. For others, division is most fundamentally a matter of theological convictions that lead to estrangement at the Lord’s table. Still others, however, look first to the basic separations within the human family—between rich and poor, oppressor and oppressed—and contend that divisions in the church have primarily to do with how we respond to, or participate in, these divisions in the world. Proponents of this last understanding often talk of “unity in solidarity.” Their concerns find clear expression in a famous speech by Jose Miguez Bonino and a Faith and Order study on “Unity in Tension,” both included in this chapter.

21. "Unto the Churches of Christ Everywhere," Encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, 1920

Willem Visser 't Hooft called this encyclical, drafted by the holy synod of the Church of Constantinople, "an initiative which was without precedent in church history." Although it generated little immediate response, this brief statement represents the first step toward formation of the WCC. • W.A. Visser 't Hooft, The Genesis and Formation of the WCC, Geneva, WCC, 1982, pp. 94-97.

*"Love one another earnestly from the heart."
(1 Pet. 1:22)*

Our own church holds that rapprochement between the various Christian churches and fellowship between them is not excluded by the doctrinal differences which exist between them. In our opinion such a rapprochement is highly desirable and necessary. It would be useful in many ways for the real interest of each particular church and of the whole Christian body, and also for the preparation and advancement of that blessed union which will be completed in the future in accordance with the will of God. We therefore consider that the present time is most favourable for bringing forward this important question and studying it together.

Even if in this case, owing to antiquated prejudices, practices or pretensions, the difficulties which have so often jeopardized attempts at reunion in the past may arise or be brought up, nevertheless, in our view, since we are concerned at this initial stage only with contacts and rapprochement, these difficulties are of less importance. If there is good will and intention, they cannot and should not create an invincible and insuperable obstacle.

Wherefore, considering such an endeavour to be both possible and timely, especially in view of the hopeful establishment of the League of Nations, we venture to express below in brief our thoughts and our opinion regarding the way in which we understand this rapprochement and contact and how we consider it to be realizable; we earnestly ask and invite the judgment and the opinion of the other sister churches in the East and of the venerable Christian churches in the West and everywhere in the world.

We believe that the two following measures would greatly contribute to the rapprochement which is so much to be desired and which would be so useful, and we believe that they would be both successful and fruitful:

First, we consider as necessary and indispensable the removal and abolition of all the mutual mistrust and bitterness between the different churches which arise from the tendency of some of them to entice and proselytize adherents of other confessions. For nobody ignores what is unfortunately happening today in many places, disturbing the internal peace of the churches, especially in the East. So many troubles and sufferings are caused by other Christians and great hatred and enmity are aroused, with such insignificant results, by this tendency of some to proselytize and entice the followers of other Christian confessions.

After this essential re-establishment of sincerity and confidence between the churches, we consider,

Secondly, that above all, love should be rekindled and strengthened among the churches, so that they should no more consider one another as strangers and foreigners, but as relatives, and as being a part of the household of Christ and "fellow heirs, members of the same body and partakers of the promise of God in Christ" (Eph. 3:6).

For if the different churches are inspired by love, and place it before everything else in their judgments of others and their relationships with them, instead of increasing and widening the existing dissensions, they should be enabled to reduce and diminish them. By stirring up a right brotherly interest in the condition, the wellbeing and stability of the other churches; by readiness to take an interest in what is happening in those churches and to obtain a better knowledge of them, and by willingness to offer mutual aid and help, many good things will be achieved for the glory and the benefit both of themselves and of the Christian body. In our opinion, such a friendship and kindly disposition towards each other can be shown and demonstrated particularly in the following ways:

- a) By the acceptance of a uniform calendar for the celebration of the great Christian feasts at the same time by all the churches.
- b) By the exchange of brotherly letters on the occasion of the great feasts of the churches' year as is customary, and on other exceptional occasions.
- c) By close relationships between the representatives of all churches wherever they may be.
- d) By relationships between the theological schools and the professors of theology; by the exchange of theological and ecclesiastical reviews, and of other works published in each church.

- e) By exchanging students for further training between the seminaries of the different churches.
- f) By convoking pan-Christian conferences in order to examine questions of common interest to all the churches.
- g) By impartial and deeper historical study of doctrinal differences both by the seminaries and in books.
- h) By mutual respect for the customs and practices in different churches.
- i) By allowing each other the use of chapels and cemeteries for the funerals and burials of believers of other confessions dying in foreign lands.
- j) By the settlement of the question of mixed marriages between the confessions.
- k) Lastly, by wholehearted mutual assistance for the churches in their endeavours for religious advancement, charity and so on.

Such a sincere and close contact between the churches will be all the more useful and profitable for the whole body of the Church, because manifold dangers threaten not only particular churches, but all of them. These dangers attack the very foundations of the Christian faith and the essence of Christian life and society. For the terrible world war which has just finished brought to light many unhealthy symptoms in the life of the Christian peoples, and often revealed great lack of respect even for the elementary principles of justice and charity. Thus it worsened already existing wounds and opened other new ones of a more material kind, which demand the attention and care of all the churches. Alcoholism, which is increasing daily; the increase of unnecessary luxury under the pretext of bettering life and enjoying it; the voluptuousness and lust hardly covered by the cloak of freedom and emancipation of the flesh; the prevailing unchecked licentiousness and indecency in literature, painting, the theatre, and in music, under the respectable name of the development of good taste and cultivation of fine art; the deification of wealth and the contempt of higher ideals; all these and the like, as they threaten the very essence of Christian societies, are also timely topics requiring and indeed necessitating common study and cooperation by the Christian churches.

Finally, it is the duty of the churches which bear the sacred name of Christ not to forget or neglect any longer his new and great commandment of love. Nor should they continue to fall piteously behind the political authorities,

who, truly applying the spirit of the Gospel and the teaching of Christ, have under happy auspices already set up the so-called League of Nations in order to defend justice and cultivate charity and agreement between the nations.

For all these reasons, being ourselves convinced of the necessity for establishing a contact and league (fellowship) between the churches and believing that the other churches share our conviction as stated above, at least as a beginning we request each one of them to send us in reply a statement of its own judgment and opinion on this matter so that, common agreement or resolution having been reached, we may proceed together to its realization, and thus "speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Eph. 4:15-16).

22. "An Appeal to All Christian People," Lambeth Conference, 1920

This famous "appeal," issued by bishops of the Anglican communion, has had significant impact on subsequent discussion of the shape of Christian unity. • Documents on Christian Unity 1920-30, ed. G.K.A. Bell, London, Oxford UP, 1955, pp. 1-5.

We, Archbishops, Bishops Metropolitan, and other Bishops of the Holy Catholic Church in full communion with the Church of England, in Conference assembled, realizing the responsibility which rests upon us at this time and sensible of the sympathy and the prayers of many, both within and without our own Communion, make this appeal to all Christian people.

We acknowledge all those who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, and have been baptized into the name of the Holy Trinity, as sharing with us membership in the universal Church of Christ which is His Body. We believe that the Holy Spirit has called us in a very solemn and special manner to associate ourselves in penitence and prayer with all those who deplore the divisions of Christian people and

are inspired by the vision and hope of a visible unity of the whole Church.

I. We believe that God wills fellowship. By God's own act this fellowship was made in and through Jesus Christ, and its life is in His Spirit. We believe that it is God's purpose to manifest this fellowship, so far as this world is concerned, in an outward, visible, and united society, holding one faith, having its own recognized officers, using God-given means of grace, and inspiring all its members to the world-wide service of the Kingdom of God. This is what we mean by the Catholic Church.

II. This united fellowship is not visible in the world to-day. On the one hand there are other ancient episcopal Communion in East and West, to whom ours is bound by many ties of common faith and tradition. On the other hand there are the great non-episcopal Communion, standing for rich elements of truth, liberty and life which might otherwise have been obscured or neglected. With them we are closely linked by many affinities, racial, historical and spiritual. We cherish the earnest hope that all these Communion, and our own, may be led by the Spirit into the unity of the Faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God. But in fact we are all organized in different groups, each one keeping to itself gifts that rightly belong to the whole fellowship, and tending to live its own life apart from the rest.

III. The causes of division lie deep in the past, and are by no means simple or wholly blameworthy. Yet none can doubt that self-will, ambition, and lack of charity among Christians have been principal factors in the mingled process, and that these, together with blindness to the sin of disunion, are still mainly responsible for the breaches of Christendom. We acknowledge this condition of broken fellowship to be contrary to God's will, and we desire frankly to confess our share in the guilt of thus crippling the Body of Christ and hindering the activity of His Spirit.

IV. The times call us to a new outlook and new measures. The Faith cannot be adequately apprehended and the battle of the Kingdom cannot be worthily fought while the body is divided, and is thus unable to grow up into the fullness of the life of Christ. The time has come, we believe, for all the separated groups of Christians to agree in forgetting the things which are behind and reaching out towards the goal of a reunited Catholic Church. The removal of the barriers which have arisen between them will only be brought about by a new comradeship of those whose faces are definitely set this way.

The vision which rises before us is that of a Church, genuinely Catholic, loyal to all Truth, and gathering into its fellowship all "who profess and call themselves Christians," within whose visible unity all the treasures of faith

and order, bequeathed as a heritage by the past to the present, shall be possessed in common, and made serviceable to the whole Body of Christ. Within this unity Christian Communion now separated from one another would retain much that has long been distinctive in their methods of worship and service. It is through a rich diversity of life and devotion that the unity of the whole fellowship will be fulfilled.

V. This means an adventure of goodwill and still more of faith, for nothing less is required than a new discovery of the creative resources of God. To this adventure we are convinced that God is now calling all the members of His Church.

VI. We believe that the visible unity of the Church will be found to involve the wholehearted acceptance of:

The Holy Scriptures, as the record of God's revelation of himself to man, and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith; and the Creed commonly called Nicene, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith, and either it or the Apostles' Creed as the baptismal confession of belief; the divinely instituted sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Communion, as expressing for all the corporate life of the whole fellowship in and with Christ; a ministry acknowledged by every part of the Church as possessing not only the inward call of the Spirit, but also the commission of Christ and the authority of the whole body.

VII. May we not reasonably claim that the Episcopate is the one means of providing such a ministry? It is not that we call in question for a moment the spiritual reality of the ministries of those Communion which do not possess the Episcopate. On the contrary, we thankfully acknowledge that these ministries have been manifestly blessed and owned by the Holy Spirit as effective means of grace. But we submit that considerations alike of history and of present experience justify the claim which we make on behalf of the Episcopate. Moreover, we would urge that it is now and will prove to be in the future the best instrument for maintaining the unity and continuity of the Church. But we greatly desire that the office of a Bishop should be everywhere exercised in a representative and constitutional manner, and more truly express all that ought to be involved for the life of the Christian Family in the title of Father-in-God. Nay more, we eagerly look forward to the day when through its acceptance in a united Church we may all share in that grace which is pledged to the members of the whole body in the apostolic rite of the laying-on of hands, and in the joy and fellowship of a Eucharist in which as one Family we may together, without any doubtfulness of mind, offer to the one Lord our worship and service.

VIII. We believe that for all the truly equitable approach to union is by the way of mutual deference to one another's consciences. To this end, we who send forth this appeal would say that if the authorities of other Communion should so desire, we are persuaded that, terms of union having been otherwise satisfactorily adjusted, Bishops and clergy of our Communion would willingly accept from these authorities a form of commission or recognition which would commend our ministry to their congregations, as having its place in the one family life. It is not in our power to know how far this suggestion may be acceptable to those to whom we offer it. We can only say that we offer it in all sincerity as a token of our longing that all ministries of grace, theirs and ours, shall be available for the service of our Lord in a united Church.

It is our hope that the same motive would lead ministers who have not received it to accept a commission through episcopal ordination, as obtaining for them a ministry throughout the whole fellowship.

In so acting no one of us could possibly be taken to repudiate his past ministry. God forbid that any man should repudiate a past experience rich in spiritual blessings for himself and others. Nor would any of us be dishonouring the Holy Spirit of God, whose call led us all to our several ministries, and whose power enabled us to perform them. We shall be publicly and formally seeking additional recognition of a new call to wider service in a reunited Church, and imploring for ourselves God's grace and strength to fulfil the same.

IX. The spiritual leadership of the Catholic Church in days to come, for which the world is manifestly waiting, depends upon the readiness with which each group is prepared to make sacrifices for the sake of a common fellowship, a common ministry, and a common service to the world.

We place this ideal first and foremost before ourselves and our own people. We call upon them to make the effort to meet the demands of a new age with a new outlook. To all other Christian people whom our words may reach we make the same appeal. We do not ask that anyone Communion should consent to be absorbed in another. We do ask that all should unite in a new and great endeavour to recover and to manifest to the world the unity of the Body of Christ for which He prayed.

23. "Affirmation of Union in Allegiance to Our Lord Jesus Christ," Second World Conference on Faith and Order, Edinburgh, 1937

This affirmation, while not yet naming the characteristics of visible unity, proved to be highly influential for the work of Faith and Order. • The Second World Conference on Faith and Order, *Edinburgh 1937*, ed. Leonard Hodgson, London, SCM, 1938, pp. 275-76.

We are one in faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God. We are one in allegiance to Him as Head of the Church, and as King of kings and Lord of lords. We are one in acknowledging that this allegiance takes precedence of any other allegiance that may make claims upon us.

This unity does not consist in the agreement of our minds or the consent of our wills. It is founded in Jesus Christ Himself, Who lived, died and rose again to bring us to the Father, and Who through the Holy Spirit dwells in His Church. We are one because we are all the objects of the love and grace of God, and called by Him to witness in all the world to His glorious gospel.

Our unity is of heart and spirit. We are divided in the outward forms of our life in Christ, because we understand differently His will for His Church. We believe, however, that a deeper understanding will lead us towards a united apprehension of the truth as it is in Jesus.

We humbly acknowledge that our divisions are contrary to the will of Christ, and we pray God in His mercy to shorten the days of our separation and to guide us by His Spirit into fullness of unity.

We are thankful that during recent years we have been drawn together; prejudices have been overcome, misunderstandings removed, and real, if limited, progress has been made towards our goal of a common mind.

In this Conference we may gratefully claim that the Spirit of God has made us willing to learn from one another, and has given us a fuller vision of the truth and enriched our spiritual experience.

We have lifted up our hearts together in prayer; we have sung the same hymns; together we have read the same Holy Scriptures. We recognise in one another, across the barriers of our separation, a common Christian outlook

and a common standard of values. We are therefore assured of a unity deeper than our divisions.

We are convinced that our unity of spirit and aim must be embodied in a way that will make it manifest to the world, though we do not yet clearly see what outward form it should take.

We believe that every sincere attempt to co-operate in the concerns of the kingdom of God draws the severed communions together in increased mutual understanding and goodwill. We call upon our fellow-Christians of all communions to practise such co-operation; to consider patiently occasions of disunion that they may be overcome; to be ready to learn from those who differ from them; to seek to remove those obstacles to the furtherance of the gospel in the non-Christian world which arise from our divisions; constantly to pray for that unity which we believe to be our Lord's will for His Church

We desire also to declare to all men everywhere our assurance that Christ is the one hope of unity for the world in face of the distractions and dissensions of this present time. We know that our witness is weakened by our divisions. Yet we are one in Christ and in the fellowship of His Spirit. We pray that everywhere, in a world divided and perplexed, men may turn to Jesus Christ our Lord, Who makes us one in spite of our divisions; that He may bind in one those who by many worldly claims are set at variance; and that the world may at last find peace and unity in Him; to Whom be glory for ever.

24. Message, First Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Amsterdam, 1948

This message still stands as an eloquent statement of the vision behind the WCC. Its most famous phrase, "We intend to stay together," was suggested by Kathleen Bliss, the only woman among the assembly's main speakers. • Man's Disorder and God's Design: The Amsterdam Assembly Series (in one volume), New York, Harper, 1949, unnumbered pages at the end of the volume.

The World Council of Churches, meeting at Amsterdam, sends this message of greeting to all who are in Christ, and to all who are willing to hear.

We bless God our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ Who gathers together in one the children of God that are scattered abroad. He has brought us here together at Amsterdam. We are one in acknowledging Him as our God and Saviour. We are divided from one another not only in matters of faith, order and tradition, but also by pride of nation, class and race. But Christ has made us His own, and He is not divided. In seeking Him we find one another. Here at Amsterdam we have committed ourselves afresh to Him, and have covenanted with one another in constituting this World Council of Churches. We intend to stay together. We call upon Christian congregations everywhere to endorse and fulfill this covenant in their relations one with another. In thankfulness to God we commit the future to Him.

When we look to Christ, we see the world as it is—His world, to which He came and for which He died. It is filled both with great hopes and also with disillusionment and despair. Some nations are rejoicing in new freedom and power, some are bitter because freedom is denied them, some are paralysed by division, and everywhere there is an undertone of fear. There are millions who are hungry, millions who have no home, no country and no hope. Over all mankind hangs the peril of total war. We have to accept God's judgment upon us for our share in the world's guilt. Often we have tried to serve God and mammon, put other loyalties before loyalty to Christ, confused the Gospel with our own economic or national or racial interests, and feared war more than we have hated it. As we have talked with one another here, we have begun to understand how our separation has prevented us from receiving correction from one another in Christ. And because we lacked this correction, the world has often heard from us not the Word of God but the words of men. But there is a word of God for our world. It is that the world is in the hands of the living God.

Whose will for it is wholly good; that in Christ Jesus, His incarnate Word, Who lived and died and rose from the dead, God has broken the power of evil once for all, and opened for everyone the gate into freedom and joy in the Holy Spirit; that the final judgment on all human history and on every human deed is the judgment of the merciful Christ; and that the end of history will be the triumph of His Kingdom, where alone we shall understand how much God has loved the world. This is God's unchanging Word to the world. Millions of our fellow men have never heard it. As we are met here from many lands, we pray God to stir up His whole Church to make this Gospel known to the whole world, and to call on all men to believe in Christ, to live in His love and to hope for His coming.

Our coming together to form a World Council will be vain unless Christians and Christian congregations everywhere commit themselves to the lord of the Church in a new effort to seek together, where they live, to be His witnesses and servants among their neighbours. We have to remind ourselves and all men that God has put down the mighty from their seats and exalted the humble and meek. We have to learn afresh together to speak boldly in Christ's name both to those in power and to the people, to oppose terror, cruelty and race discrimination, to stand by the outcast, the prisoner and the refugee. We have to make of the Church in every place a voice for those who have no voice, and a home where every man will be at home. We have to learn afresh together what is the duty of the Christian man or woman in industry, in agriculture, in politics, in the professions and in the home. We have to ask God to teach us together to say No and to say Yes in truth. No to all that flouts the love of Christ, to every system, every programme and every person that treats any man as though he were an irresponsible thing or a means of profit, to the defenders of injustice in the name of order, to those who sow the seeds of war or urge war as inevitable; Yes, to all that conforms to the love of Christ, to all who seek for justice, to the peacemakers, to all who hope, fight and suffer for the cause of man, to all who—even without knowing it—look or new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

It is not in man's power to banish sin and death from the earth, to create the unity of the Holy Catholic Church, to conquer the hosts of Satan. But it is within the power of God. He has given us at Easter the certainty that His purpose will be accomplished. But, by our acts of obedience and faith, we can on earth set up signs which point to the coming victory. Till the day of that victory our lives are hid with Christ in God, and no earthly disillusion or distress or power of hell can separate us from Him. As those who wait in confidence and joy for their deliverance, let us give ourselves to those tasks which lie to our hands, and so set up signs that men may see.

Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end.

25. Willem Visser 't Hooft, "How Does Unity Grow?" 1959

I have already noted Visser 't Hooft's seminal contribution to the ecumenical movement in Chapter I. This chapter is taken from one of his best-known books. • The Pressure of Our Common Calling, Garden City, NY, Doubleday, 1959, pp. 16-23, 27-28.

. . . The basic issues of the theology of the ecumenical movement are: What is the nature of the relation which the churches have together in that movement? Is it a purely organizational relationship or is it an expression of a real unity? If the latter is true, how is that unity related to the unity of which the New Testament speaks? And how can that unity which we have already grow toward that full unity which is, according to New Testament teaching, an indispensable characteristic of the Church of Christ?

The paradox that churches which do not only differ from each other in matters of faith and order but disagree with each other about important points of doctrine, and in many cases do not have sacramental fellowship, are, nevertheless, able to work together and even to witness together in specific matters had, of course, occupied the thoughts of the pioneers of the ecumenical movement. The 1920 Encyclical of the Patriarchate of Constantinople,¹ which was of great importance for the thinking of the ecumenical movement in its first stage, had said that closer relationship and fellowship (*koinonia*) between the Christian churches was not prevented by the doctrinal differences existing between them and that such understanding would be in the interest of the whole Christian body and could prepare and facilitate "the complete blessed union" of the churches. In the following years leaders of the "Life and Work" movement formulated a more explicit answer to the fundamental question. This answer is contained in a letter which the leaders of the "Life and Work" movement sent to "Faith and Order" in 1922. This is the important passage: "The Bishop of Winchester has rightly said: 'that in the region of moral and social questions we desire all Christians to begin at once to act as if they were one body in one visible fellowship. This can be done by all alike without any injury to theological principles.' As Dr. Rapiet has said: 'Doctrine divides, but service unites.' We are concerned with service, and we believe that by serving the cooperation of

1. *Documents of Christian Unity*, A selection, 1955, London, p. 17.

the churches we shall break down prejudices and create a spirit of fellowship which will render the accomplishment of the aims of the Faith and Order movement less difficult to achieve.²²

This theory of ecumenical action had first been formulated in 1918 in the report of the Church of England commission on "Christianity and Industrial Problems," a report submitted to the Archbishop of Canterbury. It had been taken over two years later in the report of the Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops in a slightly stronger form: "We believe that there are no principles at stake which can rightly be held to hinder all denominations from beginning without delay to act as if they were wholly one body in the department of public, moral and social witness."²³

In the following years this "as if" theory came to exert a wide-spread influence. Archbishop Nathan Söderblom used it again and again in order to explain and justify the "Life and Work" approach to Christian unity and stated as late as the year 1929 that "all" had "witnessed the correctness of this opinion."²⁴ . . .

Now this widely accepted pragmatic approach (which curiously enough was not invented in the country which has so often been regarded as the country of pragmatism *par excellence*, but which came from the older churches) was in many ways a danger to the spiritual and theological health of the ecumenical movement. It is certainly true that Christians can speak and act on specific moral issues even if they are not at one about important matters of faith and order. And it is highly desirable that they should do so. It is also true that by so doing they may be drawn closer together. But such common action excluding the common consideration of the basis of action on such application of the Christian faith, and not attempting to agree as to the content of the Christian faith is in no way comparable to the fellowship in Christ of which the New Testament speaks. For that fellowship is precisely a comprehensive fellowship which embraces faith and life, doctrine and service. To act together "as if" that fellowship had been established when in reality, agreement is sought only in the realm of social principles is to create the wrong impression that a utilitarian relationship is an adequate response to the call which God addresses to His Church and to the need of the world. The answer

is inadequate because it neglects the central ecumenical task of the Church, namely, to restore its unity in Christ. Co-operation is not unity. A consensus about social action combined with a moratorium on theological and doctrinal discussion leads easily to the conclusion that the churches have done enough when they have established co-operative relationships. But that is a false conclusion. For unity in Christ is unity in the deepest convictions and unity which embraces all of life. Those who accept co-operation as sufficient are in danger of retarding the growth of that true unity.

The "as if" answer is also inadequate because it fails to take account of the importance of theological agreement for action itself. Common action which is not based on common convictions is not controlled and purified by the actual truth of the gospel can easily degenerate and become the defense of ideological interests rather than of specifically Christian concerns. It is, therefore, impossible to separate faith from life, or theology from moral action. Dr. J. H. Oldham, whose keen and penetrating mind shaped the program and content of the second Life and Work Conference at Oxford in 1937, wrote just before that conference: "The chief need of the Church today to equip it to fulfill its mission to society is theology."²⁵ And Oxford, 1937, proved that, by putting the issue of the Christian attitude to the state, to the nation, and to society in the framework of central Christian doctrine, the ecumenical movement gained in clarity, in spiritual authority, and in relevance to the modern world.

It is, therefore, not surprising that the "as if" method created grave misunderstanding of the nature of the ecumenical movement. Some went so far as to state that this kind of ecumenism did not arise from supernatural faith but from merely human considerations, and that, instead of being concerned with unity of belief, "Life and Work" was concerned only with "the moral attitude common to all the sects and underlying the variety and contrariety of their creeds."²⁶ This was, of course, an un fair judgment, for the great majority of the advocates of the "as if" method never meant to apply their method as a general theological principle. It was for them a provisional solution of a difficult practical problem. But the fact remains that they made it easy to interpret the ecumenical movement in terms of doctrinal relativism.

Were the pioneers, then, wholly wrong? In the perspective of all that we have learned since those early days we can see that they were in fact seeking to express an important truth which belongs to the heart of the

2. Söderblom, *The Church and Peace*, Bruge Memorial Lecture, Oxford, 1929, p. 32. See also *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, London, 1954, p. 572.

3. Report, Lambeth Conference, 1920, pp. 74-5. See Bell, *Christian Unity: The Anglican Position*, London, 1948, p. 156.

4. *The Church and Peace*, p. 32. See also "Einigung der Christenheit," 1925, p. 218, and Söderblom's address at the Lausanne Faith and Order Conference, Official Report (German edition), p. 321.

5. *The Church and Its Function in Society*, London, 1937, pp. 163.

6. Conger, *Divided Christendom*, London, 1939, p. 120. See also Journet, *L'Unité de l'Eglise*, Paris, 1927, p. 83.

ecumenical experience, but which need not be formulated in such a misleading way. They had themselves expressed their meaning much more adequately when they had given the "Life and Work" movement the title, *communio in serviendo ecumenica* (ecumenical communion in serving), for that title made it clear that in serving our Lord and in rendering service to the world, they were brought together in an ecumenical fellowship which, while far from being an adequate manifestation of the one Church of Christ, was, nevertheless, a real witness to the gathering work of Christ. Again the Encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of 1920 had said: "We consider as the most important thing that love between the churches must be revived and strengthened so that they may no longer look upon each other as strangers and enemies, but as relatives and friends in Christ and as 'fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel'" (Eph. 3:6). And this also implied that by living together the life of Christian agape, both in their relations with each other and in their relations with the world, the churches could begin to rediscover that unity which is rooted in the fact that Christ's work embraces them all. Archbishop Nathan Söderblom, speaking at the Lausanne Conference in 1927, applied Pascal's famous words to the ecumenical situation, "You would not seek me if you had not already found me," and said that the very seeking after a fuller joint expression of unity indicated that we had already at the bottom of our Christian experience such a unity. In other words, Söderblom and his colleagues were really seeking to give expression to the conviction that there existed a real unity and that that unity could become more explicit if the churches would seek to fulfill together the mission given to the Church by its Lord.

In 1937 when the "Life and Work" and "Faith and Order" movements held their second world conferences, the time had come to formulate a clearer answer to the question of the nature of the ecumenical movement. "Life and Work," at Oxford under Oldham's leadership, took its stand on the conviction that "the real crisis of the Church relates not to its social programme but to its faith."⁷ The conference message (written by Archbishop William Temple) spoke boldly of "our unity in Christ" as "an experienced fact, not a theme of aspiration," and based on "the redeeming acts of the one Lord of the Church." And it was again Archbishop Temple who said in the opening sermon of the Faith and Order Conference at Edinburgh: "We could not seek union if we did not already possess unity. . . . It is because we are one in allegiance to one Lord that we seek and hope for the way of manifesting that unity in our

witness to Him before the world."⁸ In other words, we need no "as if"; we can say thankfully "because." The ecumenical task is not a hopeless task because Jesus Christ is gathering us together.

Some years later William Paton, who at that time served both the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches, struggled with the same problem of the unity already given and the unity to be achieved. In the so-called Paton memorandum of 1941, addressed to the churches and missions of India, he raised the question whether churches which desired to be united could not act in all possible matters in the same way as they should if there were a united Church in being. This formulation was much less open to criticism. For he explained his proposal in this way: "It is possible in view of the ascertained large measure of agreement between the churches, to proceed at this time of urgency to act in virtue of that agreement so far as it extends."⁹ In other words, that unity which already exists must be all owed to have its full effect. It is not enough to discuss plans of reunion; we must also expose ourselves right now to those forces which make for unity, and that means living and acting together on the basis of the convictions which we already have in common.

Ecumenical history teaches us, therefore, that we must learn to distinguish between the unity which exists and the fuller unity which should characterize the Church of Christ and which it is our task to realize. There is the unity which holds us together right now and obliges us to go forward together. And there is the unity which is promised to us and which will be given to us in God's time if we respond obediently to His work of gathering. There is the unity of the road and there is the unity of the goal.

Thus, by the time when the plan to establish the World Council of Churches was formed, the fourteen signatories of the "Letter of Invitation" said: "It is not only or chiefly because it may be practical convenience and utility that we commend this scheme. Rather it is because the very nature of the Church demands that it shall make manifest to the world the unity in Christ of all who believe in Him. The full unity of the Church is something for which we must still work and pray. But there exists a unity in allegiance to our Lord for the manifestation of which we are responsible. We may not pretend that the existing unity among Christians is greater than in fact it is; but we should act upon it so far as it is already a reality."¹⁰

The basic problem of the ecumenical movement lies in that last phrase. There exists already a real unity. The churches would not have declared (as they did at the first

7. Oldham in *The Church and Its Function in Society*, London, 1937, p. 105.

8. Report, Faith and Order Conference, Edinburgh, 1937, London, 1938, p. 21.

9. *International Review of Missions*, 1941, p. 506.

10. *The World Council of Churches: Its Process of Formation*, Geneva, 1946, pp. 172-73. The letter was drafted by Archbishop Temple.

assembly of the World Council of Churches) that they did intend to stay together if they were not aware of a real bond between them, the bond of their common faith in Jesus Christ as God and Savior, the bond of their common calling. The Amsterdam message describes that unity in these words: "We are divided from one another, but Christ has made us His own and He is not divided." In a resolution concerning the nature of the World Council, also adopted by the first assembly, it was said of the churches: "They find their unity in Him. They have not to create their unity; it is the gift of God." Again, when in 1950 an attempt was made to define the ecclesiological significance of the World Council in the Toronto statement on "The Church, the Churches and the World Council of Churches," it was underlined that "a very real unity has been discovered in ecumenical meetings which is, to all who collaborate in the World Council, the most precious element of its life."¹¹

This already existing unity enables the World Council to be a channel for common witness and action of the churches in those matters in which they have come to a common mind. There are areas in which a substantial common witness has been given; there are others in which this has not been possible. But we may say that there is reason for deep gratitude that, in the short period of its life, the World Council has been allowed to manifest such a large degree of unity among the churches. It is, however, essential that we do not pretend that the existing unity is greater than, in fact, it is. We must not speak, as happens too often, as if the ecumenical movement can properly be called "the World Church." For that terminology gives the impression that what we have today in the World Council is the definite and sufficient answer to the problem of Christian unity. In fact the World Council is only the provisional solution of that problem, or, in the words of Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, "a transitory phase of the journey from disunity to unity."¹²

. . . the theme of the ecumenical movement is not unity as an isolated goal; it is unity as the outcome of the common effort to express the integrity and the wholeness of the Church of Christ. It is unity through renewal. Nikolaus L. Zinzendorf, that ecumenical theologian *avant la lettre*, had seen this already: "All fellowship [*gemeinschaft*] which is only based on agreement of opinions and forms without a change of heart, is a dangerous sect."¹³

The ecumenical movement does not owe its origin to a passion for unity alone. Its roots lie in a rediscovery of the nature and mission of the Church of Christ. Nothing less than that could have created the movement; nothing less than that can keep it going and growing. A theology of the ecumenical movement must, therefore, be concerned with the whole calling of the Church and seek to answer the question what implications that calling has for the relationships which the churches should have with each other in the ecumenical movement and for the tasks which they should undertake together.

What is the whole calling of the Church? It is to fulfill the mission with which it has been entrusted by Christ. "As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world" (Jn. 17: 18). That mission can neither be wholly identified with nor separated from the mission of Christ Himself. To identify it with the mission of Christ is to forget the uniqueness of His work and ministry, to separate it from the mission of Christ is to deny His continued presence in and with His Church. "The ministry of the Church is related to the ministry of Christ in such a way that in and through the ministry of the Church it is always Christ Himself who is at work, nourishing, sustaining, ordering and governing His Church on earth."¹⁴ It follows that "the pattern of Jesus' ministry remains the pattern of the Church's ministry"¹⁵ or that "the shape of His life is the shape of the Church's life."¹⁶ . . .

11. Compare also "A Word to the Churches," from the third World Conference on Faith and Order, Lund, 1952: "As we have come to know one another better our eyes have been opened to the depth and pain of our separations and also to our fundamental unity. The measure of unity which it has been given to the Churches to experience together must now find clearer manifestation. A Faith in the one Church of Christ which is not implemented by *acts* of obedience is dead. There are truths about the nature of God and His Church which will remain for ever closed to us unless we act together in obedience to the unity which is already ours."

12. *The Household of God*, London, 1953, p. 21.

13. Quoted by Wallau, *Die Einigung der Kirchen*, 1925, p. 267.

14. Torrance, *Royal Priesthood*, Edinburgh, 1955, p. 37. See also Schweizer, *Das Leben des Herrn in der Gemeinde und ihren Diensten*, 1946.

15. Paul Minear in *Work and Vocation*, New York, 1954.

16. *The Third World Conference on Faith and Order, Lund 1952*, London, 1953, p. 22.

26. Report on the Section on Unity, Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, New Delhi, 1961

The New Delhi statement, discussed in the introduction to this chapter, is one of the most famous—and longest!—sentences in ecumenical history (para. 2, below). It remains the definitive expression of “organic unity.” • The New Delhi Report, ed. W.A. Visser ‘t Hooft, London, SCM, 1962, pp. 116-25.

I. The Church’s Unity

1. The love of the Father and the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit is the source and goal of the unity which the Triune God wills for all men and creation. We believe that we share in this unity in the Church of Jesus Christ, who is before all things and in whom all things hold together. In him alone, given by the Father to be Head of the Body, the Church has its true unity. The reality of this unity was manifest at Pentecost in the gift of the Holy Spirit, through whom we know in this present age the first fruits of that perfect union of the Son with his Father, which will be known in its fullness only when all things are consummated by Christ in his glory. The Lord who is bringing all things into full unity at the last is he who constrains us to seek the unity which he wills for his Church on earth here and now.

2. We believe that the unity which is both God’s will and his gift to his Church is being made visible as all in each place who are baptized into Jesus Christ and confess him as Lord and Saviour are brought by the Holy Spirit into one fully committed fellowship, holding the one apostolic faith, preaching the one Gospel, breaking the one bread, joining in common prayer; and having a corporate life reaching out in witness and service to all and who at the same time are united with the whole Christian fellowship in all places and all ages in such wise that ministry and members are accepted by all, and that all can act and speak together as occasion requires for the tasks to which God calls his people.

It is for such unity that we believe we must pray and work.

3. This brief description of our objective leaves many questions unanswered. We are not yet of a common mind on the interpretation and the means of achieving the goal we have described. We are clear that unity does not imply simple uniformity of organization, rite or expression. We

all confess that sinful self-will operates to keep us separated and that in our human ignorance we cannot discern clearly the lines of God’s design for the future. But it is our firm hope that through the Holy Spirit God’s will as it is witnessed to in Holy Scripture will be more and more disclosed to us and in us. The achievement of unity will involve nothing less than a death and rebirth of many forms of church life as we have known them. We believe that nothing less costly can finally suffice. . . .

All in each place

7. This statement uses the word ‘place’ both in its primary sense of local neighbourhood and also, under modern conditions, of other areas in which Christians need to express unity in Christ. Thus being one in Christ means that unity among Christians must be found in each school where they study, in each factory or office where they work and in each congregation where they worship, as well as between congregations. ‘Place’ may further imply not only local communities but also wider geographical areas such as states, provinces or nations, and certainly refers to all Christian people in each place regardless of race and class. . . .

Fully committed fellowship

10. The word “fellowship” (*koinonia*) has been chosen because it describes what the Church truly is. “Fellowship” clearly implies that the Church is not merely an institution or organization. It is a fellowship of those who are called together by the Holy Spirit and in baptism confess Christ as Lord and Saviour. They are thus “fully committed” to him and to one another. Such a fellowship means for those who participate in it nothing less than a renewed mind and spirit, a full participation in common praise and prayer, the shared realities of penitence and forgiveness, mutuality in suffering and joy, listening together to the same Gospel, responding in faith, obedience and service, joining in the one mission of Christ in the world, a self-forgetting love for all for whom Christ died, and the reconciling grace which breaks down every wall of race, colour, caste, tribe, sex, class and nation. Neither does this “fellowship” imply a rigid uniformity of structure, organization or government. A lively variety marks corporate life in the one Body of one spirit. . . .

A corporate life reaching out

15. Mission and service belong to the whole Church. God calls the Church to go out into the world to witness and serve in word and deed to the one Lord Jesus Christ, who loved the world and gave himself for the world. In the fulfilment of our missionary obedience the call to unity is seen to be imperative, the vision of one Church proclaiming

one Gospel to the whole world becomes more vivid and the experience and expression of our given unity more real. There is an inescapable relation between the fulfilment of the Church's missionary obligation and the recovery of her visible unity. . . .

In all places and all ages

17. Every church and every Christian belongs to Christ. Because we belong to him we are bound through him to the Church and the Christians in all places and all ages. Those who are united in each place are at the same time one with believers in all places. As members of the one Body they share both in each other's joys and sufferings. The Church as a universal fellowship means also that we are part of the People of God of all ages, and as such are one with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all their descendants in the faith until the end of the age. Work for unity in Christ is continually attacked by all the evil forces which fear the light of truth and holiness and obscure our own vision also. We now see our unity only darkly, but we know that then we shall see it clearly when we see him face to face. But it is also our hope which gives us courage to expose our differences and our divisions and call upon God to reveal to us even now that which has hitherto been hidden from our eyes. We pray, with the praying Christ, that all may be one. To this end we must work while it is day. . . .

Implications for local church life

19. The place where the development of the common life in Christ is most clearly tested is in the local situation, where believers live and work. There the achievements and the frustrations are most deeply felt: but there too the challenge is most often avoided. It is where we live and work together daily that our Lord's own test is most clearly imposed, "by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Before and beneath all outward expression is the commandment to love one another as he has loved us. As soon as we begin to obey this command, we can ignore each other no longer and we shall actively seek the means of giving expression to that love. The Lund Conference on Faith and Order in 1952 put out this challenge in the form of suggesting that Christians ought always to seek to do together everything which conscience did not compel them to do separately. Loyalty to conscience takes different forms in different traditions. In some churches, the rules of corporate discipline make very clear the limits of corporate action; in others there is a far greater area of free manoeuvre. But all of us must confess that, in the life of our churches at the local level, we are still far from being together in all those ways in which, with a good conscience, we might be. It will be through

daily obedience in the paths that are already open to us that our eyes will be enlightened to the fuller vision of our life together. The disclosure of the goal is inseparable from the faithful walking in the way in which he leads us.

20. (a) There is need for an increase in opportunities of growing together as local churches; through common worship, Bible study groups, prayer cells, joint visitation, common witness in our communities. Locally as in the whole ecumenical movement we should be especially ready in Christian love to seek out and to establish fellowship with those traditions and minorities to which we are not now related. Even where we are compelled to remain separate at present in central aspects of the life of our congregations there is considerable freedom for developing areas of common worship, witness and service in homes and communities.

21. (b) Ordinary social life already brings men together into various associations—academic, professional, industrial, political, etc. Within these forms of unity there is need for a Christian unity of those who may learn from each other how to bear their witness in those settings. Ecumenical thought in the calling of the laity needs to be shared in groups of this kind and it has its own bearing on church unity, for denominational divisions are often found to be quite irrelevant on this frontier. What is the bearing of that discovery upon our inherited divisions?

22. (c) Sometimes Christians will find themselves in associations of this kind in situations where their witness will involve sharp conflict, and they may reach a point where they have to break with the association. Wherever such conflicts arise, Christians are called to give their witness to a true expression of unity.

23. (d) Since much of this lay witness cuts across denominational lines, it clearly calls for united planning and execution as men and women seek in a common discipline under Christ to express his Lordship over all life, drawing their local churches together in the process.

24. Our division at the Lord's Table may be most acutely felt at the local level, especially if Christians of separated church traditions are truly meeting each other in common obedience to Christ. Where they are content virtually to ignore each other as Christians, or where the ecclesiastical traditions raise no difficulty, the problem may not be felt. But this "scandal" of eucharistic division appears at every one of the three levels we are considering. Since it is at the local level that it comes home most persistently, if it is seen at all, this is the point at which briefly to consider what the problem is, for there is no point at which we more completely fail to understand each other.

25. For some Christians, the Lord's own command "Do this" is an imperative which over-rides all our

divisions. If Holy Communion is the sovereign means of grace for the forgiveness and conquest of sin, then that is true of the sin of division as well. Thus it is intolerable and incomprehensible that a common love of God should not be expressed and deepened by common participation in the Holy Communion which he offers.

26. For some Christians, the essence of the Christian life is incorporation into the Body of Christ realized as fellowship in an organic and transcendent unity of faith, life and love made visible in a pattern of ministry and sacraments which is indivisible. Then it is intolerable and incomprehensible that those who do not share the organic life should expect to share in its eucharistic expression.

27. For neither view can there be any final peace so long as others who are known to be in Christ are not with us at the Holy Communion. But there are serious and deeply felt differences about how we should behave in our present recognition that God wills a unity which we do not manifest.

28. Although the problem may be most acutely felt at the local level, it is not at this level that it can find any general solution. Local churches may rightly ask, however, that confessional convictions be made clear amongst them if they are to be saved from uncomprehending suffering. In certain places groups of Christians have entered into intercommunion with full knowledge of the gravity of the issues involved. In these instances there has been, if not ecclesiastical approval, at least the withholding of disapproval. None of us can ignore the issues which such action raises. The Table is the Lord's gift before it is our blessing. We must therefore ask whether there are situations, e.g. during unity negotiations, when intercommunion is possible even before full union is achieved, and all must feel with renewed intensity the agony of broken communion at the one Table of the Lord.

29. In the WCC we commit ourselves, in our local churches also, to an abiding concern for each other. In staying together we have discovered more and more that Christ is present among those to whom we cannot, on the grounds of our differing convictions, grant the full meaning of the word "church." If Christ is present with them, is he not calling us in ways we cannot yet clearly discern, to move out towards him in order that we may receive our full unity with him and with his people? When the real Christian encounter takes place locally we are forced to face these vital questions. This self-examination is always difficult; for we cannot and must not surrender those truths and ways of church life which we believe are God's will for his Church, and which the others do not yet accept. At the same time, we cannot and should not refuse to move out to Christ whose presence we recognize in the life of the others.

30. In this situation are we not constrained by the love of God to exert pressure on the limits of our own inherited traditions, recognizing the theological necessity of what we may call "responsible risk"? We emphasize the word responsible; for such actions must be taken with sincere respect for our confessional position and with the full attempt to explore with the Christian communion to which we belong the meaning of what we are doing. Clearly also, the responsible risk will be different according to our different convictions. Nevertheless, unless there is this preparedness to seek for responsible ways of breaking through to fresh understandings, we cannot hope to be shown the way to that growing unity which we know to be God's will for us. Responsible use of local situations to explore such possibilities is a challenge in every place.

27. Georges Florovsky, "Obedience and Witness," 1963

A professor of philosophy and theology in Europe and the U.S., Florovsky was instrumental in articulating the theological basis for Orthodox involvement in the movement. He was also a key figure in drafting the WCC's Toronto Statement (see Chapter VIII). • The Sufficiency of God, op. cit., pp. 62-63, 65-67.

. . . The ecumenical problem was first formulated by the Protestants, or rather they formulated their own *ecumenical* problem, which simply does not exist for the Orthodox as it does not exist for Roman Catholics also. The basic presupposition of Protestant ecumenism is *the parity* of existing denominations, at least in certain limits which can be differently defined, against the background of a certain "given unity," as the conventional phrase goes, which is regarded both as a gift of God and his inherent purpose. The main task is, accordingly, "to manifest" this given unity, to embody and to expand it. This implies a kind of mutual recognition. Denominations are taken to be complementary to each other. The practical objectives can be differently defined.

The first spiritual danger, implied in this attitude, is that of *ecumenical impatience*. If "unity" is already "given," and Christians are called to "manifest" it, it is difficult to understand why they should postpone the most spectacular gesture which can be imagined, that is to join in a united

and common act of Holy Communion. In fact, this action, under various names—inter-communion or open communion, concelebration, and the like—is constantly demanded, especially by the younger generation, as an integral element of any ecumenical action, and as a token of honesty and not but idle, uncommitted talk. The *act* is wanted, an outward gesture, a *visible* sign. It is often honestly admitted that those invited to join and share may disagree profoundly and conscientiously concerning the meaning and character precisely of this solemn common action, as also concerning other basic Christian doctrines. In this situation it is difficult, for an outsider—that is, for a “non-Protestant”—to understand what this precipitate action can really contribute to the cause of unity. The sting of disunity seems to be bluntly ignored. The existing unity—that is, the alleged “given unity”—seems to be considered as adequate—only an outward “manifestation” is missing—while, in fact, there is but variety and divergence. . . .

Before we start speaking of Christian Unity, we must be clear about the nature of the Church: Christian Unity is, indeed, the Unity of the Church, and Unity in the Church. It may be true that there is still no definitive and authoritative definition of the Church. But there is the Church herself, as a divine institution, visible, historical, and yet transcending and uniting all ages of her historic pilgrimage in the continuity of her being. A former bishop of Gloucester, A. C. Headlam, once said: the Church has never existed in history, there were but “schisms,” particular bodies, divergent branches. And accordingly he pleaded for recognition of parity or equality of all historical “schisms,” in anticipation of the coming of the Church, of the Church to come. In fact, many people, among the Protestants, are committed to this view. But Orthodox, as well as Roman Catholics, are bound to repudiate this view, and the whole approach, resolutely and comprehensively. The starting point of their “ecumenical engagement,” as much as they may disagree among themselves, is radically different. And accordingly their understanding of Christian obedience, and of the call to unity and witness, is radically different, as much as they may, and as they should, sympathize with any honest search and urge for Christian Unity. Indeed there is a “given unity,” and this unity has been “manifested” and is being “manifested”—*in the Church itself*. But the Church is more than just a witnessing body, as she is more than a worshipping body: the Church herself is an integral part and subject of her own total witness, because she is not only a body of believers, but the Body of Christ. One may dare to say even more; the Church is Christ himself, as he lives and rules in his own body and its members—*totus Christus, caput et corpus*, in the glorious phrase of St Augustine. The Church is the historical form or *modus* of Christ’s abiding

and acting presence in the world, in history, in the cosmos, redeemed, being redeemed, and to be redeemed. Indeed, the Church is a historical entity, visible and temporal, a phenomenon in the human dimension. But the “historicity” of the Church is at once also her ultimate “super-historicity,” for it is a historicity of the divine Presence. The Church indivisibly, but also unconfusedly, is both “visible” and “invisible.” She has her own structure and her own distinctive marks. But in no sense is the Church a “denomination.” There is but One Church in history, although, unfortunately, there were many and manifold “schisms,” separated from her. This is the first presupposition of what can be called “Orthodox ecumenism,” as little as it has been practised.

It is not my purpose now to expound, even in outline, Orthodox ecclesiology. I have done so already on various occasions and cannot add much to what I have said. I want to concentrate now on the direct contribution of Orthodox ecclesiology to the methodology of sound ecumenical study and action. And I want to introduce at once my favourite idea of “*ecumenism in time*,” which I personally believe to be a right methodological key to all ecumenical locks and riddles. . . . We may contrast this kind of ecumenism with the current “*ecumenism in space*,” which is in common and current practice, and which has been not unjustly, if bitingly, described as an “exercise in comparative theology.” Usually one begins with the existing “denominations,” including the Church, in so far as she is empirically one of the existing Christian bodies, and proceeds to recording “agreements” and “disagreements,” with the hope of discovering a certain common core of belief, which may be used as a starting point, or eventually as a basis or ground, of *rapprochement* and reconciliation. The weak point of this method is that it is basically static and ignores precisely the major issue: that of “schism” or “separation.” No “agreement” can heal “the schism” automatically, important and valid as agreement may be, for “disagreements” do not disrupt communion immediately, unless they are intransigently pressed and stressed. The other weak point is this and it is difficult to say in general which of the two is more decisive: the criterion of comparison is uncertain, and usually vague. Reference to Scripture, to “Scripture alone,” *sola scriptura*, does not provide sure guidance. One cannot ignore that historical context in which only Scripture has its living voice. It is increasingly realized in our days, across all denominational limits, that Scripture (the Bible) and Church cannot be separated. The Bible itself is alive only in the Church, within the Church, that is, actually, in the context of living Tradition. . . .

28. Decree on Ecumenism (*Redintegratio Unitas*), Second Vatican Council, 1964

This decree is "the official charter of the Roman Catholic Church's active participation in the one ecumenical movement" (T. Stransky). The text was overwhelmingly approved by the church bishops (2137 to 11) during the third session of Vatican II. • Doing the Truth in Charity, eds Thomas F. Stransky and John B. Sheerin, New York, Paulist, 1982, pp. 18-26.

Introduction

1. The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council. Christ the Lord founded one Church and one Church only. However, many Christian Communions present themselves to men as the true inheritors of Jesus Christ; all indeed profess to be followers of the Lord but they differ in mind and go different ways, as if Christ Himself were divided (Cf. I Cor. 1,13). Certainly, such division openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages that most holy cause, the preaching of the Gospel to every creature.

The Lord of Ages nevertheless wisely and patiently follows out the plan of His grace on our behalf, sinners that we are. In recent times He has begun to bestow more generously upon divided Christians remorse over their divisions and longing for unity.

Everywhere large numbers have felt the impulse of this grace, and among our separated brethren also there increases from day to day a movement, fostered by the grace of the Holy Spirit, for the restoration of unity among all Christians. Taking part in this movement, which is called ecumenical, are those who invoke the Triune God and confess Jesus as Lord and Savior. They do this not merely as individuals but also as members of the corporate groups in which they have heard the Gospel, and which each regards as his Church and indeed, God's. And yet, almost everyone, though in different ways, longs for the one visible Church of God, a Church truly universal and sent forth to the whole world that the world may be converted to the Gospel and so be saved, to the glory of God.

The sacred Council gladly notes all this. It has already declared its teaching on the Church, and now, moved by a desire for the restoration of unity among all the followers of Christ, it wishes to set before all Catholics guidelines, helps

and methods, by which they too can respond to the grace of this divine call.

Catholic Principles on Ecumenism

2. What has revealed the love of God among us is that the only-begotten Son of God has been sent by the Father into the world, so that, being made man, He might by His redemption of the entire human race give new life to it and unify it (Cf. 1 Jn. 4,9; Col. 1,18-20; Jn. 11, 52). Before offering Himself up as a spotless victim upon the altar of the cross, He prayed to His Father for those who believe: "that they all may be one: even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (Jn. 17,21). In His Church He instituted the wonderful sacrament of the Eucharist by which the unity of the Church is both signified and brought about. He gave His followers a new commandment to love one another (Cf. Jn. 13,34), and promised the Spirit, their Advocate (Cf. Jn. 16,7), who, as Lord and life-giver, should remain with them forever.

After being lifted up on the cross and glorified, the Lord Jesus poured forth the Spirit whom He had promised, and through whom He has called and gathered together the people of the New Covenant, which is the Church, into a unity of faith, hope and charity, as the Apostle teaches us: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph. 4,4-5). For "all you who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. . . for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3,27-28). It is the Holy Spirit, dwelling in those who believe and pervading and ruling over the entire Church, who brings about that wonderful communion of the faithful and joins them together so intimately in Christ that He is the principle of the Church's unity. By distributing various kinds of spiritual gifts and ministries (Cf. I Cor. 12,4-11), He enriches the Church of Jesus Christ with different functions "in order to equip the saints for the work of service, so as to build up the body of Christ" (Eph. 4,12).

In order to establish this His holy Church everywhere in the world till the end of time, Christ entrusted to the College of the Twelve the task of teaching, ruling and sanctifying (Cf. Mt. 28,18-20, in conjunction with Jn. 20,21-23). Among their number He chose Peter. And after his confession of faith, He determined that on him He would build His Church; to him He promised the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Cf. Mt.16,19, in conjunction with Mt. 18,18), and after his profession of love, entrusted all His sheep to him to be confirmed in faith (Cf. Lk. 22,32) and shepherded in perfect unity (Cf. Jn. 21,15-18), with

Himself, Christ Jesus, forever remaining the chief cornerstone (Cf. Eph. 2.20) and shepherd of our souls (Cf. 1 Pet. 2,25; 1 Vatican Council, Sess. IV [1870], The Constitution *Pastor Aeternus*: Coll. Lac. 7, 482a).

It is through the faithful preaching of the Gospel by the Apostles and their successors—the bishops with Peter's successor at their head—through their administering the sacraments, and through their governing in love, that Jesus Christ wishes His people to increase, under the action of the Holy Spirit; and He perfects its fellowship in unity: in the confession of one faith, in the common celebration of divine worship, and in the fraternal harmony of the family of God.

The Church, then, God's only flock, like a standard high lifted for the nations to see it (Cf. Is. 11,10-12), ministers the Gospel of peace to all mankind (Cf. Eph. 2,17-18, in conjunction with Mk. 16,15), as it makes its pilgrim way in hope toward its goal, the fatherland above (Cf. 1 Pet. 1,3-9).

This is the sacred mystery of the unity of the Church, in Christ and through Christ, with the Holy Spirit energizing its various functions. The highest exemplar and source of this mystery is the unity, in the Trinity of Persons, of one God, the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit.

3. In this one and only Church of God from its very beginnings there arose certain rifts (Cf. 1 Cor. 11,18-19; Gal. 1,6-9; 1 Jn. 2,18-19), which the Apostle strongly censures as damnable (Cf. 1 Cor. 1,11ff.; 11,22). But in subsequent centuries much more serious dissensions appeared and quite large Communities became separated from full communion with the Catholic Church—for which, often enough, men of both sides were to blame. However, one cannot charge with the sin of the separation those who at present are born into these Communities and in them are brought up in the faith of Christ, and the Catholic Church accepts them with respect and affection as brothers. For men who believe in Christ and have been properly baptized are brought into certain, though imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church. Without doubt, the differences that exist in varying degrees between them and the Catholic Church—whether in doctrine and sometimes in discipline, or concerning the structure of the Church—do indeed create many obstacles, sometimes serious ones, to full ecclesiastical communion. The ecumenical movement is striving to overcome these obstacles. But even in spite of them it remains true that all who have been justified by faith in baptism are incorporated into Christ (Cf. Council of Florence, Sess. VIII [1439], The Decree *Exultate Deo*: Mansi 31, 1055A); they therefore have a right to be called Christians, and with good reason are accepted as brothers by the children of the Catholic Church (Cf. St. Augustine, In Ps. 32, Enarr.: II, 29: PL 36,299).

Moreover, some, even very many of the most significant elements and endowments, which together go to build up and give life to the Church itself, can exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church: the written Word of God; the life of grace; faith, hope and charity, with the other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit, as well as visible elements. All of these, which come from Christ and lead back to Him, belong by right to the one Church of Christ.

The brethren divided from us also carry out many liturgical actions of the Christian religion. In ways that vary according to the condition of each Church or Community, these most certainly can truly engender a life of grace, and, one must say, can aptly give access to the communion of salvation.

It follows that the separated Churches (Cf. IV Lateran Council [1215] Constitution IV: Mansi 22, 990; II Council of Lyons [1274], Profession of faith of Michael Palaeologos: Mansi 24,71E; Council of Florence, Sess. VI [1439], Definition *Laetentur caeli*: Mansi 31, 1026E) and Communities as such, though we believe they suffer from defects already mentioned, have been by no means deprived of significance and importance in the mystery of salvation. For the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as means of salvation which derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church.

Nevertheless, our separated brethren, whether considered as individuals or as Communities and Churches, are not blessed with that unity which Jesus Christ wished to bestow on all those to whom He has given new birth into one body, and whom He has quickened to newness of life—that unity which the Holy Scriptures and the ancient Tradition of the Church proclaim. For it is through Christ's Catholic Church alone, which is the all-embracing means of salvation, that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained. It was to the apostolic college alone, of which Peter is the head, that we believe that our Lord entrusted all the blessings of the New Covenant, in order to establish on earth the one Body of Christ into which all those should be fully incorporated who belong in any way to the people of God. During its pilgrimage on earth, this people, though still in its members liable to sin, is growing in Christ and is guided by God's gentle wisdom, according to His hidden designs, until it shall happily arrive at the fullness of eternal glory, in the heavenly Jerusalem.

4. Today, in many parts of the world, under the inspiring grace of the Holy Spirit, many efforts are being made in prayer, word and action to attain that fullness of unity which Jesus Christ desires. The sacred Council exhorts, therefore, all the Catholic faithful to recognize the signs of

the times and to take an active and intelligent part in the work of ecumenism.

The term "ecumenical movement" indicates the initiatives and activities encouraged and organized, according to the various needs of the Church and as opportunities offer, to promote Christian unity. These are: first, every effort to avoid expressions, judgements and actions which do not represent the condition of our separated brethren with truth and fairness and so make mutual relations with them more difficult. Then, "dialogue" between competent experts from different Churches and Communities; in their meetings, which are organized in a religious spirit, each explains the teaching of his Communion in greater depth and brings out clearly its distinctive features. Through such dialogue everyone gains a truer knowledge and more just appreciation of the teaching and religious life of both Communions. In addition, these Communions engage in that more intensive cooperation in carrying out any duties for the common good of humanity which are demanded by every Christian conscience. They also come together for common prayer, where this is permitted. Finally, all are led to examine their own faithfulness to Christ's will for the Church and, wherever necessary, undertake with vigor the task of renewal and reform.

Such actions, when they are carried out by the Catholic faithful with prudent patience and under the attentive guidance of their bishops, promote justice and truth, concord and collaboration, as well as the spirit of brotherly love and unity. The result will be that, little by little, as the obstacles to perfect ecclesiastical communion are overcome, all Christians will be gathered, in a common celebration of the Eucharist, into the unity of the one and only Church, which Christ bestowed on His Church from the beginning. This unity, we believe, subsists in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose, and we hope that it will continue to increase until the end of time. However, it is evident that the work of preparing and reconciling those individuals who wish for full Catholic communion is of its nature distinct from ecumenical action. But there is no opposition between the two, since both proceed from the marvelous ways of God.

In ecumenical work, Catholics must assuredly be concerned for their separated brethren, praying for them, keeping them informed about the Church, making the first approaches toward them. But their primary duty is to make a careful and honest appraisal of whatever needs to be renewed and done in the Catholic household itself, in order that its life may bear witness more clearly and faithfully to the teachings and institutions which have been handed down from Christ through the Apostles.

For although the Catholic Church has been endowed with all divinely revealed truth and with all means of grace, yet its members fail to live by them with all the fervor that they should. As a result the radiance of the face shines less brightly in the eyes of our separated brethren and of the world at large, and the growth of God's kingdom is retarded. Every Catholic must therefore aim at Christian perfection (Cf. James 1,4; Rom. 12,1-2) and, each according to his station, play his part that the Church, which bears in her own body the humility and dying of Jesus (Cf. 2 Cor. 4,10; Phil. 2,5-8), may daily be more purified and renewed, against the day when Christ will present her to Himself in all her glory without spot or wrinkle (Cf. Eph. 5,27).

While preserving unity in essentials, let everyone in the Church, according to the office entrusted to him, preserve a proper freedom in the various forms of spiritual life and discipline, in the variety of liturgical rites, and even in the theological elaborations of revealed truth. In all things let charity prevail. If they are true to this course of action, they will be giving ever richer expression to the authentic catholicity of the Church.

On the other hand, Catholics must gladly acknowledge and esteem the truly Christian endowments from our common heritage which are to be found among our separated brethren. It is right and salutary to recognize the riches of Christ and virtuous works in the lives of others who are bearing witness to Christ, sometimes even to the shedding of their blood. For God is always wonderful in His works and worthy of all praise.

Nor should we forget that anything wrought by the grace of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of our separated brethren can contribute to our own edification. Whatever is truly Christian is never contrary to what genuinely belongs to the faith; indeed, it can always bring a more perfect realization of the very mystery of Christ and the Church.

Nevertheless, the divisions among Christians prevent the Church from realizing the fullness of catholicity proper to her in those of her sons who, though joined to her by baptism, are yet separated from full communion with her. Furthermore, the Church herself finds it more difficult to express in actual life her full catholicity in all its aspects.

This sacred Council is gratified to note that the participation by the Catholic faithful in ecumenical work is growing daily. It commends this work to the bishops everywhere in the world for their diligent promotion and prudent guidance.

The Practice of Ecumenism

5. The concern for restoring unity involves the whole Church, faithful and clergy alike. It extends to everyone, according to the talent of each, whether it be exercised in daily Christian living or in theological and historical studies. This concern itself already reveals to some extent the bond of brotherhood existing among all Christians and it leads toward full and perfect unity, in accordance with what God in His kindness wills.

6. Every renewal of the Church (Cf. V Lateran Council, Sess. XII [1517], Constitution *Constitutum*; Mansi 32, 988B-C) essentially consists in an increase of fidelity to her own calling. Undoubtedly this explains the dynamism of the movement toward unity.

Christ summons the Church, as she goes her pilgrim way, to that continual reformation of which she always has need, insofar as she is an institution of men here on earth. Consequently, if, in various times and circumstances, there have been deficiencies in moral conduct or in church discipline, or even in the way that church teaching has been formulated—to be carefully distinguished from the deposit of faith itself—these should be set right at the opportune moment and in the proper way.

Church renewal therefore has notable ecumenical importance. Already this renewal is taking place in various spheres of the Church's life: the biblical and liturgical movements, the preaching of the Word of God and catechetics, the apostolate of the laity, new forms of religious life and the spirituality of married life, and the Church's social teaching and activity. All these should be considered as promises and guarantees for the future progress of ecumenism.

7. There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without interior conversion. For is from newness of attitudes of mind (Cf. Eph. 4:23), from self-denial and unstinted love, that desires of unity take their rise and develop in a mature way. We should therefore pray to the Holy Spirit for the grace to genuinely self-denying, humble, gentle in the service of others and to have an attitude of brotherly generosity toward them. The Apostle of the Gentiles says: "I, therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4,1-3). This exhortation is directed especially to those raised to sacred orders in order that the mission of Christ may be continued. He came among us "not to be served but to serve" (Mt. 20,28).

St. John has testified: "if we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us" (1 Jn. 1,10). This holds good for sins against unity. Thus, in humble

prayer we beg pardon of God and of our separated brethren, just as we forgive them that trespass against us.

The faithful should remember that they are better promoting union among Christians, indeed living it better, the more they strive to live holier according to the Gospel. For the closer their union with the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, the more deeply and easily will they be able to grow in mutual brotherly love.

8. This change of heart and holiness of life, along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians, should be regarded as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement, and merits the name, "spiritual ecumenism."

It is a recognized custom for Catholics to meet for frequent recourse to that prayer for the unity of the Church with which the Savior Himself on the eve of His death so fervently appealed to His Father. "That they may all be one" (Jn. 17,20).

In certain special circumstances, such as in prayer services "for unity" and during ecumenical gatherings, it is allowable, indeed desirable that Catholics should join in prayer with their separated brethren. Such prayers in common are certainly a very effective means of petitioning for the grace of unity, and they are a genuine expression of the ties which still bind Catholics to their separated brethren. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mt. 18,20).

Yet worship in common (*communicatio in sacris*) is not to be considered as a means to be used indiscriminately for the restoration of unity among Christians. There are two main principles upon which the practice of such common worship depends: first, that of the unity of the Church which ought to be expressed; and second, that of the sharing in means of grace. The expression of unity very generally forbids common worship. Grace to be obtained sometimes commends it. The concrete course to be adopted, when due regard has been given to all the circumstances of time, place and persons, is left to the prudent decision of the local episcopal authority, unless the Bishops Conference according to its own statutes, or the Holy See, has determined otherwise.

9. We must get to know the outlook of our separated brethren. Study is absolutely required for this, and it should be pursued in fidelity to truth and with a spirit of good will. Catholics, who already have a proper grounding, need to acquire a more adequate understanding of the respective doctrines of our separated brethren, their history, their spiritual and liturgical life, their religious psychology and cultural background. Most valuable for this purpose are meetings of the two sides—especially for discussion of theological problems—where each can treat with the other on an equal footing, provided that those who take part in them

under the guidance of the authorities are truly competent. From such dialogue will emerge still more clearly what the situation of the Catholic Church really is. In this way, too, we will better understand the outlook of our separated brethren and more aptly present our own belief.

10. Sacred theology and other branches of knowledge, especially those of an historical nature, must be taught with due regard also for the ecumenical point of view, so that they may correspond as exactly as possible with the facts.

It is important that future pastors and priests should have mastered a theology that has been carefully worked out in this way and not polemically, especially with regard to those aspects which concern the relations of separated brethren with the Catholic Church. For it is the formation which priests receive upon which so largely depends the necessary instruction and spiritual formation of the faithful and of religious. Moreover, Catholics engaged in missionary work in the same territories as other Christians ought to know, particularly in these times, the problems and the benefits which affect their apostolate because of the ecumenical movement.

11. The manner and order in which Catholic belief is expressed should in no way become an obstacle to dialogue with our brethren. It is, of course, essential that the doctrine be clearly presented in its entirety. Nothing is so foreign to the spirit of ecumenism as a false irenicism which harms the purity of Catholic doctrine and obscures its assured genuine meaning.

At the same time, Catholic belief must be explained more profoundly and precisely, in such a way and in such terms as our separated brethren can also really understand it.

Furthermore, in ecumenical dialogue, Catholic theologians, standing fast by the teaching of the Church yet searching together with separated brethren into the divine mysteries, should do so with love for the truth, with charity, and with humility. When comparing doctrines with one another, they should remember that in Catholic doctrine there exists an order or "hierarchy" of truths, since they vary in their relation to the foundation of the Christian faith. Thus the way will be opened whereby this kind of "fraternal rivalry" will incite all to a deeper realization and a clearer expression of the unfathomable riches of Christ (Cf. Eph. 3,8).

12. Before the whole world let all Christians confess their faith in God, one and three, in the incarnate Son of God, our Redeemer and Lord. United in their efforts, and with mutual respect, let them bear witness to our common hope which does not play us false. Since cooperation in social matters is so widespread today, all men without exception are called to work together; with much greater

reason are all those who believe in God, but most of all, all Christians in that they bear the seal of Christ's name. Cooperation among Christians vividly expresses that bond which already unites them, and it sets in clearer relief the features of Christ the Servant. Such cooperation, which has already begun in many countries, should be developed more and more, particularly in regions where a social and technical evolution is taking place. It should contribute to a just appreciation of the dignity of the human person, to the promotion of the blessings of peace, the application of Gospel principles to social life, and the advancement of the arts and sciences in a truly Christian spirit. It should also be intensified in the use of every possible means to relieve the afflictions of our times, such as famine and natural disasters, illiteracy and poverty, lack of housing, and the unequal distribution of wealth. Through such cooperation, all believers in Christ are able to learn easily how they can understand each other better and esteem each other more, and how the road to the unity of Christians may be made smooth.

29. "The Holy Spirit and the Catholicity of the Church," Report of Section I, Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Uppsala, 1968

The Uppsala assembly, coming in the turbulent years of the late 1960s, is generally known for its attentiveness to ethical issues. The delegates also spoke powerfully, however, of "catholicity" as part of God's activity in history. • The Uppsala Report 1968, ed. Norman Goodall, Geneva, WCC, 1968, pp. 13-18.

7. Since Christ lived, died and rose again for all mankind, catholicity is the opposite of all kinds of egoism and particularism. It is the quality by which the Church expresses the fullness, the integrity and the totality of life in Christ. The Church is catholic, and should be catholic, in all her elements and in all aspects of her life, and especially in her worship. Members of the Church should reflect the integrity and wholeness which is the essential character of the Church. One measure of her internal unity is that it is said of believers that they have but one heart and one soul (Acts 4:32; Phil. 2:1-12).

There are then two factors in it: the unifying grace of the Spirit and the humble efforts of believers, who do not seek their own, but are united in faith, in adoration, and in love and service of Christ for the sake of the world. Catholicity is a gift of the Spirit, but it is also a task, a call and an engagement. . . .

10. God offers this gift to men in their freedom. The activity of the Spirit never forces men, but opens before them the doors of God's love and gives them the power to cooperate in God's creative and redeeming action. Such power is needed to overcome individual and collective egoism, to reconcile enemies, and to free slaves of habit from their chains. But men misuse this freedom, refusing the gift of catholicity both individually and corporately. This happens whenever Christians confuse the unity and catholicity of the Church with other solidarities and communities. Examples of this confusion occur wherever Christian communities

- allow the Gospel to be obscured by prejudices which prevent them from seeking unity;
- allow their membership to be determined by discrimination based on race, wealth, social class or education;
- do not exhibit in all the variety of their life together the essential oneness in Christ of men and women;
- allow cultural, ethnic or political allegiances to prevent the organic union of churches which confess the same faith within the same region;
- prescribe their own customary practices as binding on other Christians as the condition for cooperation and unity;
- permit loyalty to their own nation to hinder or to destroy their desire for mutual fellowship with Christians of another nation;
- allow themselves to be forced into a unity by the State for nationalistic ends, or break their unity for political reasons.

By recognizing these confusions and by seeking to eliminate them, our churches may find themselves on the way to overcoming the forces which still keep us apart from each other. . . .

The Quest for Diversity

12. The quest for catholicity faces us with the question whether we betray God's gift by ignoring the diversities

of the Spirit's working. Diversity may be a perversion of catholicity but often it is a genuine expression of the apostolic vocation of the Church. This is illustrated by the New Testament, where through a wide range of doctrinal and liturgical forms, relevant to differing situations, the one unchanging apostolic heritage finds expression. Behind the variety of apostolic activities we discern a double movement: the Church is always "being called out of the world and being sent into the world" (Lund 1952). This double movement is basic to a dynamic catholicity. Each of the two movements requires different words and actions in different situations, but always the two movements belong together. The constitutive centre of this double movement is corporate worship in which Christ himself is the one who both calls and sends.

13. Here we also discern a basis for evaluating the Spirit's gift. A diversity which frustrates the calling and the sending is demonic; the diversities which encourage and advance the double movement, and therefore enhance catholicity, are of different kinds. There are now as in the New Testament rich varieties of charismatic gifts, such as are described in 1 Cor. 12-14; there are diverse ways of proclaiming the Gospel and setting forth its mysteries; there are manifold ways of presenting doctrinal truths and of celebrating sacramental and liturgical events; churches in different areas adopt different patterns of organization. By such diversities, intrinsic to the double movement, the Spirit leads us forward on the way to a fully catholic mission and ministry.

14. We give thanks that down the ages the continuing life of the people of God can be discerned. For the Holy Spirit, who created this people in time, has continued with it through the centuries, preserving its worship and enabling it to bring God's good news to the world. The Church is revealed as the one body of Christ, the one people of God in every age, and so its continuity is made actual

- in the "faith once given to the saints," embodied in the Scriptures, confessed in the Church and proclaimed to the world;
- in the liturgical life of the Church, its worship and sacraments;
- in the continuous succession of the apostolic ministry of Word and Sacrament;
- in constantly preparing the people of God to go into the world and meet human needs;
- in the unbroken witness of the lives of prophets, martyrs and saints.

15. The Holy Spirit has not only preserved the Church in continuity with her past; He is also continuously present in the Church, effecting her inward renewal and recreation. The Church in heaven is indeed one with the Church on earth, yet the Church on earth does not stand outside the historical process. As the pilgrim people of God she finds herself at every point of time implicated in the varying hopes, problems and fears of men and women, and in the changing patterns of human history. The Church is faced by the twin demands, of continuity in the one Holy Spirit, and of renewal in response to the call of the Spirit amid the changes of human history.

16. The Church is apostolic in the sense that all that makes the Church the Church is derived from Christ through the apostles. Apostolicity also means the continuous transmission of the Gospel to all men and nations through acts of worship, witness and human service in the world. The Church is therefore apostolic because she remains true to the faith and mission of the apostles. We are now called afresh to repentance and humility in the search for one ministry recognized by the whole Church, and for an understanding of ministry more adequate to the New Testament, to the Church and to the needs of our own times. We seek to present the apostolic faith unimpaired: we must beware among ourselves of a perversion of catholicity into a justification for a blind defence of political and religious establishments, as well as being watchful against distortions of the apostolic faith by those who confuse the novel with the new.

17. The New Delhi Assembly emphasized with good effect the need to manifest the unity of "all Christians in each place." Even so, much still needs to be done in drawing separated congregations to recognize each other and to share in such activities as common worship, Bible study, ecumenical offerings and joint response to human needs. We must continue to seek the unity of all Christians in a common profession of the faith in the observance of Baptism and the Eucharist, and in recognition of a ministry for the whole Church.

18. So to the emphasis on "all in each place" we would now add a fresh understanding of the unity of all Christians in all places. This calls the churches in all places to realize that they belong together and are called to act together. In a time when human interdependence is so evident, it is the more imperative to make visible the bonds which unite Christians in universal fellowship.

19. But there are hindrances. No church can properly avoid responsibility for the life of its own nation and culture. Yet if that should militate against fellowship with churches and Christians of other lands, then distortion has entered the Church's life at a vital point. But the clearest

obstacle to manifestation of the churches' universality is their inability to understand the measure in which they already belong together in one body. Some real experience of universality is provided by establishing regional and international confessional fellowships. But such experiences of universality are inevitably partial. The ecumenical movement helps to enlarge this experience of universality, and its regional councils and its World Council may be regarded as a transitional opportunity for eventually actualizing a truly universal, ecumenical, conciliar form of common life and witness. The members of the World Council of Churches, committed to each other, should work for the time when a genuinely universal council may once more speak for all Christians, and lead the way into the future.

The Quest for the Unity of Mankind

20. The Church is bold in speaking of itself as the sign of the coming unity of mankind. However well founded the claim, the world hears it sceptically, and points to "secular catholicities" of its own. For secular society has produced instruments of conciliation and unification which often seem more effective than the Church itself. To the outsider, the churches often seem remote and irrelevant, and busy to the point of tediousness with their own concerns. The churches need a new openness to the world in its aspirations, its achievements, its restlessness and its despair.

21. This is the more evident at a time when technology is drawing men into a single secular culture, a fact which underlines the essential truth of human nature as of one blood, in equal right and dignity through every diversity of race and kind. This unity of man is grounded for the Christian not only in his creation by the one God in his own image, but in Jesus Christ who "for us men" became man, was crucified, and who constitutes the Church which is his body as a new community of new creatures. The catholicity of the Church means this given reality of grace in which the purpose of creation is restored and sinful men are reconciled in the one divine sonship of which Christ is both author and finisher.

22. It is by this truth of man made new in Christ that we must judge and repudiate the tragic distortions of humanity in the life of mankind, some found even in the Christian community. The churches have declaimed against racism of every kind; but racial segregations are found in them, so that even when they gather in Christ's name some are excluded on account of their colour. Such a denial of catholicity demands the speediest and most passionate rejection. How long, O Lord, how long? Renewal must begin in the local community, by detecting and dethroning all exclusiveness of race and class and by

fighting all economic, political and social degradation and exploitation of men.

23. Catholicity is also a constant possession and pursuit of the mystery of faith, the sacramental experience of that incorporation into Christ and involvement with mankind of which the Church is the form and the Eucharist the substantial focus.

24. When we consider the vision of unity granted to this generation and the resources of God's bounty available for the enrichment of mankind, we become newly aware of the tragic character of the divisions that separate us, including the divisions among us at this Assembly. We confess how empty and deceptive our talk of catholicity may sound, and how far we lag behind the summons of the Spirit. We have been reminded that by nature we are united with that world which was judged on Golgotha, and will be judged on the Last Day; and in Christ through the Spirit we are united with that community renewed at Pentecost and which will be renewed in the Year of the Lord. With a single voice all members of the Assembly pray "Come, creator Spirit," knowing that any answer to this prayer should open our eyes to God's future, which is already breaking in upon us.

30. Johannes Willebrands, "Moving towards a Typology of Churches," 1970

This address, by the president of the Vatican's unity secretariat (now the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity), was given in Cambridge, England. It is, in effect, an explication of remarks by Pope Paul VI and has been highly influential for the movement's understanding of unity. • Called to Full Unity: Documents on Anglican-Roman Catholic Relations 1966-1983, eds Joseph W. Witmer and J. Robert Wright, United States Catholic Conference, 1986, pp. 50-53.

May I invite you to reflect on a notion which, it seems to me, has received much fruitful attention from theologians recently? It is that of the *typos* in its sense of general form or character, and of a plurality of *typoi* within the communion of the one and only Church of Christ.

When I speak here of a *typos* of the Church, I do not mean to describe the local or the particular Church in the sense the Vatican Council has given it. In the *Decree on the*

Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church the Council describes the local Church or the diocese as

that portion of God's people which is entrusted to a bishop to be shepherded by him with the cooperation of the presbytery. Adhering thus to its pastor and gathered together by him in the Holy Spirit through the gospel and the Eucharist, this portion constitutes a particular church in which the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and operative.

From this description it becomes clear that the local Church is not merely a part of the whole but that the fullness of the whole universal Church is present in the local Church, or if that fullness is not present in it, the local Church is not perfect and complete. Here we are not making a distinction between the essence of the Church and its empirical manifestation. The New Testament never makes this distinction when it speaks of Churches. We are talking about the universal Church which is manifest in a particular place. It is this meaning of the local Church which the Vatican Council has discovered again.

As distinct from this notion of the local Church, with all of the theological meaning it contains, the notion which I submit to your attention, that of a *typos* of a Church, does not primarily designate a diocese or a national Church (although in some cases it may more or less coincide with a national Church). It is a notion which has its own phenomenological aspects, with their particular theological meaning.

In the *Decree on Ecumenism* we read: "For many centuries the Churches of East and West went their own ways, though a brotherly communion of faith and sacramental life bound them together" (n.14). The theological element which must always be present and presupposed is the full "communion of faith and sacramental life." But the words "went their own ways" point in the direction of the notion which I would like to develop a little more. What are these "own ways" and when can we speak of a *typos*? A bit further on the *Decree on Ecumenism* explains "the heritage handed down by the apostles was received in different forms and ways, so that from the very beginnings of the Church it has had a varied development in various places, thanks to a similar variety of natural gifts and conditions of life" (n.14).

Where there is a long coherent tradition, commanding men's love and loyalty, creating and sustaining a harmonious and organic whole of complementary elements, each of which supports and strengthens the other, you have the reality of a *typos*.

Such complementary elements are many. A characteristic theological method and approach (historical perhaps

in emphasis, concrete and mistrustful of abstraction) is one of them. It is one approach among others to the understanding of the single mystery, the single faith, the single Christ.

A characteristic liturgical expression is another. It has its own psychology; here a people's distinctive experience of the one divine Mystery will be manifest—in sobriety or in splendor, inclining to tradition or eager for experiment, national or supranational in flavor. The liturgical expression is perhaps a more decisive element because “the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fountain from which her power flows” (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, n.10).

A spiritual and devotional tradition draws from many springs—the bible, the fathers, the monastic heritage, its own more recent classics. It meets new needs in its own way; its balance of joy and contrition, of action and contemplation, will be determined by history and temperament.

A characteristic canonical discipline, the fruit also of experience and psychology, can be present. Through the combination of all of these, a *typos* can be specified.

In the *Constitution on the Church* of the Second Vatican Council we read: “By divine Providence it has come about that various Churches, established in various places by the apostles and their successors, have in the course of time coalesced into several groups, organically united, which, preserving the unity of faith and the unique divine constitution of the universal Church, enjoy their own discipline, their own liturgical usage, and their own theological and spiritual heritage” (n.23). It is through such deeply seated realities as these, and not because of mere territorial or national boundaries, that we can find the expression of a typology of Churches. Different *typoi* exist in countries where eastern and western Churches live together. If within one nation two *typoi* are so closely related, that in a situation of full communion between them, Providence draws them into coalescence, the authentic and strong elements of each will take their place in an enriched unity. Such a strengthening and enrichment will manifest itself primarily where it finds its highest motive—in a renewal of witness to Christ, a renewal of mission. A reunion which would not be a new Pentecost, a fresh manifestation of the eternal mystery to a time with its own spiritual needs, would be a nine days' wonder and little else.

It seems to me that Pope Gregory in his famous letter to Augustine, Archbishop of the English nation, opened the way for a new *typos* of the Church in western countries. He writes:

My brother, you are familiar with the usage of the Roman Church, in which you were brought up. But if you have found customs, whether in the Roman,

Gallican, or any other Churches that may be more acceptable to God, I wish you to make a careful selection of them, and teach the Church of the English, which is still young in Faith, whatever you can profitably learn from the various Churches. For things should not be loved for the sake of places, but places for the sake of good things. Therefore select from each of the Churches whatever things are devout, religious, and right; and when you have arranged them into a unified rite, let the minds of the English grow accustomed to it. (Bede, *A History of the English Church and People* I, 27, 2)

Obviously the very existence of different *typoi* “added to external causes and to mutual failures of understanding and charity” can also “set the stage for separations” (Decree on Ecumenism, n.14). Through the grace of God, the ecumenical movement is creating understanding and charity and restoring unity between those who have grown asunder. The life of the Church needs a variety of *typoi* which would manifest the full catholic and apostolic character of the one and holy Church. If we are only going to fossilize, common sense would seem to suggest that it is not very important whether we do so together or separately. Unity is vital only if it is a vital unity.

None of us, I fancy, underestimates what is needed of wisdom and discernment, of strength and patience, of loyalty and flexibility, of forbearance, of willingness to teach and to learn, if we are to make progress toward this goal. Nor, happily, is any of us in doubt as to the sources whence we shall derive what we need. The movement we aspire to make together is within one great dynamic, the *aedificatio Christi*. The tradition which is shared and enriched in a true typology is a *living* tradition—something which looks to the past only as it has vital meaning for the present and contributes dynamically to the future.

If a typology of Churches, a diversity in unity and unity in diversity, multiplies the possibilities of identifying and celebrating the presence of God in the world; if it brings nearer the hope of providing an imaginative framework within which Christian witness can transform human consciousness for today, then it has all the justification it needs.

31. José Míguez Bonino, "A Latin American Attempt to Locate the Question of Unity," Consultation on Faith and Order, Salamanca, 1973

Míguez Bonino, well known as a Protestant liberation theologian from Latin America, has been very active in international ecumenism, especially in the work of the WCC. This address, delivered at the Salamanca conference on "concepts of unity and models of union," signals a new turn in discussions of this topic. • What Kind of Unity? Faith and Order paper no. 69, Geneva, WCC, 1974, pp. 51, 53-60.

It is, I think, becoming increasingly clear that we do not have a general, abstract conception of unity which can be articulated in a programme and implemented by means of an adequate strategy and tactics. As the staff paper prior to this Consultation put it, the various concepts of unity, while they are "attempts to describe the unity of the Church confessed in the Creed," are "themselves historically conditioned." The only way to avoid sacralizing such historically conditioned concepts and models (with the resulting frustration or self-deception in the attempt to apply them) is to start from the concrete historical situation, to assess it and clarify it by means of whatever analytical means are at our disposal and to try to understand it theologically in such a way that we may "offer it a future" (Metz). It is impossible to attempt to do this in this brief paper, but I shall try to indicate some lines in relation to the question of unity in our Latin American situation. . . .

An Ecclesiological Crisis

The classical ecclesiological questions: who belongs in the Church? where is the Church? what are the limits of the Church? what are the "signs" or "marks" of the Church? take for us a new and more radical form: *What is the Church for?* One may say that this question was implicit in the others. If so, it has become explicit and urgent. In certain ways, it has been the ecumenical movement itself which, by relativizing through mutual confrontation the exclusive and self-justifying claims of the different churches, has opened the way for this total and more fundamental question for the reason of the churches' existence. We must look at some

consequences of this new way of posing the ecclesiological question, at least as we see it in our continent.

For one thing, the existence of different denominations, however regrettable it may be, is not the great scandal that it once was. Negatively it can be said that the merger of the denominations would not remove the scandal. Competition among the churches (at least among the major confessions) has mostly been removed. There are no great and public breaches of courtesy and even of fellowship. For the great public, the peaceful coexistence and eventual union of the Christian churches is already taken for granted. What is more difficult to understand is the fact of the growing polarization within each Church and across Christianity as a whole concerning the meaning of the Christian faith, its place and significance in our historical situation, the proper function and stance of the Church.

The point may be illustrated in the experience of a Puerto Rican theology professor thrown in prison for his participation in a protest against US military operations in his country. As he was trying to explain to his (non-Christian) fellow prisoners why he had, as a Christian, taken that action, one of them interrupted: "Look here, what you say makes no sense because you took this action as Christian obedience, and those who threw you in prison did the same. What is the meaning of a Christian truth that can equally issue in revolutionary action or reactionary repression?"

This is the real scandal that we face and no distinction of principle and application, of dogmatics and ethics, of corporate neutrality and personal commitment can help us at this point. We are up against conflicting and mutually exclusive understandings of what it means to be a Christian in Latin America in the last third of the twentieth century!

The old discussion between spiritual and organic unity has been left behind: we are well aware of the concrete and historical character of all our so-called "spiritual" relations. Confessional debate, on the other hand, is in our continent mostly artificial. When either a spiritual conception of unity or confessional differences are invoked for justifying separation it soon turns out that these things really cover other reasons which are related to the basic terms of the debate (it is because Argentine Methodists are left-wing, or Brazilian Presbyterians are conservative, or the Chilean Roman Catholic hierarchy is "reformist"). Perhaps the only real confessional distinction which still makes sense for Latin Americans is that between Catholics and Protestants, and even this is slowly losing an identifiable content and being replaced by trans-confessional distinctions and groupings.

One should say, in fact, that our churches were never confessional except formally or to the extent that they were

externally shaped by their national (transplanted communities) or missionary origin. Their confessional consciousness was closely related to—if not totally coincident with—their “foreignness.” The more they become a part of their own societies, the more they lose these characteristics which, in any case, had never been really introjected because they had their historical matrix in a different and intransferable situation. We shall have to take up this question later on in another context. At the present point it is enough to realize that the historical ecumenical movement, built on the basis of the existence and significance of different confessional traditions and aiming at the discussion, *rapprochement* and eventual union of them, becomes largely irrelevant for our own problem. It can only be interesting for a few leaders who have assumed the questions and conditions of the ecumenical centres and who, at this point at least, become estranged from the congregations for which such a problematic has no basis in reality.

What we are witnessing in Latin America is a regrouping of the Christian community. It may or may not mean the break-up of ecclesiastical structures. But in any case it brackets out the confessional question and draws different lines of unity and separation. We can thus speak of “families” of Christians, drawn together by a common answer to the question: what is the Church for? People and groups in each of these “families” may be organically connected, loosely related, or ignorant of each other. But they speak a common language, they instantly recognize each other and they draw similar lines of separation from other “families.”

There is the “charismatic” family for which the Church is the gathering in which they experience a common immediacy of the Spirit, a liberating and transforming experience opening a new realm of existence, “the life in the Spirit” characterized by joy, freedom and love. There is among them the expectancy of the miracle—tongues, healing, prophecy—the communal signs of solidarity—mutual help, care of the needy—but these are not so much anticipations of the coming Kingdom, much less signs of a reality which has to be extended to the whole society; rather they are the external *rayonnement* of the spiritual life. The Church is the realm where this life becomes available and consequently the invitation to participate in the fellowship is the most significant form of service. This is what the Church is for!

There is the “revolutionary” family which hears the Gospel as a call for justice which has to be understood in terms of the historical conditions of neocolonial and capitalist oppression and dependence in which we live. The answer of faith must therefore take the nature of a historical commitment to the struggle for liberation. The Church cannot therefore claim to be the impartial bearer

of a neutral Word which hovers above concrete options. It is always *already* committed—whether unwittingly or not! To make the right commitment, the option which corresponds to God’s liberating purpose at a given time is the call and function of the Church. This is certainly not denying that the liberation offered in the Gospel is not exhausted in economic and political terms. But it claims that this deeper dimension can only be historically articulated from within the socio-political struggle. This is what the Church is for!

There is the “conservative” family, in which the option seems less defined because it claims to be simply the continuing embodiment and depositary of the “normative” Christian faith, the “real” Church over against sect, group and movement. Whatever our theological judgment may be, though, from an empirical point of view this is also a distinctive “family” easily recognizable in its conception of the Church as a socially stable and structured religious body charged with the preservation and transmission of a religious tradition, usually associated with a cultural and frequently also with an ideological heritage and conception. The militant character of this option becomes more evident as that heritage—both in its cultural-ideological and in its religio-theological aspects—is challenged. It defines itself more evidently in its pathological form in groups such as “Tradition, family and property,” or “Christians concerned,” but it is present in every ecclesiastical body and dominant in many.

I have used the nicknames for these families on purpose, and drawn what may look as caricatures of their positions. Nicknames and caricatures are used in polemics and conflicts. Christian literature of the great confessing periods (the early centuries, the times of the Reformation) is full of them. Since the beginning of the “liberal era” and particularly in the “ecumenical age” we have carefully avoided nicknames and caricatures and at tempted balanced and objective pictures of the “other” (whom we refused to call “adversary”). It seemed to be beyond doubt that this was a more Christian attitude. Was that really the case or was it rather that the sociological uniting force of the liberal ideology was much stronger than confessional differences which were originated in answer to conditions definitively left behind, which could therefore be objectively and courteously debated? It is at least instructive that the new lines of confession and separation are not so ironically debated but elicit the language and attitudes characteristic of confessing and polemical times. Even the fact that so many people and churches refuse to face the problem as a legitimately confessional one by refusing to grant the dissenting “families” ecclesiological dignity is a clear indication of our situation. We face a true “confessional conflict” in this new (and old) sense of a concrete missiological definition. As in

other times in history, the quest for the true unity is at the same time the struggle for the true division.

Theological Reconsideration

In view of our conflicts, the old question: Where is the Church? becomes again a crucial one. The matter could be easily settled if we could answer that institutional continuity by itself decides where the Church is. But not even a secular judge would settle a case of institutional division solely on the basis of formal continuity. He would have to enquire about the continuation of purposes and functions. Theologically, hardly anybody would claim that a missionologically empty institutional continuity is enough.

Therefore we must move beyond this purely formal level and ask where, in the Christian “families” in Latin America, do we find a living Word, a word which is no mere transmission and explanation but also proclamation and convocation. Where do we find a community of purpose and of intention (*sympneou*)? The answer is: we find these things only in the transconfessional “families.” The roots of our problems are this divorce between institutional continuity and the transmission of the heritage on the one hand and a missionary community and a living Word on the other. The problem of unity does not consist for us in bringing the two things together in theory or in theological statements but historically and in reality. The ecumenical question is for us the struggle for a reconstitution of the Church.

In this struggle we discover the decisive weight of the sociological and ideological disguises and the need for unmasking them. The ecumenical movement has known for a long time the existence of “non-theological factors” and its weight in the question of unity. It has also been said that the expression “non-theological” is not adequate because these factors belong to the sphere of creation, or are related to God’s general activity in history. But it seems that the real significance of these factors is not taken seriously unless we take at least two more steps. First, we must recognize that they are no mere isolated “factors,” ingredients that we can bracket out in order to survey and understand the situation as it would be without them. These so-called factors are really the sociohistorical matrix of our churches and of the ecumenical movement. We are structurally, administratively, liturgically, theologically shaped and institutionalized by and within a certain socio-political economic system. Secondly, these systems have their own ideologies, their particular ways of understanding and representing reality and of projecting themselves into the future. In other words, there are only historically and ideologically “datable” churches. There is no possibility

of even theoretically abstracting ourselves from them in order to pose a pure model which we could then adapt historically. In our case (but is it only ours?) we know a “colonial Church,” the Church of the Iberian colonization which began its crisis in the nineteenth century, and “neo-colonial churches,” both Catholic and Protestant, which are now meeting the crisis created by the Latin American effort to overcome its neocolonial age. The different “families” are defined by the way in which they place themselves in relation to this effort. There is no possibility of being “Church”—or of being anything, for that matter—in today’s world without making an option concerning the struggle for a post-capitalist, post-neocolonial society. It is only natural that a discussion of unity which refuses to face this fact can excite no interest and inspire no lasting determination.

This line of analysis has to be pursued also concerning the models of unity, and particularly of organic union and of conciliar relation that have become familiar during the last half century. Is it not true that the concepts of negotiation, representation, procedure as we use them bear the imprint of the liberal ideology and the democratic parliamentary system of the age of Anglo-Saxon domination in which it was born? Do we not become irritated when Orthodox or (to some extent) Roman Catholics fail to see the “logical” and “natural” universal validity of this model? Could we not understand better much of the struggle in the Roman Catholic Church at the time of the Council and since then, particularly in Europe and North America, as the painful effort to reinstitutionalize the Roman Catholic Church in this modern, liberal world?

It is not my intent to decry or deny the value of the impulse towards unity and the concrete possibilities to achieve it generated by the liberal-parliamentary model. I am only pleading for the recognition of the historical and ideological matrix of this—and all—concepts and models of unity. This means, on the other hand, that our present situation, the struggle for overcoming the capitalist neocolonial age and the projects for a new society can also become an impulse for unity and provide models for its realization. Confessional families, for instance, have clearly been shaped historically by the colonial and neocolonial structure. The attempt to achieve unity without radically changing its forms of representation, financing, deliberation and operation becomes a clear option for the continuation of the colonial past and has to be resisted and rejected by those churches and groups which are trying to overcome this past. Their opposition may seem unreasonable to those who have not perceived the ideological determination of their own model. Perhaps just as unreasonable as Luther’s insistence that, in his time, a legitimate Christian Council

to deal with the problem of unity could only be held “on German territory”!

The same kind of analysis can be applied to the idea of an ecumenical Council which has been debated in ecumenical centres during the last few years. It is interesting that the problems raised—to my knowledge—have been confined almost totally to juridical claims of the world confessions. It has been taken for granted that, if the question of legitimate convocation and representation in terms of the ecclesiastical bodies could be settled, the road would be expedited for “a genuine Christian Council.” What would happen if we were to take seriously the fact that world relationships are today determined by the pattern of domination/dependence and that the same pattern determines the relation of centre/periphery in the great confessional bodies? What is the adequate translation of Luther’s demand of a council “on German territory” for this situation? The determination to attempt such an enterprise, to free the quest for unity from the control of the liberal-democratic ideology, could become a real challenge, an anticipation of the future in an age of social revolution.

In order to break out of the socio-ideological strait-jacket and to open the ground for the reconstitution of the Church in the struggle of the “confessing” families as we have them today, one more theological step is necessary. It is necessary to become aware of the fact that “church” and “unity” are not univocal but analogous and critical concepts. It is true that, to a certain extent, we have always recognized that “church” has that analogous character as applied to a local congregation, a confession and the mystical Body of Christ. But one would have to carry this recognition one step further by giving up the attempt to erect one of the existing ecclesial entities as “the full measure” of ecclesial reality against which one could measure the “ecclesial density” of the rest. This is indeed a bold step: it means to admit the “struggle for the Church” as the ecclesiology for unity. In other words, towards the end of the twentieth century we are caught in the din and confusion of the struggle for a new organization of human life and society. The churches, sociologically and ideologically shaped, united and divided by previous systems, are also in crisis as new forms of articulation of Christian life, of the Christian message, of theology and organization begin to emerge. Shall we persist in abstracting the quest for unity from this situation and continue to proceed as if the lines of unity and division of a previous time were still relevant? Or shall we dare to take seriously the lines of division and the signs of unity that begin to emerge, not as curious additions to the old and trusted patterns but as the basic reference for our discussion of unity? For us, at least, the search for unity

is the struggle for the Church as it strives to take shape in the quest for a new kind of human life in a new society.

32. “Towards Unity in Tension,” World Council of Churches Commission on Faith and Order, 1974

This statement marks the conclusion of a Faith and Order study project on “The Unity of the Church and the Unity of Mankind,” the WCC’s first systematic attempt to relate these themes. Numerous subsequent studies have drawn inspiration from this brief report. • Documentary History of Faith and Order 1968-1993, ed. Günther Gassmann, Faith and Order paper no. 159, Geneva, WCC, 1993, pp. 144-47.

1. In pursuing our quest for the visible unity of the Church, we are seeking the fulfilment of God’s purpose as it is declared to us in Jesus Christ. This purpose concerns the world, the whole of mankind, and the whole created order. Christ has been lifted up to draw all men to himself, and as all things have been created through him and all men are made in his image, so it is his will that all should be reconciled in him through the “blood of the Cross” (Col. 1:20).

Our concern for the unity of the Church is, therefore, held within a concern for that wider and fuller unity whereof we believe the Church is called to be sign, first-fruit, and instrument. Thus it is as part of our faith that we say: “The Church is bold in speaking of itself as the sign of the coming unity of mankind” (the Uppsala assembly, 1968).

2. But in a time when human inter-relatedness has become oppressive for so many, can we speak of “the unity of mankind”? When liberation and struggle have become a vocation for the oppressed, is it enough to speak of “signs” and “church unity”? What does “unity” require of Christians in situations of human conflict?

3. When we speak of the unity of mankind, we intend to refer to more than the unity of the Church. We speak in the light of the new creation of the human unity in and for which God created mankind, and which he has promised to his children in his Kingdom. It will come in God’s own time and power, in judgment and fulfilment, and will be

the final definition and realization of mankind's hope for unity.

4. This unity, whose foretaste we know in the Spirit, demands and enables in history the just interdependence of free people, societies, and nations. It is this just interdependence of which mankind has dreamed, of which its laws and ideologies attempt to speak, and which it continually struggles to attain and protect. Movements of liberation, for instance, derive a large part of their motivation from the sense of solidarity of man with man in the fight for justice and equality. Although this just interdependence is not identical with "the unity of mankind," it is also not separable from it. In this light, humanity's search for a just interdependence is in reality a hunger, implanted by the Creator, a hunger for which Christians share a mutual responsibility with all human beings.

It is part of that travail in which the whole creation groans, longing for liberation (Rom. 8:19-22). It is that longing which Christians share, sustained in it by the work of the Spirit. Therefore, Christians have a mandate for critical, loyal participation in humanity's strivings for a more adequate human community. They are also called to recognize, proclaim, and expect God's judgment upon all forms of that community which are unjust and oppressive.

5. Mankind's yearning for a just interdependence is magnified today by certain historical factors and forces which are producing an inevitable, fast-developing human inter-relatedness and organization. In speaking of this developing "human inter-relatedness," we intend to refer to a fact of modern life which has both positive and negative aspects.

6. On the positive side, a providential increase in the human ability for just interdependence is taking place. World-wide economic structures, mass communication, the development of science and technology, international travel—to name only a few factors—increasingly inter-relate us in one another's economics, societies, politics, cultures, aspirations. They provide a basis for vastly strengthening the just interdependence of free people. We understand this inter-relatedness as extending not only in space but in time. We are increasingly linked with the heritage of past generations and projected into new responsibilities for generations unborn. This makes it all the more urgent and possible to act now to reverse the crisis of our environment and stem the reckless exploitation of this earth's resources.

7. But the unity of mankind—as the Bible teaches us—bears the mark of Cain. From the beginning, human wickedness has made human history a scene of hostility and alienation. The human quest for a just interdependence is vitiated by sinful self-assertion. In the name of unity and interdependence false structures are created, marked by

false dependence and oppression. The powerful exploit the weak in the name of unity. The commercial and financial structures which bind the world together also oppress and enslave. Race oppresses race, and even the Church itself uses its power to subject others to a false unity. Hence it may be more accurate to speak of human brokenness than of mankind's unity.

This universal hostility and alienation has been exposed and condemned in the Cross of Jesus Christ. It is that Cross—the Cross of the one who is risen and who reigns—which marks the birth of a new humanity recreated in him. It give us our belief in and our hope for the unity of mankind.

8. We believe that the unity of mankind for which we pray and hope, and the just interdependence of free people inseparable from it, cannot be thought of apart from God's liberating activity and an active human response and participation. Moreover, this liberation is indivisible: it concerns the human soul, mind, and body, and no less mankind in its cultures, societies, and politics. It must confront, struggle against, and overcome whatever alienates human beings from themselves, from each other, and from God. We are aware of limits to liberation which will never be overcome as long as history lasts. The powers of sickness and death will always be present and there will always be suffering people calling for solidarity and love. In recognizing it, our hope in the liberating power of God's Kingdom is reinforced. We are called to that unity where "there shall be an end to death, and to mourning and crying and pain" (Rev. 21:4). And, therefore, we are called to face the problems of suffering and conflict not simply as an unpleasantness to be avoided, or as a disorder to be suppressed, but also as a necessary implication of liberation.

9. We recognize that once men become involved in the struggles for liberation, two factors emerge. A sense of solidarity springs up among those involved together in a common task. But other relationships are strained, even broken, by such engagement. But there is no other way of achieving a just interdependence than by facing the issues, engaging in encounter, and even conflict.

10. How does such conflict affect the unity of the Church? What does it mean for the goal of the visible unity of the Church? Christians have a vocation to be the fellowship of reconciliation. But Christians involved in the struggle for liberation in fact often find themselves closer to others who share the struggle with them, Christian or not, than to other Christians who are not committed to it. This problem cannot be avoided. An ecclesiastical unity which would stand in the way of struggles for liberation would be a repressive unity, hindering the just interdependence

which Christians are called to serve. We are learning that Church unity can be a “unity in tension.”

11. Christian faith trusts the reality of grace in which it is empowered to bear the tensions of conflicts. Jesus Christ accepted the necessity of conflict, yet transcended it in his death on the Cross. He took upon himself the cost of conflict; forces of divisions are finally overcome in the unity which Christ creates and gives, as he leads all things to unity in himself. The Church has also been given remarkable anticipations of this unity, even in the midst of severe conflict. The Church must, therefore, bear the tension of conflicts within itself, and so fulfil its ministry of reconciliation, in obedience to the Lord who chooses to sacrifice himself rather than to confer on the forces of division any ultimate authority. The Church accordingly is called to work for unity, through suffering, under the sign of the Cross.

12. The Church is called to be a visible sign of the presence of Christ, who is both hidden and revealed to faith, reconciling and healing human alienation in the worshipping community. The Church's calling to be such a sign includes struggle and conflict for the sake of the just interdependence of mankind.

There is here an enduring tension which will not be resolved until the promise is fulfilled of a new heaven and a new earth. Until that day we have to accept the fact that we do not fully know how to embody in the life of the nations and communities of our time the unity which God wills. There is only one foundation for human unity—the new Man, Jesus Christ. But what we build on that foundation will be tested by fire, and may not pass the test.

We must resolutely refuse any too easy forms of unity, or any misuse of the “sign,” that conceal a deeper disunity. At the same time, we may believe in and give witness to our unity in Christ, even with those from whom we may, for his sake, have to part. This means to be prepared to be a “fellowship in darkness”—dependent on the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the form which our fellowship should seek and take; and a “unity in tension”—dependent on the Spirit for the strength to reconcile within the one body of the Church all whom the forces of disunity would otherwise continue to drive apart. For there is no “fellowship in darkness” without some sign of the reconciling judgment and love of Christ.

33. “What Unity Requires,” Report of Section II, Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1975

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the following report is one of the ecumenical movement's most significant attempts to define the nature of visible church unity. • Breaking Barriers, Nairobi 1975: Official Report, Fifth Assembly, World Council of Churches, ed. David M. Paton, London, SPCK, and Geneva, WCC, 1976, pp. 59-64.

II. Unity Requires a Commonly Accepted Goal

2. We believe that we are called to the goal of visible unity and have therefore struggled, as previous Assemblies have done, to describe more fully that goal. We recall and reaffirm the statement made at the Third Assembly at New Delhi which described God's will for unity in terms of one fully committed fellowship of all God's people in each place, in all places, and in all ages. The Fourth Assembly spoke of a deeper internal dimension of unity which is expressed by the term “catholicity.” “Catholicity,” the Assembly said, “is the opposite of all kinds of egotism and particularism. It is the quality by which the Church expresses the fullness, the integrity, and the totality of life in Christ. . . . The Church must express this catholicity in its worship by providing a home for all sorts and conditions of men and women; and in its witness and service by working for the realization of genuine humanity” (*Uppsala Speaks*, pp.13,14, paragraphs 7 and 9). True catholicity involves a quest for diversity in unity and continuity. In its catholicity the Church “is bold in speaking of itself as the sign of the coming unity of mankind” (*ibid.*, p.20).

3. The Faith and Order Commission at its meeting in Louvain made a considered attempt to describe the unity which we seek in terms of “conciliar fellowship.” The Conference at Salamanca on “Concepts of Unity and Models of Union” has recommended the concept in the following terms: “The one Church is to be envisioned as a conciliar fellowship of local churches which are themselves truly united. In this conciliar fellowship, each local church possesses, in communion with the others, the fullness of catholicity, witnesses to the same apostolic faith, and therefore recognizes the others as belonging to the same Church of Christ and guided by the same Spirit. As the New Delhi Assembly pointed out, they are bound together because they have received the same baptism and share in the same

Eucharist; they recognize each other's members and ministries. They are one in their common commitment to confess the gospel of Christ by proclamation and service to the world. To this end, each church aims at maintaining sustained and sustaining relationships with her sister churches, expressed in conciliar gatherings whenever required for the fulfilment of their common calling."

4. The term "conciliar fellowship" has been frequently misunderstood. It does not look towards a conception of unity different from that full organic unity sketched in the New Delhi statement, but is rather a further elaboration of it. The term is intended to describe an aspect of the life of the one undivided Church *at all levels*. In the first place, it expresses the unity of church separated by distance, culture, and time, a unity which is publicly manifested when the representatives of these local churches gather together for a common meeting. It also refers to a quality of life within each local church; it underlines the fact that true unity is not monolithic, does not override the special gifts given to each member and to each local church, but rather cherishes and protects them.

5. True conciliar fellowship presupposes the unity of the Church. We describe this unity in different ways. One description given in our meeting, in which we all share, even though it is not yet expressed in the language of all, is the following: "True conciliarity is the reflection in the life of the Church of the triune being of God. It is that unity for which Christ prayed when he asked the Father that his disciples might be one *as* the Father and the Son are one. The source of the Church's unity, as of her faith and her joy, is the meeting of the Apostles with the risen Christ who bears the marks of his cross, and the continued encounter with the disciples today with his living presence in the midst of the eucharistic fellowship. He brings its members into the communion of the Holy Spirit, and makes them children of the Father. Thereby, they share a common participation in the divine nature and become living members in the one living Body of the risen Christ. Though different members in each local community, and different local communities, do and should manifest a rich diversity, and develop their own proper personality, nevertheless no cultural, sociological, psychological, political, or historical difference can alter the integrity of the one apostolic faith. By the working of the Holy Spirit, the One Living Word and Son of God is incarnate in the One Church, the One Body of which Christ is the Head and the true worshippers of the Father the members. They commune with him who said: "I am the truth." This Living Truth is the goal towards which all churches who seek for unity tend together. Conciliarity expresses this interior unity of the churches separated by space, culture, or time, but living intensely this unity in

Christ and seeking, from time to time, by councils of representatives of all the local churches at various geographical levels to express their unity visibly in a common meeting."

6. Our present interconfessional assemblies are not councils in this full sense, because they are not yet united by a common understanding of the apostolic faith, by a common, ministry, and a common Eucharist. They nevertheless express the sincere desire of the participating churches to herald and move towards full conciliar fellowship, and are themselves a true foretaste of such fellowship.

7. It is because the unity of the Church is grounded in the divine trinity that we can speak of diversity in the Church as something to be not only admitted but actively desired. Since Christ died and rose for all and his Church is to be the sign of the coming unity of humankind, it must be open to women and men of every nation and culture, of every time and place, of every sort of ability and disability. In its mission it must actively seek them wherever and whoever they are, and in its company they must find their true home. It follows that, in order to be faithful to our calling to unity, we must consider this calling within the wider context of the unity and diversity of humankind. It is because we have often failed to do this that many have dismissed the quest for church unity as irrelevant to their real concerns.

III. Unity Requires a Fuller Understanding of the Context

8. *The Handicapped and the Wholeness of the Family of God.* The Church's unity includes both the "disabled" and the "able." A Church which seeks to be truly united within itself and to move towards unity with others must be open to all; yet able-bodied church members, both by their attitudes and by their emphasis on activism, marginalize and often exclude those with mental or physical disabilities. The disabled are treated as the weak to be served, rather than as fully committed, integral members of the Body of Christ and the human family; the specific contribution which they have to give is ignored. This is the more serious because disability—a world-wide problem—is increasing. Accidents and illness leave adults and children disabled; many more are emotionally handicapped by the pressures of social change and urban living; genetic disorders and famine leave millions of children physically or mentally impaired. The Church cannot exemplify "the full humanity revealed in Christ," bear witness to the interdependence of humankind, or achieve unity in diversity if it continues to acquiesce in the social isolation of disabled persons and to deny them full participation in its life. The unity of the family of God is handicapped where these brothers

and sisters are treated as objects of condescending charity. It is broken where they are left out. How can the love of Christ create in us the will to discern and to work forcefully against the causes which distort and cripple the lives of so many of our fellow human beings? How can the Church be open to the witness which Christ extends through them?

9. *The Community of Women and Men and the Wholeness of the Body of Christ.* The Church's unity includes women and men in a true mutuality. As a result of rapid cultural, economic, and social change, women (and many men) reject the passive or restrictive roles formerly assigned to women, and search for fuller participation in the life of the Church and in society at large. The relations of women and men must be shaped by reciprocity and not by subordination. The unity of the Church requires that women be free to live out the gifts which God has given to them and to respond to their calling to share fully in the life and witness of the Church. This raises fundamental dogmatic issues on which we are not agreed, but which are further pursued in the study, "The Community of Women and Men in the Church," which will include the significance of the Virgin Mary in the Church and the question of the ordination of women. It will be important for the churches to discuss the implications of this study for their teaching on family life and on religious vocation.

10. *Organization and Personal Community in the Unity of the Church.* The Church's unity enhances and does not hinder personal freedom and community. Church unity is often misunderstood as implying larger bureaucratic structures incompatible with spiritual freedom and personal community. In essence, the Church is not bureaucratic, but gathers God's people in each place and in all places around the personal presence of Christ in the ministry of word and sacrament acknowledged and accepted by all. The heart of any proposal for church union is the integrity of this fundamental personal community. The fresh search, especially among young people, for an authentic spirituality and a sense of community can contribute to that "fully committed fellowship" which is intended by the term "organic union." It is true that there is no community without structure, but structure must serve and facilitate good church order, which is itself essentially and properly the expression of committed personal fellowship in Christ. Organic union of separate denominations to form one body does mean a kind of death which threatens the denominational identity of its members, but it is dying in order to receive a fuller life. That is literally the "crux of the matter."

11. *Political Struggle and the Unity of the Church.* The Church's unity is lived in the tension of political struggle. The Church is called to discern and attest God's purpose of justice in history and in the created world, but it is

frequently tempted to remain silent in order to preserve "unity," or to divide in a crusading spirit for or against some particular cause. On these difficulties, we have three things to say:

(a) Christians are sinners judged and forgiven, accepting one another as such in Christ. At the Eucharist we are all equal, a company who have no righteousness of our own but who receive by faith and in love the righteousness of God. The Church is thus the place where people with sharply opposed commitments can meet at the foot of the cross within the divine mercy which sustains them all.

(b) But the Church is also a company under Christ's discipline. We are not permitted to ignore or to compromise with sin. We are called to open and vigorous mutual criticism, bearing the pain of controversy, openly testing ethical decisions (including political ones) under the truth of Christ, and seeking always the way of obedience in each concrete situation. Individual Christians may and often should take more radical positions than the Church as a whole can or should do. But there are political issues on which the Church itself must speak and act on behalf of the dignity of God's creatures. To do this is not to "politicize" the Church. Rather, the Church is politicized when it is so tied to a party or a government, a class or an ideology, that it is not free so to speak and act.

(c) Open and honest controversy on political issues may lead to agreement or it may lead to polarization. When all things are brought into the light, some will find their refuge in a retreat into darkness. The Church has to learn to distinguish in the light of God's Word between sin which can be exposed and forgiven, and apostasy which rejects God's forgiveness and must therefore be rejected by the Church. How can we learn to exercise this discipline and this discernment in situations where our churches are involved in racism, in social, political, or religious oppression, and in economic exploitation?

12. *The Search for Cultural Identity and the Oneness of the Church Universal.* The Church's oneness has to include and to transcend every culture, but the gospel cannot be wholly separated from those cultures through which it has in fact come to us. For the sake of witnessing to the gospel of Christ the Church is free to ground itself firmly in the culture and life style of every people to whom it is sent. Otherwise it would die like a potted plant with no roots in the local soil, rather than find life as a seed which dies to bear fruit. There is no single culture peculiarly congenial to the Christian message; each culture is to be both shaped and transcended by that message. But cultures change, and the Church's alertness to cultural development is essential to healthy oneness.

No church should become so identified with its own or another particular culture, present or past, as to frustrate its critical dialogue with that culture. When a church's loyalty to a given culture becomes uncritical, the oneness of the Church Universal suffers. Indeed, there may be situations of dependence between churches where, for the sake of the integrity of a church's witness in its own culture, there should be a temporary moratorium on existing dependencies in order to prepare for a more mature independence. Yet, the people of God will always find their first and primary identity through their baptism into the one Body of Christ. How does this understanding of culture and unity shape our life in liturgy and mission, increase our understanding of diverse theological understandings of the One Faith, free us in situations, such as Ireland, where cultural identification has become an imprisonment making it profoundly costly for the churches to exercise their ministry of reconciliation?

34. Representatives of World Confessional Families, "Reconciled Diversity," 1977

World Confessional Families, now called Christian World Communions, is the label given to a diverse group of international organizations that bring together national churches belonging to the same confessional family (e.g., the Lutheran World Federation). This famous articulation of the nature of Christian unity comes from a meeting of the representatives of these organizations in 1973. • WCC Exchange, July 1977, pp. 6-9.

IV. Confessional Identity and Reconciled Diversity

17. "Any advance towards unity calls into question the identity of the now divided churches. But can this identity be abandoned? Is it not the expression of God's faithfulness throughout history? All churches face this dilemma in one way or another" (Faith and Order Consultation, Salamanca, September 1973, Report, Section vi).

18. There has been a certain tendency to equate confessional identity with an anti-ecumenical stance. This no longer applies in the contemporary situation.

19. On the ground of the one baptism into Jesus Christ as Lord of the Church, the Church is summoned to confess Jesus Christ anew in the contemporary historical

situation. The Church of Jesus Christ is therefore by definition a confessing Church with its identity grounded in him who is confessed as Lord. But this confession of Christ as Lord is expressed incompletely in the different confessional identities of the world families of churches.

20. For the very reason that the churches as confessional identities are set by God in the ongoing historical process, each confessional identity of necessity undergoes over the years profound changes. A brief survey of the broad spectrum in each of the world families demonstrates also that any one confessional identity is recognizable only in some form of historical variation, for example, South American Catholicism and North European Catholicism, or Scandinavian Lutheranism and Indonesian Lutherism, which are respectively affected by specific historical and cultural elements which have shaped the identity can never mean timeless unchanging fossilization.

21. The involvement of the world families in the processes of bilateral dialogue points to similar modifications. Dialogue implies a listening together which evokes a modification of personal conviction and confession. No partner in genuine dialogue can escape this. Indeed, as the world families have addressed themselves to overcoming specific questions which divide them . . . it becomes all the more apparent that a genuine confessional identity that seeks to be faithful to Jesus Christ is constantly renewed and transformed by the Spirit of the living God, and is opened out towards the other confessional identities in the search for reconciliation.

22. There can be no valid reconciliation among the families of churches which is not founded on and sustained by the one act of reconciliation whereby God in Jesus Christ has reconciled the world unto himself. Such an understanding of reconciliation in Christ commits all of us to the task of thinking through, confessing and living out together our common understanding of Christ and his Gospel. The churches are therefore summoned to witness to Christ together at every level of people's lives—culturally, socially, ethically, in the context of the realities of today.

23. We believe that the World Confessional Families (WCFs) are contributing to this process of mutual reconciliation. To expect some kind of uniform ecumenical Christian theology and culture to emerge in a uniform pattern would be to deny the multiplicity of the gifts of the Spirit and the manifold variety of creation and history. We may expect instead that the dialogues of the world families with one another will lead to an expression of "reconciled diversity," which acknowledges under the Gospel that the things of the faith which unite are greater than those that separate.

24. We have to ask what this expression of a “reconciled diversity” may mean. Provisionally it can be said that confessional positions tend no longer to be held in the exclusive, over-against manner of previous generations, although the effects of acts of excommunication and condemnation in former periods linger on and influence ecclesiastical and institutional attitudes today. Certain specific approaches towards overcoming the differences between confessions have been envisaged and in some cases implemented. We may cite for example the *modus operandi* in the European Lutheran/Reformed Leuvenberg Concord, which, on the basis of agreement on the central meaning of the Gospel and the sacraments, leads to a withdrawal of the mutual “condemnations” of the past and the establishing of full pulpit and altar fellowship in common witness and service to the world.

25. It is clear that in moving towards the achievement of this form of “reconciled diversity,” careful theological investigation of the precise nature of the divisive elements between any two confessional identities has to be undertaken. This in turn will lead, depending on the needs of the situation, either to some initial covenant formula in which the partners bind themselves to each other, and/or to some act of mutual recognition of baptism, and/or to an act of mutual recognition of ministries, and/or to a specific extension of eucharistic fellowship, and so on. Implicit in this process is the need for a mutual asking for forgiveness of each other and a common act of repentance. It is also implicit in any movement towards greater unity among the churches that they will express their growing fellowship in the form of common witness and service.

26. A legitimate stress on confessional identity which seeks to be faithful to Jesus Christ must by the very nature of its commitment reject such manifestations of confessional self-consciousness as exclusivism, self-righteousness and proselytism. It must also reject certain manifestations of ecumenism such as indifferentism to truth, or denying the legitimacy of particular confessional expressions of the faith. If in any one confession this impulse is lacking, then that confessional identity is less than faithful to him who is confessed as Lord of the Church.

V. Reconciled Diversity and Church Unity

27. The WCFs share fully in the search for the manifestation of the unity of the Church. While some WCFs advocate a particular model of unity, there are others for whom the most adequate expression of Church unity remains an unresolved issue within their own constituency, and they explore various models of unity. This search for the manifestation of unity within and between WCFs is further

complicated by the fact that not every WCF is clear about its own ecclesial nature.

28. Despite the open-ended questions concerning the unity we seek, we are agreed in the conviction that the unity of the Church is given primarily in the life and work, death and resurrection, of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that the gift of unity in Christ cannot be had unless it is appropriated by our obedience, our sharing in his dying and rising, and by our realization of the common life in the Body of Christ.

29. WCFs are generally characterized by the existence of eucharistic fellowship between their member churches based on a common confession of faith and/or a common ministry and common life. It is inevitable, therefore, that each WCF tries to make its heritage fruitful also for the unity of all churches.

30. We consider the variety of denominational heritages legitimate insofar as the truth of the one faith explicates itself in history in a variety of expressions. We do not overlook the fact that such explications of the faith have been marked by error which has threatened the unity of the Church. On the other hand, it needs to be seen that a heritage remains legitimate and can be preserved if it is properly translated into new historical situations. If it is, it remains a valuable contribution to the richness of life in the Church universal. In the open encounter with other heritages the contribution of a particular denomination can lose its character of denominational exclusiveness. Therefore, unity and fellowship among the churches do not require uniformity of faith and order, but can and must encompass a plurality or diversity of convictions and traditions. This idea is as old as the ecumenical movement itself, but only in the last decade has it been taken seriously (WCC Assembly Report, Uppsala, Section I, Nos 12 and 13). On the basis of the old idea has emerged a new conception of the relationship between “confession” and “ecumenism.” Confessional loyalty and ecumenical commitment are no contradiction, but are one—paradoxical as it may seem. When existing differences between churches lose their divisive character, a vision of unity emerges which has the character of a “reconciled diversity.”

31. This “reconciled diversity” has been examined in recent ecumenical discussions with the help of the term “conciliar fellowship” which by its very nature is a eucharistic fellowship (Report of the Faith and Order Consultation on “Concepts of Unity and Models of Union,” Salamanca, Faith and Order Paper No. 74:6, p.6). However, such a definition leaves us with a number of questions, particularly with regard to the relationship between “conciliar fellowship” and “organic union” as possible manifestations of “reconciled diversity.” Does “reconciled diversity” find

its structural expression in a number of models of unity, for example “organic union” as well as in the form of full mutual recognition and sacramental fellowship? Is “organic union” still to be understood as a merger of former separate churches into one new church body? Which kind of authority is binding for churches which live in “conciliar fellowship”? Are there different kinds of unity on the local, regional and universal level?

35. “The Unity of the Church as *Koinonia*: Gift and Calling,” Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Canberra, 1991

In recent decades, the biblical concept of koinonia has become central in the quest for a common understanding of the church and its unity. This statement, focused on koinonia, was written by the WCC’s Faith and Order Commission at the request of the Council’s Central Committee. • Documentary History of Faith and Order 1963-1993, op. cit., pp. 3-5.

1.1. The purpose of God according to holy scripture is to gather the whole of creation under the Lordship of Christ Jesus in whom, by the power of the Holy Spirit, all are brought into communion with God (Eph. 1). The church is the foretaste of this communion with God and with one another. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit enable the one church to live as sign of the reign of God and servant of the reconciliation with God, promised and provided for the whole creation. The purpose of the church is to unite people with Christ in the power of the Spirit, to manifest communion in prayer and action and thus to point to the fullness of communion with God, humanity and the whole creation in the glory of the kingdom.

1.2. The calling of the church is to proclaim reconciliation and provide healing, to overcome divisions based on race, gender, age, culture, colour, and to bring all people into communion with God. Because of sin and the misunderstanding of the diverse gifts of the Spirit, the churches are painfully divided within themselves and among each other. The scandalous divisions damage the credibility of their witness to the

world in worship and service. Moreover they contradict not only the church’s witness but also its very nature.

1.3. We acknowledge with gratitude to God that in the ecumenical movement the churches walk together in mutual understanding, theological convergence, common suffering and common prayer, shared witness and service as they draw close to one another. This has allowed them to recognize a certain degree of communion already existing between them. This is indeed the fruit of the active presence of the Holy Spirit in the midst of all who believe in Christ Jesus and who struggle for visible unity now. Nevertheless churches have failed to draw the consequences for their life from the degree of communion they have already experienced and the agreements already achieved. They have remained satisfied to co-exist in division.

2.1. The unity of the church to which we are called is a *koinonia* given and expressed in the common confession of the apostolic faith; a common sacramental life entered by the one baptism and celebrated together in one eucharistic fellowship; a common life in which members and ministries are mutually recognized and reconciled; and a common mission witnessing to the gospel of God’s grace to all people and serving the whole of creation. The goal of the search for full communion is realized when all the churches are able to recognize in one another the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church in its fullness. This full communion will be expressed on the local and the universal levels through conciliar forms of life and action. In such communion churches are bound in all aspects of their life together at all levels in confessing the one faith and engaging in worship and witness, deliberation and action.

2.2. Diversities which are rooted in theological traditions, various cultural, ethnic or historical contacts are integral to the nature of communion; yet there are limits to diversity. Diversity is illegitimate when, for instance, it makes impossible the common confession of Jesus Christ as God and Saviour the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8); and salvation and the final destiny of humanity as proclaimed in holy scripture and preached by the apostolic community. In communion diversities are brought together in harmony as gifts of the Holy Spirit, contributing to the richness and fullness of the church of God.

3.1. Many things have been done and many remain to be done on the way towards the realization of full communion. Churches have reached agreements in bilateral and multilateral dialogues which are already bearing fruit, renewing their liturgical and spiritual life and their theology. In taking specific steps together the churches express and encourage the enrichment and renewal of Christian life, as they learn from one another, work together for justice and peace, and care together for God’s creation.

3.2. The challenge at this moment in the ecumenical movement as a reconciling and renewing movement towards full visible unity is for the seventh assembly of the WCC to call all churches:

- to recognize each other's baptism on the basis of the BEM document;
- to move towards the recognition of the apostolic faith as expressed through the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed in the life and witness of one another;
- on the basis of convergence in faith in baptism, eucharist and ministry to consider, wherever appropriate, forms of eucharistic hospitality; we gladly acknowledge that some who do not observe these rites share in the spiritual experience of life in Christ;
- to move towards a mutual recognition of ministries;
- to endeavour in word and deed to give common witness to the gospel as a whole;
- to recommit themselves to work for justice, peace and the integrity of creation, linking more closely the search for the sacramental communion of the church with the struggles for justice and peace;
- to help parishes and communities express in appropriate ways locally the degree of communion that already exists.

4.1. The Holy Spirit as promoter of *koinonia* (2 Cor. 13:13) gives to those who are still divided the thirst and hunger for full communion. We remain restless until we grow together according to the wish and prayer of Christ that those who believe in him may be one (John 17:21). In the process of praying, working and struggling for unity, the Holy Spirit comforts us in pain, disturbs us when we are satisfied to remain in our division, leads us to repentance, and grants us joy when our communion flourishes.

36. Mary Tanner, "On Being Church," 2001

An ecumenical leader from the Anglican Communion, Tanner is a former moderator of the WCC's Faith and Order Commission and, subsequently, a president of the WCC. In this essay, she draws insights from both Faith and Order and the Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women. • The Ecumenical Review, vol. 53, no. 1, 2001, pp. 64-71.

For more than twenty-five years my dreams for the future of the church have been influenced by insights coming from the fellowship of churches that worships, reflects and acts together through being a part of the World Council of Churches. Both the "Community of Women and Men in the Church" study of the 1980s and the more recent Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women have helped to shape my own understanding of what sort of church God might be calling us to be. . . .

Insights from the Community Study

The "Community of Women and Men in the Church"¹⁷ study was inspired by two biblical texts: Genesis 1:27 and Galatians 3:27. In the light of these two biblical passages the programme began by encouraging a global exploration and conversation on women's experiences. It encouraged women, and women and men together, from around the world to explore their experience. No value judgment was placed upon one person's, or any group's, experience above another's. We discovered an underlying unity that existed due to women's common experience in many and the most varied situations of oppression and powerlessness in both the churches and the world. We listened to the longings expressed for release, for liberation, for a greater wholeness and holiness. We listened to women who felt their perspectives were never listened to, their imaginations imprisoned and who heard churches addressing them as second-class citizens, made in the image of men and not of God. We listened to women who felt God was calling them to a ministry of word and sacrament but who found that that call could not be tested, or even spoken about. We began to see how the liturgical, the ministerial, and the structured life of many churches reinforced this feeling of exclusion and marginalization. We were shocked by the number of women (and men) who only seemed to experience their church as oppressor, and their church's way of living as oppressive.

Gradually we began to recognize that this was a profoundly theological and ecclesiological study. There was one central question to which all others were related. This was not about the liberation of women, or getting women into positions of power and authority, or about the ordination of women, or about inclusive language, however sharp and pressing these questions were. The central question to which all the other issues were related is the theological

17. See Constance F. Parvey, ed., *The Community of Women and Men in the Church*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 1983, and "Beyond Unity-in-Tension. Prague: the Issues and the Experience in Ecumenical Perspective," in *Beyond Unity-in-Tension: Unity, Renewal and the Community of Women and Men*, Thomas F. Best, ed., Faith and Order paper no. 138, Geneva, WCC Publications, 1988, pp. 1-33.

question of our understanding of the nature and being of God.

We asked ourselves: Is God really Father? Is the male language of Father and Son, are the masculine attributes of power and lordship, or is the pattern of pyramidal hierarchy in the Trinity, any longer useable? We explored the language of Father and Son and asked: What is it that the unique relation between the unique Father, and the unique Son, safeguards and preserves that might not, in another time and place, be safeguarded by the relation of a unique mother to a unique daughter? Some of us were fearful of where we were being taken. We searched the Bible and Tradition, not to replace the traditional language, but rather to recover the feminine images for God, in order to find a balance and wholeness. We looked at Deuteronomy and Isaiah, at Jesus' treatment of women, at Clement of Alexandria, Julian of Norwich and John of the Cross, as well as at contemporary feminist writings. We tried to understand Jürgen Moltmann's plea to us to "zero content" the distorted notions of Father and Son and re-content them with the relation of utter mutuality, interdependence and conformity of mind and will that we see between Jesus and the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane. We grasped at the emerging emphasis in theology on the personal and relational life of the Trinity, on the receiving and giving, giving and receiving life of God, on that mutual attentiveness of the persons to each other.

We held before us, at almost every meeting, the Rublev icon of the Trinity. The social Trinity was seen to correspond most directly to the most fundamental questionings of women about God, born out of their experience of personal relations. We came to see that if what we were discovering was the truth about God, then all churches must watch their language in the presence of this inclusive God. The language, symbols and imagery we use to speak about God have to be rich enough and evocative enough to help us encounter a God who is neither male nor female, neither masculine nor feminine but who encompasses and transcends all we have come to understand as male and female, masculine and feminine.

We recognized the need to find new and inclusive ways of talking about the community of those created and redeemed in the image of this inclusive God. Language shapes a community's self-understanding, its identity. And we called for liturgical reform, not as a means of exchanging one "bag of tools" for another but of attempting a painful exchange of identity—a change to inclusive community. We needed it because the wholeness and holiness of the Christian community depends on it—and because, in the end, our vision of God was at stake.

Our perception about God led naturally to challenges about our understanding of ourselves, our identity

as men and women created in the image of God, about what equality means, and how that might be lived out more faithfully in new relationships and patterns of living in different cultural contexts. The distinction given in creation between male and female raises profound questions of what it means that we are not simply human, but human as male or female. We explored questions about the relation between being and function, between biology and identity. We asked whether, and how, the distinctive functions of women and men should determine their roles in the family, in society, and in the church—whether gender is constitutive of identity, and whether difference of gender determines differences in status and role.

The ecclesiological challenges included challenges to the structures of the churches, to how power and authority were exercised and by whom. And with the question of power and exclusive, all-male leadership came questions about the ordination of women to a ministry of word and sacrament. For some, the fundamental question was a theological one: "Christian priesthood is called to be fully human, if God is to be known as fully God."

The vision of God, the understanding of men and women in God's image, the inclusive life of the church, its liturgy, its structures, and its ministry—all this was one vast interlocking agenda. We were in search of the wholeness and holiness that flow from our understanding of God's own mysterious trinitarian life. The Community study called for a radical transformation if the church was to be a more credible sign of wholeness, and holiness, in and for the world.

The Community study did help us see new possibilities in the biblical truths from Genesis 1:27 and Galatians 3:28—that God created men and women "in God's image," and that in Christ "there is neither male nor female." We did begin to see the implications of this for the unity and mission of the church. And what we had begun to see in the ecumenical community of exploration did make a difference to some churches whose lives were renewed by the insights and reflections of the ecumenical community. But it was only a beginning.

Churches in Solidarity with Women

The Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women—which turned out to be the Decade of Women in Solidarity with Women—was also inspired by a biblical image or story, by the story of the women coming to the tomb on the first Easter morning and their question, "Who will roll away the stone?"¹⁸ The earlier study was, in the main, con-

18. *Living Letters: A Report of Visits to the Churches during the Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 1997.

cerned with renewal in the life of the church as a community of women and men. The Decade was, in the main, concerned with the grave impact of the global economy on women; with racism and xenophobia; with the dreadful violence against women in the world and, shockingly, in the churches also. The Decade also identified the continuing barriers that prevented women from participating fully in the life of the churches. The Decade uncovered the scope of violence against women in every country, age group, sect and society, in the home and the work-place, on the streets.¹⁹ Besides domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape and sex tourism, violence takes subtler forms in the psychological and emotional demeaning of women. Its extent is seldom acknowledged, its victims are often afraid to speak out, and are silenced or discredited if they do. The Decade understood that, like violence, economic oppression is constituted and multiplied by the intermingling of factors of gender, race, sexual orientation, age, ability, ethnicity and religion. Every indicator of women's poverty and inequality is intensified for aboriginal, immigrants and disabled women.

The challenges of the Decade were different from those of the Community study, but they were complementary, all part of a single agenda which helps us to understand what sort of church God is calling us to be in and for the world. What are some features of this church which God is calling us to be?

First, the church is called to be a church in solidarity, in solidarity with the poor, the marginalized, victims of violence. And because women, and women and children, are most often the most powerless in the face of economic injustice, the ravages of war, ethnic genocide, and racism and sexism, the church has a special responsibility of *attentive solidarity* with the women of the world. It is not enough for women to be in solidarity with women. The whole church is called to a ministry of solidarity with a bias towards women and children. The Decade called for the church to be what some called a "moral community," actively opposing all forms of violence against humanity and against the: environment. Being a "moral community" is not about standing apart from the world, offering tokens of support, but rather about being mixed up with the brokenness of the world, alongside and in suffering solidarity with it. . . .

Secondly, the Decade saw that, given how many women are treated with violence, sexual harassment, psychological abuse and abuse of power, the church, within its own life and in the lives of the churches, is called to an attentive solidarity with women. It is not enough for women to be in solidarity with women; the cry that

began the Decade—for the *churches* to be in solidarity with women—was not an empty cry. Through the visits to the churches, those "living letters," the cry of women weeping was heard, women weeping because of the oppression they experience—in the churches as well as in the world outside. The Decade had very particular things to say about the way power and authority are experienced by women in the churches. It looked for another way of exercising power and authority. This was not simply a matter of a fairer numerical representation of women in the governing bodies of the churches, though that is important. It is about the sort of change that the theologian Letty Russell talks about, the change from a paradigm of domination to a paradigm of doxology.²⁰ The experience of women in solidarity with women has been of sitting around a table, of leadership in the round, of something inclusive and open, welcoming and hospitable, where responsibility is shared, and where women have been prepared to take risks, and even to get things wrong. As one woman put it: women want to build a new church, stripping it of its hierarchical and crippling institutionalism so that it becomes a movement of concerned and involved men and women, engaged in a ministry of healing and reconciliation.

The insights of the Community study and the Decade complement each other. The primary focus of the first was on the internal life of the church; the primary focus of the second was on the church as it faces, and lives out its calling in and for the world, particularly in attentive solidarity with women. The two belong together. As a result of the Community study and the Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women, the ecumenical community in many places around the world has been helped to envision something of the church God calls us to be, and it has helped churches in some places to take steps, albeit small steps, to realize that vision. It is important to acknowledge this, for these are the stepping stones for the future, the foundation on which we can now build.

Being Church in the Future

Without the imagination or poetic skills of an Ezekiel, or of the author of the book of Revelation, or a Mother Julian, it is hard to capture in words a vision for the future of "being church." It was no accident that women in England chose to sum up the inspiration of the Decade by commissioning an icon of St Hilda of Whitby. The icon depicts Hilda, in a time of chaos, establishing ordered life for women; in a polarized hierarchical society establishing a community where no one was rich or poor; and in a time of awful

19. Aruna Gnanadason, *No Longer a Secret: The Church and Violence against Women*, Risk Book Series, Geneva, WCC Publications, 1997.

20. Letty M. Russell, *The Household of Freedom: Authority in Feminist Theology*, Philadelphia, Westminster, 1987.

barbarity and violence presiding, in love, over a community where the keynote was peace and charity. The icon of Hilda is a window on to a life of wholeness, where all are valued and violence no longer holds sway. Nor was it surprising that many in the Community study found a vision of wholeness and holiness most profoundly expressed in the Rublev icon of the Trinity with its portrayal of equality, mutual attentiveness, gentleness, and giving and receiving love. Whatever I envision about being church in the future, I know I must include and bring together both the insights of both the Community study and the Decade. What are some of these insights?

First, the church in each and every place must become a community which is inclusive and not exclusive, where male and masculine is no longer valued above female and feminine. All must hear the church teaching that men and women are equally created in God's image, equally assumed and redeemed in Christ, and equally recipients of the indwelling, sanctifying Spirit of God. There is no room for teaching, whether explicit or implicit, that perpetuates false notions of male domination and female subordination. There can be no room for structures that exclude women. Every person must hear and know themselves to be valued in, and for, who they are, and for the particular gift which God has given to them to use in the service of all. The church must lift up the hitherto-silent parts of the scriptures and the Tradition, and re-express the faith of the church in language, symbols and imagery which speak to women as well as to men. The worship life of the community must help all to encounter "in the depths" a God who is neither male nor female, neither masculine nor feminine, but who embraces and transcends all that we know as male and female, masculine and feminine. We must be a community of women and men who together dare to risk exploring a God who can never be trapped in our limited language or imagery.

Secondly, the church in each and every place must become the community which lives deeply from God's gifts of scripture and the church's Tradition, interpreted now in the light of the experience of women as well as of men, and expressed afresh in ways that speak to women as well as to men. The Community study and the Decade drew women into the circle of interpretation and as a result there are a growing number of feminist theologies and rich resources for women's spirituality. . . . Churches everywhere, in their catechetical teaching and their theological education, need intentionally to encourage women to bring their experience into the community of exploration, interpretation and proclamation of the faith of the church.

Thirdly, the church in each and every place must seek to be a community of women and men which lives from

the power of God's gifts of sacramental grace. Those gifts must be celebrated and administered in ways that build up the church as a community of women and men. The very words and actions of the celebration, and the administration, must proclaim and symbolize that the community is a community of women and men. In that way the community will be empowered through the grace of sacrament to become what it is. And participation in the eucharist must lead to the community's active involvement in challenging all forms of violence and all kinds of injustice—not least of all those things that diminish and oppress the lives of women. This requires that the church be passionately aware of situations of injustice and violence, particularly as these affect the lives of women, and be ready to speak out prophetically and to act boldly to alleviate injustice.

Fourthly, the church in each and every place must be a community of men and women who know that they need all other Christian communities across the world, that their lives are interdependent. Of course, belonging to a worldwide Christian family requires some sort of structure of interconnectedness. The community of women and men walking together on the way (*syn hodos*) needs people to meet together, to share perspectives and to speak a Christian message on behalf of all, not least wherever issues of peace and justice involve us all. Different resources, material and spiritual, are there to be shared. The community requires structures of belonging that value the personal and the relational, the individual and the community, and that can hold the local, regional and world levels interdependent and mutually accountable. These are qualities which are hospitable to women's way of working. The insights of women on participation, inclusive oversight, power sharing, and what it means to be around a round table for consensus building, all need to be embodied in renewed structures of belonging and authority.

The worldwide sense of interconnectedness and interdependence must, at the same time, be balanced with structures and signs of continuity with the church of apostolic times: those signs and symbols of the church's continuity must become more inclusive. Holy women—as well as holy men—are personal signs of faithful continuity with the teaching and mission of the apostolic community. Women saints and martyrs deserve a more equal place in the liturgical life of the community. The visible signs of the church's continuity must be more inclusive.

Lastly, the church in each and every place, if it is to be credible as a community of women and men, must pick up that vast unfinished agenda of uncovering and confronting violence against women, and women and children. We are only just beginning to become conscious of how violence threatens the very foundations of life through

the “colonizing of wombs,” through bio-technology, and through other scientific means, controlling women’s reproductive choices and capacities, and threatening the very foundations of life itself. The church in each and every place must become the community that uncovers and challenges all the violent forces that hold women, and women and men, captive. Exposing violence, standing for peace, peace with justice, caring for the harmony of creation—all this is an indispensable part of being church. Being church requires that we continue to “roll away the stones” of prejudice, injustice and violence, particularly as this affects women all over the world. . . .

Any vision of the church as a community of women and men is hopelessly incomplete if it takes no account of the multifaith, pluralistic world of which the church is a part. The church is called to be a sign for the world of the world’s own possibility for inclusive, participatory, non-violent, whole and holy life. But the church never has had, and never will have, a monopoly on the truth, nor has it always given convincing witness to the truth which it does have. Other faith communities and secular movements have things to tell the church. The community of women and men in the church of the future must be one which listens more attentively, engages in dialogue more humbly and is not afraid to make common cause with others in confronting violence, not least violence against women. . . .

37. “Called to Be the One Church,” Ninth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Porto Alegre, 2006

This attempt to summarize a generation of ecumenical dialogue on ecclesiology also offers insight on the meaning of unity. Written by the WCC’s Faith and Order Commission at the request of the Central Committee, it includes an important “invitation to the churches.” • God, in Your Grace: Official Report of the Ninth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, op.cit, pp. 255-61.

I

1. We, the delegates to the Ninth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, give thanks to the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who has brought our churches into living contact and dialogue. By God’s grace we have been enabled to remain together, even when this has not been easy. Considerable efforts have been made to overcome divisions. We are “a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfill their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”²¹ We reaffirm that “the primary purpose of the fellowship of churches in the World Council of Churches is to call one another to visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship expressed in worship and in common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe.”²² Our continuing divisions are real wounds to the body of Christ, and God’s mission in the world suffers.

2. Churches in the fellowship of the WCC remain committed to one another on the way towards full *visible unity*. This commitment is a gift from our gracious Lord. Unity is both a divine gift and calling. Our churches have affirmed that the unity for which we pray, hope and work is “a *koinonia* given and expressed in the common confession of the apostolic faith; a common sacramental life entered by the one baptism and celebrated together in one eucharistic fellowship; a common life in which members and ministries are mutually recognized and reconciled; and a common mission witnessing to the gospel of God’s grace to all people and serving the whole of creation.”²³ Such *koinonia* is to be expressed in each place, and through a conciliar relationship of churches in different places. We have much work ahead of us as together we seek to understand the meaning of unity and catholicity, and the significance of baptism.

II

3. We confess one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church as expressed in the Nicene Constantinopolitan Creed (381). The Church’s oneness is an image of the unity of the Triune God in the communion of the divine Persons. Holy scripture describes the Christian community as the body of Christ whose interrelated diversity is essential to its wholeness: “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord;

21. Basis, WCC Constitution, I.

22. Purposes and Functions, WCC Constitution, III.

23. The Unity of the Church as *Koinonia*: Gift and Calling—The Canberra Statement, Geneva, WCC, 1991, 2.1.

and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor. 12:4-7).²⁴ Thus, as the people of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit, the Church is called to manifest its *oneness in rich diversity*.

4. The Church as communion of believers is created by the Word of God, for it is through hearing the *proclamation of the gospel* that faith, by the action of His Holy Spirit, is awakened (Rom. 10:17). Since the good news proclaimed to awaken faith is the good news handed down by the apostles, the Church created by it is *apostolic*. Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets the Church is God’s household, a *holy* temple in which the Holy Spirit lives and is active. By the power of the Holy Spirit believers grow into a holy temple in the Lord (Eph. 2:21-22)²⁵

5. We affirm that the apostolic faith of the Church is *one*, as the body of Christ is one. Yet there may legitimately be different formulations of the faith of the Church. The life of the Church as new life in Christ is one. Yet it is built up through different charismata and ministries. The hope of the Church is one. Yet it is expressed in different human expectations. We acknowledge that there are different ecclesiological starting points, and a range of views on the relation of the Church to the churches. Some differences express God’s grace and goodness; they must be discerned in God’s grace through the Holy Spirit. Other differences divide the Church; these must be overcome through the Spirit’s gifts of faith, hope and love so that separation and exclusion do not have the last word. God’s “plan for the fullness of time [is] to gather up all things in him” (Eph. 1:10), reconciling human divisions. God calls his people in love to discernment and renewal on the way to the fullness of *koinonia*.

6. The *catholicity* of the Church expresses the fullness, integrity and totality of its life in Christ through the Holy Spirit in all times and places. This mystery is expressed in each community of baptized believers in which the apostolic faith is confessed and lived, the gospel is proclaimed, and the sacraments are celebrated. Each church is the Church catholic and not simply a part of it. Each church is the Church catholic, but not the whole of it. Each church fulfills its catholicity when it is in communion with the other churches. We affirm that the catholicity of the Church is expressed most visibly in sharing holy communion and in a mutually recognized and reconciled ministry.

24. The scripture quotations contained herein are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, © 1989, 1995, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America, and are used by permission. All rights reserved.

25. “The Nature and Mission of the Church—A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement,” Geneva, WCC, 2005, §23.

7. The relationship among churches is dynamically interactive. Each church is called to mutual giving and receiving gifts and to *mutual accountability*. Each church must become aware of all that is provisional in its life and have the courage to acknowledge this to other churches. Even today, when eucharistic sharing is not always possible, divided churches express mutual accountability and aspects of catholicity when they pray for one another, share resources, assist one another in times of need, make decisions together, work together for justice, reconciliation, and peace, hold one another accountable to the discipleship inherent in baptism, and maintain dialogue in the face of differences, refusing to say “I have no need of you” (1 Cor. 12:21). Apart from one another we are impoverished.

III

8. All who have been baptized into Christ are united with Christ in his body: “Therefore we have been buried with him by *baptism* into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4). In baptism, the Spirit confers Christ’s holiness upon Christ’s members. Baptism into union with Christ calls churches to be open and honest with one another, even when doing so is difficult: “But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ” (Eph. 4:15). Baptism bestows upon the churches both the freedom and the responsibility to journey towards common proclamation of the Word, confession of the one faith, celebration of one eucharist, and full sharing in one ministry. There are some who do not observe the rite of baptism in water but share in the spiritual experience of life in Christ.²⁶

9. Our common belonging to Christ through baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit enables and calls churches to walk together, even when they are in disagreement. We affirm that there is one baptism, just as there is one body and one Spirit, one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one God and Father of us all (cf. Eph. 4:4-6). In God’s grace, baptism manifests the reality that we *belong to one another*, even though some churches are not yet able to recognize others as Church in the full sense of the word. We recall the words of the Toronto Statement, in which the member churches of the WCC affirm that “the membership of the church of Christ is more inclusive than the membership of their own church body. They seek, therefore, to enter into living contact with those out side their own ranks who confess the Lordship of Christ.”

26. Cf. “The Unity of the Church as *Koinonia*: Gift and Calling—The Canberra Statement,” Geneva, WCC, 1991, 3.2.

IV

10. The Church as the creation of God's Word and Spirit is a mystery, sign and instrument of what God intends for the salvation of the world. The grace of God is expressed in the victory over sin given by Christ, and in the healing and wholeness of the human being. The kingdom of God can be perceived in a *reconciled and reconciling community* called to holiness: a community that strives to overcome the discriminations expressed in sinful social structures, and to work for the healing of divisions in its own life and for healing and unity in the human community. The Church participates in the reconciling ministry of Christ, who emptied himself, when it lives out its mission, affirming and renewing the image of God in all humanity and working alongside all those whose human dignity has been denied by economic, political and social marginalization.

11. Mission is integral to the life of the Church. The Church in its mission expresses its calling to proclaim the gospel and to offer the living Christ to the whole creation. The churches find themselves living alongside people of other living faiths and ideologies. As an instrument of God, who is sovereign over the whole creation, the Church is called to engage in dialogue and collaboration with them so that its mission brings about the good of all creatures and the well-being of the earth. All churches are called to struggle against sin in all its manifestations, within and around them, and to work with others to combat injustice, alleviate human suffering, overcome violence and ensure fullness of life for all people.

V

12. Throughout its history the World Council of Churches has been a privileged instrument by which churches have been able to listen to one another and speak to one another, engaging issues that challenge the churches and imperil humankind. Churches in the ecumenical movement have also explored divisive questions through multilateral and bilateral dialogues. And yet churches have not always acknowledged their *mutual responsibilities* to one another, and have not always recognized the need to give account to one another of their faith, life and witness, as well as to articulate the factors that keep them apart. Bearing in mind the experience of the life we already share and the achievements of multilateral and bilateral dialogues, it is now time to take concrete steps together.

13. Therefore the Ninth Assembly calls upon the World Council of Churches to continue to facilitate *deep conversations* among various churches. We also invite all of our churches to engage in the hard task of giving a candid account of the relation of their own faith and order to the

faith and order of other churches. Each church is asked to articulate the judgments that shape, and even qualify, its relationship to the others. The honest sharing of commonalities, divergences and differences will help all churches to pursue the things that make for peace and build up the common life.

14. Towards the goal of full visible unity the churches are called to address recurrent matters in fresh, more pointed ways. Among the *questions to be addressed* continually by the churches are these:

- a. To what extent can your church discern the faithful expression of the apostolic faith in its own life, prayer and witness and in that of other churches?
- b. Where does your church perceive fidelity to Christ in the faith and life of other churches?
- c. Does your church recognize a common pattern of Christian initiation, grounded in baptism, in the life of other churches?
- d. Why does your church believe that it is necessary, or permissible, or not possible to share the Lord's Supper with those of other churches?
- e. In what ways is your church able to recognize the ordered ministries of other churches?
- f. To what extent can your church share the spirituality of other churches?
- g. How will your church stand with other churches to contend with problems such as social and political hegemonies, persecution, oppression, poverty and violence?
- h. To what extent will your church share with other churches in the apostolic mission?
- i. To what extent does your church share with other churches in faith formation and theological education?
- j. How fully can your church share in prayer with other churches?

In addressing these questions, churches will be challenged to recognize areas for renewal in their own lives and new opportunities to deepen relations with those of other traditions.

VI

15. Our churches *journey together* in conversation and common action, confident that the risen Christ will continue to disclose himself as he did in the breaking of bread at Emmaus, and that he will unveil the deeper meaning of fellowship and communion (Luke 24:13-35). Noting the progress made in the ecumenical movement, we encourage

our churches to continue on this arduous yet joyous path, trusting in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, whose grace transforms our struggles for unity into the fruits of communion.

Let us listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches!

38. "Unity Statement," Tenth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Busan, 2013

This statement, adopted by the assembly in Busan, emphasizes the church's relation to the unity of all creation. • <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/2013-busan/adopted-documents-statements/unity-statement>.

GOD'S GIFT AND CALL TO UNITY— AND OUR COMMITMENT

1. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Gen.1:1)." Creation is a gift from the living God. We celebrate creation's life in its diversity and give thanks for its goodness. It is the will of God that the whole creation, reconciled in the love of Christ through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, should live together in unity and peace (Eph. 1).

Our Experience

2. Today, the whole creation, the world and its people, live in the tension between the profoundest hope and the deepest despair. We give thanks for the diversity of human cultures, for the wonder of knowledge and learning, for the enthusiasm and vibrancy of many young people, for communities being rebuilt and enemies reconciled, for people being healed, and populations fed. We rejoice when people of different faiths work together for justice and peace. These are signs of hope and new beginnings. But we grieve that there are also places where God's children cry out. Social and economic injustice, poverty and famine, greed and war ravage our world. There is violence and terrorism and the threat of war, particularly nuclear war. Many have to live with HIV and AIDS and suffer from other epidemics; peoples are displaced and their lands dispossessed. Many women and children are victims of violence,

inequality and trafficking as are some men. There are those who are marginalised and excluded. We are all in danger of being alienated from our cultures and disconnected from earth. Creation has been misused and we face threats to the balance of life, a growing ecological crisis and the effects of climate change. These are signs of our disordered relations with God, with one another and with creation, and we confess that they dishonour God's gift of life.

3. Within churches we experience a similar tension between celebration and sorrow. There are signs of vibrant life and creative energy in the growth of Christian communities around the world with rich diversity. There is a deepening sense among some churches of needing one another and of being called by Christ to be in unity. In places where churches experience anguish and constant fear of persecution, solidarity between Christians from different traditions in the service of justice and peace is a sign of God's grace. The ecumenical movement has encouraged new friendships forming a seed bed in which unity can grow. There are places where Christians work and witness together in their local communities and new regional agreements of covenanting, closer fellowship and church unions. Increasingly, we recognize that we are called to share with, and learn from, those of other faiths, to work with them in common efforts for justice and peace and for the preservation of the integrity of God's beautiful but hurting creation. These deepening relationships bring new challenges and enlarge our understanding.

4. We grieve that there are also painful experiences of situations where diversity has turned into division and we do not always recognise the face of Christ in each other. We cannot all gather together around the Table in Eucharistic communion. Divisive issues remain. New issues bring sharp challenges which create new divisions within and between churches. These must be addressed in the fellowship of churches by the way of consensus discernment. Too easily we withdraw into our own traditions and communities refusing to be challenged and enriched by the gifts others hold out to us. Sometimes we seem to embrace the creative new life of faith and yet do not embrace a passion for unity or a longing for fellowship with others. This makes us more ready to tolerate injustice and even conflicts between and within the churches. We are held back as some grow weary and disappointed on the ecumenical path.

5. We do not always honour the God who is the source of our life. Whenever we abuse life through our practices of exclusion and marginalization, our refusal to pursue justice, our unwillingness to live in peace, our failure to seek unity, and our exploitation of creation, we reject the gifts God holds out to us.

Our Shared Scriptural Vision

6. As we read the Scriptures together, under the guidance of the Spirit, our eyes are opened to the place of the community of God's people within creation. Men and women are created in the image and likeness of God and given the responsibility to care for life (Gen. 1:27-28). The covenant with Israel marks a decisive moment in the unfolding of God's plan of salvation. The prophets call God's covenanted people to work for justice and peace, to care for the poor, the outcast, and the marginalized, and to be a light to the nations (Mic. 6:8; Is. 49:6).

7. God sent Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word of God (John 1). Through his ministry and through his death on the cross Jesus destroyed the walls of separation and hostility, established a new covenant, and brought about genuine unity and reconciliation in his own Body (Eph. 1:9-10 and 2:14-16). He announced the coming Kingdom of God, had compassion on the crowds, healed the sick and preached good news to the poor (Matt. 9:35-36; Luke 4:14-24). He reached out to the despised, the sinners, the alien, offering acceptance, and redemption. By his life, death and resurrection, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus revealed the communion of the life of God the Holy Trinity, and opened to all a new way of living in communion with one another in the love of God (1 John 1:1-3). Jesus prayed for the unity of his disciples for the sake of the world (John 17:20-24). He entrusted his message and his ministry of unity and reconciliation to his disciples and through them to the Church, which is called to continue his mission (2 Cor. 5: 18-20). From the beginning the community of believers lived together, were devoted to the apostolic teaching and fellowship, breaking bread and praying together, caring for the poor, proclaiming the good news and yet struggling with factions and divisions (Acts 2:42; Acts 15).

8. The Church, as the Body of Christ, embodies Jesus' uniting, reconciling and self-sacrificial love to the world on the cross. At the heart of God's own life of communion is forever a cross and forever resurrection—a reality which is revealed to us and through us. We pray and wait with eager longing for God to renew the whole creation (Rom. 8:19-21). God is always there ahead of us in our pilgrimage, always surprising us, calling us to repentance, forgiving our failures and offering us the gift of new life.

God's Call to Unity Today

9. On our ecumenical journey we have come to understand more about God's call to the Church to serve the unity of all creation. The vocation of the Church is to be: foretaste of new creation; prophetic sign to the whole world of the

life God intends for all; and servant spreading the good news of God's Kingdom of justice, peace and love.

10. As foretaste God gives to the Church gracious gifts: the Word, testified to in Holy Scripture to which we are invited to respond in faith in the power of the Holy Spirit; baptism in which we are made a new creation in Christ; the Eucharist, the fullest expression of communion with God and with one another, which builds up the fellowship and from which we are sent out in mission; an apostolic ministry to draw out and nurture the gifts of all the faithful and to lead the mission of the Church. Conciliar gatherings too are gifts enabling the fellowship, under the Spirit's guidance, to discern the will of God, to teach together and to live sacrificially, serving one another's needs and the world's needs. The unity of the Church is not uniformity; diversity is also a gift, creative and life-giving. But diversity cannot be so great that those in Christ become strangers and enemies to one another, thus damaging the uniting reality of life in Christ.²⁷

11. As prophetic sign the Church's vocation is to show forth the life that God wills for the whole creation. We are hardly a credible sign as long as our ecclesial divisions, which spring from fundamental disagreements in faith, remain. Divisions and marginalisation on the basis of ethnicity, race, gender, disability, power, status, caste, and other forms of discrimination also obscure the Church's witness to unity. To be a credible sign our life together must reflect the qualities of patience, humility, generosity, attentive listening to one another, mutual accountability, inclusivity, and a willingness to stay together, not saying "I have no need of you" (1 Cor. 12:21). We are called to be a community upholding justice in its own life, living together in peace, never settling for the easy peace that silences protest and pain, but struggling for the true peace that comes with justice. Only as Christians are being reconciled and renewed by God's Spirit will the Church bear authentic witness to the possibility of reconciled life for all people, for all creation. It is often in its weakness and poverty, suffering as Christ suffers, that the Church is truly sign and mystery of God's grace.²⁸

12. As servant the Church is called to make present God's holy, loving and life affirming plan for the world revealed in Jesus Christ. By its very nature the Church is missionary, called and sent to witness to the gift of

27. We pray that as our churches respond to the Faith and Order document, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, we may be helped to understand more of the visible unity that God calls us to live in and for the world.

28. We gratefully acknowledge the many programmes of the WCC that have helped us to understand what it means to be a faithful community where divisions of ethnicity, race, gender, power and status are being confronted and overcome.

communion that God intends for all humanity and for all creation in the Kingdom of God. In its work of holistic mission—evangelism and *diakonia* done in Christ’s way—the Church participates in offering God’s life to the world.²⁹ In the power of the Spirit, the Church is to proclaim the good news in ways that awaken a response in different contexts, languages and cultures, to pursue God’s justice, and to work for God’s peace. Christians are called to make common cause with people of other faiths or none wherever possible, for the well-being of all peoples and creation.

13. The unity of the Church, the unity of the human community and the unity of the whole creation are interconnected. Christ who makes us one calls us to live in justice and peace and impels us to work together for justice and peace in God’s world. The plan of God made known to us in Christ is, in the fullness of time, to gather up all things in Christ, “things in heaven and things on earth (Eph. 1:9-10).”

Our Commitment

14. We affirm the place of the Church in God’s design and repent of the divisions among and within our churches, confessing with sorrow that our disunity undermines our witness to the good news of Jesus Christ and makes less credible our witness to that unity God desires for all. We confess our failures to do justice, to work for peace, and to sustain creation. Despite our failings, God is faithful and forgiving and continues to call us to unity. Having faith in God’s creating and re-creating power, we long for the Church to be foretaste, credible sign and effective servant of the new life that God is offering to the world. It is in God, who beckons us to life in all its fullness that joy, hope, and a passion for unity are renewed. Therefore, we urge one another to remain committed to the primary purpose of the fellowship of churches in the World Council of Churches:

to call one another to visible unity in one faith and in one Eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe.³⁰

29. We are thankful for all we have learned through the Decade to Overcome Violence about just peace in God’s way focused in *An Ecumenical Call to Just Peace* from the Jamaica Peace Convocation; and all we have learned about mission in God’s way, encapsulated in the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism document, *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*, Geneva, WCC, 2012.

30. *The Constitution and Rules of the World Council of Churches* as amended by the 9th Assembly, Porto Alegre, Brazil, 2006;

We affirm the uniqueness of our fellowship and our conviction to pursue the visible unity of the Church together, thankful for our diversity and conscious of our need to grow in communion.

15. In faithfulness to this our common calling, we will seek together the full visible unity of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church when we shall express our unity around the one Table of the Lord. In pursuing the unity of the Church we will open ourselves to receive the gifts of each other’s traditions, and offer our gifts to one another. We will learn to commemorate together the martyrs who witnessed to our common faith. We will continue theological conversations, giving attention to new voices and different methods of approach. We will seek to live out the consequences of our theological agreements. We will intensify our work for justice, peace and the healing of creation, and address together the complex challenges of contemporary social, economic and moral issues. We will work for more just, participatory and inclusive ways of living together. We will make common cause for the well-being of humanity and creation with those of other faith communities. We will hold each other accountable for fulfilling these commitments. Above all, we will pray without ceasing for the unity for which Jesus prayed (John 17): a unity of faith, love and compassion that Jesus Christ brought through his ministry; a unity like the unity Christ shares with the Father; a unity enfolded in the communion of the life and love of the Triune God. Here, we receive the mandate for the Church’s vocation for unity in mission and service.

16. We turn to God, the source of all life, and we pray:

*O God of life,
lead us to justice and peace,
that suffering people may discover hope; the scarred world
find healing;
and divided churches become
visibly one, through the one who
prayed for us, and in whom
we are one Body,
your Son, Jesus Christ,
who with you and the Holy Spirit,
is worthy to be praised, one God, now
and forever. Amen.*

III: Purposes and Functions. We remember the words of the First WCC Assembly in 1948, “Here at Amsterdam we have . . . covenanted with one another in constituting this World Council of Churches. We intend to stay together.”

CHAPTER THREE

Agreement on Issues That Divide the Church: Toward Fuller Communion in Christ

Introduction

The texts collected in this chapter give evidence of the astonishing agreement—or, at least, convergence—on once-divisive issues achieved as a result of theological dialogue within the ecumenical movement, especially since the Second Vatican Council. So many documents could have been chosen that the selection had to be guided by four limiting principles:

1) Several of the texts were selected a) because they have led to important changes in the relationship between the churches involved or b) because they have had significant impact on the movement as a whole. An example of the former is the agreed statement between Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches which may lead to the formal lifting of anathemas. The prime example of the latter is Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM), generally regarded as the most influential theological text of the modern ecumenical movement. BEM has been translated into more than thirty languages, has been officially responded to by nearly two hundred churches, has been “received” as an unofficial teaching document in many of those communions, and has served as a resource for numerous subsequent dialogues. As the preface to BEM puts it, it is simply unprecedented for theologians of such widely different traditions—Orthodox, Protestant and Roman Catholic—to speak so harmoniously about substantive issues of the faith.

2) I have, in some cases, chosen texts that demonstrate the original breakthrough on a particular issue, even when later documents have gone further in the discussion. For example, the Montreal report on scripture and Tradition is recognized as a crucial moment of convergence on this Reformation-era dispute, even though the responses to BEM indicate that the issue demands additional attention.

3) The selections are intended to show the range of issues dealt with by such theological dialogues, including grace, hope, scripture and Tradition, Christology, authority, sacrament, ministry, justification, and the nature and purpose of the church.

4) Finally, I have tried, within the chapter as a whole, to display a variety of ecumenical methodologies: statements produced by ecumenical conferences or assemblies (e.g., “Christ—The Hope of the World” from the WCC’s Evanston assembly), multilateral discussions through Faith and Order (e.g., BEM), international bilateral dialogues (e.g., “The Gift of Authority” from the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission), and, regional multilateral dialogues (e.g.,

the Leuenberg Agreement between Lutheran and Reformed churches in Europe). Even within these categories, there are considerable differences of approach. For example, both BEM and the “Common Account of Hope” are the work of Faith and Order, but the latter, unlike the former, drew heavily on reports from local study groups.

It is helpful, when reading documents of this sort, to keep several points in mind:

- *Doctrinal reconciliation is not the sole purpose of the ecumenical movement but a highly significant part of the wider effort to be the church God wills. Reaching agreement on baptism and opposing racism are complementary facets of a single vision.*
- *The quest for unity is always coupled with the quest for renewal. BEM, for example, is important not only as a vehicle for promoting visible oneness among the churches but as an instrument for renewing sacramental practice within the churches here and now.*
- *Ecumenical texts are not authoritative in and of themselves. Rather, they are attempts to interpret the normative sources of Christian faith. Such documents commend themselves to us, however, because they stem from an expanded community of interpreters.*
- *With this in mind, don't only ask how these convergences “measure up” against your church's historic confessions, but how your confessions are challenged by these ecumenical attempts to articulate “the faith of the church through the ages” (BEM).*
- *The emerging ecumenical consensus represented in this chapter does not mean that all differences have been, or need be, reconciled. It may well be that differences once thought of as divisions can now be seen as legitimate diversities within the one church of Jesus Christ.*

The big challenge now, in the words of ecumenist Mary Tanner, is to turn “the ever growing pile of ecumenical texts into shared life.” This concern for what is often called “reception” of theological agreements will likely be increasingly prominent on the ecumenical agenda in coming years.

39. "The Church's Message to the World—The Gospel," First World Conference on Faith and Order, Lausanne, 1927

This report was received "without contradiction" by the full conference, including the Orthodox delegates who abstained from voting on the other section reports due to theological objections. Part of this statement was incorporated into the message of the International Missionary Council at its world conference in 1928. • Faith and Order: Proceedings of the World Conference, Lausanne 1927, ed. H.N. Bate, London, SCM, 1927, pp.461-63.

The message of the Church to the world is and must always remain the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel is the joyful message of redemption, both here and hereafter, the gift of God to sinful man in Jesus Christ.

The world was prepared for the coming of Christ through the activities of God's Spirit in all humanity, but especially in His revelation as given in the Old Testament; and in the fulness of time the eternal Word of God became incarnate, and was made man, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man, full of grace and truth.

Through His life and teaching, His call to repentance, His proclamation of the coming of the Kingdom of God and of judgment, His suffering and death, His resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of the Father, and by the mission of the Holy Spirit, He has brought to us forgiveness of sins, and has revealed the fulness of the living God, and His boundless love toward us. By the appeal of that love, shown in its completeness on the Cross, He summons us to the new life of faith, self-sacrifice, and devotion to His service and the service of men.

Jesus Christ, as the crucified and the living One, as Saviour and Lord, is also the centre of the world-wide Gospel of the Apostles and the Church. Because He Himself is the Gospel, the Gospel is the message of the Church to the world. It is more than a philosophical theory; more than a theological system; more than a programme for material betterment. The Gospel is rather the gift of a new world from God to this old world of sin and death; still more, it is the victory over sin and death, the revelation of eternal life in Him who has knit together the whole family in heaven and on earth in the communion of saints, united in the fellowship of service, of prayer, and of praise.

The Gospel is the prophetic call to sinful man to turn to God, the joyful tidings of justification and of sanctification to those who believe in Christ. It is the comfort of those who suffer; to those who are bound, it is the assurance of the glorious liberty of the sons of God. The Gospel brings peace and joy to the heart, and produces in men self-denial, readiness for brotherly service, and compassionate love. It offers the supreme goal for the aspirations of youth, strength to the toiler, rest to the weary, and the crown of life to the martyr.

The Gospel is the sure source of power for social regeneration. It proclaims the only way by which humanity can escape from those class and race hatreds which devastate society at present into the enjoyment of national well-being and international friendship and peace. It is also a gracious invitation to the non-Christian world, East and West, to enter into the joy of the living Lord.

Sympathising with the anguish of our generation, with its longing for intellectual sincerity, social justice and spiritual inspiration, the Church in the eternal Gospel meets the needs and fulfils the God-given aspirations of the modern world. Consequently, as in the past so also in the present, the Gospel is the only way of salvation. Thus, through His Church, the living Christ still says to men "Come unto me! . . . He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

40. "The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ," Second World Conference on Faith and Order, Edinburgh, 1937

This report may justly be called the first in the modern ecumenical movement to present substantial agreement on a frequently divisive issue. • The Second World Conference on Faith and Order, Edinburgh, 1937, ed. Leonard Hodgson, London, SCM, 1938, pp. 224-27.

With deep thankfulness to God for the spirit of unity, which by His gracious blessing upon us has guided and controlled all our discussions on this subject, we agree on the following statement and recognise that there is in connection with this subject no ground for maintaining division between Churches.

(1) *The Meaning of Grace*

When we speak of God's grace, we think of God Himself as revealed in His Son Jesus Christ. The meaning of divine grace is truly known only to those who know that God is Love, and that all that He does is done in love in fulfilment of His righteous purposes. His grace is manifested in our creation, preservation and all the blessings of this life, but above all in our redemption through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, in the sending of the holy and life-giving Spirit, in the fellowship of the Church and in the gift of the Word and Sacraments.

Man's salvation and welfare have their source in God alone, who is moved to His gracious activity towards man not by any merit on man's part, but solely by His free, outgoing love.

(2) *Justification and Sanctification*

God in His free outgoing love justifies and sanctifies us through Christ, and His grace thus manifested is appropriated by faith, which itself is the gift of God. Justification and Sanctification are two inseparable aspects of God's gracious action in dealing with sinful man.

Justification is the act of God, whereby He forgives our sins and brings us into fellowship with Himself, who in Jesus Christ, and by His death upon the Cross, has condemned sin and manifested His love to sinners, reconciling the world to Himself. Sanctification is the work of God, whereby through the Holy Spirit He continually renews us and the whole Church, delivering us from the power

of sin, giving us increase in holiness, and transforming us into the likeness of His Son through participation in His death and in His risen life. This renewal, inspiring us to continual spiritual activity and conflict with evil, remains throughout the gift of God. Whatever our growth in holiness may be, our fellowship with God is always based upon God's forgiving grace.

Faith is more than intellectual acceptance of the revelation in Jesus Christ; it is whole-hearted trust in God and His promises, and committal of ourselves to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

(3) *The Sovereignty of God and Man's Response*

In regard to the relation of God's grace and man's freedom, we all agree simply upon the basis of Holy Scripture and Christian experience that the sovereignty of God is supreme. By the sovereignty of God we mean His all-controlling, all-embracing will and purpose revealed in Jesus Christ for each man and for all mankind. And we wish further to insist that this eternal purpose is the expression of God's own loving and holy nature. Thus we men owe our whole salvation to His gracious will. But, on the other hand, it is the will of God that His grace should be actively appropriated by man's own will and that for such decision man should remain responsible.

Many theologians have made attempts on philosophical lines to reconcile the apparent antithesis of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility, but such theories are not part of the Christian Faith.

We are glad to report that in this difficult matter we have been able to speak with a united voice, so that we have found that here there ought to be no ground for maintaining any division between Churches.

(4) *The Church and Grace*

We agree that the Church is the Body of Christ and the blessed company of all faithful people, whether in heaven or on earth, the communion of saints. It is at once the realisation of God's gracious purposes in creation and redemption, and the continuous organ of God's grace in Christ by the Holy Spirit, who is its pervading life, and who is constantly hallowing all its parts.

It is the function of the Church to glorify God in its life and worship, to proclaim the gospel to every creature, and to build up in the fellowship and life of the Spirit all believing people, of every race and nation. To this end God bestows His Grace in the Church on its members through His Word and Sacraments, and in the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit.

(5) Grace, the Word and the Sacraments

We agree that the Word and the Sacraments are gifts of God to the Church through Jesus Christ for the salvation of mankind. In both the grace of God in Christ is shown forth, given and through faith received; and this grace is one and indivisible.

The Word is the appointed means by which God's grace is made known to men, calling them to repentance, assuring them of forgiveness, drawing them to obedience and building them up in the fellowship of faith and love.

The Sacraments are not to be considered merely in themselves, but always as sacraments of the Church, which is the Body of Christ. They have their significance in the continual working of the Holy Spirit, who is the life of the Church. Through the sacraments God develops in all its members a life of perpetual communion lived within its fellowship, and thus enables them to embody His will in the life of the world; but the loving-kindness of God is not to be conceived as limited by His sacraments.

Among or within the Churches represented by us there is a certain difference of emphasis placed upon the Word and the sacraments, but we agree that such a difference need not be a barrier to union.

(6) Sola Gratia

Some Churches set great value on the expression *sola gratia*, while others avoid it. The phrase has been the subject of much controversy, but we can all join in the following statement: Our salvation is the gift of God and the fruit of His grace. It is not based on the merit of man, but has its root and foundation in the forgiveness which God in His grace grants to the sinner whom He receives to sanctify him. We do not, however, hold that the action of the divine grace overrides human freedom and responsibility; rather, it is only as response is made by faith to divine grace that true freedom is achieved. Resistance to the appeal of God's outgoing love spells, not freedom, but bondage, and perfect freedom is found only in complete conformity with the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

41. "Christ—The Hope of the World," Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Evanston, 1954

The report on Evanston's theme, produced over a three-year period by an extraordinary group of theologians (including Barth, Brunner, Dodd, T.S. Eliot, Florovsky, Kraemer, Newbiggin, R. Niebuhr, Niles and Van Dusen) could not fully resolve the tension between hope in God's eschatological future and hope for the here and now. The report, while not approved by the assembly, was submitted to the churches, where it proved to be a stimulus to wider study. • The Christian Hope and the Task of the Church, Six Ecumenical Surveys and the Report of the Assembly, Evanston 1954, *New York, Harper, 1954, pp. 9-13.*

The Kingdom That Is to Come

The Kingdom that is now real moves with God's power and faithfulness towards its full realisation in the manifestation of God's glory throughout all creation. The King reigns; therefore He will reign until He has put all enemies under His feet. What we hope for is the fullness of what we already possess in Him; what we possess has its meaning only in the hope for His coming.

What Is Its Character? In the new age that now is, God has disclosed to eyes of faith what is the character of the age that is to come. We must here speak of matters which, in the nature of things, defy direct expression in explicit speech, matters for which the language of inspired imagination employed in the Scriptures is alone adequate, for these are things that can be discerned and communicated only by the Spirit. The pure in heart shall see God as He is and know Him as they are known by Him. Those who are now sons of God will receive the fullness of their inheritance as joint heirs with Christ. There will be a new heaven and a new earth. We shall all be changed. The dead will be raised incorruptible, receiving a body of heavenly glory. The agony of the created world will be recognised as the travail of childbirth. Blind eyes will see, deaf ears will hear, the lame will leap for joy, the captive will be freed. The knowledge of God will cover the earth. The Holy City will appear, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. The choir which no man can number will sing Hallelujahs to the praise of the Eternal. God's people will enter into the

Sabbath rest, and all created things will be reconciled in the perfect communion of God with His people. It is in such visions as these that the Spirit enables us to point to the splendour of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last days. It is towards this salvation that God guides us in hope. This hope is not seen, or it would not be hope; but it is promised to us as suffering, sinning, dying, and believing men. Therefore we wait for it with patience.

What Is Its Range? In His Kingdom that has already come God has unveiled the unlimited range of His love. In Christ He has already broken down the barriers between races, nations, cultures, classes, and sexes: how much more will the coming Kingdom demonstrate the breadth of His redemption! Christ came not to the righteous but to sinners, to the lost, the least, the last; how much more will His return demonstrate the triumph of His descent into the abyss. In His death He suffered for His enemies in loving forgiveness and thus overcame every enmity; how much more at His coming will His sovereignty be disclosed even to all who crucify Him. "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." Because our hope is *in* Christ, He commands us to hope *for* all those whom He loves. Because His love is shed abroad in our hearts, we are empowered to hope all things for all His brothers. And we hope also for our own participation in the endless life of His Kingdom. Of that participation we possess a sure token in His power to make our bodies the temple of His Spirit and to raise us from our daily dying. This power, however, prevents us from hoping for our own glorification apart from the fullness of glory that shall come to the whole body of Christ; for all who participate in the dying and rising of Christ are being knit together into a single body "until we all attain . . . to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." We long, therefore, for this perfecting of the Body of Christ. But not only so, the love of Christ prevents us from being content with any hope for a glorified Church which leaves the destiny of the world to the powers of evil. Solidarity with Him requires and produces solidarity through Him with the world in its transiency, futility, sin, and death. For God has promised the reconciliation of the whole creation, and we therefore hope for nothing less than the renewal of all things. This hope, however, never allows us to think of cosmic transformation apart from God's care for the falling sparrow and the hundredth sheep. Christ our hope thus embodies in Himself the destiny of individuals, of the Church, of earthly communities, and of all creation. So great is this hope in Christ that we are impelled both to press forward eagerly to its fulfilment and also to listen with full soberness to His

command: "Strive to enter by the narrow door, for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able."

What Is the Time of Its Coming? What has God revealed to His Church concerning the time of consummation? He has bidden the Church to Jive with loins girt and lamps burning, like servants waiting for their master's return, and to serve faithfully day after day, like a steward undismayed by his lord's delay. Our hope therefore bears the marks of patience and eagerness, of confidence and urgency, of waiting and hurrying. God has not disclosed to us just when His Kingdom will come in glory. In fact when we attempt to calculate the nearness or the distance of His Kingdom we confuse that hope of which Jesus Himself provides the clear pattern. His whole concern was the fulfilment of God's purpose rather than the satisfaction of man's curiosity. He met his impatient disciples with the command, "Take heed, watch; for you do not know when the time will come." Our obedience is one measure of our hope. It is for the Church to stand vigilantly with its Lord, discerning the signs of the time and proclaiming that now is the time of judgment, now is the day of salvation.

He who is both the beginning and the end, in whom all is to be consummated, is the One who meets us now and every day and invites us to commit everything to Him. We do not know what are the limits of human achievement, of our own personal history, or of the history of the race. We do not know what possibilities are in store for us or what time is before us. We do know, however, that there is a limit, for we must all die. If we do not know Christ, death is the only limit we know. And in that situation men try to find grounds for hope either in merely individual survival or in social progress. The one offers to individuals the promise of fulfilment but denies it to history as a whole; the other offers meaning to human history but denies the significance of the human person. Those who take death seriously but have not met Christ are shut up to these two alternative ways by which human wishing seeks to cross the chasm of death. But in Christ something utterly different is offered. He who has died for us and is alive for us confronts us with a totally new reality, a new limit, a new boundary to our existence. It is He who meets us; it is He with whom we have to do in every situation. It is He who is our life, He who is life for every man. We can commit ourselves and all our deeds into His hands with complete confidence, knowing that death and destruction have been robbed of their power; that even if our works fail and are buried in the rubble of human history, and though our bodies fall into the ground and die, nothing is lost, because He is able to keep that which we commit to Him against the Day.

What Is Its Relation to This World? On Calvary God's Kingdom and the kingdoms of this world met. Whoever has lived through Good Friday and Easter Day has the key to final judgment and eternal life. To him has been demonstrated the fragility of this world in comparison with the immense stability of that world which Christ brought within human reach. At the Cross God condemned the world which turns from Him and hates Him. In the coming Day this condemnation will be revealed in all its terrible finality. At the same Cross God accepted the world and disclosed how much He loves it. In the coming Day this loving acceptance will be revealed in all its unsearchable riches. Confidence in this terrible and glorious consummation of all things in Christ means neither that the history of this world will be swept aside as irrelevant, nor that our efforts will be finally crowned with success. The long history of this world which God created and sustains from day to day, and for the sake of which He sent His Son, is not rendered meaningless by the coming of His Kingdom. Nor, on the other hand, is His Kingdom simply the final outcome of this world's history. There is no straight line from the labours of men to the Kingdom of God. He rejects that history of which man fancies himself to be the centre, creator, and lord; He accepts that history whose beginning, middle, and end He Himself fixes and determines.

Thus at the boundary of all life stands One who is both Judge and Saviour. Because we know Him as Judge, we shall beware of confusing any achievement of ours with His holy and blessed Kingdom; because we know Him as Saviour, who died for the world, we shall beware of that selfish concern for our own salvation which would cause us to neglect our worldly tasks and leave the world to perdition. The operation of God's judgment and mercy in the Crucified is far from self-evident. But we know that in the age that is to come, what is now hidden from our senses will be openly revealed. The Church sees now through a glass darkly; she will then see face to face. But what she sees now she is bound to proclaim.

42. "Scripture, Tradition, and Traditions," Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order, Montreal, 1963

Subsequent ecumenical achievements, including BEM, owe much to this 1963 agreement on the basis of the church's theological reflection. Vatican II's Constitution on Divine Revelation was influenced by Montreal's treatment of this central Reformation-era dispute. • The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order: The Report from Montreal 1963, eds P.C. Rodger and Lukas Vischer, New York, Association Press, 1964, pp.50-55, 57-59.

Introduction

39. In our report we have distinguished between a number of different meanings of the word *tradition*. We speak of the *Tradition* (with a capital T), *tradition* (with a small t) and *traditions*. By *the Tradition* is meant the Gospel itself, transmitted from generation to generation in and by the Church, Christ himself present in the life of the Church. By *tradition* is meant the traditionary process. The term *traditions* is used in two senses, to indicate both the diversity of forms of expression and also what we call confessional traditions, for instance the Lutheran tradition or the Reformed tradition. In the latter part of our report the word appears in a further sense, when we speak of cultural traditions. . . .

I. Scripture, Tradition and traditions

42. As Christians we all acknowledge with thankfulness that God has revealed himself in the history of the people of God in the Old Testament and in Christ Jesus, his Son, the mediator between God and man. God's mercy and God's glory are the beginning and end of our own history. The testimony of prophets and apostles inaugurated the Tradition of his revelation. The once-for-all disclosure of God in Jesus Christ inspired the apostles and disciples to give witness to the revelation given in the person and work of Christ. No one could, and no one can, 'say that Jesus is Lord, save by the Holy Spirit' (1 Cor. 12:3). The oral and written tradition of the prophets and apostles under the guidance of the Holy Spirit led to the formation of Scriptures and to the canonization of the Old and New Testaments as the Bible of the Church. The very fact that

Tradition precedes the Scriptures points to the significance of tradition, but also to the Bible as the treasure of the Word of God.

43. The Bible poses the problem of Tradition and Scripture in a more or less implicit manner; the history of Christian theology points to it explicitly. While in the Early Church the relation was not understood as problematical, ever since the Reformation 'Scripture and Tradition' has been a matter of controversy in the dialogue between Roman Catholic and Protestant theology. On the Roman Catholic side, tradition has generally been understood as divine truth not expressed in Holy Scripture alone, but orally transmitted: The Protestant position has been an appeal to Holy Scripture alone, as the infallible and sufficient authority in all matters pertaining to salvation, to which all human traditions should be subjected. The voice of the Orthodox Church has hardly been heard in these Western discussions until quite recently.

44. For a variety of reasons, it has now become necessary to reconsider these positions. We are more aware of our living in various confessional traditions, e.g. that stated paradoxically in the saying 'It has been the tradition of my church not to attribute any weight to tradition.' Historical study and not least the encounter of the churches in the ecumenical movement have led us to realize that the proclamation of the Gospel is always inevitably historically conditioned. We are also aware that in Roman Catholic theology the concept of tradition is undergoing serious reconsideration.

45. In our present situation, we wish to reconsider the problem of Scripture and Tradition, or rather that of Tradition and Scripture. And therefore we wish to propose the following statement as a fruitful way of reformulating the question. Our starting-point is that we are all living in a tradition which goes back to our Lord and has its roots in the Old Testament, and are all indebted to that tradition inasmuch as we have received the revealed truth, the Gospel, through its being transmitted from one generation to another. Thus we can say that we exist as Christians by the Tradition of the Gospel (the *paradosis* of the *kerygma*) testified in Scripture, transmitted in and by the Church through the power of the Holy Spirit. Tradition taken in this sense is actualized in the preaching of the Word, in the administration of the Sacraments and worship, in Christian teaching and theology, and in mission and witness to Christ by the lives of the members of the Church.

46. What is transmitted in the process of tradition is the Christian faith, not only as a sum of tenets, but as a living reality transmitted through the operation of the Holy Spirit. We can speak of the Christian Tradition (with a capital T), whose content is God's revelation and self-giving in Christ, present in the life of the Church.

47. But this Tradition which is the work of the Holy Spirit is embodied in traditions (in the two senses of the word, both as referring to diversity in forms of expression, and in the sense of separate communions). The traditions in Christian history are distinct from, and yet connected with, the Tradition. They are the expressions and manifestations in diverse historical forms of the one truth and reality which is Christ.

48. This evaluation of the traditions poses serious problems. For some, questions such as these are raised. Is it possible to determine more precisely what the content of the one Tradition is, and by what means? Do all traditions which claim to be Christian contain the Tradition? How can we distinguish between traditions embodying the true Tradition and merely human traditions? Where do we find the genuine Tradition, and where impoverished tradition or even distortion of tradition? Tradition can be a faithful transmission of the Gospel, but also a distortion of it. In this ambiguity the seriousness of the problem of tradition is indicated.

49. These questions imply the search for a criterion. This has been a main concern for the Church since its beginning. In the New Testament we find warnings against false teaching and deviations from the truth of the Gospel. For the post-apostolic Church the appeal to the Tradition received from the apostles became the criterion. As this Tradition was embodied in the apostolic writings, it became natural to use those writings as an authority for determining where the true Tradition was to be found. In the midst of all tradition, these early records of divine revelation have a special basic value, because of their apostolic character. But the Gnostic crisis in the second century shows that the mere existence of apostolic writings did not solve the problem. The question of interpretation arose as soon as the appeal to written documents made its appearance. When the canon of the New Testament had been finally defined and recognized by the Church, it was still more natural to use this body of writings as an indispensable criterion.

50. The Tradition in its written form, as Holy Scripture (comprising both the Old and the New Testament), has to be interpreted by the Church in ever new situations. Such interpretation of the Tradition is to be found in the crystallization of tradition in the creeds, the liturgical forms of the sacraments and other forms of worship, and also in the preaching of the Word and in theological expositions of the Church's doctrine. A mere reiteration of the words of Holy Scripture would be a betrayal of the Gospel which has to be made understandable and has to convey a challenge to the world.

51. The necessity of interpretation raises again the question of the criterion for the genuine Tradition. Throughout the history of the Church the criterion has

been sought in the Holy Scriptures rightly interpreted. But what is 'right interpretation'?

52. The Scriptures as documents can be letter only. It is the Spirit who is the Lord and Giver of life. Accordingly we may say that the right interpretation (taking the words in the widest possible sense) is that interpretation which is guided by the Holy Spirit. But this does not solve the problem of criterion. We arrive at the quest for a hermeneutical principle.

53. This problem has been dealt with in different ways by the various churches. In some confessional traditions the accepted hermeneutical principle has been that any portion of Scripture is to be interpreted in the light of Scripture as a whole. In others the key has been sought in what is considered to be the centre of Holy Scripture, and the emphasis has been primarily on the Incarnation, or on the Atonement and Redemption, or on justification by faith, or again on the message of the nearness of the Kingdom of God, or on the ethical teachings of Jesus. In yet others, all emphasis is laid upon what Scripture says to the individual conscience, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In the Orthodox Church the hermeneutical key is found in the mind of the Church, especially as expressed in the Fathers of the Church and in the Ecumenical Councils. In the Roman Catholic Church the key is found in the deposit of faith, of which the Church's *magisterium* is the guardian. In other traditions again the creeds, complemented by confessional documents or by the definitions of Ecumenical Councils and the witness of the Fathers, are considered to give the right key to the understanding of Scripture. In none of these cases where the principle of interpretation is found elsewhere than in Scripture is the authority thought to be alien to the central concept of Holy Scripture. On the contrary, it is considered as providing just a key to the understanding of what is said in Scripture.

54. Loyalty to our confessional understanding of Holy Scripture produces both convergence and divergence in the interpretation of Scripture. For example, an Anglican and a Baptist will certainly agree on many points when they interpret Holy Scripture (in the wide sense of interpretation), but they will disagree on others. As another example, there may be mentioned the divergent interpretations given to Matt. 16:18 in Roman Catholic theology on the one hand, and in Orthodox or Protestant theology on the other. How can we overcome the situation in which we all read Scripture in the light of our own traditions?

55. Modern biblical scholarship has already done much to bring the different churches together by conducting them towards the Tradition. It is along this line that the necessity for further thinking about the hermeneutical problem arises: i.e. how we can reach an adequate

interpretation of the Scriptures, so that the Word of God addresses us and Scripture is safeguarded from subjective or arbitrary exegesis. Should not the very fact that God has blessed the Church with the Scriptures demand that we emphasize more than in the past a common study of Scripture whenever representatives of the various churches meet?

Should we not study more the Fathers of all periods of the Church and their interpretations of the Scriptures in the light of our ecumenical task? Does not the ecumenical situation demand that we search for the Tradition by re-examining sincerely our own particular traditions?

II. The Unity of Tradition and the Diversity of Traditions

56. Church and tradition are inseparable. By tradition we do not mean traditionalism. The Tradition of the Church is not an object which we possess, but a reality by which we are possessed. The Church's life has its source in God's act of revelation in Jesus Christ, and in the gift of the Holy Spirit to his people and his work in their history. Through the action of the Holy Spirit, a new community, the Church, is constituted and commissioned, so that the revelation and the life which are in Jesus Christ may be transmitted to the ends of the earth and to the end of time. The Tradition in its content not only looks backward to its origin in the past but also forward to the fulness which shall be revealed. The life of the Church is lived in the continuous recalling, appropriation and transmission of the once-for-all event of Christ's coming in the flesh, and in the eager expectation of his coming in glory. All this finds expression in the Word and in the Sacraments in which 'we proclaim the Lord's death till he come' (1 Cor. 11:26).

57. There are at least two distinctive types of understanding of the Tradition. Of these, the first is affirmed most clearly by the Orthodox. For them, the Tradition is not only the act of God in Christ, who comes by the work of the Holy Spirit to save all men who believe in him; it is also the Christian faith itself, transmitted in wholeness and purity, and made explicit in unbroken continuity through definite events in the life of the catholic and apostolic Church from generation to generation. For some others, the Tradition is substantially the same as the revelation in Christ and the preaching of the Word, entrusted to the Church which is sustained in being by it, and expressed with different degrees of fidelity in various historically conditioned forms, namely the traditions. There are others whose understanding of the Tradition and the traditions contain elements of both these points of view. Current developments in biblical and historical study, and the experience of ecumenical encounter, are leading many

to see new values in positions which they had previously ignored. The subject remains open.

58. In the two distinctive positions mentioned above, the Tradition and the traditions are clearly distinguished. But while in the one case it is held that it is to be found in the organic and concrete unity of the one Church, in the other it is assumed that the one Tradition can express itself in a variety of forms, not necessarily all equally complete. The problem of the many churches and the one Tradition appears very differently from each of those points of view. But though on the one side it is possible to maintain that the Church cannot be, and has not been, divided, and on the other to envisage the existence of many churches sharing in the one Tradition even though not in communion with each other, none would wish to acquiesce in the present state of separation.

59. Many of our misunderstandings and disagreements on this subject arise out of the fact of our long history of estrangement and division. During the centuries the different Christian communions have developed their own traditions of historical study and their own particular ways of viewing the past. The rise of the idea of a strictly scientific study of history, with its spirit of accuracy and objectivity, in some ways ameliorated this situation. But the resultant work so frequently failed to take note of the deeper theological issues involved in church history, that its value was severely limited. More recently, a study of history which is ecumenical in its scope and spirit has appeared. . . .

III. The Christian Tradition and Cultural Diversity

64. In what has been written so far, we have been concerned primarily with the understanding of Tradition as it relates to the past, to the once-for-all event of Christ's coming in the flesh, his death and resurrection, and to the continuing work of the Holy Spirit within the Church. But we have recognized throughout, that Tradition looks also to the present and to the future. The Church is sent by Christ to proclaim the Gospel to all men; the Tradition must be handed on in time and also in space. In other words, Tradition has a vital missionary dimension in every land, for the command of the Lord is to go to all nations. Whatever differences of interpretation there may be, all are agreed that there is this dynamic element in the Tradition, which comes from the action of God within the history of his people and its fulfilment in the person and work of Christ, and which looks to the consummation of the victory of the Lord at the end of time.

65. The problems raised by the transmission of the Tradition in different lands and cultures, and by the

diversities of traditions in which the one Tradition has been transmitted, are common in varying ways to all Christians. They are to be seen in an acute form in the life of the younger churches of Asia and Africa today, and in a less obvious but no less real form in what was formerly called Western Christendom. To take the problem of the younger churches, in one quite small and typical country there are more than eighty different denominations. How among these traditions are we to find the Tradition? In the building up of new nations there is a particular need for all that will make for unity among men. Are Christians, to whom the ministry of reconciliation has been committed, to be a factor of division at such a time? It is in such testing circumstances as these that the serious problems have to be faced of how the Church may become truly indigenous, bringing into the service of Christ all that is good in the life of every culture and nation, without falling into syncretism.

66. When the Word became flesh, the Gospel came to man through particular cultural medium, that of the Palestinian world of the time. So when the Church takes the Tradition to new peoples, it is necessary that again the essential content should find expression in terms of new cultures. Thus in the great missionary expansion of the Eastern Church, the Tradition was transmitted through the life of the Church into new languages and cultures, such as those of Russia and the other mission fields. Just as the use of the Slavonic tongue was necessary for the transmission of the Tradition to the Slavs, so today it is necessary to use new languages and new forms of expression which can be understood by those to whom the good news comes. In order that this can be rightly done, it is necessary to draw together knowledge of the culture and language in question, along with a careful study of the languages of the Old and New Testaments, and a thorough knowledge of church history. It is in this context that we begin to understand the meaning of the gift of tongues at Pentecost. By the power of the Holy Spirit the apostles were enabled to preach the mighty works of God to each man in his own tongue and thus the diversity of nations and cultures was united in the service of God. Through recognizing this, Christians in countries where they are a small minority can avoid the dangers of developing a 'ghetto mentality'.

67. The content of the Tradition cannot be exactly defined, for the reality it transmits can never be fully contained in propositional forms. In the Orthodox view, Tradition includes an understanding of the events recorded in the New Testament, of the writings of the Fathers, of the ecumenical creeds and Councils, and of the life of the Church throughout the centuries. All member churches of the World Council of Churches are united in confessing

the Lord Jesus Christ 'as God and Saviour, according to the Scriptures, and in seeking together to fulfil their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit'. This basis of membership safeguards a position from which we may seek constantly to grow in understanding of the fulness of God's revelation, and to correct partial apprehensions of the truth. In the task of seeking to understand the relation between the Tradition and the traditions, problems are raised as difficult to solve as they are crucial in importance. Such questions often cannot be answered apart from the specific situations which pose them. There are no ready-made solutions. Yet some things may be said.

68. What is basic in the Old and New Testament record and interpretation remains basic for the Church in any situation. Moreover, the Holy Spirit has been given to the Church to guide it into all truth. The decisions which communities of God's believing people have to take are to be made in reliance on this leading of his Spirit within the Church, and in awareness of God's providential operations in the world. In the process of indigenization (understood in its widest sense), nothing can be admitted which is at variance with the good news of what God has done, is doing and will do, in the redemption of the world through our Lord Jesus Christ, as expressed in terms of the Church's christocentric and trinitarian faith. In each particular situation, the Gospel should be so proclaimed that it will be experienced, not as a burdensome law, but as a 'joyful, liberating and reconciling power'. The Church must be careful to avoid all unnecessary offense in the proclamation of its message, but the offense of the cross itself, as foolishness to the world, can never be denied. And so the attempt must always be made to transmit the Tradition in its fulness and to remain within the community of the whole of God's people, and the temptation must be avoided of over-emphasizing those elements which are especially congenial to a particular culture. It is in the wholeness of God's truth that the Church will be enabled to fulfil its mission and to bear authentic witness.

69. The traditionary process involves the dialectic, both of relating the Tradition as completely as possible to every separate cultural situation in which men live, and at the same time of demonstrating its transcendence of all that divides men from one another. From this comes the truth that the more the Tradition is expressed in the varying terms of particular cultures, the more will its universal character be fully revealed. It is only 'with all the saints' that we come to know the fulness of Christ's love and glory (Eph. 3:18-19).

70. Catholicity, as a gift of God's grace, calls us to a task. It is a concept of immense richness whose definition

is not attempted here. It can be sought and received only through consciousness of, and caring for, the wholeness of Christ's body, through witness for Christ's lordship over every area of human life, and through compassionate identification with every man in his own particular need.

71. In the fulfilment of their missionary task most churches claim not merely to be reproducing themselves, but in some sense to be planting the *una sancta ecclesia*. Surely this fact has implications which are scarcely yet realized, let alone worked out, both for the life of the mother-churches, and also for all that is involved in the establishing of any new church in an ecumenical age. It demands that the liberty of newly founded churches be recognized, so that both mother- and daughter-churches may receive together the one gift of God's grace. This demands faithfulness to the whole *koinonia* of Christ's Church, even when we are engaged with particular problems. In this connection we recognize a vital need for the study of the history of the Church's life and mission, written from an ecumenical perspective. All must labour together in seeking to receive and manifest the fulness of Christ's truth.

43. "The Common Declaration" of Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras, 1965

This "declaration" goes far towards healing the painful historic split between Eastern and Western Christianity. Athenagoras I, Ecumenical Patriarch from 1949 to 1972, regarded unity as a "holy duty" and was one of the outstanding leaders of the modern ecumenical movement. • Doing the Truth in Charity, eds Thomas F. Stransky and John B. Sheerin, New York, Paulist, 1982, pp. 178-79.

1. Full of gratitude to God for the favour which he mercifully granted them in their brotherly meeting in those holy places where the mystery of our salvation was accomplished by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and where the Church was born by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I have not lost sight of the intention which they held from then onwards, each for his part, never to omit in the future any of those gestures inspired by charity which might contribute towards the fraternal relationships thus initiated between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church of

Constantinople. They believe that they are thus responding to the call of divine grace, which today requires that the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, as well as all Christians, overcome their differences, so as to be once again 'one' as the Lord Jesus asked of his Father for them.

2. Among the obstacles to be found in the way of the development of these brotherly relationships of trust and esteem, there is the memory of those painful decisions, acts and incidents which led in 1054 to the sentence of excommunication delivered against Patriarch Michael Cerularius and two other persons by the legates of the Roman See led by Cardinal Humbert, legates who were themselves in turn the objects of a similar sentence on the side of the Patriarch and the Synod of Constantinople.

3. One cannot pretend that these events were not what they were in that particularly troubled period of history. But now that today a more calm and equitable judgment has been brought to bear on them, it is important to recognize the excesses with which they were tainted and which later led to consequences which, as far as we can judge, went much further than their authors had intended or expected. Their censures were aimed at the persons concerned and not the Churches; they were not meant to break ecclesiastical communion between the sees of Rome and Constantinople.

4. This is why Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I with his synod, certain that they are expressing the common desire for justice and the unanimous sentiment of charity on the part of their faithful, and remembering the command of the Lord: 'If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift before the altar and go first to be reconciled to your brother' (Matt. 5:23-24), declare with one accord that:

- a. They regret the offensive words, the reproaches without foundation and the reprehensible gestures which on both sides marked or accompanied the sad events of that period;
- b. They also regret and wish to erase from the memory and midst of the Church the sentences of excommunication which followed them, and whose memory has acted as an obstacle to a rapprochement in charity down to our own days, and consign them to oblivion;
- c. Finally they deplore the troublesome precedents and the later events which, under the influence of various factors, among them lack of understanding

and mutual hostility, eventually led to the effective rupture of ecclesiastical communion.

5. This reciprocal act of justice and forgiveness, as Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I with his synod are aware, cannot suffice to put an end to the differences, ancient or more recent, which remain between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church and which, by the action of the Holy Spirit, will be overcome thanks to the purification of hearts, regret for historical errors, and an effective determination to arrive at a common understanding and expression of the apostolic faith and its demands.

In accomplishing this act, however, they hope that it will be pleasing to God, who is prompt to pardon us when we forgive one another, and recognized by the whole Christian world. But especially by the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church together, as the expression of a sincere mutual desire for reconciliation and as an invitation to pursue, in a spirit of mutual trust, esteem and charity, the dialogue which will lead them, with the help of God, to live once again for the greater good of souls and the coming of the Kingdom of God, in the full communion of faith, of brotherly concord and of sacramental life which existed between them throughout the first millennium of the life of the Church.

44. "Agreed Statement," Third Unofficial Conversation between Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches, 1970

Separation between Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches stems from differences over the Christological dogma declared by the Council of Chalcedon in 451. Since 1964, a series of conversations has resolved many of the contentious issues, as indicated by this selection. • Does Chalcedon Divide or Unite? Towards Convergence in Orthodox Christology, eds Paulos Gregorios, William H. Lazareth and Nikos A. Nissiotis, Geneva, WCC, 1981, pp. 8-11.

Reaffirmation of Christological Agreement

2. . . . On the essence of the Christological dogma our two traditions, despite fifteen centuries of separation, still find themselves in full and deep agreement with the universal tradition of the one undivided Church. It is the teaching of

the blessed Cyril on the hypostatic union of the two natures in Christ that we both affirm, though we may use differing terminology to explain this teaching. We both teach that He who is consubstantial with the Father according to Godhead became consubstantial also with us according to humanity in the Incarnation, that He who was before all ages begotten from the Father, was in these last days for us and for our salvation born of the blessed Virgin Mary, and that in Him the two natures are united in the one hypostasis of the Divine Logos, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation. Jesus Christ is perfect God and perfect man, with all the properties and faculties that belong to Godhead and to humanity.

3. The human will and energy of Christ are neither absorbed nor suppressed by His divine will and energy, nor are the former opposed to the latter, but are united together in perfect concord without division or confusion; He who wills and acts is always the One hypostasis of the Logos Incarnate. One is Emmanuel, God and Man, Our Lord and Saviour, Whom we adore and worship and who yet is one of us.

4. We have become convinced that our agreement extends beyond Christological doctrine to embrace other aspects also of the authentic tradition, though we have not discussed all matters in detail. But through visits to each other, and through study of each other's liturgical traditions and theological and spiritual writings, we have rediscovered, with a sense of gratitude to God, our mutual agreement in the common Tradition of the One Church in all important matters—liturgy and spirituality, doctrine and canonical practice, in our understanding of the Holy Trinity, of the Incarnation, of the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit, on the nature of the Church as the Communion of Saints with its ministry and Sacraments, and on the life of the world to come when our Lord and Saviour shall come in all his glory.

5. We pray that the Holy Spirit may continue to draw us together to find our full unity in the one Body of Christ. Our mutual agreement is not merely verbal or conceptual; it is a deep agreement that impels us to beg our Churches to consummate our union by bringing together again the two lines of tradition which have been separated from each other for historical reasons for such a long time. We work in the hope that our Lord will grant us full unity so that we can celebrate together that unity in the Common Eucharist. That is our strong desire and final goal.

Some Differences

6. Despite our agreement on the substance of the Tradition, the long period of separation has brought about certain

differences in the formal expression of that tradition. These differences have to do with three basic ecclesiological issues: (a) the meaning and place of certain Councils in the life of the Church, (b) the anathematization or acclamation as Saints of certain controversial teachers in the Church, and (c) the jurisdictional questions related to manifestation of the unity of the Church at local, regional and world levels.

(a) Theologians from the Eastern Orthodox Church have drawn attention to the fact that for them the Church teaches that the seven ecumenical Councils which they acknowledge have an inner coherence and continuity that make them a single indivisible complex to be viewed in its entirety of dogmatic definition. Theologians from the Oriental Orthodox Church feel, however, that the authentic Christological tradition has so far been held by them on the basis of the three ecumenical Councils, supplemented by the liturgical and patristic tradition of the Church. It is our hope that further study will lead to the solution of this problem by the decision of our Churches.

As for the Councils and their authority for the tradition, we all agree that the Councils should be seen as charismatic events in the life of the Church rather than as an authority over the Church; where some Councils are acknowledged as true Councils, whether as ecumenical or as local, by the Church's tradition, their authority is to be seen as coming from the Holy Spirit. Distinction is to be made not only between the doctrinal definitions and canonical legislations of a Council, but also between the true intention of the dogmatic definition of a Council and the particular terminology in which it is expressed, which latter has less authority than the intention.

(b) The reuniting of the two traditions which have their own separate continuity poses certain problems in relation to certain revered teachers of one family being condemned or anathematized by the other. It may not be necessary formally to lift these anathemas, nor for these teachers to be recognised as Saints by the condemning side. But the restoration of Communion obviously implies, among other things, that formal anathemas and condemnation of revered teachers of the other side should be discontinued, as in the case of Leo, Dioscurus, Severus, and others.

(c) It is recognised that jurisdiction is not to be regarded only as an administrative matter, but that it also touches the question of ecclesiology in some aspects. The traditional pattern of territorial autonomy or autocephaly has its own pragmatic, as well as theological, justification. The manifestation of local unity in the early centuries was to have one bishop, with one college of presbyters united in one eucharist. In more recent times pragmatic considerations, however, have made it necessary in some cases to

have more than one bishop and one eucharist in one city, but it is important that the norm required by the nature of the Church be safe-guarded at least in principle and expressed in Eucharistic Communion and in local conciliar structures.

7. The universal Tradition of the Church does not demand uniformity in all details of doctrinal formulation, forms of worship and canonical practice. But the limits of pluralistic variability need to be more clearly worked out, in the areas of the forms of worship, in terminology of expressing the faith, in spirituality, in canonical practice, in administrative or jurisdictional patterns, and in the other structural or formal expressions of tradition, including the names of teachers and Saints in the Church.

45. "Leuenberg Agreement," Reformation Churches of Europe, 1973

The Leuenberg Agreement resulted in the establishment of pulpit and table fellowship among some eighty churches of the Lutheran, Reformed, United, Waldensian, and Moravian traditions. The sweep of its consensus, and the fellowship it has made possible, make Leuenberg a highly significant achievement. • Lutheran World, vol. 20, 1973, pp. 349-52.

AGREEMENT BETWEEN REFORMATION CHURCHES IN EUROPE (LEUENBERG AGREEMENT)

(1) On the basis of their doctrinal discussions, the churches assenting to this Agreement—namely, Lutheran and Reformed churches in Europe along with the Union churches which grew out of them, and the related pre-Reformation churches, the Waldensian Church and the Church of the Czech Brethren—affirm together the common understanding of the gospel elaborated below. This common understanding of the gospel enables them to declare and to realize church fellowship. Thankful that they have been led closer together, they confess at the same time that guilt and suffering have also accompanied and still accompany the struggle for truth and unity in the church.

(2) The church is founded upon Jesus Christ alone. It is he who gathers the church and sends it forth, by the bestowal of his salvation in preaching and the sacraments. In the view of the Reformation, it follows that agreement in the right teaching of the gospel, and in the right

administration of the sacraments, is the necessary and sufficient prerequisite for the true unity of the church. It is from these Reformation criteria that the participating churches derive their view of church fellowship as set out below.

I. The Road to Fellowship

(3) Faced with real differences in style of theological thinking and church practice, the fathers of the Reformation, despite much that they had in common, did not see themselves in a position, on grounds of faith and conscience, to avoid divisions. In this Agreement the participating churches acknowledge that their relationship to one another has changed since the time of the Reformation.

Common Aspects at the Outset of the Reformation

(4) With the advantage of historical distance, it is easier today to discern the common elements in the witness of the churches of the Reformation, in spite of the differences between them: "Their starting point was a new experience of the power of the gospel to liberate and assure. In standing up for the truth which they saw, the Reformers found themselves drawn together in opposition to the church traditions of that time. They were, therefore, at one in confessing that the church's life and doctrine are to be gauged by the original and pure testimony to the gospel in Scripture. They were at one in bearing witness to God's free and unconditional grace in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for all those who believe this promise. They were at one in confessing that the practice and form of the church should be determined only by the commission to deliver this testimony to the world, and that the word of God remains sovereign over every human ordering of the Christian community. In so doing, they were at one with the whole of Christendom in receiving and renewing the confession of the triune God and the God-manhood of Jesus Christ as expressed in the ancient creeds of the church.

Changed Elements in the contemporary situation

(5) In the course of 400 years of history, the churches of the Reformation have been led to new and similar ways of thinking and living: by theological wrestling with the questions of modern times, by advances in biblical research, by the movements of church renewal, and by the rediscovery of the ecumenical horizon. These developments certainly have also brought with them new differences cutting right across the confessions. But, time and again, there has also been an experience of brotherly fellowship, particularly in times of common suffering. The result of all these factors was a new concern on the part of the churches, especially

since the revival movements, to achieve a contemporary expression both of the biblical witness and of the Reformation confessions of faith. In the process they have learned to distinguish between the fundamental witness of the Reformation confessions of faith and their historically-conditioned thought forms. Because these confessions of faith bear witness to the gospel as the living word of God in Jesus Christ, far from barring the way to continued responsible testimony to the Word, they open up this way with a summons to follow it in the freedom of faith.

II. The Common Understanding of the Gospel

(6) In what follows, the participating churches describe their common understanding of the gospel insofar as this is required for establishing church fellowship between them.

The message of justification as the message of the free grace of God

(7) The gospel is the message of Jesus Christ, the salvation of the world, in fulfilment of the promise given to the people of the Old Covenant.

(8) a) The true understanding of the gospel was expressed by the fathers of the Reformation in the doctrine of justification.

(9) b) In this message, Jesus Christ is acknowledged as the one in whom God became man and bound himself to man; as the crucified and risen one who took God's judgment upon himself and, in so doing, demonstrated God's love to sinners; and as the coming one who, as judge and Savior, leads the world to its consummation.

(10) c) Through his word, God by his Holy Spirit calls all men to repent and believe, and assures the believing sinner of his righteousness in Jesus Christ. Whoever puts his trust in the gospel is justified in God's sight for the sake of Jesus Christ, and set free from the accusation of the law. In daily repentance and renewal, he lives within the fellowship in praise of God and in service to others, in the assurance that God will bring his kingdom in all its fulness. In this way, God creates new life, and plants in the midst of the world the seed of a new humanity.

(11) d) This message sets Christians free for responsible service in the world and makes them ready to suffer in this service. They know that God's will, as demand and succour, embraces the whole world. They stand up for temporal justice and peace between individuals and nations. To do this they have to join with others in seeking rational and appropriate criteria, and play their part in applying these criteria. They do so in the confidence that God sustains the world and as those who are accountable to him.

(12) e) In this understanding of the gospel, we take our stand on the basis of the ancient creeds of the church, and reaffirm the common conviction of the Reformation confessions that the unique mediation of Jesus Christ in salvation is the heart of the Scriptures, and that the message of justification as the message of God's free grace is the measure of all the church's preaching.

Preaching, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper

(13) The fundamental witness to the gospel is the testimony of the apostles and prophets in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. It is the task of the church to spread this gospel by the spoken word in preaching, by individual counseling, and by baptism and the Lord's Supper. In preaching, baptism, and the Lord's Supper, Jesus Christ is present through the Holy Spirit. Justification in Christ is thus imparted to men, and in this way the Lord gathers his people. In doing so he employs various forms of ministry and service, as well as the witness of all those belonging to his people.

Baptism

(14) Baptism is administered in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit with water. In baptism, Jesus Christ irrevocably receives man, fallen prey to sin and death, into his fellowship of salvation so that he may become a new creature. In the power of his Holy Spirit, he calls him into his community and to a new life of faith, to daily repentance, and to discipleship.

The Lord's Supper

(15) In the Lord's Supper the risen Christ imparts himself in his body and blood, given up for all, through his word of promise with bread and wine. He thereby grants us forgiveness of sins, and sets us free for a new life of faith. He enables us to experience anew that we are members of his body. He strengthens us for service to all men.

(16) When we celebrate the Lord's Supper we proclaim the death of Christ through which God has reconciled the world with himself. We proclaim the presence of the risen Lord in our midst. Rejoicing that the Lord has come to us, we await his future coming in glory.

III. Agreement regarding the Condemnations of the Reformation Period

(17) The differences which from the time of the Reformation onwards have made church fellowship between the Lutheran and Reformed churches impossible, and have led them to pronounce mutual condemnations, relate to the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, christology, and the doctrine

of predestination. We take the decisions of the Reformation fathers seriously, but are today able to agree on the following statements in respect of these condemnations:

The Lord's Supper

(18) In the Lord's Supper the risen Jesus Christ imparts himself in his body and blood, given up for all, through his word of promise with bread and wine. He thus gives himself unreservedly to all who receive the bread and wine; faith receives the Lord's Supper for salvation, unfaith for judgment.

(19) We cannot separate communion with Jesus Christ in his body and blood from the act of eating and drinking. To be concerned about the manner of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper in abstraction from this act is to run the risk of obscuring the meaning of the Lord's Supper.

(20) Where such a consensus exists between the churches, the condemnations pronounced by the Reformation confessions are inapplicable to the doctrinal position of these churches.

Christology

(21) In the true man Jesus Christ, the eternal Son, and so God himself, has bestowed himself upon lost mankind for its salvation. In the word of the promise and in the sacraments, the Holy Spirit, and so God himself, makes the crucified and risen Jesus present to us.

(22) Believing in this self-bestowal of God in his Son, the task facing us, in view of the historically conditioned character of traditional thought forms, is to give renewed and effective expression to the special insights of the Reformed tradition, with its concern to maintain unimpaired the divinity and humanity of Jesus, and to those of the Lutheran tradition, with its concern to maintain the unity of Jesus as a person.

(23) In these circumstances, it is impossible for us to reaffirm the former condemnations today.

Predestination

(24) In the gospel we have the promise of God's unconditional acceptance of sinful man. Whoever puts his trust in the gospel can know that he is saved, and praise God for his election. For this reason we can speak of election only with respect to the call to salvation in Christ.

(25) Faith knows by experience that the message of salvation is not accepted by all; yet it respects the mystery of God's dealings with men. It bears witness to the seriousness of human decisions, and at the same time to the reality of God's universal purpose of salvation. The witness of the Scriptures to Christ forbids us to suppose that God

has uttered an eternal decree for the final condemnation of specific individuals or of a particular people.

(26) When such a consensus exists between churches, the condemnations pronounced by the Reformation confessions of faith are inapplicable to the doctrinal position of these churches.

Conclusions

(27) Wherever these statements are accepted, the condemnations of the Reformation confessions in respect of the Lord's Supper, christology, and predestination are inapplicable to the doctrinal position. This does not mean that the condemnations pronounced by the Reformation fathers are irrelevant; but they are no longer an obstacle to church fellowship.

(28) There remain considerable differences between our churches in forms of worship, types of spirituality, and church order. These differences are often more deeply felt in the congregations than the traditional doctrinal differences. Nevertheless, in fidelity to the New Testament and Reformation criteria for church fellowship, we cannot discern in these differences any factors which should divide the church.

IV. The Declaration and Realization of Church Fellowship

(29) In the sense intended in this Agreement, church fellowship means that, on the basis of the consensus they have reached in their understanding of the gospel, churches with different confessional positions accord each other fellowship in word and sacrament, and strive for the fullest possible cooperation in witness and service to the world.

Declaration of church fellowship

(30) In assenting to this Agreement the churches, in loyalty to the confessions of faith which bind them, or with due respect for their traditions, declare:

(31) a) that they are one in understanding the gospel as set out in Parts II and III;

(32) b) that, in accordance with what is said in Part III, the doctrinal condemnations expressed in the confessional documents no longer apply to the contemporary doctrinal position of the assenting churches;

(33) c) that they accord each other table and pulpit fellowship; this includes the mutual recognition of ordination and the freedom to provide for intercelebration.

(34) With these statements, church fellowship is declared. The divisions which have barred the way to this fellowship since the 16th century are removed. The participating churches are convinced that they have part together

in the one church of Jesus Christ, and that the Lord liberates them for, and lays upon them the obligation of, common service.

Realizing Church Fellowship

(35) It is in the life of the churches and congregations that church fellowship becomes a reality. Believing in the unifying power of the Holy Spirit, they bear their witness and perform their service together, and strive to deepen and strengthen the fellowship they have found together.

Witness and Service

(36) The preaching of the churches gains credibility in the world when they are at one in their witness to the gospel. The gospel liberates and binds together the churches to render common service. Being the service of love, it turns to man in his distress and seeks to remove the causes of that distress. The struggle for justice and peace in the world increasingly demands of the churches the acceptance of a common responsibility.

46. "A Common Account of Hope," World Council of Churches Commission on Faith and Order, Bangalore, 1978

Faith and Order initiated a study on "Giving Account of the Hope That Is in Us" in 1971. This final "account of hope," which drew on the experiences and reflections of local study groups, was written at the commission's meeting in 1978. • Sharing in One Hope: Bangalore, 1978, Faith and Order paper no. 92, Geneva, WCC, 1978, pp. 1-2, 5-11.

. . . Everywhere songs of hope and longing are being sung. We have been able to listen to many of them in the accounts of hope which we have studied. There is a bewildering variety: from those who hunger for bread, justice and peace; those who long for freedom from religious or political prosecution; those who hope for deliverance from infirmities of body and mind; those seeking a new community of women and men; those who search for cultural authenticity; those who hope for a responsible use of science and technology; those who evangelize and work for the spread of the Gospel; those who labour for the visible unity of the churches. We have even become aware of intimations of

hope from those who are silenced. In their silence itself is a word for those who can hear it. . . .

V. The Church: A Communion of Hope

"The Lord is risen!" He is present and powerful in the midst of his people, making them members of one another and of his Body, the Church. He is the Master; they are the disciples. He is the vine; they are the branches. To those who put their faith in him, He gives a communion of hope, and He sends them as a sign of hope for all humanity.

They share his own divine life, the communion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God whose own being is mirrored in all creaturely love. In the Christian community of faith, sharing in the confession of the apostles, gathered around God's Word and partaking of the sacraments, we are given the power to share with each other. We can rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. We can bear one another's burdens. It is in this communion that we also learn to share one another's hopes. This encounter of hope in itself has been made by God to be a sign in every situation and place: Christ our hope, the power of love!

Because this is the spiritual reality of the Church, we are ashamed of how we in our churches actually look. The communion of hope is so obscured that it is almost unrecognizable. The common witness is wounded by divisions. Too often and too transparently, our churches reflect the sins of society, and are found on the side of the privileged and the powerful. Women are often denied their rightful places of leadership in church life. Members and ministers do not fully recognize each other. More scandalous still, our churches do not yet worship God together around the common table. Many of our contemporaries think it a travesty to call this people a sign of hope. Hope for the renewal and unity of our churches is often our most difficult spiritual task.

Nevertheless, we do hope for the Church of Christ to become more manifest in our churches. We hope for the recovery and fruitfulness of their mission. The communion, though obscured, is not lost; it is grounded not in its members, but in God. The Word has been given to it and the Word endures. The Spirit which has been at work throughout the ages is present in our times to re-establish a credible communion. Built on such foundations, this community will become a community of repentance!

Of this power among the churches we are witnesses. We do have hope for this communion. And we believe that this communion, incomplete as it is, can become a sign of hope for others. Communion in Christ provides the possibility of encounter across the human barriers. It

reestablishes relations in mutual respect without sacrificing convictions. It can be a testing ground for the witness which each church bears. Without being pressed into conformity, churches can become accountable to each other. It is also a source of hope because as they live by God's forgiveness, they can extend forgiveness to other churches as well, and find in the witness and commitment of others an enrichment of their own. Finally, communion in Christ is a source of hope when it anticipates the reign of God and does not acquiesce in things as they are.

So the Church thanks God for a foretaste, here and now, of what it hopes for. Long since, it has anticipated its hope in its prayer: "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us our daily bread. Forgive us our sins. Deliver us from evil."

VI. Shared Hopes in the Face of the Common Future

"Christ is risen!" What does it mean to have common hope in a world where we face common threats? There are common Christian commitments; concerted action is possible, although the emphases are different in different parts of the world.

Our common hope is threatened by *increasing and already excessive concentrations of power with their threats of exploitation and poverty*. They are responsible for the ever-widening gap between rich and poor, not only between nations but within individual nations. Political exploitation and dependency, hunger and malnutrition are the price paid by the poor for the superabundance of goods and power enjoyed by the rich. Concentration of power also leads to the preservation of the existing and the formation of new class distinctions. Nevertheless, we share a common hope; for we believe that God has taken sides in this struggle (Ps. 103:6).

Our common future is dominated by our *increasing capacity to shape the physical world*. Science and technology have bettered the human lot. Wisely used, they can help to feed the hungry, heal the sick, develop communication, strengthen community. The refusal to use these powers responsibly on the part of all people everywhere, and especially the ability of the affluent to appropriate these benefits for themselves, threatens us with environmental collapse, biological catastrophes and nuclear destruction. Nevertheless, we hope in the continual action of the Creator Spirit who will not abandon his creatures and who can prompt us to act responsibly as stewards of creation.

The most alarming concentration of power in our time is the *seemingly uncontrollable growth of armaments*. The present arsenal of nuclear warheads held by the superpowers numbers well above 10,000—more than

a million times the annihilating power which devastated Hiroshima. Even the so-called Third World has increased its commitment to armament from eight billion dollars in 1957 to forty billion in 1977. It is important not to overstate our hopes, but God's Spirit opens doors beyond human expectations. Evil is not necessary. The Spirit can plant the leaven of peace in unexpected surroundings, and create hope that it is possible to establish justice without resorting to war.

There are pressures and forces everywhere which threaten to disintegrate the human community. Races, classes, sexes, even religions are set against each other. In all places inherited patterns of society are dissolving and weakening the sense of belonging which community provides. At the same time new forms of community are emerging which in their newness can also create anxieties. Nevertheless, the Spirit works with a surprising freedom, preserving that which sustains life and bringing to birth something genuinely new. Therefore, we can have courage to experiment with new forms of association, new structures and institutions, new forms of human relationships.

Our common hope is threatened by *assaults on human dignity*. Statistics for programmes, stereotypes for discrimination, slaves, victims, or simply the forgotten. Human persons and human possibilities are everywhere threatened today. Individual human rights are violated by arbitrary arrest and "disappearances." We are appalled at the growing numbers of "prisoners of conscience" and at the increasingly systematic use of torture as an ordinary method of exercising power. But social human rights are likewise violated by denial of food, housing, jobs, education and health care, compounded by racism and sexism. There is no part of the world where some of these violations are not present. Those who dehumanize others thereby dehumanize themselves. Nevertheless, we have hope because God affirms the dignity of "the very least."

Commitment to the common future and life itself are eroded by *meaninglessness and absurdity*. In situations of affluence, this may result from "playing by the rules of the game" in a success-oriented culture. In situations of rapid cultural or social change, it may arise in the confusion of being called to fill previously undefined roles. In situations of exploitation, dependency and "marginalization" it may be imposed by the sense of impotence and frustration which comes from the inability to act for oneself or one's class. Nevertheless, we share a common hope, for the Son of God himself withstood the threat of meaninglessness and absurdity. God's healing word will come with different accents: to the affluent it is the challenge to renounce false gods; to the confused it offers the light of Jesus' life to clarify perplexity; to the dispossessed it comes

as a challenge and empowerment to take up the struggle. To all it promises that life makes sense.

The problems seem overwhelming. The cry for realism is deep in each one of us, and it expresses a kind of ultimate question about Christian hope. But we believe that each rightful action counts because God blesses it. With the five loaves and two fishes which the young man brought to him, Jesus fed the multitude. Hope lives with special power in small actions.

Above all, we dare to hope in the face of *death*, the ultimate threat to our aspirations and actions. As sinners under the judgment of God we are bound to die. Therefore death is the “last enemy” of our hopes. It penetrates life with paralyzing power, especially where it takes away people before they have had a chance to live. Yet hope in Christ focuses precisely on this enemy. The triumph of God’s grace is the resurrection Christ’s victory over death and sin with all their allies. The Apostle says: “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (I Cor. 15:19). We rejoice that his crucial *if* is answered unequivocally: *not only* in this life. It is this “not only” that gives life its hopeful horizon. Fate is broken. There is a tomorrow for us today—and in the day of our death.

The Christian hope is a resistance movement against fatalism.

VII. Hope as the Invitation to Risk

“Christ is risen!” But the risen one is the crucified. This means that our life in hope is not a guarantee of safety, but an invitation to risk. To live in hope is never to have reached our goal, but always to be on a risk-laden journey.

To live in hope is to risk *struggle*. We are denied the privilege of being “neither hot nor cold,” of adopting a pseudo-neutrality that covertly supports those in power. To struggle is to take sides openly, saying “yes” to some at the cost of saying “no” to others. If patient endurance is all that is possible, that too can be a form of protest. We can afford to fail, since God can use our failures in the fulfillment of his purposes. Hope embraces the risk of struggle.

To live in hope is to risk *the use of power*. Some have too much power to be trusted; most have too little to be effective. It is not right that a few should impose their decisions on the many. We must seek identification with the powerless and help them escape a life of dependency on others. But we must also minister to those in power, asking them to listen to “the wretched of the earth,” to use power justly and share it with those who stand outside. Hope embraces the risk of the responsible use of power.

To live in hope is to risk *affirming the new and reaffirming the old*. To affirm the new is to acknowledge that Christ goes before us; to reaffirm the old is to acknowledge that He did not come to destroy, but to fulfil, for He is the same yesterday, today and forever. Hope sends us on untried ways and calls us to discover the new whether it is represented by the challenge of new cultural contexts, the call for new life-styles or previously unheeded cries for liberation. When we lock ourselves to the past we may become deaf to the groanings and pleadings of the Spirit. Yet, the Spirit will always reaffirm the truth of Christ. Therefore, hope embraces the risk both of new departures and of faithfulness to the past against the temptation of passing fashions.

To live in hope is to risk *self-criticism as the channel of renewal*. Within culture and within the Church, renewal comes through challenge to what is established, so that it can be revitalized or cast aside. But renewal in the true sense of the word is not within our power. It arises as we are judged by God and driven to repent and bear fruits worthy of repentance. This can also include, however, a certain light-heartedness, a willingness not to take ourselves too seriously. Only those who can smile at themselves can be ultimately serious about other selves. Hope embraces the risk of self-criticism as the way to renewal.

To live in hope is to risk *dialogue*. Genuine encounter with others can challenge us to vacate positions of special privilege and render ourselves vulnerable. To enter dialogue with people of other faiths and ideologies is to risk having one’s own faith shaken and to discover that there are other ways to state the truth than we have yet learned ourselves. The dialogue with Jews holds special promise and difficulties: promise of enrichment, because with no other people are our common roots so deep; difficulties, because the theological and political questions which arise threaten to divide us from one another as well as from them. Because in dialogue we can receive a fuller understanding of our own faith and a deeper understanding of our neighbour, hope is not afraid of dialogue.

To live in hope is to risk *cooperation with those from whom we differ*. When we join with others in immediate human tasks we risk being used and absorbed. But when we find those who, not acknowledging the name of Christ, are serving humanity, we can side with them, both for the sake of all God’s children and, if occasion permits, to give account of our own hope. Hope is willing to risk cooperation with those who are different.

To live in hope is to risk *new forms of community between women and men*. This calls for a grace and understanding that can take past structures, stereotypes and resentments and transmute them into new forms of living

together, both inside and outside the Church. We are challenged to discover on the basis of scripture and tradition contemporary ways to express mutuality and equality, and especially to understand anew what it means to be created in the image of God.

To live in hope is to risk *scorn*. To most of our contemporaries our hope appears vain; it is at best irrelevant, at worst malevolent. To live in hope is nevertheless to continue to witness to the saving power of Jesus Christ, whether we are ignored or attacked. Because to spread the Gospel is not only our mission but also our privilege and joy, we can run the risk of ridicule.

To live in hope is to risk *death for the sake of that hope*. No Christian may decide that someone else should be a martyr. But each of us confronts the likelihood that faithful witness can be costly witness. The Christian hope is not that death can be avoided, but that death can be overcome. Those who truly live in hope have come to terms with death and can risk dying with Christ. For some that is rhetoric; for others it is the bedrock assurance from which they face each new day. To live in hope is to embrace the risk of death for the sake of that hope.

The saying is sure
if we have died with him, we shall also live with him;
if we suffer, we shall also reign with him;
if we deny him, he also will deny us;
if we are faithless, he remains faithful;
for he cannot deny himself. (II Tim. 2:11-13)

47. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, World Council of Churches Commission on Faith and Order, Lima, 1982

Much has already been said in the introduction to this chapter about BEM, a seminal achievement in ecumenical theology. Due to space limitations, only a few of the "commentaries" found in the original text have been retained in this anthology. • Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, *Faith and Order* paper no. 111, Geneva, WCC, 1982.

Preface

. . . If the divided churches are to achieve the visible unity they seek, one of the essential prerequisites is that they should be in basic agreement on baptism, eucharist and ministry. Naturally, therefore, the Faith and Order Commission has devoted a good deal of attention to overcoming doctrinal division on these three. During the last fifty years, most of its conferences have had one or another of these subjects at the centre of discussion. . . .

Perhaps even more influential than the official studies are the changes which are taking place within the life of the churches themselves. We live in a crucial moment in the history of humankind. As the churches grow into unity, they are asking how their understandings and practices of baptism, eucharist and ministry relate to their mission in and for the renewal of human community as they seek to promote justice, peace and reconciliation. Therefore our understanding of these cannot be divorced from the redemptive and liberating mission of Christ through the churches in the modern world.

Indeed, as a result of biblical and patristic studies, together with the liturgical revival and the need for common witness, an ecumenical fellowship has come into being which often cuts across confessional boundaries and within which former differences are now seen in a new light. Hence, although the language of the text is still largely classical in reconciling historical controversies, the driving force is frequently contextual and contemporary. This spirit will likely stimulate many reformulations of the text into the varied language(s) of our time.

Where have these efforts brought us? As demonstrated in the Lima text, we have already achieved a remarkable degree of agreement. Certainly we have not yet fully reached "consensus" (*consentire*), understood here as that experience of life and articulation of faith necessary to realize and maintain the Church's visible unity. Such consensus is rooted in the communion built on Jesus Christ and the witness of the apostles. As a gift of the Spirit it is realized as a communal experience before it can be articulated by common efforts into words. Full consensus can only be proclaimed after the churches reach the point of living and acting together in unity.

On the way towards their goal of visible unity, however, the churches will have to pass through various stages. They have been blessed anew through listening to each other and jointly returning to the primary sources, namely "the Tradition of the Gospel testified in Scripture, transmitted in and by the Church through the power of the Holy Spirit" (Faith and Order World Conference, 1963). In leaving behind the hostilities of the past, the churches have begun to discover many promising convergences in

their shared convictions and perspectives. These convergences give assurance that despite much diversity in theological expression the churches have much in common in their understanding of the faith. The resultant text aims to become part of a faithful and sufficient reflection of the common Christian Tradition on essential elements of Christian communion. In the process of growing together in mutual trust, the churches must develop these doctrinal convergences step by step, until they are finally able to declare together that they are living in communion with one another in continuity with the apostles and the teachings of the universal Church.

This Lima text represents the significant theological convergence which Faith and Order has discerned and formulated. Those who know how widely the churches have differed in doctrine and practice on baptism, eucharist and ministry, will appreciate the importance of the large measure of agreement registered here. Virtually all the confessional traditions are included in the Commission's membership. That theologians of such widely different traditions should be able to speak so harmoniously about baptism, eucharist and ministry is unprecedented in the modern ecumenical movement. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that the Commission also includes among its full members theologians of the Roman Catholic and other churches which do not belong to the World Council of Churches itself.

In the course of critical evaluation the primary purpose of this ecumenical text must be kept in mind. Readers should not expect to find a complete theological treatment of baptism, eucharist and ministry. That would be neither appropriate nor desirable here. The agreed text purposely concentrates on those aspects of the theme that have been directly or indirectly related to the problems of mutual recognition leading to unity. The main text demonstrates the major areas of theological convergence; the added commentaries either indicate historical differences that have been overcome or identify disputed issues still in need of further research and reconciliation.

In the light of all these developments, the Faith and Order Commission now presents this Lima text (1982) to the churches. We do so with deep conviction, for we have become increasingly aware of our unity in the body of Christ. We have found reason to rejoice in the rediscovery of the richness of our common inheritance in the Gospel. We believe that the Holy Spirit has led us to this time, a *kairos* of the ecumenical movement when sadly divided churches have been enabled to arrive at substantial theological agreements. We believe that many significant advances are possible if in our churches we are sufficiently courageous and imaginative to embrace God's gift of Church unity.

As concrete evidence of their ecumenical commitment, the churches are being asked to enable the widest possible involvement of the whole people of God at all levels of church life in the spiritual process of receiving this text. . . .

The Faith and Order Commission now respectfully invites all churches to prepare an official response to this text at the highest appropriate level of authority, whether it be a council, synod, conference, assembly or other body. In support of this process of reception, the Commission would be pleased to know as precisely as possible

- the extent to which your church can recognize in this text the faith of the Church through the ages;
- the consequences your church can draw from this text for its relations and dialogues with other churches, particularly with those churches which also recognize the text as an expression of the apostolic faith;
- the guidance your church can take from this text for its worship, educational, ethical and spiritual life and witness. . . .

BAPTISM

I. The Institution of Baptism

1. Christian baptism is rooted in the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, in his death and in his resurrection. It is incorporation into Christ, who is the crucified and risen Lord; it is entry into the New Covenant between God and God's people. Baptism is a gift of God, and is administered in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. St Matthew records that the risen Lord, when sending his disciples into the world, commanded them to baptize (Matt. 28:18-20). The universal practice of baptism by the apostolic Church from its earliest days is attested in letters of the New Testament, the Acts of the Apostles, and the writings of the Fathers. The churches today continue this practice as a rite of commitment to the Lord who bestows his grace upon his people.

II. The Meaning of Baptism

2. Baptism is the sign of new life through Jesus Christ. It unites the one baptized with Christ and with his people. The New Testament scriptures and the liturgy of the Church unfold the meaning of baptism in various images which express the riches of Christ and the gifts of his salvation. These images are sometimes linked with the symbolic uses

of water in the Old Testament. Baptism is participation in Christ's death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12); a washing away of sin (I Cor. 6:11); a new birth (John 3:5); an enlightenment by Christ (Eph. 5:14); a reclothing in Christ (Gal. 3:27); a renewal by the Spirit (Titus 3:5); the experience of salvation from the flood (I Peter 3:20-21); an exodus from bondage (I Cor. 10:1-2) and a liberation into a new humanity in which barriers of division whether of sex or race or social status are transcended (Gal. 3:27-28; I Cor. 12:13). The images are many but the reality is one.

A. Participation in Christ's Death and Resurrection

3. Baptism means participating in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus went down into the river Jordan and was baptized in solidarity with sinners in order to fulfil all righteousness (Matt. 3:15). This baptism led Jesus along the way of the Suffering Servant, made manifest in his sufferings, death and resurrection (Mark 10:38-40,45). By baptism, Christians are immersed in the liberating death of Christ where their sins are buried, where the "old Adam" is crucified with Christ, and where the power of sin is broken. Thus those baptized are no longer slaves to sin, but free. Fully identified with the death of Christ, they are buried with him and are raised here and now to a new life in the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, confident that they will also ultimately be one with him in a resurrection like his (Rom. 6:3-11; Col. 2:13, 3:1; Eph. 2:5-6).

B. Conversion, Pardoning and Cleansing

4. The baptism which makes Christians partakers of the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection implies confession of sin and conversion of heart. The baptism administered by John was itself a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Mark 1:4). The New Testament underlines the ethical implications of baptism by representing it as an ablution which washes the body with pure water, a cleansing of the heart of all sin, and an act of justification (Heb. 10:22; I Peter 3:21; Acts 22:16; I Cor. 6:11). Thus those baptized are pardoned, cleansed and sanctified by Christ, and are given as part of their baptismal experience a new ethical orientation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

C. The Gift of the Spirit

5. The Holy Spirit is at work in the lives of people before, in and after their baptism. It is the same Spirit who revealed Jesus as the Son (Mark 1:10-11) and who empowered and united the disciples at Pentecost (Acts 2). God bestows upon all baptized persons the anointing and the promise of the Holy Spirit, marks them with a seal and implants in their hearts the first instalment of their inheritance as sons

and daughters of God. The Holy Spirit nurtures the life of faith in their hearts until the final deliverance when they will enter into its full possession, to the praise of the glory of God (II Cor. 1:21-22; Eph. 1:13-14).

D. Incorporation into the Body of Christ

6. Administered in obedience to our Lord, baptism is a sign and seal of our common discipleship. Through baptism, Christians are brought into union with Christ, with each other and with the Church of every time and place. Our common baptism, which unites us to Christ in faith, is thus a basic bond of unity. We are one people and are called to confess and serve one Lord in each place and in all the world. The union with Christ which we share through baptism has important implications for Christian unity. "There is . . . one baptism, one God and Father of us all . . ." (Eph. 4:4-6). When baptismal unity is realized in one holy, catholic, apostolic Church, a genuine Christian witness can be made to the healing and reconciling love of God. Therefore, our one baptism into Christ constitutes a call to the churches to overcome their divisions and visibly manifest their fellowship.

E. The Sign of the Kingdom

7. Baptism initiates the reality of the new life given in the midst of the present world. It gives participation in the community of the Holy Spirit. It is a sign of the Kingdom of God and of the life of the world to come. Through the gifts of faith, hope and love, baptism has a dynamic which embraces the whole of life, extends to all nations, and anticipates the day when every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

III. Baptism and Faith

8. Baptism is both God's gift and our human response to that gift. It looks towards a growth into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13). The necessity of faith for the reception of the salvation embodied and set forth in baptism is acknowledged by all churches. Personal commitment is necessary for responsible membership in the body of Christ.

9. Baptism is related not only to momentary experience, but to life-long growth into Christ. Those baptized are called upon to reflect the glory of the Lord as they are transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit, into his likeness, with ever increasing splendour (II Cor. 3:18). The life of the Christian is necessarily one of continuing struggle yet also of continuing experience of grace. In this new relationship, the baptized live for the sake of Christ, of his Church and of the world which he loves, while they wait in

hope for the manifestation of God's new creation and for the time when God will be all in all (Rom. 8:18-24; I Cor. 15:22-28, 49-57).

10. As they grow in the Christian life of faith, baptized believers demonstrate that humanity can be regenerated and liberated. They have a common responsibility, here and now, to bear witness together to the Gospel of Christ, the Liberator of all human beings. The context of this common witness is the Church and the world. Within a fellowship of witness and service, Christians discover the full significance of the one baptism as the gift of God to all God's people. Likewise, they acknowledge that baptism, as a baptism into Christ's death, has ethical implications which not only call for personal sanctification, but also motivate Christians to strive for the realization of the will of God in all realms of life (Rom. 6:9ff; Gal. 3:27-28; I Peter 2:21-4:6).

IV. Baptismal Practice

A. Baptism of Believers and Infants

11. While the possibility that infant baptism was also practised in the apostolic age cannot be excluded, baptism upon personal profession of faith is the most clearly attested pattern in the New Testament documents.

In the course of history, the practice of baptism has developed in a variety of forms. Some churches baptize infants brought by parents or guardians who are ready, in and with the Church, to bring up the children in the Christian faith. Other churches practise exclusively the baptism of believers who are able to make a personal confession of faith. Some of these churches encourage infants or children to be presented and blessed in a service which usually involves thanksgiving for the gift of the child and also the commitment of the mother and father to Christian parenthood.

All churches baptize believers coming from other religions or from unbelief who accept the Christian faith and participate in catechetical instruction.

12. Both the baptism of believers and the baptism of infants take place in the Church as the community of faith. When one who can answer for himself or herself is baptized, a personal confession of faith will be an integral part of the baptismal service. When an infant is baptized, the personal response will be offered at a later moment in life. In both cases, the baptized person will have to grow in the understanding of faith. For those baptized upon their own confession of faith, there is always the constant requirement of a continuing growth of personal response in faith. In the case of infants, personal confession is expected later,

and Christian nurture is directed to the eliciting of this confession. All baptism is rooted in and declares Christ's faithfulness unto death. It has its setting within the life and faith of the Church and, through the witness of the whole Church, points to the faithfulness of God, the ground of all life in faith. At every baptism the whole congregation reaffirms its faith in God and pledges itself to provide an environment of witness and service. Baptism should, therefore, always be celebrated and developed in the setting of the Christian community.

Commentary (12)

When the expressions "infant baptism" and "believers' baptism" are used, it is necessary to keep in mind that the real distinction is between those who baptize people at any age and those who baptize only those able to make a confession of faith for themselves. The differences between infant and believers' baptism become less sharp when it is recognized that both forms of baptism embody God's own initiative in Christ and express a response of faith made within the believing community.

The practice of infant baptism emphasizes the corporate faith and the faith which the child shares with its parents. The infant is born into a broken world and shares in its brokenness. Through baptism, the promise and claim of the Gospel are laid upon the child. The personal faith of the recipient of baptism and faithful participation in the life of the Church are essential for the full fruit of baptism

The practice of believers' baptism emphasizes the explicit confession of the person who responds to the grace of God in and through the community of faith and who seeks baptism.

Both forms of baptism require a similar and responsible attitude towards Christian nurture. A rediscovery of the continuing character of Christian nurture may facilitate the mutual acceptance of different initiation practices. . . .

13. Baptism is an unrepeatable act. Any practice which might be interpreted as "re-baptism" must be avoided.

B. Baptism-Chrismation-Confirmation

14. In God's work of salvation, the paschal mystery of Christ's death and resurrection is inseparably linked with the Pentecostal gift of the Holy Spirit. Similarly, participation in Christ's death and resurrection is inseparably linked with the receiving of the Spirit. Baptism in its full meaning signifies and effects both.

Christians differ in their understanding as to where the sign of the gift of the Spirit is to be found. Different actions have become associated with the giving of the Spirit. For some it is the water rite itself. For others, it is the anointing with chrism and/or the imposition of hands, which many

churches call confirmation. For still others it is, all three, as they see the Spirit operative throughout the rite. All agree that Christian baptism is in water and the Holy Spirit.

Commentary (14)

. . . (b) *If baptism, as incorporation into the body of Christ, points by its very nature to the eucharistic sharing of Christ's body and blood, the question arises as to how a further and separate rite can be interposed between baptism and admission to communion. Those churches which baptize children but refuse them a share in the eucharist before such a rite may wish to ponder whether they have fully appreciated and accepted the consequences of baptism.*

C. Towards Mutual Recognition of Baptism

15. Churches are increasingly recognizing one another's baptism as the one baptism into Christ when Jesus Christ has been confessed as Lord by the candidate or, in the case of infant baptism, when confession has been made by the church (parents, guardians, godparents and congregation) and affirmed later by personal faith and commitment. Mutual recognition of baptism is acknowledged as an important sign and means of expressing the baptismal unity given in Christ. Wherever possible, mutual recognition should be expressed explicitly by the churches.

16. In order to overcome their differences, believer baptists and those who practise infant baptism should reconsider certain aspects of their practices. The first may seek to express more visibly the fact that children are placed under the protection of God's grace. The latter must guard themselves against the practice of apparently indiscriminate baptism and take more seriously their responsibility for the nurture of baptized children to mature commitment to Christ.

V. The Celebration of Baptism

17. Baptism is administered with water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

18. In the celebration of baptism the symbolic dimension of water should be taken seriously and not minimized. The act of immersion can vividly express the reality that in baptism the Christian participates in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.

19. As was the case in the early centuries, the gift of the Spirit in baptism may be signified in additional ways; for example, by the sign of the laying on of hands, and by anointing or chrismation. The very sign of the cross recalls the promised gift of the Holy Spirit who is the installment and pledge of what is yet to come when God has fully

redeemed those whom he has made his own (Eph. 1:13-14). The recovery of such vivid signs may be expected to enrich the liturgy.

20. Within any comprehensive order of baptism at least the following elements should find a place: the proclamation of the scriptures referring to baptism; an invocation of the Holy Spirit; a renunciation of evil; a profession of faith in Christ and the Holy Trinity; the use of water; a declaration that the persons baptized have acquired a new identity as sons and daughters of God, and as members of the Church, called to be witnesses of the Gospel. Some churches consider that Christian initiation is not complete without the sealing of the baptized with the gift of the Holy Spirit and participation in holy communion.

21. It is appropriate to explain in the context of the baptismal service the meaning of baptism as it appears from scriptures (i.e. the participation in Christ's death and resurrection, conversion, pardoning and cleansing, gift of the Spirit, incorporation into the body of Christ and sign of the Kingdom).

22. Baptism is normally administered by an ordained minister, though in certain circumstances others are allowed to baptize.

23. Since baptism is intimately connected with the corporate life and worship of the Church, it should normally be administered during public worship, so that the members of the congregation may be reminded of their own baptism and may welcome into their fellowship those who are baptized and whom they are committed to nurture in the Christian faith. The sacrament is appropriate to great festival occasions such as Easter, Pentecost and Epiphany, as was the practice in the early Church.

THE EUCHARIST

I. The Institution of the Eucharist

1. The Church receives the eucharist as a gift from the Lord. St Paul wrote: "I have received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said: 'This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance (anamnesis) of me.' In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying: 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'" (I Cor. 11:23-25; cf. Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20).

The meals which Jesus is recorded as sharing during his earthly ministry proclaim and enact the nearness of the Kingdom, of which the feeding of the multitudes is a sign.

In his last meal, the fellowship of the Kingdom was connected with the imminence of Jesus' suffering. After his resurrection, the Lord made his presence known to his disciples in the breaking of the bread. Thus the eucharist continues these meals of Jesus, during his earthly life and after his resurrection, always as a sign of the Kingdom. Christians see the eucharist prefigured in the Passover memorial of Israel's deliverance from the land of bondage and in the meal of the Covenant on Mount Sinai (Ex. 24). It is the new paschal meal of the Church, the meal of the New Covenant, which Christ gave to his disciples as the anamnesis of his death and resurrection, as the anticipation of the Supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9). Christ commanded his disciples thus to remember and encounter him in this sacramental meal, as the continuing people of God, until his return. The last meal celebrated by Jesus was a liturgical meal employing symbolic words and actions. Consequently the eucharist is a sacramental meal which by visible signs communicates to us God's love in Jesus Christ, the love by which Jesus loved his own "to the end" (John 13:1). It has acquired many names: for example, the Lord's Supper, the breaking of bread, the holy communion, the divine liturgy, the mass. Its celebration continues as the central act of the Church's worship.

II. The Meaning of the Eucharist

2. The eucharist is essentially the sacrament of the gift which God makes to us in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Every Christian receives this gift of salvation through communion in the body and blood of Christ. In the eucharistic meal, in the eating and drinking of the bread and wine, Christ grants communion with himself. God himself acts, giving life to the body of Christ and renewing each member. In accordance with Christ's promise, each baptized member of the body of Christ receives in the eucharist the assurance of the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 26:28) and the pledge of eternal life (John 6:51-58). Although the eucharist is essentially one complete act, it will be considered here under the following aspects: thanksgiving to the Father, memorial of Christ, invocation of the Spirit, communion of the faithful, meal of the Kingdom.

A. *The Eucharist as Thanksgiving to the Father*

3. The eucharist, which always includes both word and sacrament, is a proclamation and a celebration of the work of God. It is the great thanksgiving to the Father for everything accomplished in creation, redemption and sanctification, for everything accomplished by God now in the Church and in the world in spite of the sins of human

beings, for everything that God will accomplish in bringing the Kingdom to fulfilment. Thus the eucharist is the benediction (*berakah*) by which the Church expresses its thankfulness for all God's benefits.

4. The eucharist is the great sacrifice of praise by which the Church speaks on behalf of the whole creation. For the world which God has reconciled is present at every eucharist: in the bread and wine, in the persons of the faithful, and in the prayers they offer for themselves and for all people. Christ unites the faithful with himself and includes their prayers within his own intercession so that the faithful are transfigured and their prayers accepted. This sacrifice of praise is possible only through Christ, with him and in him. The bread and wine, fruits of the earth and of human labour, are presented to the Father in faith and thanksgiving. The eucharist thus signifies what the world is to become: an offering and hymn of praise to the Creator, a universal communion in the body of Christ, a kingdom of justice, love and peace in the Holy Spirit.

B. *The Eucharist as Anamnesis or Memorial of Christ*

5. The eucharist is the memorial of the crucified and risen Christ, i.e. the living and effective sign of his sacrifice, accomplished once and for all on the cross and still operative on behalf of all humankind. The biblical idea of memorial as applied to the eucharist refers to this present efficacy of God's work when it is celebrated by God's people in a liturgy.

6. Christ himself with all that he has accomplished for us and for all creation (in his incarnation, servanthood, ministry, teaching, suffering, sacrifice, resurrection, ascension and sending of the Spirit) is present in this *anamnesis*, granting us communion with himself. The eucharist is also the foretaste of his *parousia* and of the final kingdom.

7. The *anamnesis* in which Christ acts through the joyful celebration of his Church is thus both representation and anticipation. It is not only a calling to mind of what is past and of its significance. It is the Church's effective proclamation of God's mighty acts and promises.

8. Representation and anticipation are expressed in thanksgiving and intercession. The Church, gratefully recalling God's mighty acts of redemption, beseeches God to give the benefits of these acts to every human being. In thanksgiving and intercession, the Church is united with the Son, its great High Priest and Intercessor (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25). The eucharist is the sacrament of the unique sacrifice of Christ, who ever lives to make intercession for us. It is the memorial of all that God has done for the salvation of the world. What it was God's will to accomplish in the incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension of

Christ, God does not repeat. These events are unique and can neither be repeated nor prolonged. In the memorial of the eucharist, however, the Church offers its intercession in communion with Christ, our great High Priest.

Commentary (8)

It is in the light of the significance of the eucharist as intercession that references to the eucharist in Catholic theology as "propitiatory sacrifice" may be understood. The understanding is that there is only one expiation, that of the unique sacrifice of the cross, made actual in the eucharist and presented before the Father in the intercession of Christ and of the Church for all humanity.

In the light of the biblical conception of memorial, all churches might want to review the old controversies about "sacrifice" and deepen their understanding of the reasons why other traditions than their own have either used or rejected this term.

9. The *anamnesis* of Christ is the basis and source of all Christian prayer. So our prayer relies upon and is united with the continual intercession of the risen Lord. In the eucharist, Christ empowers us to live with him, to suffer with him and to pray through him as justified sinners, joyfully and freely fulfilling his will.

10. In Christ we offer ourselves as a living and holy sacrifice in our daily lives (Rom. 12:1; I Peter 2:5); this spiritual worship, acceptable to God, is nourished in the eucharist, in which we are sanctified and reconciled in love, in order to be servants of reconciliation in the world.

11. United to our Lord and in communion with all the saints and martyrs, we are renewed in the covenant sealed by the blood of Christ.

12. Since the *anamnesis* of Christ is the very content of the preached Word as it is of the eucharistic meal, each reinforces the other. The celebration of the eucharist properly includes the proclamation of the Word.

13. The words and acts of Christ at the institution of the eucharist stand at the heart of the celebration; the eucharistic meal is the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, the sacrament of his real presence. Christ fulfills in a variety of ways his promise to be always with his own even to the end of the world. But Christ's mode of presence in the eucharist is unique. Jesus said over the bread and wine of the eucharist: "This is my body . . . this is my blood . . ." What Christ declared is true, and this truth is fulfilled every time the eucharist is celebrated. The Church confesses Christ's real, living and active presence in the eucharist. While Christ's real presence in the eucharist does

not depend on the faith of the individual, all agree that to discern the body and blood of Christ, faith is required.

Commentary (13)

Many churches believe that by the words of Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit, the bread and wine of the eucharist become, in a real though mysterious manner, the body and blood of the risen Christ, i.e., of the living Christ present in all his fullness. Under the signs of bread and wine, the deepest reality is the total being of Christ who comes to us in order to feed us and transform our entire being. Some other churches, while affirming a real presence of Christ at the eucharist, do not link that presence so definitely with the signs of bread and wine. The decision remains for the churches whether this difference can be accommodated within the convergence formulated in the text itself.

C. The Eucharist as Invocation of the Spirit

14. The Spirit makes the crucified and risen Christ really present to us in the eucharistic meal, fulfilling the promise contained in the words of institution. The presence of Christ is clearly the centre of the eucharist, and the promise contained in the words of institution is therefore fundamental to the celebration. Yet it is the Father who is the primary origin and final fulfilment of the eucharistic event. The incarnate Son of God by and in whom it is accomplished is its living centre. The Holy Spirit is the immeasurable strength of love which makes it possible and continues to make it effective. The bond between the eucharistic celebration and the mystery of the Triune God reveals the role of the Holy Spirit as that of the One who makes the historical words of Jesus present and alive. Being assured by Jesus' promise in the words of institution that it will be answered, the Church prays to the Father for the gift of the Holy Spirit in order that the eucharistic event may be a reality: the real presence of the crucified and risen Christ giving his life for all humanity.

15. It is in virtue of the living word of Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit that the bread and wine become the sacramental signs of Christ's body and blood. They remain so for the purpose of communion.

16. The whole action of the eucharist has an "*epikletic*" character because it depends upon the work of the Holy Spirit. In the words of the liturgy, this aspect of the eucharist finds varied expression.

17. The Church, as the community of the new covenant, confidently invokes the Spirit, in order that it may be sanctified and renewed, led into all justice, truth and unity, and empowered to fulfil its mission in the world.

18. The Holy Spirit through the eucharist gives a foretaste of the Kingdom of God: the Church receives the life of the new creation and the assurance of the Lord's return.

D. The Eucharist as Communion of the Faithful

19. The eucharistic communion with Christ who nourishes the life of the Church is at the same time communion within the body of Christ which is the Church. The sharing in one bread and the common cup in a given place demonstrates and effects the oneness of the sharers with Christ and with their fellow sharers in all times and places. It is in the eucharist that the community of God's people is fully manifested. Eucharistic celebrations always have to do with the whole Church, and the whole Church is involved in each local eucharistic celebration. In so far as a church claims to be a manifestation of the whole Church, it will take care to order its own life in ways which take seriously the interests and concerns of other churches.

20. The eucharist embraces all aspects of life. It is a representative act of thanks giving and offering on behalf of the whole world. The eucharistic celebration demands reconciliation and sharing among all those regarded as brothers and sisters in the one family of God and is a constant challenge in the search for appropriate relationships in social, economic and political life (Matt. 5:23f; I Cor. 10:16f; I Cor. 11:20-22; Gal. 3:28). All kinds of injustice, racism, separation and lack of freedom are radically challenged when we share in the body and blood of Christ. Through the eucharist the all-renewing grace of God penetrates and restores human personality and dignity. The eucharist involves the believer in the central event of the world's history. As participants in the eucharist, therefore, we prove inconsistent if we are not actively participating in this ongoing restoration of the world's situation and the human condition. The eucharist shows us that our behaviour is inconsistent in face of the reconciling presence of God in human history: we are placed under continual judgment by the persistence of unjust relationships of all kinds in our society, the manifold divisions on account of human pride, material interest and power politics and, above all, the obstinacy of unjustifiable confessional oppositions within the body of Christ.

21. Solidarity in the eucharistic communion of the body of Christ and responsible care of Christians for one another, and the world find specific expression in the liturgies: in the mutual forgiveness of sins; the sign of peace; intercession for all; the eating and drinking together; the taking of the elements to the sick and those in prison or the celebration of the eucharist with them. All these manifestations of love in the eucharist are directly related to Christ's own testimony as a servant, in whose servanthood

Christians themselves participate. As God in Christ has entered into the human situation, so eucharistic liturgy is near to the concrete and particular situations of men and women. In the early Church the ministry of deacons and deaconesses gave expression in a special way to this aspect of the eucharist. The place of such ministry between the table and the needy properly testifies to the redeeming presence of Christ in the world.

E. The Eucharist as Meal of the Kingdom

22. The eucharist opens up the vision of the divine rule which has been promised as the final renewal of creation, and is a foretaste of it. Signs of this renewal are present in the world wherever the grace of God is manifest and human beings work for justice, love and peace. The eucharist is the feast at which the Church gives thanks to God for these signs and joyfully celebrates and anticipates the coming of the Kingdom in Christ (I Cor. 11:26; Matt. 26:29).

23. The world, to which renewal is promised, is present in the whole eucharistic celebration. The world is present in the thanksgiving to the Father, where the Church speaks on behalf of the whole creation; in the memorial of Christ, where the Church, united with its great High Priest and Intercessor, prays for the world; in the prayer for the gift of the Holy Spirit, where the Church asks for sanctification and new creation.

24. Reconciled in the eucharist, the members of the body of Christ are called to be servants of reconciliation among men and women and witnesses of the joy of resurrection. As Jesus went out to publicans and sinners and had table-fellowship with them during his earthly ministry, so Christians are called in the eucharist to be in solidarity with the outcast and to become signs of the love of Christ who lived and sacrificed himself for all and now gives himself in the eucharist.

25. The very celebration of the eucharist is an instance of the Church's participation in God's mission to the world. This participation takes everyday form in the proclamation of the Gospel, service of the neighbour, and faithful presence in the world.

26. As it is entirely the gift of God, the eucharist brings into the present age a new reality which transforms Christians into the image of Christ and therefore makes them his effective witnesses. The eucharist is precious food for missionaries, bread and wine for pilgrims on their apostolic journey. The eucharistic community is nourished and strengthened for confessing by word and action the Lord Jesus Christ who gave his life for the salvation of the world. As it becomes one people, sharing the meal of the one Lord, the eucharistic assembly must be concerned for gathering also those who are at present

beyond its visible limits, because Christ invited to his feast all for whom he died. Insofar as Christians cannot unite in full fellowship around the same table to eat the same loaf and drink from the same cup, their missionary witness is weakened at both the individual and the corporate levels.

III. The Celebration of the Eucharist

27. The eucharistic liturgy is essentially a single whole, consisting historically of the following elements in varying sequence and of diverse importance:

- hymns of praise;
- act of repentance;
- declaration of pardon;
- proclamation of the Word of God, in various forms;
- confession of faith (creed);
- intercession for the whole Church and for the world;
- preparation of the bread and wine;
- thanksgiving to the Father for the marvels of creation, redemption and sanctification (deriving from the Jewish tradition of the *berakah*);
- the words of Christ's institution of the sacrament according to the New Testament tradition;
- the *anamnesis* or memorial of the great acts of redemption, passion, death, resurrection, ascension and Pentecost, which brought the Church into being;
- the invocation of the Holy Spirit (*epiklesis*) on the community, and the elements of bread and wine (either before the words of institution or after the memorial, or both; or some other reference to the Holy Spirit which adequately expresses the "epikletic" character of the eucharist);
- consecration of the faithful to God; reference to the communion of saints;
- prayer for the return of the Lord and the definitive manifestation of his Kingdom;
- the Amen of the whole community;
- the Lord's prayer;
- sign of reconciliation and peace;
- the breaking of the bread;
- eating and drinking in communion with Christ and with each member of the Church;
- final act of praise;
- blessing and sending.

28. The best way towards unity in eucharistic celebration and communion is the renewal of the eucharist itself in the different churches in regard to teaching and liturgy. The churches should test their liturgies in the light of the eucharistic agreement now in the process of attainment. The liturgical reform movement has brought the churches closer together in the manner of celebrating the Lord's Supper. However, a certain liturgical diversity compatible with our common eucharistic faith is recognized as a healthy and enriching fact. The affirmation of a common eucharistic faith does not imply uniformity in either liturgy or practice.

29. In the celebration of the eucharist, Christ gathers, teaches and nourishes the Church. It is Christ who invites to the meal and who presides at it. He is the shepherd who leads the people of God, the prophet who announces the Word of God, the priest who celebrates the mystery of God. In most churches, this presidency is signified by an ordained minister. The one who presides at the eucharistic celebration in the name of Christ makes clear that the rite is not the assemblies' own creation or possession; the eucharist is received as a gift from Christ living in his Church. The minister of the eucharist is the ambassador who represents the divine initiative and expresses the connection of the local community with other local communities in the universal Church.

30. Christian faith is deepened by the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Hence the eucharist should be celebrated frequently. Many differences of theology, liturgy and practice are connected with the varying frequency with which the Holy Communion is celebrated.

31. As the eucharist celebrates the resurrection of Christ, it is appropriate that it should take place at least every Sunday. As it is the new sacramental meal of the people of God, every Christian should be encouraged to receive communion frequently.

32. Some churches stress that Christ's presence in the consecrated elements continues after the celebration. Others place the main emphasis on the act of celebration itself and on the consumption of the elements in the act of communion. The way in which the elements are treated requires special attention. Regarding the practice of reserving the elements, each church should respect the practices and piety of the others. Given the diversity in practice among the churches and at the same time taking note of the present situation in the convergence process, it is worthwhile to suggest:

- that, on the one hand, it be remembered, especially in sermons and instruction, that the primary intention of reserving the elements is their distribution among the sick and those who are absent, and
- on the other hand, it be recognized that the best way of showing respect for the elements served in the eucharistic celebration is by their consumption, without excluding their use for communion of the sick.

33. The increased mutual understanding expressed in the present statement may allow some churches to attain a greater measure of eucharistic communion among themselves and so bring closer the day when Christ's divided people will be visibly reunited around the Lord's Table.

MINISTRY

I. The Calling of the Whole People of God

1. In a broken world God calls the whole of humanity to become God's people. For this purpose God chose Israel and then spoke in a unique and decisive way in Jesus Christ, God's Son. Jesus made his own the nature, condition and cause of the whole human race, giving himself as a sacrifice for all. Jesus' life of service, his death and resurrection, are the foundation of a new community which is built up continually by the good news of the Gospel and the gifts of the sacraments. The Holy Spirit unites in a single body those who follow Jesus Christ and sends them as witnesses into the world. Belonging to the Church means living in communion with God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.

2. The life of the Church is based on Christ's victory over the powers of evil and death, accomplished once for all. Christ offers forgiveness, invites to repentance and delivers from destruction. Through Christ, people are enabled to turn in praise to God and in service to their neighbours. In Christ they find the source of new life in freedom, mutual forgiveness and love. Through Christ their hearts and minds are directed to the consummation of the Kingdom where Christ's victory will become manifest and all things made new. God's purpose is that, in Jesus Christ, all people should share in this fellowship.

3. The Church lives through the liberating and renewing power of the Holy Spirit. That the Holy Spirit was upon Jesus is evidenced in his baptism, and after the resurrection that same Spirit was given to those who believed in the Risen Lord in order to recreate them as the body of Christ. The Spirit calls people to faith, sanctifies them. through many gifts, gives them strength to witness to the

Gospel, and empowers them to serve in hope and love. The Spirit keeps the Church in the truth and guides it despite the frailty of its members.

4. The Church is called to proclaim and prefigure the Kingdom of God. It accomplishes this by announcing the Gospel to the world and by its very existence as the body of Christ. In Jesus the Kingdom of God came among us. He offered salvation to sinners. He preached good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, liberation to the oppressed (Luke 4:18). Christ established a new access to the Father. Living in this communion with God, all members of the Church are called to confess their faith and to give account of their hope. They are to identify with the joys and sufferings of all people as they seek to witness in caring love. The members of Christ's body are to struggle with the oppressed towards that freedom and dignity promised with the coming of the Kingdom. This mission needs to be carried out in varying political, social and cultural contexts. In order to fulfil this mission faithfully, they will seek relevant forms of witness and service in each situation. In so doing they bring to the world a foretaste of the joy and glory of God's Kingdom.

5. The Holy Spirit bestows on the community diverse and complementary gifts. These are for the common good of the whole people and are manifested in acts of service within the community and to the world. They may be gifts of communicating the Gospel in word and deed, gifts of healing, gifts of praying, gifts of teaching and learning gifts of serving, gifts of guiding and following, and gifts of inspiration and vision. All members are called to discover, with the help of the community, the gifts they have received and to use them for the building up of the Church and for the service of the world to which the Church is sent.

6. Though the churches are agreed in their general understanding of the calling of the people of God, they differ in their understanding of how the life of the Church is to be ordered. In particular, there are differences concerning the place and forms of the ordained ministry. As they engage in the effort to overcome these differences, the churches need to work from the perspective of the calling of the whole people of God. A common answer needs to be found to the following question: How, according to the will of God and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is the life of the Church to, be understood and ordered, so the Gospel may be spread and the community built up in love?

II. The Church and the Ordained Ministry

7. Differences in terminology are part of the matter under debate. In order to avoid confusion in the discussions on

the ordained ministry in the Church, it is necessary to delineate clearly how various terms are used in the following paragraphs.

a) The word *charism* denotes the gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit on any member of the body of Christ for the building up of the community and the fulfilment of its calling.

b) The word *ministry* in its broadest sense denotes the service to which the whole people of God is called, whether as individuals, as a local community, or as the universal Church. Ministry or ministries can also denote the particular institutional forms which this service may take.

c) The term *ordained ministry* refers to persons who have received a charism and whom the church appoints for service by ordination through the invocation of the Spirit and the laying on of hands.

d) Many churches use the word *priest* to denote certain ordained ministers. Because this usage is not universal, this document will discuss the substantive questions in paragraph 17.

A. The Ordained Ministry

8. In order to fulfil its mission, the Church needs persons who are publicly and continually responsible for pointing to its fundamental dependence on Jesus Christ, and thereby provide, within a multiplicity of gifts, a focus of its unity. The ministry of such persons, who since very early times have been ordained, is constitutive for the life and witness of the Church.

9. The Church has never been without persons holding specific authority and responsibility. Jesus chose and sent the disciples to be witnesses of the Kingdom (Matt. 10:1-8). The Twelve were promised that they would "sit on thrones judging the tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:30). A particular role is attributed to the Twelve within the communities of the first generation. They are witnesses of the Lord's life and resurrection (Acts 1:21-26). They lead the community in prayer, teaching, the breaking of bread, proclamation and service (Acts 2:42-47; 6:2-6, etc.). The very existence of the Twelve and other apostles shows that, from the beginning, there were differentiated roles in the community.

10. Jesus called the Twelve to be representatives of the renewed Israel. At that moment they represent the whole people of God and at the same time exercise a special role in the midst of that community. After the resurrection they are among the leaders of the community. It can be said that the apostles prefigure both the Church as a whole and the persons within it who are entrusted with the specific authority and responsibility. The role of the apostles

as witnesses to the resurrection of Christ is unique and unrepeatable. There is therefore a difference between the apostles and the ordained ministers whose ministries are founded on theirs.

11. As Christ chose and sent the apostles, Christ continues through the Holy Spirit to choose and call persons into the ordained ministry. As heralds and ambassadors, ordained ministers are representatives of Jesus Christ to the community, and proclaim his message of reconciliation. As leaders and teachers they call the community to submit to the authority of Jesus Christ, the teacher and prophet, in whom law and prophets were fulfilled. As pastors, under Jesus Christ the chief shepherd, they assemble and guide the dispersed people of God, in anticipation of the coming Kingdom.

12. All members of the believing community, ordained and lay, are interrelated. On the one hand, the community needs ordained ministers. Their presence reminds the community of the divine initiative, and of the dependence of the Church on Jesus Christ, who is the source of its mission and the foundation of its unity. They serve to build up the community in Christ and to strengthen its witness. In them the Church seeks an example of holiness and loving concern. On the other hand, the ordained ministry has no existence apart from the community. Ordained ministers can fulfil their calling only in and for the community. They cannot dispense with the recognition, the support and the encouragement of the community.

13. The chief responsibility of the ordained ministry is to assemble and build up the body of Christ by proclaiming and teaching the Word of God, by celebrating the sacraments, and by guiding the life of the community in its worship, its mission and its caring ministry.

14. It is especially in the eucharistic celebration that the ordained ministry is the visible focus of the deep and all-embracing communion between Christ and the members of his body. In the celebration of the eucharist, Christ gathers, teaches and nourishes the Church. It is Christ who invites to the meal and who presides at it. In most churches this presidency is signified and represented by an ordained minister.

B. Ordained Ministry and Authority

15. The authority of the ordained minister is rooted in Jesus Christ, who has received it from the Father (Matt. 28:18), and who confers it by the Holy Spirit through the act of ordination. This act takes place within a community which accords public recognition to a particular person. Because Jesus came as one who serves (Mark 10:45; Luke 22:27), to be set apart means to be consecrated to service. Since ordination is essentially a setting apart with prayer for the gift

of the Holy Spirit, the authority of the ordained ministry is not to be understood as the possession of the ordained person but as a gift for the continuing edification of the body in and for which the minister has been ordained. Authority has the character of responsibility before God and is exercised with the cooperation of the whole community.

16. Therefore, ordained ministers must not be autocrats or impersonal functionaries. Although called to exercise wise and loving leadership on the basis of the Word of God, they are bound to the faithful in interdependence and reciprocity. Only when they seek the response and acknowledgment of the community can their authority be protected from the distortions of isolation and domination. They manifest and exercise the authority of Christ in the way Christ himself revealed God's authority to the world, by committing their life to the community. Christ's authority is unique. "He spoke as one who has authority (*exousia*), not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:29). This authority is an authority governed by love for the "sheep who have no shepherd" (Matt. 9:36). It is confirmed by his life of service and, supremely, by his death and resurrection. Authority in the Church can only be authentic as it seeks to conform to this model.

Commentary (16)

Here two dangers must be avoided. Authority cannot be exercised without regard for the community. The apostles paid heed to the experience and the judgment of the faithful. On the other hand, the authority of ordained ministers must not be so reduced as to make them dependent on the common opinion of the community. Their authority lies in their responsibility to express the will of God in the community.

C. Ordained Ministry and Priesthood

17. Jesus Christ is the unique priest of the new covenant. Christ's life was given as a sacrifice for all. Derivatively, the Church as a whole can be described as a priesthood. All members are called to offer their being "as a living sacrifice" and to intercede for the Church and the salvation of the world. Ordained ministers are related, as are all Christians, both to the priesthood of Christ, and to the priesthood of the Church. But they may appropriately be called priests because they fulfil a particular priestly service by strengthening and building up the royal and prophetic priesthood of the faithful through word and sacraments, through their prayers of intercession, and through their pastoral guidance of the community.

D. The Ministry of Men and Women in the Church

18. Where Christ is present, human barriers are being broken. The Church is called to convey to the world the image of a new humanity. There is in Christ no male or female (Gal. 3:28). Both women and men must discover together their contributions to the service of Christ in the Church. The Church must discover the ministry which can be provided by women as well as that which can be provided by men. A deeper understanding of the comprehensiveness of ministry which reflects the interdependence of men and women needs to be more widely manifested in the life of the Church.

Though they agree on this need, the churches draw different conclusions as to the admission of women to the ordained ministry. An increasing number of churches have decided that there is no biblical or theological reason against ordaining women, and many of them have subsequently proceeded to do so. Yet many churches hold that the tradition of the Church in this regard must not be changed.

Commentary (18)

Those churches which practise the ordination of women do so because of their understanding of the Gospel and of the ministry. It rests for them on the deeply held theological conviction that the ordained ministry of the Church lacks fullness when it is limited to one sex. This theological conviction has been reinforced by their experience during the years in which they have included women in their ordained ministries. They have found that women gifts are as wide and varied as mens and that their ministry is as fully blessed by the Holy Spirit as the ministry of men. None has found reason to reconsider its decision.

Those churches which do not practise the ordination of women consider that the force of nineteen centuries of tradition against the ordination of women must not be set aside. They believe that such a tradition cannot be dismissed as a lack of respect for the participation of women in the Church. They believe that there are theological issues concerning the nature of humanity and concerning Christology which lie at the heart of their convictions and understanding of the role of women in the Church:

The discussion of these practical and theological questions within the various churches and Christian traditions should be complemented by joint study and reflection within the ecumenical fellowship of all churches.

III. The Forms of the Ordained Ministry

A. Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons

19. The New Testament does not describe a single pattern of ministry which might serve as a blueprint or continuing norm for all future ministry in the Church. In the New Testament there appears rather a variety of forms which existed at different places and times. As the Holy Spirit continued to lead the Church in life, worship and mission, certain elements from this early variety were further developed and became settled into a more universal pattern of ministry. During the second and third centuries, a threefold pattern of bishop, presbyter and deacon became established as the pattern of ordained ministry throughout the Church. In succeeding centuries, the ministry by bishop, presbyter and deacon underwent considerable changes in its practical exercise. At some points of crisis in the history of the Church, the continuing functions of ministry were in some places and communities distributed according to structures other than the predominant threefold pattern. Sometimes appeal was made to the New Testament in justification of these other patterns. In other cases, the restructuring of ministry was held to lie within the competence of the Church as it adapted to changed circumstances.

20. It is important to be aware of the changes the threefold ministry has undergone in the history of the Church. In the earliest instances, where threefold ministry is mentioned, the reference is to the local eucharistic community. The bishop was the leader of the community. He was ordained and installed to proclaim the Word and preside over the celebration of the eucharist. He was surrounded by a college of presbyters and by deacons who assisted in his tasks. In this context the bishop's ministry was a focus of unity within the whole community.

21. Soon, however, the functions were modified. Bishops began increasingly to exercise *episkopé* over several local communities at the same time. In the first generation, apostles had exercised *episkopé* in the wider Church. Later Timothy and Titus are recorded to have fulfilled a function of *episkopé* in a given area. Later again this apostolic task is carried out in a new way by the bishops. They provide a focus for unity in life and witness within areas comprising several eucharistic communities. As a consequence, presbyters and deacons are assigned new roles. The presbyters become the leaders of the local eucharistic community, and as assistants of the bishops, deacons receive responsibilities in the larger area.

22. Although there is no single New Testament pattern, although the Spirit has many times led the Church to adapt its ministries to contextual needs, and although other forms of the ordained ministry have been blessed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, nevertheless the threefold

ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon may serve today as an expression of the unity we seek and also as a means for achieving it. Historically, it is true to say, the threefold ministry became the generally accepted pattern in the Church of the early centuries and is still retained today by many churches. In the fulfilment of their mission and service the churches need people who in different ways express and perform the tasks of the ordained ministry in its diaconal, presbyteral and episcopal aspects and functions.

23. The Church as the body of Christ and the eschatological people of God is constituted by the Holy Spirit through a diversity of gifts or ministries. Among these gifts a ministry of *episkopé* is necessary to express and safeguard the unity of the body. Every church needs this ministry of unity in some form in order to be the Church of God, the one body of Christ, a sign of the unity of all in the Kingdom.

24. The threefold pattern stands evidently in need of reform. In some churches the collegial dimension of leadership in the eucharistic community has suffered diminution. In others, the function of deacons has been reduced to an assistant role in the celebration of the liturgy: they have ceased to fulfill any function with regard to the diaconal witness of the Church. In general, the relation of the presbyterate to the episcopal ministry has been discussed throughout the centuries, and the degree of the presbyter's participation in the episcopal ministry is still for many an unresolved question of far-reaching ecumenical importance. In some cases, churches which have not formally kept the threefold form have, in fact, maintained certain of its original patterns.

25. The traditional threefold pattern thus raises questions for all the churches. Churches maintaining the threefold pattern will need to ask how its potential can be fully developed for the most effective witness of the Church in this world. In this task churches not having the threefold pattern should also participate. They will further need to ask themselves whether the threefold pattern as developed does not have a powerful claim to be accepted by them.

B. Guiding Principles for the Exercise of the Ordained Ministry in the Church

26. Three considerations are important in this respect. The ordained ministry should be exercised in a personal, collegial and communal way. It should be personal because the presence of Christ among his people can most effectively be pointed to by the person ordained to proclaim the Gospel and to call the community to serve the Lord in unity of life and witness. It should also be collegial, for there is need for a college of ordained ministers sharing in the common task of representing the concerns of the community.

Finally, the intimate relationship between the ordained ministry and the community should find expression in a communal dimension where the exercise of the ordained ministry is rooted in the life of the community and requires the community's effective participation in the discovery of God's will and the guidance of the Spirit.

27. The ordained ministry needs to be constitutionally or canonically ordered and exercised in the Church in such a way that each of these three dimensions can find adequate expression. At the level of the local eucharistic community there is need for an ordained minister acting within a collegial body. Strong emphasis should be placed on the active participation of all members in the life and the decision-making of the community. At the regional level there is again need for an ordained minister exercising a service of unity. The collegial and communal dimensions will find expression in regular representative synodal gatherings.

C. Functions of Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons

28. What can then be said about the functions and even the titles of bishops, presbyters and deacons? A uniform answer to this question is not required for the mutual recognition of the ordained ministry. The following considerations on functions are, however, offered in a tentative way.

29. *Bishops* preach the Word, preside at the sacraments, and administer discipline in such a way as to be representative pastoral ministers of oversight, continuity and unity in the Church. They have pastoral oversight of the area to which they are called. They serve the apostolicity and unity of the Church's teaching, worship and sacramental life. They have responsibility for leadership in the Church's mission. They relate the Christian community in their area to the wider Church, and the universal Church to their community. They, in communion with the presbyters and deacons and the whole community, are responsible for the orderly transfer of ministerial authority in the Church.

30. *Presbyters* serve as pastoral ministers of Word and sacraments in a local eucharistic community. They are preachers and teachers of the faith, exercise pastoral care, and bear responsibility for the discipline of the congregation to the end that the world may believe and that the entire membership of the Church may be renewed, strengthened and equipped in ministry. Presbyters have particular responsibility for the preparation of members for Christian life and ministry.

31. *Deacons* represent to the Church its calling as servant in the world. By struggling in Christ's name with the myriad needs of societies and persons, deacons exemplify the interdependence of worship and service in the Church's life. They exercise responsibility in the worship

of the congregation: for example by reading the scriptures, preaching and leading the people in prayer. They help in the teaching of the congregation. They exercise a ministry of love within the community. They fulfil certain administrative tasks and may be elected to responsibilities for governance.

D. Variety of Charisms

32. The community which lives in the power of the Spirit will be characterized by a variety of charisms. The Spirit is the giver of diverse gifts which enrich the life of the community. In order to enhance their effectiveness, the community will recognize publicly certain of these charisms. While some serve permanent needs in the life of the community, others will be temporary. Men and women in the communities of religious orders fulfil a service which is of particular importance for the life of the Church. The ordained ministry, which is itself a charism, must not become a hindrance for the variety of these charisms. On the contrary, it will help the community to discover the gifts bestowed on it by the Holy Spirit and will equip members of the body to serve in a variety of ways.

33. In the history of the Church there have been times when the truth of the Gospel could only be preserved through prophetic and charismatic leaders. Often new impulses could find their way into the life of the Church only in unusual ways. At times reforms required a special ministry. The ordained ministers and the whole community will need to be attentive to the challenge of such special ministries.

IV. Succession in the Apostolic Tradition

A. Apostolic Tradition in the Church

34. In the Creed, the Church confesses itself to be apostolic. The Church lives in continuity with the apostles and their proclamation. The same Lord who sent the apostles continues to be present in the Church. The Spirit keeps the Church in the apostolic tradition until the fulfilment of history in the Kingdom of God. Apostolic tradition in the Church means continuity in the permanent characteristics of the Church of the apostles: witness to the apostolic faith, proclamation and fresh interpretation of the Gospel, celebration of baptism and the eucharist, the transmission of ministerial responsibilities, communion in prayer, love, joy and suffering, service to the sick and the needy, unity among the local churches and sharing the gifts which the Lord has given to each.

Commentary (34)

The apostles, as witnesses of the life and resurrection of Christ and sent by him, are the original transmitters of the Gospel, of the tradition of the saving words and acts of Jesus Christ which constitute the life of the Church. This apostolic tradition continues through history and links the Church to its origins in Christ and in the college of the apostles. Within this apostolic tradition is an apostolic succession of the ministry which serves the continuity of the Church in its life in Christ and its faithfulness to the words and acts of Jesus transmitted by the apostles. The ministers appointed by the apostles, and then the episkopoi of the churches, were the first guardians of this transmission of the apostolic tradition; they testified to the apostolic succession of the ministry which was continued through the bishops of the early Church in collegial communion with the presbyters and deacons within the Christian community. A distinction should be made therefore, between the apostolic tradition of the whole Church and the succession of the apostolic ministry.

B. Succession of the Apostolic Ministry

35. The primary manifestation of apostolic succession is to be found in the apostolic tradition of the Church as a whole. The succession is an expression of the permanence and, therefore, of the continuity of Christ's own mission in which the Church participates. Within the Church the ordained ministry has a particular task of preserving and actualizing the apostolic faith. The orderly transmission of the ordained ministry is therefore a powerful expression of the continuity of the Church throughout history; it also underlines the calling of the ordained minister as guardian of the faith. Where churches see little importance in orderly transmission, they should ask themselves whether they have not to change their conception of continuity in the apostolic tradition. On the other hand, where the ordained ministry does not adequately serve the proclamation of the apostolic faith, churches must ask themselves whether their ministerial structures are not in need of reform.

36. Under the particular historical circumstances of the growing Church in the early centuries, the succession of bishops became one of the ways, together with the transmission of the Gospel and the life of the community, in which the apostolic tradition of the Church was expressed. This succession was understood as serving, symbolizing and guarding the continuity of the apostolic faith and communion.

37. In churches which practice the succession through the episcopate, it is increasingly recognized that a continuity in apostolic faith, worship and mission has been preserved in churches which have not retained the form of historic episcopate. This recognition finds additional

support in the fact that the reality and function of the episcopal ministry have been preserved in many of these churches, with or without the title "bishop". Ordination, for example, is always done in them by persons in whom the Church recognizes the authority to transmit the ministerial commission.

38. These considerations do not diminish the importance of the episcopal ministry. On the contrary, they enable churches which have not retained the episcopate to appreciate the episcopal succession as a sign, though not a guarantee, of the continuity and unity of the Church. Today churches, including those engaged in union negotiations, are expressing willingness to accept episcopal succession as a sign of the apostolicity of the life of the whole Church. Yet, at the same time, they cannot accept any suggestion that the ministry exercised in their own tradition should be invalid until the moment that it enters into an existing line of episcopal succession. Their acceptance of the episcopal succession will best further the unity of the whole Church if it is part of a wider process by which the episcopal churches themselves also regain their lost unity.

V. Ordination

A. The Meaning of Ordination

39. The Church ordains certain of its members for the ministry in the name of Christ by the invocation of the Spirit and the laying on of hands (I Tim. 4:14; II Tim. 1:6); in so doing it seeks to continue the mission of the apostles and to remain faithful to their teaching. The act of ordination by those who are appointed for this ministry attests the bond of the Church with Jesus Christ and the apostolic witness, recalling that it is the risen Lord who is the true ordainer and bestows the gift. In ordaining, the Church, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, provides for the faithful proclamation of the Gospel and humble service in the name of Christ. The laying on of hands is the sign of the gift of the Spirit, rendering visible the fact that the ministry was instituted in the revelation accomplished in Christ, and reminding the Church to look to him as the source of its commission. This ordination, however, can have different intentions according to the specific tasks of bishops, presbyters and deacons as indicated in the liturgies of ordination.

40. Properly speaking, then, ordination denotes an action by God and the community by which the ordained are strengthened by the Spirit for their task and are upheld by the acknowledgment and prayers of the congregation.

B. The Act of Ordination

41. A long and early Christian tradition places ordination in the context of worship and especially of the eucharist. Such a place for the service of ordination preserves the understanding of ordination as an act of the whole community, and not of a certain order within it or of the individual ordained. The act of ordination by the laying on of hands of those appointed to do so is at one and the same time invocation of the Holy Spirit (*epiklesis*); sacramental sign; acknowledgment of gifts and commitment.

42. (a) Ordination is an invocation to God that the new minister be given the power of the Holy Spirit in the new relation which is established between this minister and the local Christian community and, by intention, the Church universal. The otherness of God's initiative, of which the ordained ministry is a sign, is here acknowledged in the act of ordination itself. "The Spirit blows where it wills" (John 3:3): the invocation of the Spirit implies the absolute dependence on God for the outcome of the Church's prayer. This means that the Spirit may set new forces in motion and open new possibilities "far more abundantly than all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20).

43. (b) Ordination is a sign of the granting of this prayer by the Lord who gives the gift of the ordained ministry. Although the outcome of the Church's *epiklesis* depends on the freedom of God, the Church ordains in confidence that God, being faithful to his promise in Christ, enters sacramentally into contingent, historical forms of human relationship and uses them for his purpose. Ordination is a sign performed in faith that the spiritual relationship signified is present in, with and through the words spoken, the gestures made and the forms employed.

44. (c) Ordination is an acknowledgment by the Church of the gifts of the Spirit in the one ordained, and a commitment by both the Church and the ordinand to the new relationship. By receiving the new minister in the act of ordination, the congregation acknowledges the minister's gifts and commits itself to be open towards these gifts. Likewise those ordained offer their gifts to the Church and commit themselves to the burden and opportunity of new authority and responsibility. At the same time, they enter into a collegial relationship with other ordained ministers.

C. The Conditions for Ordination

45. People are called in differing ways to the ordained ministry. There is a personal awareness of a call from the Lord to dedicate oneself to the ordained ministry. This call may be discerned through personal prayer and reflection, as well as through suggestion, example, encouragement, guidance coming from family, friends, the congregation, teachers, and other church authorities. This call must be

authenticated by the Church's recognition of the gifts and graces of the particular person, both natural and spiritually given, needed for the ministry to be performed. God can use people both celibate and married for the ordained ministry.

46. Ordained persons may be professional ministers in the sense that they receive their salaries from the church. The church may also ordain people who remain in other occupations or employment.

47. Candidates for the ordained ministry need appropriate preparation through study of scripture and theology, prayer and spirituality, and through acquaintance with the social and human realities of the contemporary world. In some situations, this preparation may take a form other than that of prolonged academic study. The period of training will be one in which the candidate's call is tested, fostered and confirmed, or its understanding modified.

48. Initial commitment to ordained ministry ought normally to be made without reserve or time limit. Yet leave of absence from service is not incompatible with ordination. Resumption of ordained ministry requires the assent of the Church, but no re-ordination. In recognition of the God-given charism of ministry, ordination to any one of the particular ordained ministries is never repeated.

49. The discipline with regard to the conditions for ordination in one church need not be seen as universally applicable and used as grounds for not recognizing ministry in others.

50. Churches which refuse to consider candidates for the ordained ministry on the ground of handicap or because they belong, for example, to one particular race or sociological group should re-evaluate their practices. This re-evaluation is particularly important today in view of the multitude of experiments in new forms of ministry with which the churches are approaching the modern world.

VI. Towards the Mutual Recognition of the Ordained Ministries

51. In order to advance towards the mutual recognition of ministries, deliberate efforts are required. All churches need to examine the forms of ordained ministry and the degree to which the churches are faithful to its original intentions. Churches must be prepared to renew their understanding and their practice of the ordained ministry.

52. Among the issues that need to be worked on as churches move towards mutual recognition of ministries, that of apostolic succession is of particular importance. Churches in ecumenical conversations can recognize their respective ordained ministries if they are mutually assured of their intention to transmit the ministry of Word and

sacrament in continuity with apostolic times. The act of transmission should be performed in accordance with the apostolic tradition, which includes the invocation of the Spirit and the laying on of hands.

53. In order to achieve mutual recognition, different steps are required of different churches. For example:

- a) Churches which have preserved the episcopal succession are asked to recognize both the apostolic content of the ordained ministry which exists in churches which have not maintained such succession and also the existence in these churches of a ministry of *episkopé* in various forms.
- b) Churches without the episcopal succession, and living in faithful continuity with the apostolic faith and mission, have a ministry of Word and sacrament, as is evident from the belief, practice, and life of those churches. These churches are asked to realize that the continuity with the Church of the apostles finds profound expression in the successive laying on of hands by bishops and that, though they may not lack the continuity of the apostolic tradition, this sign will strengthen and deepen that continuity. They may need to recover the sign of the episcopal succession.

54. Some churches ordain both men and women, others ordain only men. Differences on this issue raise obstacles to the mutual recognition of ministries. But those obstacles must not be regarded as substantive hindrance for further efforts towards mutual recognition. Openness to each other holds the possibility that the Spirit may well speak to one church through the insights of another. Ecumenical consideration, therefore, should encourage, not restrain, the facing of this question.

55. The mutual recognition of churches and their ministries implies decision by the appropriate authorities and a liturgical act from which point unity would be publicly manifest. Several forms of such public act have been proposed: mutual laying on of hands, eucharistic consecration, solemn worship without a particular rite of recognition, the reading of a text of union during the course of a celebration. No one liturgical form would be absolutely required, but in any case it would be necessary to proclaim the accomplishment of mutual recognition publicly. The common celebration of the eucharist would certainly be the place for such an act.

48. "Porvoo Common Statement," British and Irish Anglican Churches and Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches, 1992

The Porvoo Common Statement builds on the regional Anglican-Lutheran reports enumerated below, restating the doctrinal agreement which has enabled the declaration of full communion among British and Irish Anglicans and Baltic and Nordic Lutherans. • The Porvoo Common Statement: Conversations between the British and Irish Anglican Churches and the Nordic and Baltic Lutheran Churches, London, Council for Christian Unity, General Synod of the Church of England, Occasional Paper no. 3, 1993, pp. 116-21.

30. . . . we set out the substantial agreement in faith that exists between us.

Here we draw upon *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (the Lima text) and the official responses of our churches to that text. We also draw upon previous attempts to specify the range and nature of Anglican-Lutheran agreement. These include the Pullach Report of 1973, the Helsinki Report of 1983, the Cold Ash Report of 1983, *Implications of the Gospel* of 1988, *The Meissen Common Statement* of 1988 and the Niagara Report of 1988. These texts all testify to a substantial unity in faith between Anglicans and Lutherans. We have benefited from the insights from these texts as a contribution to our agreement in faith. Furthermore, we have made considerable use of the results of the respective Anglican-Roman Catholic and Roman Catholic-Lutheran dialogues. . . .

32. Here we declare in summary form the principal beliefs and practices that we have in common:

a) We accept the *canonical scriptures* of the Old and the New Testaments to be the sufficient, inspired and authoritative record and witness, prophetic and apostolic, to God's revelation in Jesus Christ. We read the Scriptures as part of public worship in the language of the people, believing that in the Scriptures—as the Word of God and testifying to the gospel—eternal life is offered to all humanity, and that they contain everything necessary to salvation.

b) We believe that God's *will and commandment* are essential to Christian proclamation, faith and life. God's commandment commits us to love God and our neighbour, and to live and serve to his praise and glory. At the

same time God's commandment reveals our sins and our constant need for his mercy.

c) We believe and proclaim *the gospel*, that in Jesus Christ God loves and redeems the world. We share a common understanding of God's justifying grace, i.e. that we are accounted righteous and are made righteous before God only by grace through faith because of the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and not on account of our works or merits. Both our traditions affirm that justification leads and must lead to "good works"; authentic faith issues in love. We receive the Holy Spirit who renews our hearts and equips us for and calls us to good works. As justification and sanctification are aspects of the same divine act, so also living faith and love are inseparable in the believer.

d) We accept the faith of the Church through the ages set forth in *the Niceno-Constantinopolitan and Apostles' Creeds* and confess the basic Trinitarian and Christological dogmas to which these creeds testify. That is, we believe that Jesus of Nazareth is true God and true Man, and that God is one God in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This faith is explicitly confirmed both in the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion and in the Augsburg Confession.

e) We confess and celebrate the apostolic faith in *liturgical worship*. We acknowledge in the liturgy both a celebration of salvation through Christ and a significant factor in forming the consensus fidelium. We rejoice at the extent of our "common tradition of spirituality, liturgy and sacramental life" which has given us similar forms of worship and common texts, hymns, canticles and prayers. We are influenced by a common liturgical renewal and by the variety of expression shown in different cultural settings.

f) We believe that *the Church* is constituted and sustained by the Triune God through God's saving action in word and sacraments. We believe that the Church is a sign, instrument and foretaste of the Kingdom of God. But we also recognize that it stands in constant need of reform and renewal.

g) We believe that through *baptism* with water in the name of the Trinity God unites the one baptized with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, initiates into the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, and confers the gracious gift of new life in the Spirit. Since we in our churches practise and value infant baptism, we also take seriously our catechetical task for the nurture of baptized children to mature commitment to Christ. In all our traditions baptism is followed by a rite of *confirmation*. We recognize two practices in our churches, both of which have precedents in earlier centuries: in Anglican churches, confirmation administered by the bishop; in the Nordic and Baltic churches, confirmation usually administered by

a local priest. In all our churches this includes invocation of the Triune God, renewal of the baptismal profession of faith and a prayer that through the renewal of the grace of baptism the candidate may be strengthened now and for ever.

h) We believe that the body and blood of Christ are truly present, distributed and received under the forms of bread and wine in *the Lord's Supper (Eucharist)*. In this way we receive the body and blood of Christ, crucified and risen, and in him the forgiveness of sins and all other benefits of his passion. The eucharistic memorial is no mere calling to mind of a past event or of its significance, but the Church's effectual proclamation of God's mighty acts. Although we are unable to offer to God a worthy sacrifice, Christ unites us with himself in his self-offering to the Father, the one, full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice which he has offered for us all. In the eucharist God himself acts, giving life to the body of Christ and renewing each member. Celebrating the eucharist, the Church is reconstituted and nourished, strengthened in faith and hope, in witness and service in daily life. Here we already have a foretaste of the eternal joy of God's Kingdom.

i) We believe that *all members of the Church* are called to participate in its apostolic mission. All the baptized are therefore given various gifts and ministries by the Holy Spirit. They are called to offer their being as a living sacrifice and to intercede for the Church and the salvation of the world. This is the corporate priesthood of the whole people of God and the calling to ministry and service (1 Peter 2:5).

j) We believe that within the community of the Church *the ordained ministry* exists to serve the ministry of the whole people of God. We hold the ordained ministry of word and sacrament to be an office of divine institution and as such a gift of God to his Church. Ordained ministers are related, as are all Christians, both to the priesthood of Christ and to the priesthood of the Church. This basic oneness of the ordained ministry is expressed in the service of word and sacrament. In the life of the Church, this unity has taken a differentiated form. The threefold ministry of bishop, priest and deacon became the general pattern in the Church of the early centuries and is still retained by many churches, though often in partial form. "The threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon may serve today as an expression of the unity we seek and also as a means for achieving it."

k) We believe that a ministry of *pastoral oversight (episcopate)*, exercised in personal, collegial and communal ways, is necessary as witness to and safeguard of the unity and apostolicity of the Church. Further, we retain and employ the episcopal office as a sign of our intention, under God,

to ensure the continuity of the Church in apostolic life and witness. For these reasons, all our churches have a personally exercised episcopal office.

1) We share a *common hope* in the final consummation of the Kingdom of God, and believe that in this eschatological perspective we are called to work now for the furtherance of justice, to seek peace and to care for the created world. The obligations of the Kingdom are to govern our life in the Church and our concern for the world. 'The Christian faith is that God has made peace through Jesus "by the blood of his cross" (Col. 1:20), so establishing the one valid centre for the unity of the whole human family.'

33. This summary witnesses to a high degree of unity in faith and doctrine. Whilst this does not require each tradition to accept every doctrinal formulation characteristic of our distinctive traditions, it does require us to face and overcome the remaining obstacles to still closer communion.

49. "The Gift of Authority," Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, 1998

The various rounds of the international dialogue between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church, begun in 1970, have reached significant convergence on a number of divisive topics. This is the third, and most substantial, agreed statement from this dialogue on the question of authority in the church. • The Gift of Authority: An Agreed Statement by the Second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, London, Catholic Truth Center, Toronto, Anglican Book Center, New York, Church Publishing Incorporated, 1999, Sections II and III.

II. AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH

Jesus Christ: God's "Yes" to Us and Our "Amen" to God

7. God is the author of life. By his Word and Spirit, in perfect freedom, God calls life into being. In spite of human sin, God in perfect faithfulness remains the author of the hope of new life for all. In Jesus Christ's work of redemption God renews his promise to his creation, for "God's

purpose is to bring all people into communion with himself within a transformed creation" (ARCIC, *Church as Communion*, 16). The Spirit of God continues to work in creation and redemption to bring this purpose of reconciliation and unity to completion. The root of all true authority is thus the activity of the triune God, who authors life in all its fullness.

8. The authority of Jesus Christ is that of the "faithful witness," the "Amen" (cf. Rev 1.5; 3.14) in whom all the promises of God find their "Yes." When Paul had to defend the authority of his teaching he did so by pointing to the trustworthy authority of God: "As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we preached among you . . . was not Yes and No; but in him it is always Yes. For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why we utter the Amen through him, to the glory of God" (2 Cor 1.18-20). Paul speaks of the "Yes" of God to us and the "Amen" of the Church to God. In Jesus Christ, Son of God and born of a woman, the "Yes" of God to humanity and the "Amen" of humanity to God become a concrete human reality. This theme of God's "Yes" and humanity's "Amen" in Jesus Christ is the key to the exposition of authority in this statement.

9. In the life and ministry of Jesus, who came to do his Father's will (cf. Heb 10.5-10) even unto death (cf. Phil 2.8; Jn 10.18), God provided the perfect human "Amen" to his purpose of reconciliation. In his life, Jesus expressed his total dedication to the Father (cf. Jn 5.19). The way Jesus exercised authority in his earthly ministry was perceived by his contemporaries as something new. It was recognised in his powerful teaching and in his healing and liberating word (cf. Mt 7.28-29; Mk 1.22,27). Most of all, his authority was demonstrated by his self-giving service in sacrificial love (cf. Mk 10.45). Jesus spoke and acted with authority because of his perfect communion with the Father. His authority came from the Father (cf. Mt 11.27; Jn 14.10-12). It is to the Risen Lord that all authority is given in heaven and on earth (cf. Mt 28.18). Jesus Christ now lives and reigns with the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit; he is the Head of his Body, the Church, and Lord of all Creation (cf. Eph 1.18-23).

10. The life-giving obedience of Jesus Christ calls forth through the Spirit our "Amen" to God the Father. In this "Amen" through Christ we glorify God, who gives the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge of his faithfulness (cf. 2 Cor 1.20-22). We are called in Christ to witness to God's purpose (cf. Lk 24.46-49), a witness that may for us too include obedience to the point of death. In Christ obedience is not a burden (cf. 1 Jn 5.3). It springs from the liberation given by the Spirit of God. The divine "Yes" and our

“Amen” are clearly seen in baptism, when in the company of the faithful we say “Amen” to God’s work in Christ. By the Spirit, our “Amen” as believers is incorporated in the “Amen” of Christ, through whom, with whom, and in whom we worship the Father.

The Believer’s “Amen” in the “Amen” of the Local Church

11. The Gospel comes to people in a variety of ways: the witness and life of a parent or other Christian, the reading of the Scriptures, participation in the liturgy, or some other spiritual experience. Acceptance of the Gospel is also enacted in many ways: in being baptised, in renewal of commitment, in a decision to remain faithful, or in acts of self-giving to those in need. In these actions the person says, “Indeed, Jesus Christ is my God: he is *for me* salvation, the source of hope, the true face of the living God.”

12. When a believer says “Amen” to Christ individually, a further dimension is always involved: an “Amen” to the faith of the Christian community. The person who receives baptism must come to know the full implication of participating in divine life within the Body of Christ. The believer’s “Amen” to Christ becomes yet more complete as that person receives all that the Church, in faithfulness to the Word of God, affirms to be the authentic content of divine revelation. In that way, the “Amen” said to what Christ is *for each believer* is incorporated within the “Amen” the Church says to what Christ is *for his Body*. Growing into this faith may be for some an experience of questioning and struggle. For all it is one in which the integrity of the believer’s conscience has a vital part to play. The believer’s “Amen” to Christ is so fundamental that individual Christians throughout their life are called to say “Amen” to all that the whole company of Christians receives and teaches as the authentic meaning of the Gospel and the way to follow Christ.

13. Believers follow Christ in communion with other Christians in their local church (cf. *Authority in the Church I*, 8, where it is explained that “the unity of local communities under one bishop constitutes what is commonly meant in our two communions by ‘a local church’”). In the local church they share Christian life, together finding guidance for the formation of their conscience and strength to face their difficulties. They are sustained by the means of grace which God provides for his people: the Holy Scriptures, expounded in preaching, catechesis and creeds; the sacraments; the service of the ordained ministry; the life of prayer and common worship; the witness of holy persons. The believer is incorporated into an “Amen” of faith, older, deeper, broader, richer than the individual’s “Amen” to the

Gospel. So the relation between the faith of the individual and the faith of the Church is more complex than may sometimes appear. Every baptised person shares the rich experience of the Church which, even when it struggles with contemporary questions, continues to proclaim what Christ is *for his Body*. Each believer, by the grace of the Spirit, together with all believers of all times and all places, inherits this faith of the Church in the communion of saints. Believers then live out a twofold “Amen” within the continuity of worship, teaching and practice of their local church. This local church is a eucharistic community. At the centre of its life is the celebration of the Holy Eucharist in which all believers hear and receive God’s “Yes” in Christ to them. In the Great Thanksgiving, when the memorial of God’s gift in the saving work of Christ crucified and risen is celebrated, the community is at one with all Christians of all the churches who, since the beginning and until the end, pronounce humanity’s “Amen” to God—the “Amen” which the Apocalypse affirms is at the heart of the great liturgy of heaven (cf. Rev 5.14; 7.12).

Tradition and Apostolicity: The Local Church’s “Amen” in the Communion of the Churches

14. The “Yes” of God commands and invites the “Amen” of believers. The revealed Word, to which the apostolic community originally bore witness, is received and communicated through the life of the whole Christian community. Tradition (*paradosis*) refers to this process. The Gospel of Christ crucified and risen is continually handed on and received (cf. 1 Cor 15.3) in the Christian churches. This tradition, or handing on, of the Gospel is the work of the Spirit, especially through the ministry of Word and Sacrament and in the common life of the people of God. Tradition is a dynamic process, communicating to each generation what was delivered once for all to the apostolic community. Tradition is far more than the transmission of true propositions concerning salvation. A minimalist understanding of Tradition that would limit it to a storehouse of doctrine and ecclesial decisions is insufficient. The Church receives, and must hand on, all those elements that are constitutive of ecclesial communion: baptism, confession of the apostolic faith, celebration of the Eucharist, leadership by an apostolic ministry (cf. *Church as Communion*, 15, 43). In the economy (*oikonomia*) of God’s love for humanity, the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us is at the centre of what was transmitted from the beginning and what will be transmitted until the end.

15. Tradition is a channel of the love of God, making it accessible in the Church and in the world today. Through it, from one generation to another, and from one

place to another, humanity shares communion in the Holy Trinity. By the process of tradition, the Church ministers the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the *koinonia* of the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Cor 13.14). Therefore Tradition is integral to the economy of grace, love and communion. For those whose ears have not heard and eyes have not seen, the moment of receiving the saving Gospel is an experience of enlightenment, forgiveness, healing, liberation. Those who participate in the communion of the Gospel cannot refrain from transmitting it to others, even if this means martyrdom. Tradition is both a treasure to be received by the people of God and a gift to be shared with all humanity.

16. Apostolic Tradition is a gift of God which must be constantly received anew. By means of it, the Holy Spirit forms, maintains and sustains the communion of the local churches from one generation to the next. The handing on and reception of apostolic Tradition is an act of communion whereby the Spirit unites the local churches of our day with those that preceded them in the one apostolic faith. The process of tradition entails the constant and perpetual reception and communication of the revealed Word of God in many varied circumstances and continually changing times. The Church's "Amen" to apostolic Tradition is a fruit of the Spirit who constantly guides the disciples into all the truth; that is, into Christ who is the way, the truth and the life (cf. Jn 16.13; 14.6).

17. Tradition expresses the apostolicity of the Church. What the apostles received and proclaimed is now found in the Tradition of the Church where the Word of God is preached and the sacraments of Christ celebrated in the power of the Holy Spirit. The churches today are committed to receiving the one living apostolic Tradition, to ordering their life according to it, and to transmitting it in such a way that the Christ who comes in glory will find the people of God confessing and living the faith once for all entrusted to the saints (cf. Jude 3).

18. Tradition makes the witness of the apostolic community present in the Church today through its corporate *memory*. Through the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the sacraments the Holy Spirit opens the hearts of believers and manifests the Risen Lord to them. The Spirit, active in the once for all events of the ministry of Jesus, continues to teach the Church, bringing to remembrance what Christ did and said, making present the fruits of his redemptive work and the foretaste of the kingdom (cf. Jn 2.22; 14.26). The purpose of Tradition is fulfilled when, through the Spirit, the Word is received and lived out in faith and hope. The witness of proclamation, sacraments and life in communion is at one and the same time the content of Tradition and its result. Thus memory

bears fruit in the faithful life of believers within the communion of their local church.

The Holy Scriptures: The "Yes" of God and the "Amen" of God's People

19. Within Tradition the Scriptures occupy a unique and normative place and belong to what has been given once for all. As the written witness to God's "Yes" they require the Church constantly to measure its teaching, preaching and action against them. "Since the Scriptures are the uniquely inspired witness to divine revelation, the Church's expression of that revelation must be tested by its consonance with Scripture" (*Authority in the Church: Elucidation*, 2). Through the Scriptures God's revelation is made present and transmitted in the life of the Church. The "Yes" of God is recognised in and through the "Amen" of the Church which receives the authentic revelation of God. By receiving certain texts as true witnesses to divine revelation, the Church identified its Holy Scriptures. It regards this corpus alone as the inspired Word of God written and, as such, uniquely authoritative.

20. The Scriptures bring together diverse streams of Jewish and Christian traditions. These traditions reveal the way God's Word has been received, interpreted and passed on in specific contexts according to the needs, the culture, and the circumstances of the people of God. They contain God's revelation of his salvific design, which was realised in Jesus Christ and experienced in the earliest Christian communities. In these communities God's "Yes" was received in a new way. Within the New Testament we can see how the Scriptures of the First Testament were both received as revelation of the one true God and also reinterpreted and re-received as revelation of his final Word in Christ.

21. All the writers of the New Testament were influenced by the experience of their own local communities. What they transmitted, with their own skill and theological insights, records those elements of the Gospel which the churches of their time and in their various situations kept in their memory. Paul's teaching about the Body of Christ, for instance, owes much to the problems and divisions of the local church in Corinth. When Paul speaks about "our authority which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you" (2 Cor 10.8), he does so in the context of his turbulent relationship with the church of Corinth. Even in the central affirmations of our faith there is often a clear echo of the concrete and sometimes dramatic situation of a local church or of a group of local churches, to which we are indebted for the faithful transmission of apostolic Tradition. The emphasis in the Johannine literature on the presence of the Lord in the flesh of a

human body that could be seen and touched both before and after the resurrection (cf. Jn 20.27; 1 Jn 4.2) is linked to the conflict in the Johannine communities on this issue. It is through the struggle of particular communities at particular times to discern God's Word for them that we have in Scripture an authoritative record of the apostolic Tradition which is to be passed from one generation to another and from one church to another, and to which the faithful say "Amen".

22. The formation of the canon of the Scriptures was an integral part of the process of tradition. The Church's recognition of these Scriptures as canonical, after a long period of critical discernment, was at the same time an act of obedience and of authority. It was an act of *obedience* in that the Church discerned and received God's life-giving "Yes" through the Scriptures, accepting them as the norm of faith. It was an act of *authority* in that the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, received and handed on these texts, declaring that they were inspired and that others were not to be included in the canon.

23. The meaning of the revealed Gospel of God is fully understood only within the Church. God's revelation has been entrusted to a community. The Church cannot properly be described as an aggregate of individual believers, nor can its faith be considered the sum of the beliefs held by individuals. Believers are together the people of faith because they are incorporated by baptism into a community which receives the canonical Scriptures as the authentic Word of God; they receive faith within this community. The faith of the community precedes the faith of the individual. So, though one person's journey of faith may begin with individual reading of Scripture, it cannot remain there. Individualistic interpretation of the Scriptures is not attuned to the reading of the text within the life of the Church and is incompatible with the nature of the authority of the revealed Word of God (cf. 2 Pet 1.20-21). Word of God and Church of God cannot be put asunder.

Reception and Re-Reception: The Church's "Amen" to the Word of God

24. Throughout the centuries, the Church receives and acknowledges as a gracious gift from God all that it recognises as a true expression of the Tradition which has been once for all delivered to the apostles. This reception is at one and the same time an act of faithfulness and of freedom. The Church must continue faithful so that the Christ who comes in glory will recognise in the Church the community he founded; it must continue to be free to receive the apostolic Tradition in new ways according to the situations by which it is confronted. The Church has

the responsibility to hand on the whole apostolic Tradition, even though there may be parts which it finds hard to integrate in its life and worship. It may be that what was of great significance for an earlier generation will again be important in the future, though its importance is not clear in the present.

25. Within the Church the memory of the people of God may be affected or even distorted by human finitude and sin. Even though promised the assistance of the Holy Spirit, the churches from time to time lose sight of aspects of the apostolic Tradition, failing to discern the full vision of the kingdom of God in the light of which we seek to follow Christ. The churches suffer when some element of ecclesial communion has been forgotten, neglected or abused. Fresh recourse to Tradition in a new situation is the means by which God's revelation in Christ is recalled. This is assisted by the insights of biblical scholars and theologians and the wisdom of holy persons. Thus, there may be a rediscovery of elements that were neglected and a fresh remembrance of the promises of God, leading to renewal of the Church's "Amen". There may also be a sifting of what has been received because some of the formulations of the Tradition are seen to be inadequate or even misleading in a new context. This whole process may be termed *re-reception*.

Catholicity: The "Amen" of the Whole Church

26. There are two dimensions to communion in the apostolic Tradition: diachronic and synchronic. The process of tradition clearly entails the transmission of the Gospel from one generation to another (diachronic). If the Church is to remain united in the truth, it must also entail the communion of the churches in all places in that one Gospel (synchronic). Both are necessary for the catholicity of the Church. Christ promises that the Holy Spirit will keep the essential and saving truth in the memory of the Church, empowering it for mission (cf. Jn 14.26; 15.26-27). This truth has to be transmitted and received anew by the faithful in all ages and in all places throughout the world, in response to the diversity and complexity of human experience. There is no part of humanity, no race, no social condition, no generation, for whom this salvation, communicated in the handing on of the Word of God, is not intended (cf. *Church as Communion*, 34).

27. In the rich diversity of human life, encounter with the living Tradition produces a variety of expressions of the Gospel. Where diverse expressions are faithful to the Word revealed in Jesus Christ and transmitted by the apostolic community, the churches in which they are found are truly in communion. Indeed, this diversity of traditions

is the practical manifestation of catholicity and confirms rather than contradicts the vigour of Tradition. As God has created diversity among humans, so the Church's fidelity and identity require not uniformity of expression and formulation at all levels in all situations, but rather catholic diversity within the unity of communion. This richness of traditions is a vital resource for a reconciled humanity. "Human beings were created by God in his love with such diversity in order that they might participate in that love by sharing with one another both what they have and what they are, thus enriching each other in their mutual communion" (*Church as Communion*, 35).

28. The people of God as a whole is the bearer of the living Tradition. In changing situations producing fresh challenges to the Gospel, the discernment, actualisation and communication of the Word of God is the responsibility of the whole people of God. The Holy Spirit works through all members of the community, using the gifts he gives to each for the good of all. Theologians in particular serve the communion of the whole Church by exploring whether and how new insights should be integrated into the ongoing stream of Tradition. In each community there is an exchange, a mutual give-and-take, in which bishops, clergy and lay people receive from as well as give to others within the whole body.

29. In every Christian who is seeking to be faithful to Christ and is fully incorporated into the life of the Church, there is a *sensus fidei*. This *sensus fidei* may be described as an active capacity for spiritual discernment, an intuition that is formed by worshipping and living in communion as a faithful member of the Church. When this capacity is exercised in concert by the body of the faithful we may speak of the exercise of the *sensus fidelium* (cf. *Authority in the Church: Elucidation*, 3-4). The exercise of the *sensus fidei* by each member of the Church contributes to the formation of the *sensus fidelium* through which the Church as a whole remains faithful to Christ. By the *sensus fidelium*, the whole body contributes to, receives from and treasures the ministry of those within the community who exercise *episcopate*, watching over the living memory of the Church (cf. *Authority in the Church I*, 5-6). In diverse ways the "Amen" of the individual believer is thus incorporated within the "Amen" of the whole Church.

30. Those who exercise *episcopate* in the Body of Christ must not be separated from the 'symphony' of the whole people of God in which they have their part to play. They need to be alert to the *sensus fidelium*, in which they share, if they are to be made aware when something is needed for the well-being and mission of the community, or when some element of the Tradition needs to be received in a fresh way. The charism and function of *episcopate* are

specifically connected to the *ministry of memory*, which constantly renews the Church in hope. Through such ministry the Holy Spirit keeps alive in the Church the memory of what God did and revealed, and the hope of what God will do to bring all things into unity in Christ. In this way, not only from generation to generation, but also from place to place, the one faith is communicated and lived out. This is the ministry exercised by the bishop, and by ordained persons under the bishop's care, as they proclaim the Word, minister the sacraments, and take their part in administering discipline for the common good. The bishops, the clergy and the other faithful must all recognise and receive what is mediated from God through each other. Thus the *sensus fidelium* of the people of God and the ministry of memory exist together in reciprocal relationship.

31. Anglicans and Roman Catholics can agree in principle on all of the above, but need to make a deliberate effort to retrieve this shared understanding. When Christian communities are in real but imperfect communion they are called to recognise in each other elements of the apostolic Tradition which they may have rejected, forgotten or not yet fully understood. Consequently, they have to receive or reappropriate these elements, and reconsider the ways in which they have separately interpreted the Scriptures. Their life in Christ is enriched when they give to, and receive from, each other. They grow in understanding and experience of their catholicity as the *sensus fidelium* and the ministry of memory interact in the communion of believers. In this economy of giving and receiving within real but imperfect communion, they move closer to an undivided sharing in Christ's one "Amen" to the glory of God.

III. THE EXERCISE OF AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH

Proclaiming the Gospel: The Exercise of Authority for Mission and Unity

32. The authority which Jesus bestowed on his disciples was, above all, the authority for mission, to preach and to heal (cf. Lk 9.1-2, 10.1). The Risen Christ empowered them to spread the Gospel to the whole world (cf. Mt 28.18-20). In the early Church, the preaching of the Word of God in the power of the Spirit was seen as the defining characteristic of apostolic authority (cf. 1 Cor 1.17, 2.4-5). In the proclamation of Christ crucified, the "Yes" of God to humanity is made a present reality and all are invited to respond with their "Amen." Thus, the exercise of ministerial authority within the Church, not least by those entrusted with the ministry of *episcopate*, has a radically missionary dimension. Authority is exercised within

the Church for the sake of those outside it, that the Gospel may be proclaimed “in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction” (1 Thess 1.5). This authority enables the whole Church to embody the Gospel and become the missionary and prophetic servant of the Lord.

33. Jesus prayed to the Father that his followers might be one “so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (Jn 17.23). When Christians do not agree about the Gospel itself, the preaching of it in power is impaired. When they are not one in faith they cannot be one in life, and so cannot demonstrate fully that they are faithful to the will of God, which is the reconciliation through Christ of all things to the Father (cf. Col 1.20). As long as the Church does not live as the community of reconciliation God calls it to be, it cannot adequately preach this Gospel or credibly proclaim God’s plan to gather his scattered people into unity under Christ as Lord and Saviour (cf. Jn 11.52). Only when all believers are united in the common celebration of the Eucharist (cf. *Church as Communion*, 24) will the God whose purpose it is to bring all things into unity in Christ (cf. Eph 1.10) be truly glorified by the people of God. The challenge and responsibility for those with authority within the Church is so to exercise their ministry that they promote the unity of the whole Church in faith and life in a way that enriches rather than diminishes the legitimate diversity of local churches.

Synodality: The Exercise of Authority in Communion

34. In each local church all the faithful are called to walk together in Christ. The term *synodality* (derived from *synodos* meaning “common way”) indicates the manner in which believers and churches are held together in communion as they do this. It expresses their vocation as people of the Way (cf. Acts 9.2) to live, work and journey together in Christ who is the Way (cf. Jn 14.6). They, like their predecessors, follow Jesus on the way (cf. Mk 10.52) until he comes again.

35. Within the communion of local churches the Spirit is at work to shape each church through the grace of reconciliation and communion in Christ. It is only through the activity of the Spirit that the local church can be faithful to the “Amen” of Christ and can be sent into the world to draw all people to participate in this “Amen.” Through this presence of the Spirit the local church is maintained in the Tradition. It receives and shares the fullness of the apostolic faith and the means of grace. The Spirit confirms the local church in the truth in such a way that its life embodies the saving truth revealed in Christ. From generation to generation the authority of the living Word should

be made present in the local church through all aspects of its life in the world. The way in which authority is exercised in the structures and corporate life of the Church must be conformed to the mind of Christ (cf. Phil 2.5).

36. The Spirit of Christ endows each bishop with the pastoral authority needed for the effective exercise of *episcopate* within a local church. This authority necessarily includes responsibility for making and implementing the decisions that are required to fulfil the office of a bishop for the sake of *koinonia*. Its binding nature is implicit in the bishop’s task of teaching the faith through the proclamation and explanation of the Word of God, of providing for the celebration of the sacraments, and of maintaining the Church in holiness and truth. Decisions taken by the bishop in performing this task have an authority which the faithful have a duty to receive and accept (cf. *Authority in the Church II*, 17). By their *sensus fidei* the faithful are able in conscience both to recognise God at work in the bishop’s exercise of authority, and also to respond to it as believers. This is what motivates their obedience, an obedience of freedom and not slavery. The jurisdiction of bishops is one consequence of the call they have received to lead their churches in an authentic “Amen”; it is not arbitrary power given to one person over the freedom of others. Within the working of the *sensus fidelium* there is a complementary relationship between the bishop and the rest of the community. In the local church the Eucharist is the fundamental expression of the walking together (synodality) of the people of God. In prayerful dialogue, the president leads the people to make their “Amen” to the eucharistic prayer. In unity of faith with their local bishop, their “Amen” is a living memorial of the Lord’s great “Amen” to the will of the Father.

37. The mutual interdependence of all the churches is integral to the reality of the Church as God wills it to be. No local church that participates in the living Tradition can regard itself as self-sufficient. Forms of synodality, then, are needed to manifest the communion of the local churches and to sustain each of them in fidelity to the Gospel. The ministry of the bishop is crucial, for this ministry serves communion within and among local churches. Their communion with each other is expressed through the incorporation of each bishop into a college of bishops. Bishops are, both personally and collegially, at the service of communion and are concerned for synodality in all its expressions. These expressions have included a wide variety of organs, instruments and institutions, notably synods or councils, local, provincial, worldwide, ecumenical. The maintenance of communion requires that at every level there is a capacity to take decisions appropriate to that level. When those

decisions raise serious questions for the wider communion of churches, synodality must find a wider expression.

38. In both our communions, the bishops meet together collegially, not as individuals but as those who have authority within and for the synodal life of the local churches. Consulting the faithful is an aspect of episcopal oversight. Each bishop is both a voice for the local church and one through whom the local church learns from other churches. When bishops take counsel together they seek both to discern and to articulate the *sensus fidelium* as it is present in the local church and in the wider communion of churches. Their role is magisterial: that is, in this communion of the churches, they are to determine what is to be taught as faithful to the apostolic Tradition. Roman Catholics and Anglicans share this understanding of synodality, but express it in different ways.

39. In the Church of England at the time of the English Reformation the tradition of synodality was expressed through the use both of synods (of bishops and clergy) and of Parliament (including bishops and lay people) for the settlement of liturgy, doctrine and church order. The authority of General Councils was also recognised. In the Anglican Communion, new forms of synods came into being during the nineteenth century and the role of the laity in decision making has increased since that time. Although bishops, clergy, and lay persons consult with each other and legislate together, the responsibility of the bishops remains distinct and crucial. In every part of the Anglican Communion, the bishops bear a unique responsibility of oversight. For example, a diocesan synod can be called only by the bishop, and its decisions can stand only with the bishop's consent. At provincial or national levels, Houses of Bishops exercise a distinctive and unique ministry in relation to matters of doctrine, worship and moral life. Further, though Anglican synods largely use parliamentary procedures, their nature is eucharistic. This is why the bishop as president of the Eucharist appropriately presides at the diocesan synod, which assembles to bring God's redemptive work into the present through the life and activity of the local church. Furthermore, each bishop has not only the *episcopate* of the local church but participates in the care of all the churches. This is exercised within each province of the Anglican Communion with the help of organs such as Houses of Bishops and the Provincial and General Synods. In the Anglican Communion as a whole the Primates' Meeting, the Anglican Consultative Council, the Lambeth Conference and the Archbishop of Canterbury serve as instruments of synodality.

40. In the Roman Catholic Church the tradition of synodality has not ceased. After the Reformation, synods of bishops and clergy continued to be held from time to

time in different dioceses and regions, and on the universal level three Councils have been held. By the turn of the twentieth century specific meetings of bishops and Episcopal Conferences emerged as means of consultation to enable local churches of a given region to face together the demands of their mission and to deal with new pastoral situations. Since the Second Vatican Council these have become a regular structure in nations and regions. In a decision which received the support of the bishops at that Council, Pope Paul VI instituted the Synod of Bishops to deal with issues concerning the Church's mission throughout the world. The ancient custom of *ad limina* visits to the tombs of the apostles Peter and Paul and to the Bishop of Rome has been renewed by their visiting not singly but in regional groups. The more recent custom of visits by the Bishop of Rome to local churches has attempted to foster a deeper sense of their belonging to the communion of churches, and to help them be more aware of the situation of others. All these synodal institutions provide the possibility of a growing awareness by both local bishops and the Bishop of Rome of ways of working together in a stronger communion. Complementing this collegial synodality, a growth in synodality at the local level is promoting the active participation of lay persons in the life and mission of the local church.

Perseverance in the Truth: The Exercise of Authority in Teaching

41. In every age Christians have said "Amen" to Christ's promise that the Spirit will guide his Church into all truth. The New Testament frequently echoes this promise by referring to the boldness, assurance and certainty to which Christians can lay claim (cf. Lk 1.4; 1 Thess 2.2; Eph 3.2; Heb 11.1). In their concern to make the Gospel accessible to all who are open to receive it, those charged with the ministry of memory and teaching have accepted new and hitherto unfamiliar expressions of faith. Some of these formulations have initially generated doubt and disagreement about their fidelity to the apostolic Tradition. In the process of testing such formulations, the Church has moved cautiously, but with confidence in the promise of Christ that it will persevere and be maintained in the truth (cf. Mt 16.18; Jn 16.13). This is what is meant by the *indefectibility* of the Church (cf. *Authority in the Church I*, 18; *Authority in the Church II*, 23).

42. In its continuing life, the Church seeks and receives the guidance from the Holy Spirit that keeps its teaching faithful to apostolic Tradition. Within the whole body, the college of bishops is to exercise the ministry of memory to this end. They are to discern and give teaching

which may be trusted because it expresses the truth of God surely. In some situations, there will be an urgent need to test new formulations of faith. In specific circumstances, those with this ministry of oversight (*episcopate*), assisted by the Holy Spirit, may together come to a judgement which, being faithful to Scripture and consistent with apostolic Tradition, is preserved from error. By such a judgement, which is a renewed expression of God's one "Yes" in Jesus Christ, the Church is maintained in the truth so that it may continue to offer its "Amen" to the glory of God. This is what is meant when it is affirmed that the Church may teach *infallibly* (see *Authority in the Church II*, 24 - 28, 32). Such infallible teaching is at the service of the Church's indefectibility.

43. The exercise of teaching authority in the Church, especially in situations of challenge, requires the participation, in their distinctive ways, of the whole body of believers, not only those charged with the ministry of memory. In this participation the *sensus fidelium* is at work. Since it is the faithfulness of the whole people of God which is at stake, reception of teaching is integral to the process. Doctrinal definitions are received as authoritative in virtue of the divine truth they proclaim as well as because of the specific office of the person or persons who proclaim them within the *sensus fidei* of the whole people of God. When the people of God respond by faith and say "Amen" to authoritative teaching it is because they recognise that this teaching expresses the apostolic faith and operates within the authority and truth of Christ, the Head of the Church. (3) The truth and authority of its Head is the source of infallible teaching in the Body of Christ. God's "Yes" revealed in Christ is the standard by which such authoritative teaching is judged. Such teaching is to be welcomed by the people of God as a gift of the Holy Spirit to maintain the Church in the truth of Christ, our "Amen" to God.

44. The duty of maintaining the Church in the truth is one of the essential functions of the episcopal college. It has the power to exercise this ministry because it is bound in succession to the apostles, who were the body authorised and sent by Christ to preach the Gospel to all the nations. The authenticity of the teaching of individual bishops is evident when this teaching is in solidarity with that of the whole episcopal college. The exercise of this teaching authority requires that what it teaches be faithful to Holy Scripture and consistent with apostolic Tradition. This is expressed by the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, "This teaching office is not above the Word of God, but serves it" (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, 10).

Primacy: The Exercise of Authority in Collegiality and Conciliarity

45. In the course of history the synodality of the Church has been served through conciliar, collegial and primatial authority. Forms of primacy exist in both the Anglican Communion and in the churches in communion with the Bishop of Rome. Among the latter, the offices of Metropolitan Archbishop or Patriarch of an Eastern Catholic Church are primatial in nature. Each Anglican Province has its Primate and the Primates' Meeting serves the whole Communion. The Archbishop of Canterbury exercises a primatial ministry in the whole Anglican Communion.

46. ARCIC has already recognised that the "pattern of complementary primatial and conciliar aspects of *episcopate* serving the *koinonia* of the churches needs to be realised at the universal level" (*Authority in the Church I*, 23). The exigencies of church life call for a specific exercise of *episcopate* at the service of the whole Church. In the pattern found in the New Testament one of the twelve is chosen by Jesus Christ to strengthen the others so that they will remain faithful to their mission and in harmony with each other (see the discussion of the Petrine texts in *Authority in the Church II*, 2-5). Augustine of Hippo expressed well the relationship among Peter, the other apostles and the whole Church, when he said:

After all, it is not just one man that received these keys, but the Church in its unity. So this is the reason for Peter's acknowledged preeminence, that he stood for the Church's universality and unity, when he was told, *To you I am entrusting*, what has in fact been entrusted to all. I mean to show you that it is the Church which has received the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Listen to what the Lord says in another place to all his apostles: *Receive the Holy Spirit; and straight away, whose sins you forgive, they will be forgiven them; whose sins you retain, they will be retained* (Jn 20.22-23). This refers to the keys, about which is said, *whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven* (Mt 16.19). But that was said to Peter . . . Peter at that time stood for the universal Church (*Sermon 295, On the Feast of the Martyrdom of the Apostles Peter and Paul*).

ARCIC has also previously explored the transmission of the primatial ministry exercised by the Bishop of Rome (see *Authority in the Church II*, 6-9). Historically, the Bishop of Rome has exercised such a ministry either for the benefit of the whole Church, as when Leo contributed to the Council of Chalcedon, or for the benefit of a local church, as when Gregory the Great supported Augustine of Canterbury's mission and ordering of the English church.

This gift has been welcomed and the ministry of these Bishops of Rome continues to be celebrated liturgically by Anglicans as well as Roman Catholics.

47. Within his wider ministry, the Bishop of Rome offers a specific ministry concerning the discernment of truth, as an expression of universal primacy. This particular service has been the source of difficulties and misunderstandings among the churches. Every solemn definition pronounced from the chair of Peter in the church of Peter and Paul may, however, express only the faith of the Church. Any such definition is pronounced *within* the college of those who exercise *episcopate* and not outside that college. Such authoritative teaching is a particular exercise of the calling and responsibility of the body of bishops to teach and affirm the faith. When the faith is articulated in this way, the Bishop of Rome proclaims the faith of the local churches. It is thus the wholly reliable teaching of the whole Church that is operative in the judgement of the universal primate. In solemnly formulating such teaching, the universal primate must discern and declare, with the assured assistance and guidance of the Holy Spirit, in fidelity to Scripture and Tradition, the authentic faith of the whole Church, that is, the faith proclaimed from the beginning. It is this faith, the faith of all the baptised in communion, and this only, that each bishop utters with the body of bishops in council. It is this faith which the Bishop of Rome in certain circumstances has a duty to discern and make explicit. This form of authoritative teaching has no stronger guarantee from the Spirit than have the solemn definitions of ecumenical councils. The reception of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome entails the recognition of this specific ministry of the universal primate. We believe that this is a gift to be received by all the churches.

48. The ministers God gives the Church to sustain her life are marked by fragility: "Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart . . . but we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us" (2 Cor 4.1; 4.7). It is clear that only by the grace of God does the exercise of authority in the communion of the Church bear the marks of Christ's own authority. This authority is exercised by fragile Christians for the sake of other fragile Christians. This is no less true of the ministry of Peter: "Simon, Simon, behold Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren" (Lk 22.31-32; cf. Jn 21.15-19). Pope John Paul II makes this clear in *Ut Unum Sint*:

I carry out this duty with the profound conviction that I am obeying the Lord, and with a clear sense of my own human frailty. Indeed, if Christ himself gave Peter this special mission in the Church and exhorted him to strengthen his brethren, he also made clear to him his human weakness and his special need of conversion. (*Ut Unum Sint*, 4)

Human weakness and sin do not only affect individual ministers: they can distort the human structuring of authority (cf. Mt 23). Therefore, loyal criticism and reforms are sometimes needed, following the example of Paul (cf. Gal 2.11-14). The consciousness of human frailty in the exercise of authority ensures that Christian ministers remain open to criticism and renewal and above all to exercising authority according to the example and mind of Christ.

Discipline: The Exercise of Authority and the Freedom of Conscience

49. The exercise of authority in the Church is to be recognised and accepted as an instrument of the Spirit of God for the healing of humanity. The exercise of authority must always respect conscience, because the divine work of salvation affirms human freedom. In freely accepting the way of salvation offered through baptism, the Christian disciple also freely takes on the discipline of being a member of the Body of Christ. Because the Church of God is recognised as the community where the divine means of salvation are at work, the demands of discipleship for the well-being of the entire Christian community cannot be refused. There is also a discipline required in the exercise of authority. Those called to such a ministry must themselves submit to the discipline of Christ, observe the requirements of collegiality and the common good, and duly respect the consciences of those they are called to serve.

The Church's "Amen" to God's "Yes" in the Gospel

50. We have come to a shared understanding of authority by seeing it, in faith, as a manifestation of God's "Yes" to his creation, calling forth the "Amen" of his creatures. God is the source of authority, and the proper exercise of authority is always ordered towards the common good and the good of the person. In a broken world, and to a divided Church, God's "Yes" in Jesus Christ brings the reality of reconciliation, the call to discipleship, and a foretaste of humanity's final goal when through the Spirit all in Christ utter their "Amen" to the glory of God. The "Yes" of God, embodied in Christ, is received in the proclamation and Tradition of

the Gospel, in the sacramental life of the Church and in the ways that *episcopate* is exercised. When the churches, through their exercise of authority, display the healing and reconciling power of the Gospel, then the wider world is offered a vision of what God intends for all creation. The aim of the exercise of authority and of its reception is to enable the Church to say “Amen” to God’s “Yes” in the Gospel.

50. “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification,” Lutheran-Roman Catholic International Dialogue, 1989

This famous agreement, on an issue at the heart of the Protestant Reformation, is the result of sustained dialogue between the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Lutheran World Federation. The Joint Declaration is a model example of what is sometimes called “differentiated consensus,” a consensus on basic truth with remaining differences in its explication. • http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/documents/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_31101999_cath-luth-joint-declaration_en.html.

1. The doctrine of justification was of central importance for the Lutheran Reformation of the sixteenth century. It was held to be the “first and chief article”¹ and at the same time the “ruler and judge over all other Christian doctrines.”² The doctrine of justification was particularly asserted and defended in its Reformation shape and special valuation over against the Roman Catholic Church and theology of that time, which in turn asserted and defended a doctrine of justification of a different character. From the Reformation perspective, justification was the crux of all the disputes. Doctrinal condemnations were put forward both in the Lutheran Confessions³ and by the Roman Catholic Church’s Council of Trent. These condemnations are still valid today and thus have a church-dividing effect.

1. *The Smalcald Articles*, II,1; *Book of Concord*, 292.

2. “Rector et iudex super omnia genera doctrinarum” Weimar Edition of Luther’s Works (WA), 39,I,205

3. It should be noted that some Lutheran churches include only the Augsburg Confession and Luther’s Small Catechism among their binding confessions. These texts contain no condemnations about justification in relation to the Roman Catholic Church.

2. For the Lutheran tradition, the doctrine of justification has retained its special status. Consequently it has also from the beginning occupied an important place in the official Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue. . . .

5. The present Joint Declaration has this intention: namely, to show that on the basis of their dialogue the subscribing Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church⁴ are now able to articulate a common understanding of our justification by God’s grace through faith in Christ. It does not cover all that either church teaches about justification; it does encompass a consensus on basic truths of the doctrine of justification and shows that the remaining differences in its explication are no longer the occasion for doctrinal condemnations. . . .

7. . . . this Joint Declaration rests on the conviction that in overcoming the earlier controversial questions and doctrinal condemnations, the churches neither take the condemnations lightly nor do they disavow their own past. On the contrary, this Declaration is shaped by the conviction that in their respective histories our churches have come to new insights. Developments have taken place which not only make possible, but also require the churches to examine the divisive questions and condemnations and see them in a new light.

1. Biblical Message of Justification

8. Our common way of listening to the word of God in Scripture has led to such new insights. Together we hear the gospel that “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (Jn 3:16). This good news is set forth in Holy Scripture in various ways. In the Old Testament we listen to God’s word about human sinfulness (Ps 51:1-5; Dan 9:5f; Eccl/Qo 8:9f; Ezra 9:6f) and human disobedience (Gen 3:1-19; Neh 9:16f,26) as well as of God’s “righteousness” (Isa 46:13; 51:5-8; 56:1 [cf. 53:11]; Jer 9:24) and “judgment” (Eccl/Qo 12:14; Ps 9:5f; 76:7-9).

9. In the New Testament diverse treatments of “righteousness” and “justification” are found in the writings of Matthew (5:10; 6:33; 21:32), John (16:8-11), Hebrews (5:3; 10:37f), and James (2:14-26).⁵ In Paul’s letters also,

4. The word “church” is used in this Declaration to reflect the self-understandings of the participating churches, without intending to resolve all the ecclesiological issues related to this term.

5. Cf. “Malta Report,” paras. 26-30; Justification by Faith, paras. 122-147. At the request of the US dialogue on justification, the non-Pauline New Testament texts were addressed in *Righteousness in the New Testament*, by John Reumann, with responses by Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Jerome D. Quinn (Philadelphia; New York: 1982), pp. 124-180. The results of this study were summarized in the dialogue report *Justification by Faith* in paras. 139-142.

the gift of salvation is described in various ways, among others: “for freedom Christ has set us free” (Gal 5:1-13; cf. Rom 6:7), “reconciled to God” (2 Cor 5:18-21; cf. Rom 5:11), “peace with God” (Rom 5:1), “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17), “alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom 6:11,23), or “sanctified in Christ Jesus” (cf. 1 Cor 1:2; 1:30; 2 Cor 1:1). Chief among these is the “justification” of sinful human beings by God’s grace through faith (Rom 3:23-25), which came into particular prominence in the Reformation period.

10. Paul sets forth the gospel as the power of God for salvation of the person who has fallen under the power of sin, as the message that proclaims that “the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith” (Rom 1:16f) and that grants “justification” (Rom 3:21-31). He proclaims Christ as “our righteousness” (1 Cor 1:30), applying to the risen Lord what Jeremiah proclaimed about God himself (Jer 23:6). In Christ’s death and resurrection all dimensions of his saving work have their roots for he is “our Lord, who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification” (Rom 4:25). All human beings are in need of God’s righteousness, “since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23; cf. Rom 1:18-3:20; 11:32; Gal 3:22). In Galatians (3:6) and Romans (4:3-9), Paul understands Abraham’s faith (Gen 15:6) as faith in the God who justifies the sinner (Rom 4:5) and calls upon the testimony of the Old Testament to undergird his gospel that this righteousness will be reckoned to all who, like Abraham, trust in God’s promise. “For the righteous will live by faith (Hab 2:4; cf. Gal 3:11; Rom 1:17). In Paul’s letters, God’s righteousness is also God’s power for those who have faith (Rom 1:16f; 2 Cor 5:21). In Christ he makes it our righteousness (2 Cor 5:21). Justification becomes ours through Christ Jesus “whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith” (Rom 3:25; see 3:21-28). “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works” (Eph 2:8f).

11. Justification is the forgiveness of sins (cf. Rom 3:23-25; Acts 13:39; Lk 18:14), liberation from the dominating power of sin and death (Rom 5:12-21) and from the curse of the law (Gal 3:10-14). It is acceptance into communion with God: already now, but then fully in God’s coming kingdom (Rom 5:1f). It unites with Christ and with his death and resurrection (Rom 6:5). It occurs in the reception of the Holy Spirit in baptism and incorporation into the one body (Rom 8:1f, 9f; 1 Cor 12:12f). All this is from God alone, for Christ’s sake, by grace, through faith in “the gospel of God’s Son” (Rom 1:1-3).

12. The justified live by faith that comes from the Word of Christ (Rom 10:17) and is active through love (Gal 5:6), the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22f). But since the justified are assailed from within and without by powers and desires (Rom 8:35-39; Gal 5:16-21) and fall into sin (1 Jn 1:8,10), they must constantly hear God’s promises anew, confess their sins (1 Jn 1:9), participate in Christ’s body and blood, and be exhorted to live righteously in accord with the will of God. That is why the Apostle says to the justified: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Phil 2:12f). But the good news remains: “there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1), and in whom Christ lives (Gal 2:20). Christ’s “act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all” (Rom 5:18).

2. The Doctrine of Justification as Ecumenical Problem

13. Opposing interpretations and applications of the biblical message of justification were in the sixteenth century a principal cause of the division of the Western church and led as well to doctrinal condemnations. A common understanding of justification is therefore fundamental and indispensable to overcoming that division. By appropriating insights of recent biblical studies and drawing on modern investigations of the history of theology and dogma, the post-Vatican II ecumenical dialogue has led to a notable convergence concerning justification, with the result that this Joint Declaration is able to formulate a consensus on basic truths concerning the doctrine of justification. In light of this consensus, the corresponding doctrinal condemnations of the sixteenth century do not apply to today’s partner.

3. The Common Understanding of Justification

14. The Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church have together listened to the good news proclaimed in Holy Scripture. This common listening, together with the theological conversations of recent years, has led to a shared understanding of justification. This encompasses a consensus in the basic truths; the differing explications in particular statements are compatible with it.

15. In faith we together hold the conviction that justification is the work of the triune God. The Father sent his Son into the world to save sinners. The foundation and presupposition of justification is the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ. Justification thus means that Christ himself is our righteousness, in which we share through the Holy Spirit in accord with the will of the Father. Together

we confess: By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works.⁶

16. All people are called by God to salvation in Christ. Through Christ alone are we justified, when we receive this salvation in faith. Faith is itself God's gift through the Holy Spirit who works through word and sacrament in the community of believers and who, at the same time, leads believers into that renewal of life which God will bring to completion in eternal life.

17. We also share the conviction that the message of justification directs us in a special way towards the heart of the New Testament witness to God's saving action in Christ: it tells us that as sinners our new life is solely due to the forgiving and renewing mercy that God imparts as a gift and we receive in faith, and never can merit in any way.

18. Therefore the doctrine of justification, which takes up this message and explicates it, is more than just one part of Christian doctrine. It stands in an essential relation to all truths of faith, which are to be seen as internally related to each other. It is an indispensable criterion which constantly serves to orient all the teaching and practice of our churches to Christ. When Lutherans emphasize the unique significance of this criterion, they do not deny the interrelation and significance of all truths of faith. When Catholics see themselves as bound by several criteria, they do not deny the special function of the message of justification. Lutherans and Catholics share the goal of confessing Christ in all things, who alone is to be trusted above all things as the one Mediator (1 Tim 2:5f) through whom God in the Holy Spirit gives himself and pours out his renewing gifts.

4. Explicating the Common Understanding of Justification

4.1 Human Powerlessness and Sin in Relation to justification

19. We confess together that all persons depend completely on the saving grace of God for their salvation. The freedom they possess in relation to persons and the things of this world is no freedom in relation to salvation, for as sinners they stand under God's judgment and are incapable of turning by themselves to God to seek deliverance, of meriting their justification before God, or of attaining salvation by their own abilities. Justification takes place solely by God's grace. Because Catholics and Lutherans confess this together, it is true to say:

6. "All Under One Christ," para. 14, in *Growth in Agreement*, ed. H. Meyer and L. Vischer Ramsey-Geneva, Paulist-WCC, 1984, p. 241-247.

20. When Catholics say that persons "cooperate" in preparing for and accepting justification by consenting to God's justifying action, they see such personal consent as itself an effect of grace, not as an action arising from innate human abilities.

21. According to Lutheran teaching, human beings are incapable of cooperating in their salvation, because as sinners they actively oppose God and his saving action. Lutherans do not deny that a person can reject the working of grace. When they emphasize that a person can only receive (mere passive) justification, they mean thereby to exclude any possibility of contributing to one's own justification, but do not deny that believers are fully involved personally in their faith, which is effected by God's Word.

4.2 Justification as Forgiveness of Sins and Making Righteous

22. We confess together that God forgives sin by grace and at the same time frees human beings from sin's enslaving power and imparts the gift of new life in Christ. When persons come by faith to share in Christ, God no longer imputes to them their sin and through the Holy Spirit effects in them an active love. These two aspects of God's gracious action are not to be separated, for persons are by faith united with Christ, who in his person is our righteousness (1 Cor 1:30): both the forgiveness of sin and the saving presence of God himself. Because Catholics and Lutherans confess this together, it is true to say that:

23. When Lutherans emphasize that the righteousness of Christ is our righteousness, their intention is above all to insist that the sinner is granted righteousness before God in Christ through the declaration of forgiveness and that only in union with Christ is one's life renewed. When they stress that God's grace is forgiving love ("the favor of God"), they do not thereby deny the renewal of the Christian's life. They intend rather to express that justification remains free from human cooperation and is not dependent on the life-renewing effects of grace in human beings.

24. When Catholics emphasize the renewal of the interior person through the reception of grace imparted as a gift to the believer,⁸ they wish to insist that God's forgiving grace always brings with it a gift of new life, which in the Holy Spirit becomes effective in active love. They do not thereby deny that God's gift of grace in justification remains independent of human cooperation.

4.3 Justification by Faith and through Grace

25. We confess together that sinners are justified by faith in the saving action of God in Christ. By the action of the Holy Spirit in baptism, they are granted the gift of

7. Cf. WA 8:106; American Edition 32:227.

8. Cf. DS 1528

salvation, which lays the basis for the whole Christian life. They place their trust in God's gracious promise by justifying faith, which includes hope in God and love for him. Such a faith is active in love and thus the Christian cannot and should not remain without works. But whatever in the justified precedes or follows the free gift of faith is neither the basis of justification nor merits it.

26. According to Lutheran understanding, God justifies sinners in faith alone (*sola fide*). In faith they place their trust wholly in their Creator and Redeemer and thus live in communion with him. God himself effects faith as he brings forth such trust by his creative word. Because God's act is a new creation, it affects all dimensions of the person and leads to a life in hope and love. In the doctrine of "justification by faith alone," a distinction but not a separation is made between justification itself and the renewal of one's way of life that necessarily follows from justification and without which faith does not exist. Thereby the basis is indicated from which the renewal of life proceeds, for it comes forth from the love of God imparted to the person in justification. Justification and renewal are joined in Christ, who is present in faith.

27. The Catholic understanding also sees faith as fundamental in justification. For without faith, no justification can take place. Persons are justified through baptism as hearers of the word and believers in it. The justification of sinners is forgiveness of sins and being made righteous by justifying grace, which makes us children of God. In justification the righteous receive from Christ faith, hope, and love and are thereby taken into communion with him.⁹ This new personal relation to God is grounded totally on God's graciousness and remains constantly dependent on the salvific and creative working of this gracious God, who remains true to himself, so that one can rely upon him. Thus justifying grace never becomes a human possession to which one could appeal over against God. While Catholic teaching emphasizes the renewal of life by justifying grace, this renewal in faith, hope, and love is always dependent on God's unfathomable grace and contributes nothing to justification about which one could boast before God (Rom 3:27).

4.4 *The Justified as Sinner*

28. We confess together that in baptism the Holy Spirit unites one with Christ, justifies, and truly renews the person. But the justified must all through life constantly look to God's unconditional justifying grace. They also are continuously exposed to the power of sin still pressing its attacks (cf. Rom 6:12-14) and are not exempt from a lifelong struggle against the contradiction to God within the selfish desires of the old Adam (cf. Gal 5:16; Rom 7:7-10).

The justified also must ask God daily for forgiveness as in the Lord's Prayer (Mt 6:12; 1 Jn 1:9), are ever again called to conversion and penance, and are ever again granted forgiveness.

29. Lutherans understand this condition of the Christian as a being "at the same time righteous and sinner." Believers are totally righteous, in that God forgives their sins through Word and Sacrament and grants the righteousness of Christ which they appropriate in faith. In Christ, they are made just before God. Looking at themselves through the law, however, they recognize that they remain also totally sinners. Sin still lives in them (1 Jn 1:8; Rom 7:17,20), for they repeatedly turn to false gods and do not love God with that undivided love which God requires as their Creator (Deut 6:5; Mt 22:36-40 pr.). This contradiction to God is as such truly sin. Nevertheless, the enslaving power of sin is broken on the basis of the merit of Christ. It no longer is a sin that "rules" the Christian for it is itself "ruled" by Christ with whom the justified are bound in faith. In this life, then, Christians can in part lead a just life. Despite sin, the Christian is no longer separated from God, because in the daily return to baptism, the person who has been born anew by baptism and the Holy Spirit has this sin forgiven. Thus this sin no longer brings damnation and eternal death.¹⁰ Thus, when Lutherans say that justified persons are also sinners and that their opposition to God is truly sin, they do not deny that, despite this sin, they are not separated from God and that this sin is a "ruled" sin. In these affirmations, they are in agreement with Roman Catholics, despite the difference in understanding sin in the justified.

30. Catholics hold that the grace of Jesus Christ imparted in baptism takes away all that is sin "in the proper sense" and that is "worthy of damnation" (Rom 8:1).¹¹ There does, however, remain in the person an inclination (concupiscence) which comes from sin and presses toward sin. Since, according to Catholic conviction, human sins always involve a personal element and since this element is lacking in this inclination, Catholics do not see this inclination as sin in an authentic sense. They do not thereby deny that this inclination does not correspond to God's original design for humanity and that it is objectively in contradiction to God and remains one's enemy in lifelong struggle. Grateful for deliverance by Christ, they underscore that this inclination in contradiction to God does not merit the punishment of eternal death¹² and does not separate the justified person from God. But when individuals voluntarily separate themselves from God, it is not enough

10. Cf. *Apology* II:38-45; *Book of Concord*, 105f.

11. Cf. DS 1515.

12. Cf. DS 1515.

9. Cf. DS 1530.

to return to observing the commandments, for they must receive pardon and peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation through the word of forgiveness imparted to them in virtue of God's reconciling work in Christ.

4.5 Law and gospel

31. We confess together that persons are justified by faith in the gospel "apart from works prescribed by the law" (Rom 3:28). Christ has fulfilled the law and by his death and resurrection has overcome it as a way to salvation. We also confess that God's commandments retain their validity for the justified and that Christ has by his teaching and example expressed God's will which is a standard for the conduct of the justified also.

32. Lutherans state that the distinction and right ordering of law and gospel is essential for the understanding of justification. In its theological use, the law is demand and accusation. Throughout their lives, all persons, Christians also, in that they are sinners, stand under this accusation which uncovers their sin so that, in faith in the gospel, they will turn unreservedly to the mercy of God in Christ, which alone justifies them.

33. Because the law as a way to salvation has been fulfilled and overcome through the gospel, Catholics can say that Christ is not a lawgiver in the manner of Moses. When Catholics emphasize that the righteous are bound to observe God's commandments, they do not thereby deny that through Jesus Christ God has mercifully promised to his children the grace of eternal life.¹³

4.6 Assurance of Salvation

34. We confess together that the faithful can rely on the mercy and promises of God. In spite of their own weakness and the manifold threats to their faith, on the strength of Christ's death and resurrection they can build on the effective promise of God's grace in Word and Sacrament and so be sure of this grace.

35. This was emphasized in a particular way by the Reformers: in the midst of temptation, believers should not look to themselves but look solely to Christ and trust only him. In trust in God's promise they are assured of their salvation, but are never secure looking at themselves.

36. Catholics can share the concern of the Reformers to ground faith in the objective reality of Christ's promise, to look away from one's own experience, and to trust in Christ's forgiving word alone (cf. Mt 16:19; 18:18). With the Second Vatican Council, Catholics state: to have faith is to entrust oneself totally to God,¹⁴ who liberates us from the darkness of sin and death and awakens us to eternal

life.¹⁵ In this sense, one cannot believe in God and at the same time consider the divine promise untrustworthy. No one may doubt God's mercy and Christ's merit. Every person, however, may be concerned about his salvation when he looks upon his own weaknesses and shortcomings. Recognizing his own failures, however, the believer may yet be certain that God intends his salvation.

4.7 The Good Works of the Justified

37. We confess together that good works—a Christian life lived in faith, hope and love—follow justification and are its fruits. When the justified live in Christ and act in the grace they receive, they bring forth, in biblical terms, good fruit. Since Christians struggle against sin their entire lives, this consequence of justification is also for them an obligation they must fulfill. Thus both Jesus and the apostolic Scriptures admonish Christians to bring forth the works of love.

38. According to Catholic understanding, good works, made possible by grace and the working of the Holy Spirit, contribute to growth in grace, so that the righteousness that comes from God is preserved and communion with Christ is deepened. When Catholics affirm the "meritorious" character of good works, they wish to say that, according to the biblical witness, a reward in heaven is promised to these works. Their intention is to emphasize the responsibility of persons for their actions, not to contest the character of those works as gifts, or far less to deny that justification always remains the unmerited gift of grace.

39. The concept of a preservation of grace and a growth in grace and faith is also held by Lutherans. They do emphasize that righteousness as acceptance by God and sharing in the righteousness of Christ is always complete. At the same time, they state that there can be growth in its effects in Christian living. When they view the good works of Christians as the fruits and signs of justification and not as one's own "merits," they nevertheless also understand eternal life in accord with the New Testament as unmerited "reward" in the sense of the fulfillment of God's promise to the believer.

5. The Significance and Scope of the Consensus Reached

40. The understanding of the doctrine of justification set forth in this Declaration shows that a consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification exists between Lutherans and Catholics. In light of this consensus the remaining differences of language, theological elaboration, and emphasis in the understanding of justification described in paras. 18 to 39 are acceptable. Therefore the Lutheran and the Catholic explications of justification are

13. Cf. DS 1545.

14. Cf. DV 5.

15. Cf. DV 5.

in their difference open to one another and do not destroy the consensus regarding the basic truths.

41. Thus the doctrinal condemnations of the 16th century, in so far as they relate to the doctrine of justification, appear in a new light: The teaching of the Lutheran churches presented in this Declaration does not fall under the condemnations from the Council of Trent. The condemnations in the Lutheran Confessions do not apply to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church presented in this Declaration.

42. Nothing is thereby taken away from the seriousness of the condemnations related to the doctrine of justification. Some were not simply pointless. They remain for us “salutary warnings” to which we must attend in our teaching and practice.¹⁶

43. Our consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification must come to influence the life and teachings of our churches. Here it must prove itself. In this respect, there are still questions of varying importance which need further clarification. These include, among other topics, the relationship between the Word of God and church doctrine, as well as ecclesiology, ecclesial authority, church unity, ministry, the sacraments, and the relation between justification and social ethics. We are convinced that the consensus we have reached offers a solid basis for this clarification. The Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church will continue to strive together to deepen this common understanding of justification and to make it bear fruit in the life and teaching of the churches.

44. We give thanks to the Lord for this decisive step forward on the way to overcoming the division of the church. We ask the Holy Spirit to lead us further toward that visible unity which is Christ’s will.

51. “The Authority of the Church in the World,” National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, 2010

This policy statement of the national council in the United States provides a theological basis for the advocacy work of the churches. It is based on a longer study produced by the Council’s Faith and Order Commission. • <http://www.nccusa.org/pdfs/authorityofthechurch.pdf>

The purpose of this policy statement is to address the following question: How can the churches bear effective–authoritative–witness to the gospel in a society filled with competing voices, in an era when authority itself is suspect, and at a time when the churches themselves are so obviously divided? In 1951, one year after its founding, the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC) adopted a policy statement on the implications of Christian faith for public life and the churches’ “corporate influence in the nation and in the world” (The National Council of Churches Views its Task in Christian Life and Work). The statement exudes a confidence that the churches, acting as council, would be taken seriously by the wider society, that statements issued by the NCC, while not determinative of public policy, could help shape the course of public debate on significant issues of the day. Sixty years later, the churches’ relationship to social-political life has dramatically changed! This statement explores the implications of that shift for contemporary churches in the United States, and it highlights the foundations for common action by the churches together as the NCC. . . .

Engagement with the World

There is no single, normative ecclesiology in the NCC. In fact, “the Church” can mean different things to different communions: even with the accepted ecumenical distinction between the universal Church and particular churches, some take “the Church” as referring to their own communion, while others understand it as a broader family of communions. The member communions have also been shaped by different histories, contexts, and theological traditions, and thus have developed somewhat different perspectives on the relationship of church and world. The churches have, however, been influenced by one another as a result of their ecumenical interaction. For example, the “mainline” Protestant churches, having lost their favored place at the center of American culture, now express their prophetic witness more through confrontation with society—a position long associated with Anabaptist and Free churches. Meanwhile, the Anabaptist and Free churches seem to have gained from their traditionally more mainstream partners a greater appreciation for the potentially transformative role of the Church as participant in the social-political order.

All of the churches, Faith and Order has found, can affirm that the Church is *in* the world though not *of* it (John 17:11, 16), that it has a mandate to bear witness publicly to the key values of the gospel. The churches agree that it is appropriate to make use of existing social-political structures in order to promote social transformation in ways consistent with the love Christians have known

16. *Condemnations of the Reformation Era*, ed. K. Lehmann and W. Pannenberg, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1990, p. 27.

in Jesus Christ, but also that they should not refrain from challenging such structures when needed. The question, then, is not *whether* the Church should be engaged with the world but *how* it can do so most effectively and faithfully. How does the Church speak and act in the public arena with an authority consistent with the Gospel it proclaims?

Challenges to Authoritative Witness

This question is complicated by challenges, both external and internal, to the churches' capacity to speak and act with authority in the world. One external challenge—very familiar by now, especially to western Christians—stems from the Enlightenment. Modern science has helped call into question the traditional Christian narrative of creation-fall-redemption; and, as a result, Christian faith has been reduced for many to a private quest for meaning, irrelevant to public debates about the common good. The Enlightenment's affirmation of the individual has also led to a rampant individualism which locates authority only in the self, disparaging the idea of obedience, even if freely given, to that which comes from outside.

Another external challenge, relatively new to the United States, is an ever-more dynamic religious pluralism in which various religions increasingly claim the spiritual devotion of our neighbors. The multitude of voices now heard in public discourse has contributed to a "post-modern" suspicion of all overarching narratives, a questioning that undercuts any claim to speak with authority. There is much to celebrate in this, since those with power have often declared their view of the world to be "universal"—authoritative—and foisted it off on others. But the challenge such developments pose for the church is unmistakable.

Both of these developments have contributed to what is often called the "disestablishment" of the mainline Protestant churches. Of course, the separation of church and state means that all churches in the U.S. context have had to influence the social-political environment through persuasion rather than direct control; but, historically, some churches have had far greater influence than others, and their culturally-favored position has enabled them to speak with authority in this society. That era has now clearly ended. Indeed, while the majority of NCC member communions never experienced such status in this country, nevertheless the mainline churches and all of the other member churches along with them are surely affected by the fact that American society no longer seemingly gives deference to Christian teaching.

Other challenges, more painful to recount, are internal to the Church itself. Individual Christians, nurtured in the churches, have made a mockery of the Gospel message

through their participation in such horrors as slavery and the decimation of Native American communities. Perhaps more troubling, the corporate Church has, at times, used its influence to endorse policies and practices of racism, religious intolerance, gender inequality, environmental degradation, neglect of the poor, and aggressive violence. The effect of this on the churches' authority in the world is incalculable; and the churches' credibility is further eroded by the spectacle of Christian disunity. How can the Church be taken seriously when, for example, parts of it counsel non-violence while other parts support the government's call to arms? The ecumenical movement has always insisted that unity does not mean uniformity; the churches cannot be expected to agree on all matters. It is difficult, however, for the Church to act with authority, to proclaim the Gospel with credibility, when the churches speak with such conflicting voices on major issues of the day.

The Meaning of Authority

Consideration of these challenges needs to begin with a definition of terms. Authority is often defined in terms of legality or power; but, properly understood, the authority of the church does not come from coercive power or legal sanction. Any power it claims to possess derives ultimately from its relationship, its communion, with God. Put more precisely, the Church is called to bear witness to the authority *of God and Jesus Christ* in the world.

It almost goes without saying that the Church has, at numerous points in its history, been vested with legal power through association with the state or other political entity. Such "authority," however, is extrinsic (dependent on historical conditions), whereas genuine authority is intrinsic. It has to do with the Church's essential nature and purpose as a community called forth by God. Indeed, the original meaning of the word "authority" has more to do with "the churches' ability to legitimately or rightfully influence opinion and actions" (Authority of the Church in the World, II.7). Ultimately an expression of knowledge, wisdom, and truth, "the Church's intrinsic authority derives from and witnesses to the authority of the triune God" (Authority of the Church in the World, II.8). It is the experience of God, through Jesus and the Spirit, that gives meaning to the authority possessed by the Church.

In 1950, the churches that together constitute the NCC surely had more worldly power than they do today, but it can be argued whether they had more authority. Many Christians may lament the loss of such a position, but this should not be confused with the more foundational issue of the Church's authority in the world. The authority of the Church in the world is not an authority of

worldly power, but one that reveals in holiness and truth the love of God through faithful acts of healing and forgiveness and reconciliation. “The Church finds its nature. . . as the body of Christ’s disciples, seeking to fulfill the will of the Father by the power of the Spirit so as to embody and to further the redemption, reconciliation, and justice of the reign of God in the world” (Authority of the Church in the World, II.24).

Seen in biblical perspective (which is extensively examined in the study paper), all authority ultimately rests in God, who manifests it through the giving of creation and the calling of a people to be witnesses to what God has done. This authority, Christians confess, is uniquely present in Jesus, and then in the disciples as they are empowered by the Holy Spirit. The disciples have no authority on their own; they exercise authority in Jesus’ name and as witnesses to his saving words and deeds. In this sense, they are Christ’s “ambassadors” (2 Cor 5:20), authorized to be representatives of Christ that through them the world may perceive Christ’s authority. The New Testament is clear that such authority is, paradoxically, the authority of servanthood, exercised through loving concern for others, not dominion over them.

The application of this to the life of the Church is obvious. The Church’s authority is rooted in its identity as the People of God, the Body of Christ, the New Creation of the Holy Spirit—a community of human beings called to embody and enact the graciousness it has received. The authority of the Church does not *depend* on the holiness of its members and ministers or the quality of its fellowship; there is an authority to the Word and Sacraments that goes beyond those who proclaim and administer. But the Church can surely obscure God’s authority by failing to reflect the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.

Shared Affirmations

Through the work of Faith and Order, representatives of the churches have identified a number of shared affirmations stemming from the understanding of the Church’s authority outlined above. For the sake of brevity, some of these affirmations are summarized below in ten points.

1. If the Church is to speak and act with authority, it must first and foremost be the Church—a community that worships God, nurtures its members in a way of life marked by Christ’s compassion, and seeks to proclaim and live in such a manner that others will experience the truth of the Gospel. As noted above, this Good News certainly has implications for the life of any society; and for this reason, the Church will join with others in serving the poor,

protecting the environment, promoting peace. But only the Church can be the Church. Its authority is wrapped up in the integrity of being what it is.

2. A primary way that the Church participates in the transformation of society is through the faithful vocation of individual Christians. This has always been so; but in an era distrustful of institutions, the personal witness of Christians takes on even greater importance. In this sense, careful attention to Christian education, to the formation of disciples of Christ, is central to the authority of the Church in the world.

3. If the Church’s witness is to be authentic—and, thus, to have intrinsic authority—it must be based on the commonly-recognized sources of Christian proclamation: namely, Scripture, Tradition, and the revelatory experience of God as tested in the life of the community. The churches of the NCC do not fully agree on what weight should be given to these sources of authoritative teaching, but they can affirm that each church is accountable for explaining, in the dialogue of the community, how it has arrived at its theological and moral convictions.

4. In order for the Church’s witness in the world to have authority, the churches must address the internal challenges named above, including the glaring problem of Christian division. Faith and Order’s stated mission—“to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ”—is, therefore, crucial to the entire NCC as it seeks to offer public witness on behalf of peace and justice.

5. Experience demonstrates the power of the Gospel, proclaimed in and by the Church, to transform lives and to engender a hunger for justice that can, ultimately, transform societies. Churches, acting together, have effectively promoted such things as civil rights and universal public education, and have effectively opposed child labor and capital punishment. They have acted with authority in responding to natural disasters and in founding hospitals and schools. Christians, nurtured in the church, have displayed habits of generosity and volunteerism that are a strength of American society. Experience also shows, however, that the churches can be co-opted by governments—becoming complicit in such things as colonialism, conquest, and the slave trade—and that authority can be exercised in abusive ways. For this reason, leaders in the churches must be attentive to reform movements that periodically arise to challenge the corruption that undermines the Church’s witness. Such movements are almost by definition minority efforts, as when the Society of Friends stood boldly against slavery in eighteenth century America. All of this means that the Church, if it would speak and act

with authority in the world, must be open to re-examining and, if need be, modifying past positions. To use only one example, churches historically associated with a “just war” position are reconsidering whether war can ever be justifiable in an era of weapons of massive destruction, while historically pacifist churches seem to be rethinking their traditional disengagement from the sphere of politics.

6. The Church needs leaders in the community of faith; but the Church generally speaks with authority when the people of the Church say “Amen” to decisions about its witness, and embody these decisions in the way they live. The Church’s authority is also surely enhanced when the face it shows to the world reflects the diversity of all God’s people.

7. Having mentioned the significance of community, it is important to add that, throughout Christian history, the Spirit has empowered prophetic individuals to speak God’s word to the world. These individuals often challenge as well the institutional structures of the Church, calling both church and society to conform more closely to the Gospel. Yet their witness, however prickly it may sometimes seem, is an indispensable dimension of the authority of the Church in the world.

8. Paradoxically, the Church’s authority in the world is likely enhanced when it not only speaks to the surrounding society, but listens humbly and carefully to it. As a human community, the Church has much to learn from others; and God may even use them to chastise the Church, summoning it back to its own role as participant in God’s mission of reconciliation and liberation. It follows that the Church may at times best exercise its authority through partnership with other religious communities. It does not compromise the proclamation of the Gospel to enact the love of Christ through common cause with Jewish or Muslim or other neighbors who also care for creation, seek to protect society’s most vulnerable members, and advocate for peace.

9. For the Church to have authority, its proclamation must, of course, be matched by action. Authority, as noted above, is grounded in theological discernment and communion among the parts of Christ’s body. But the authority of the Church arises from *koinonia* (communion) that is channeled to the world in the form of *kerygma* (proclamation) and *diakonia* (service). These classic elements of the church are inseparable in any adequate understanding of it.

10. The Church’s witness is authoritative to the extent that it witnesses to the hope not just of another world, but of this world made other. This is not to minimize the importance of personal salvation in the teaching of the church; but it is to say that, seen in biblical perspective, hope is incomplete if it does not include the vision

of God’s reign on earth as it is in heaven. Whatever role the Church plays in the world’s transformation, God will fulfill the promises of that time when no infant lives but a few days, when no one labors in vain, and when even the wolf and lamb feed together (Isaiah 65). The Church has authority in the world when it lifts up such a vision, refusing to accept what is as the way things ought to be.

The Authority of a Council of Churches

The English word “council” can refer to the governing body of a particular communion or to a gathering of the ancient Church which spoke with authority on matters of faith and practice. In the present context, however, “council of churches” refers to a voluntary association of separate and autonomous communions through which the members seek to manifest their fellowship with one another, to engage in common witness and service, and to advance toward the goal of full visible unity. Properly understood, there is no external entity called “council” that speaks for or to the churches, because the essence of any council is the commitment of the churches to speak and act together to the extent possible. The Constitution of the NCC refers to this commitment as a “covenant.” It is a way of affirming that the members are mutually accountable to one another because they recognize that they are commonly accountable to Christ. It is a way of expressing their intention, to echo the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches, “to stay together.”

It is worth repeating that the governing bodies of councils do not make decisions that are binding on the members. By entering into the covenant, however, a church says, in effect, that it will seek, whenever possible, to join with other member churches in offering shared witness to the Gospel in the world. Behind this is the assumption that when the churches speak and act together their words and actions may well carry more authority and credibility than that of churches speaking and acting in isolation. The fellowship of a council is not an adequate expression of the unity for which Christ prayed (John 17:21) or about which Paul repeatedly wrote; but it is an attempt, however partial, to overcome the scandal of division and, thus, strengthen the credibility of the churches.

It follows that councils should be that space where churches together address the most divisive issues of the day in order to learn from one another, to challenge one another, and, through this process of shared study and dialogue, to discern God’s will together as a basis for more authoritative proclamation. A council actually lessens the authority of its witness in the world to the extent that it acts solely like another social justice coalition or identifies

itself with partisan political positions. Its authority is that of churches acting and speaking, in harmony, as participants in the mission of God—to whom be glory forever.

52. *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, World Council of Churches Commission on Faith and Order, 2013

This text, a milestone in ecumenical reflection on ecclesiology, is the fruit of many years of work by Faith and Order, starting with BEM (1982) and the churches' response to it. It was received by the WCC Central Committee and sent to the churches for discussion and formal response. Since this document is readily accessible online, only two sections from it are included in this anthology. • The Church: Towards a Common Vision, *Faith and Order paper no. 214*, Geneva, WCC, 2013, pp. 9-19, 33-40.

CHAPTER II: THE CHURCH OF THE TRIUNE GOD

A. Discerning God's Will for the Church

11. All Christians share the conviction that Scripture is normative, therefore the biblical witness provides an irreplaceable source for acquiring greater agreement about the Church. Although the New Testament provides no systematic ecclesiology, it does offer accounts of the faith of the early communities, of their worship and practice of discipleship, of various roles of service and leadership, as well as images and metaphors used to express the identity of the Church. Subsequent interpretation within the Church, seeking always to be faithful to biblical teaching, has produced an additional wealth of ecclesiological insights over the course of history. The same Holy Spirit who guided the earliest communities in producing the inspired biblical text continues, from generation to generation, to guide later followers of Jesus as they strive to be faithful to the Gospel. This is what is understood by the "living Tradition" of the Church.¹⁷ The great importance of Tradition has

17. As the fourth World Conference on Faith and Order pointed out in its report "Scripture, Tradition and Traditions," "By the Tradition is meant the Gospel itself, transmitted from generation to generation in and by the Church, Christ himself present in the

been acknowledged by most communities, but they vary in assessing how its authority relates to that of Scripture.

12. A wide variety of ecclesiological insights can be found in the various books of the New Testament and in subsequent Tradition. The New Testament canon, by embracing this plurality, testifies to its compatibility with the unity of the Church, though without denying the limits to legitimate diversity.¹⁸ Legitimate diversity is not accidental to the life of the Christian community but is rather an aspect of its catholicity, a quality that reflects the fact that it is part of the Father's design that salvation in Christ be incarnational and thus "take flesh" among the various peoples to whom the Gospel is proclaimed. An adequate approach to the mystery of the Church requires the use and interaction of a wide range of images and insights (people of God, body of Christ, temple of the Holy Spirit, vine, flock, bride, household, soldiers, friends and so forth). The present text seeks to draw upon the richness of the biblical witness, along with insights from the Tradition.

B. The Church of the Triune God as *Koinonia*

The Initiative of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

13. The Church is called into being by the God, who "so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but may have eternal life" (John 3:16) and who sent the Holy Spirit to lead these believers into all truth, reminding them of all that Jesus taught (cf. John 14:26). In the Church, through the Holy Spirit, believers are united with Jesus Christ and thereby share a living relationship with the Father, who speaks to them and calls forth their trustful response. The biblical notion of *koinonia* has become central in the ecumenical quest for a common understanding of the life and unity of the Church. This quest presupposes that communion is not simply the union of existing churches in their current form. The noun *koinonia* (communion, participation, fellowship, sharing), which derives from a verb meaning "to have something in common," "to share," "to participate," "to have part in" or "to act together," appears in passages recounting the sharing in the Lord's Supper (cf. 1 Cor. 10:16-17), the reconciliation of Paul with Peter, James and John (cf. Gal.

life of the Church. By tradition is meant the traditionary process. The term traditions is used . . . to indicate both the diversity of forms of expression and also what we call confessional traditions. . . ." P. C. Roger and L. Vischer (eds.), *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order: Montreal 1963*, London, SCM Press, 1964, 50. See also *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels: An Instrument for an Ecumenical Reflection on Hermeneutics*, Geneva, WCC, 1998, §§14-37, pp. 14-26.

18. This theme will be taken up in §§28-30 below.

2:7-10), the collection for the poor (cf. Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 8:3-4) and the experience and witness of the Church (cf. Acts 2:42-45). As a divinely established communion, the Church belongs to God and does not exist for itself. It is by its very nature missionary, called and sent to witness in its own life to that communion which God intends for all humanity and for all creation in the kingdom.

14. The Church is centred and grounded in the Gospel, the proclamation of the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, Son of the Father. This is reflected in the New Testament affirmation, "You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God" (1 Pet. 1:23). Through the preaching of the Gospel (cf. Rom. 10:14-18) and under the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3), human beings come to saving faith and, by sacramental means, are incorporated into the body of Christ (cf. Eph. 1:23). Some communities, following this teaching, would call the Church *creatura evangelii* or "creature of the Gospel."¹⁹ A defining aspect of the Church's life is to be a community that hears and proclaims the word of God. The Church draws life from the Gospel and discovers ever anew the direction for her journey.

15. The response of Mary, the Mother of God (*Theotokos*), to the angel's message at the annunciation, "Let it be done with me according to your word" (Luke 1:38), has been seen as a symbol of and model for the Church and the individual Christian. The Faith and Order study document *Church and World* (1990) noted that Mary is "an important example for all who seek to understand the full dimensions of life in Christian community" in that she receives and responds to the Word of God (Luke 1:26-38); shares the joy of the good news with Elizabeth (Luke 1:46-55); meditates, suffers and strives to understand the events of the birth and childhood of Jesus (Matt. 2:13-23; Luke 2:19, 41-51); seeks to comprehend the full implications of discipleship (Mark 3:31-35; Lk 18:19-20); stands by him under the cross and accompanies his body to the tomb (Matt. 27:55-61; John 19:25-27) and waits with the

19. See the section "The Church as 'Creature of the Gospel'" in Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue, "Church and Justification," in J. Gros, FSC, H. Meyer and W. G. Rusch (eds.), *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1982-1998*, Geneva-Grand Rapids, WCC-Eerdmans, 2000, 495-498, which refers to Martin Luther's use of this expression in WA 2, 430, 6-7: "*Ecclesia enim creatura est evangelii*." Some bilateral dialogues have used the Latin *creatura verbi* to express this same idea: see the section "Two Conceptions of the Church" (§§94-113), which describes the Church as "*creatura verbi*" and "sacrament of grace" in the Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue, "Towards a Common Understanding of the Church," in *Growth in Agreement II*, 801-805. See also the statement "Called to Be the One Church," cf. footnote 1, above.

disciples and receives with them the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 1:12-14; 2:1-4).²⁰

16. Christ prayed to the Father to send the Spirit on his disciples to guide them into all truth (John 15:26, 16:13), and it is the Spirit who not only bestows faith and other charisms upon individual believers but also equips the Church with its essential gifts, qualities and order. The Holy Spirit nourishes and enlivens the body of Christ through the living voice of the preached Gospel, through sacramental communion, especially in the Eucharist, and through ministries of service.

The Prophetic, Priestly and Royal People of God

17. In the call of Abraham, God was choosing for himself a holy people. The prophets frequently recalled this election and vocation in the following powerful formulation: "I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 37:27; echoed in 2 Cor. 6:16; Heb. 8:10). The covenant with Israel marked a decisive moment in the unfolding realization of the plan of salvation. Christians believe that in the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus and the sending of the Holy Spirit, God established the new covenant for the purpose of uniting all human beings with himself and with one another. There is a genuine newness in the covenant initiated by Christ and yet the Church remains, in God's design, profoundly related to the people of the first covenant, to whom God will always remain faithful (cf. Rom. 11:11-36).

18. In the Old Testament, the people of Israel are journeying towards the fulfilment of the promise that in Abraham all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. All those who turn to Christ find this promise fulfilled in him, when, on the cross, he broke down the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile (cf. Eph. 2:14). The Church is a "chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people" (1 Pet. 2:9-10). While acknowledging the unique priesthood of Jesus Christ, whose one sacrifice institutes the new covenant (cf. Heb. 9:15), believers are called to express by their lives the fact that they have been named a "royal priesthood," offering themselves "as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God" (Rom. 12:1). Every Christian receives gifts of the Holy Spirit for the upbuilding of the Church and for his or her part in the mission of Christ. These gifts are given for the common good (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7; Eph. 4:11-13) and place obligations of responsibility and

20 See the Faith and Order report *Church and World: The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community*, Geneva, WCC, 1990, 64. See also the report of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, "Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ," *Growth in Agreement III*, 82-112; and the report of the Groupe des Dombes, *Mary in the Plan of God and in the Communion of Saints* (1997-1998), Mahwah, N.J., Paulist Press, 2002.

mutual accountability on every individual and local community and on the Church as a whole at every level of its life. Strengthened by the Spirit, Christians are called to live out their discipleship in a variety of forms of service.

19. The whole people of God is called to be a prophetic people, bearing witness to God's word; a priestly people, offering the sacrifice of a life lived in discipleship; and a royal people, serving as instruments for the establishment of God's reign. All members of the Church share in this vocation. In calling and sending the Twelve, Jesus laid foundations for the leadership of the community of his disciples in their on-going proclamation of the kingdom. Faithful to his example, from the earliest times some believers were chosen under the guidance of the Spirit and given specific authority and responsibility. Ordained ministers "assemble and build up the Body of Christ by proclaiming and teaching the Word of God, by celebrating the sacraments and by guiding the life of the community in its worship, its mission and its caring ministry."²¹ All members of the body, ordained and lay, are interrelated members of God's priestly people. Ordained ministers remind the community of its dependence on Jesus Christ, who is the source of its unity and mission, even as they understand their own ministry as dependent on him. At the same time, they can fulfil their calling only in and for the Church; they need its recognition, support and encouragement.

20. There is widespread agreement among churches of different traditions about the vital place of ministry. This was succinctly expressed in the Faith and Order document, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (1982), which stated that "the Church has never been without persons holding specific authority and responsibility," noting that, "Jesus chose and sent the disciples to be witnesses of the kingdom."²² The mission which Jesus entrusted to the eleven in Matthew 28 entails "a ministry of word, sacrament and oversight given by Christ to the Church to be carried out by some of its members for the good of all. This triple function of the ministry equips the Church for its mission in the world."²³ Agreed statements are making it clear that the

21. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Geneva, WCC, 1982, section on Ministry, §13.

22. *Ibid.*, section on Ministry, §9.

23. Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue, "Towards a Common Understanding of the Church", §132, in *Growth in Agreement II*, 810. See also the Lutheran Roman Catholic report "Ministry in the Church," §17, in H. Meyer and L. Vischer (eds.), *Growth in Agreement: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level*, Ramsey-Geneva, Paulist-WCC, 1984, 252-253: "The New Testament shows how there emerged from among the ministries a special ministry which was understood as standing in the succession of the apostles sent by Christ. Such a special ministry proved to be necessary for the sake of leadership in the communities. One can, therefore, say that

royal priesthood of the whole people of God (cf. 1 Pet. 2:9) and a special ordained ministry are both important aspects of the church, and not to be seen as mutually exclusive alternatives. At the same time, churches differ about who is competent to make final decisions for the community; for some that task is restricted to the ordained, while others see the laity as having a role in such decisions.

Body of Christ and Temple of the Holy Spirit

21. Christ is the abiding head of his body the Church, guiding, purifying and healing it (cf. Eph. 5:26). At the same time, he is intimately united to it, giving life to the whole in the Spirit (Rom. 12:5; cf. 1 Cor. 12:12). Faith in Christ is fundamental to membership of the body (Rom. 10:9). According to the understanding of most traditions, it is also through the rites or sacraments of initiation that human beings become members of Christ and in the Lord's Supper their participation in his body (cf. 1 Cor. 10:16) is renewed again and again. The Holy Spirit confers manifold gifts upon the members and brings forth their unity for the building up of the body (cf. Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-30). He renews their hearts, equipping and calling them to good works,²⁴ thus enabling them to serve the Lord in furthering the kingdom in the world. Thus the image of "body of Christ," though explicitly and primarily referring the Church to Christ, also deeply implies a relation to the Holy Spirit, as witnessed to throughout the entire New Testament.

A vivid example of this is the account of the descent of tongues of fire upon the disciples gathered in the upper room on the morning of Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:1-4). By the power of the Holy Spirit believers grow into "a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2:21-22), into a "spiritual house" (1 Pet. 2:5). Filled with the Holy Spirit, they are called to lead a life worthy of their calling in worship, witness and service, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (cf. Eph. 4:1-3). The Holy Spirit enlivens and equips the Church to play its role in proclaiming and bringing about that general transformation for which all creation groans (cf. Rom. 8:22-23).

The One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church

22. Since the time of the second ecumenical council, held at Constantinople in 381, most Christians have included

according to the New Testament the 'special ministry' established by Jesus Christ through the calling and sending of the apostles 'was essential then—it is essential in all times and circumstances.'" The Methodist-Roman Catholic "Toward a Statement on the Church," affirms that "the church has always needed a God-given ministry," cf. *Growth in Agreement II*, 588, §29.

24. Cf. the *Lutheran-Roman Catholic Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2000, §15.

in their liturgies the creed which professes the Church to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic. These attributes, which are not separate from one another but which inform one another and are mutually interrelated, are God's gifts to the Church which believers, in all their human frailty, are constantly called to actualize.

- The Church is one because God is one (cf. John 17:11; 1 Tim. 2:5). In consequence, the apostolic faith is one; the new life in Christ is one; the hope of the Church is one.²⁵ Jesus prayed that all his disciples be one so that the world might believe (cf. John 17:20-21) and sent the Spirit to form them into one body (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12-13). Current divisions within and between the churches stand in contrast to this oneness; “these must be overcome through the Spirit’s gifts of faith, hope, and love so that separation and exclusion do not have the last word.”²⁶ Yet, in spite of all divisions, all the churches understand themselves as founded in the one Gospel (cf. Gal. 1:5-9), and they are united in many features of their lives (cf. Eph. 4:4-7).
- The Church is holy because God is holy (cf. Is. 6:3; Lev. 11:44-45). Jesus “loved the Church and gave himself up for her in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word. . . so that she may be holy and without blemish.” (Eph. 5:26-27). The essential holiness of the Church is witnessed to in every generation by holy men and women and by the holy words and actions the Church proclaims and performs in the name of God, the All Holy. Nevertheless, sin, which contradicts this holiness and runs counter to the Church’s true nature and vocation, has again and again disfigured the lives of believers. For this reason, part of the holiness of the Church is its ministry of continually calling people to repentance, renewal and reform.
- The Church is catholic because of the abundant goodness of God “who desires everyone to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). Through the life-giving power of God, the Church’s mission transcends all barriers and proclaims the Gospel to all peoples. Where the whole mystery of Christ is present, there too is the Church catholic (cf. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Smyrneans*, 6), as in the celebration of the eucharist. The essential catholicity of the Church is undermined

when cultural and other differences are allowed to develop into division. Christians are called to remove all obstacles to the embodiment of this fullness of truth and life bestowed upon the Church by the power of the Holy Spirit.

- The Church is apostolic because the Father sent the Son to establish it. The Son, in turn, chose and sent the apostles and prophets, empowered with the gifts of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, to serve as its foundation and to oversee its mission (cf. Eph. 2:20; Rev. 21:14; and Clement of Rome, *Letter to the Corinthians* 42). The Christian community is called to be ever faithful to these apostolic origins; infidelity in worship, witness or service contradicts the Church’s apostolicity. Apostolic succession in ministry, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is intended to serve the apostolicity of the Church.²⁷

23. In the light of the previous paragraphs (13-22), it is clear that the Church is not merely the sum of individual believers among themselves. The Church is fundamentally a communion in the Triune God and, at the same time, a communion whose members partake together in the life and mission of God (cf. 2 Pet. 1:4), who, as Trinity, is the source and focus of all communions. Thus the Church is both a divine and a human reality.

24. While it is a common affirmation that the Church is a meeting place between the divine and the human, churches nonetheless have different sensitivities or even contrasting convictions concerning the way in which the Holy Spirit’s activity in the Church is related to institutional structures or ministerial order. Some see certain essential aspects of the Church’s order as willed and instituted by Christ himself for all time; therefore, in faithfulness to the Gospel, Christians would have no authority fundamentally to alter this divinely instituted structure. Some affirm that the ordering of the Church according to God’s calling can take more than one form while others affirm that no single institutional order can be attributed to the will of God. Some hold that faithfulness to the Gospel may at times require a break in institutional continuity, while others insist that such faithfulness can be maintained by resolving difficulties without breaks which lead to separation.

25. Cf. “Called to Be the One Church,” §5, in *Growth in Agreement III*, 607.

26. *Ibid.*

27. The World Council of Churches statement “Called to Be the One Church,” §3-7, offers a similar explanation of the creed’s profession that the Church is “one, holy, catholic and apostolic.” Cf. *Growth in Agreement III*, 607.

How Continuity and Change in the Church Relate to God's Will

Through their patient encounter, in a spirit of mutual respect and attention, many churches have come to a deeper understanding of these differing sensitivities and convictions regarding continuity and change in the Church. In that deeper understanding, it becomes clear that the same intent—to obey God's will for the ordering of the Church—may, in some, inspire commitment to continuity and, in others, commitment to change. We invite the churches to recognize and honour each other's commitment to seeking the will of God in the ordering of the Church. We further invite them to reflect together about the criteria which are employed in different churches for considering issues about continuity and change. How far are such criteria open to development in the light of the urgent call of Christ to reconciliation (cf. Matt. 5:23-24)? Could this be the time for a new approach?

C. The Church as Sign and Servant of God's Design for the World

25. It is God's design to gather humanity and all of creation into communion under the Lordship of Christ (cf. Eph. 1:10). The Church, as a reflection of the communion of the Triune God, is meant to serve this goal and is called to manifest God's mercy to human beings, helping them to achieve the purpose for which they were created and in which their joy ultimately is found: to praise and glorify God together with all the heavenly hosts. This mission of the Church is fulfilled by its members through the witness of their lives and, when possible, through the open proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ. The mission of the Church is to serve this purpose. Since God wills all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4), Christians acknowledge that God reaches out to those who are not explicit members of the Church, in ways that may not be immediately evident to human eyes. While respecting the elements of truth and goodness that can be found in other religions and among those with no religion, the mission of the Church remains that of inviting, through witness and testimony, all men and women to come to know and love Christ Jesus.

26. Some New Testament passages use the term *mystery* (*mysterion*) to speak both of God's design of salvation in Christ (cf. Eph. 1:9; 3:4-6) and of the intimate relation between Christ and the Church (cf. Eph. 5:32; Col. 1:24-28). This suggests that the Church enjoys a spiritual, transcendent quality which cannot be grasped simply by looking at its visible appearance. The earthly and spiritual dimensions of the Church cannot be separated. The organizational structures of the Christian community need to

be seen and evaluated, for good or ill, in the light of God's gifts of salvation in Christ, celebrated in the liturgy. The Church, embodying in its own life the mystery of salvation and the transfiguration of humanity, participates in the mission of Christ to reconcile all things to God and to one another through Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 5:18-21; Rom. 8:18-25).

27. While there is wide agreement that God established the Church as the privileged means for bringing about his universal design of salvation, some communities believe that this can be suitably expressed by speaking of the "Church as sacrament," while others do not normally use such language or reject it outright. Those who use the expression "Church as sacrament" do so because they understand the Church as an effective sign and means (sometimes described by the word *instrument*) of the communion of human beings with one another through their communion in the Triune God.²⁸ Those who refrain from employing this expression believe that its use could obscure the distinction between the Church as a whole and the individual sacraments and that it may lead one to overlook the sinfulness still present among members of the community. All agree that God is the author of salvation; differences appear concerning the ways in which the various communities understand the nature and role of the Church and its rites in that saving activity.

The Expression, "the Church as Sacrament"

Those who use the expression "the Church as sacrament" do not deny the unique "sacramentality" of the sacraments nor do they deny the frailty of human ministers. Those who reject this expression, on the other hand, do not deny that the Church is an effective sign of God's presence and action. Might this, therefore, be seen as a question where legitimate differences of formulation are compatible and mutually acceptable?

28. For example, the Catholic bishops at the Second Vatican Council stated that "the Church, in Christ, is in the nature of sacrament—a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men" (cf. the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 1, where the word instrument is intended to convey in a positive way the "effectiveness" of the Church). Other Christians who strongly affirm the Church's sacramental nature find inappropriate the use of the word *instrument* in reference to the Christian community. The rather wide reception of the idea that the Church is a sign is witnessed in the World Council of Churches report "The Holy Spirit and the Catholicity of the Church" from the Fourth General Assembly of the WCC held at Uppsala in 1968, which stated: "The Church is bold in speaking of itself as the sign of the coming unity of mankind." Cf. N. Goodall (ed.), *The Uppsala Report*, Geneva, WCC, 1968, 17. For the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* see <http://www.vatican.va>.

D. Communion in Unity and Diversity

28. Legitimate diversity in the life of communion is a gift from the Lord. The Holy Spirit bestows a variety of complementary gifts on the faithful for the common good (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4-7). The disciples are called to be fully united (cf. Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-37), while respectful of and enriched by their diversities (1 Cor 12:14-26). Cultural and historical factors contribute to the rich diversity within the Church. The Gospel needs to be proclaimed in languages, symbols and images that are relevant to particular times and contexts so as to be lived authentically in each time and place. Legitimate diversity is compromised whenever Christians consider their own cultural expressions of the Gospel as the only authentic ones, to be imposed upon Christians of other cultures.

29. At the same time, unity must not be surrendered. Through shared faith in Christ, expressed in the proclamation of the Word, the celebration of the sacraments and lives of service and witness, each local church is in communion with the local churches of all places and all times. A pastoral ministry for the service of unity and the upholding of diversity is one of the important means given to the Church in aiding those with different gifts and perspectives to remain mutually accountable to each other.

30. Issues concerning unity and diversity have been a principal concern since the Church discerned, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, that Gentiles were to be welcomed into communion (cf. Acts 15:1-29; 10:1-11:18). The letter addressed from the meeting in Jerusalem to the Christians in Antioch contains what might be called a fundamental principle governing unity and diversity: "For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials" (Acts 15:28). Later, the Ecumenical Councils provided further examples of such "essentials," as when, at the first Ecumenical Council (Nicaea, 325), the bishops clearly taught that communion in faith required the affirmation of the divinity of Christ. In more recent times, churches have joined together in enunciating firm ecclesial teachings which express the implications of such foundational doctrine, as in the condemnation of apartheid by many Christian communities.²⁹

29. "World Council of Churches' Consultation with Member-Churches in South Africa—Cottesloe, Johannesburg, 7-14 December, 1960," in *The Ecumenical Review*, XIII(2), January 1961, 244-250; "Statement on Confessional Integrity," in *In Christ a New Community: The Proceedings of the Sixth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation: Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, June 13-25, 1977*, Geneva, Lutheran World Federation, 1977, 179-180, 210-212; "Resolution on Racism and South Africa," in *Ottawa 82: Proceedings of the 21st General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (Presbyterian and Congregational) Held at Ottawa, Canada, August 17-27, 1982*, Geneva, Offices of the Alliance, 1983, 176-180; The Belhar Confession, <http://www.urcsa.org.za/documents/The%20Belhar%20Confession.pdf>.

There are limits to legitimate diversity; when it goes beyond acceptable limits it can be destructive of the gift of unity. Within the Church, heresies and schisms, along with political conflicts and expressions of hatred, have threatened God's gift of communion. Christians are called not only to work untiringly to overcome divisions and heresies but also to preserve and treasure their legitimate differences of liturgy, custom and law and to foster legitimate diversities of spirituality, theological method and formulation in such a way that they contribute to the unity and catholicity of the Church as a whole.³⁰

Legitimate and Divisive Diversity

Ecumenical dialogue in search of the unity for which Christ prayed has, in large part, been an effort by representatives from various Christian churches to discern, with the help of the Holy Spirit, what is necessary for unity, according to the will of God, and what is properly understood as legitimate diversity. Though all churches have their own procedures for distinguishing legitimate from illegitimate diversity, it is clear that two things are lacking: (a) common criteria, or means of discernment, and (b) such mutually recognized structures as are needed to use these effectively. All churches seek to follow the will of the Lord yet they continue to disagree on some aspects of faith and order and, moreover, on whether such disagreements are Church-divisive or, instead, part of legitimate diversity. We invite the churches to consider: what positive steps can be taken to make common discernment possible?

30. Cf. the World Council of Churches statement "The Unity of the Church as *Koinonia*: Gift and Calling": "Diversities which are rooted in theological traditions, various cultural, ethnic or historical contacts are integral to the nature of communion; yet there are limits to diversity. Diversity is illegitimate when, for instance, it makes impossible the common confession of Jesus Christ as God and Saviour the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8). . . . In communion diversities are brought together in harmony as gifts of the Holy Spirit, contributing to the richness and fullness of the church of God." In M. Kinnamon (ed.), *Signs of the Spirit: Official Report Seventh Assembly*, Geneva-Grand Rapids, WCC-Eerdmans, 1991, 173. Legitimate diversity is frequently treated in the international bilateral dialogues. The Anglican-Orthodox dialogue, for instance, notes the wide diversity in life of the local churches: "As long as their witness to the one faith remains unimpaired, such diversity is seen not as a deficiency or cause for division, but as a mark of the fullness of the one Spirit who distributes to each according to his will." *The Church of the Triune God: The Cyprus Statement Agreed by the International Commission for Anglican-Orthodox Dialogue 2006*, London, Anglican Communion Office, 2006, 91. See also: Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue, *Facing Unity* (1984), §§5-7, 27-30, and especially 31-34, in *Growth in Agreement II*, 445-446, 449-450; Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, "The Gift of Authority," §§26-31, in *Growth in Agreement III*, 68-69; Methodist-Roman Catholic Dialogue, "Speaking the Truth in Love," §50, in *Growth in Agreement III*, 154.

E. Communion of Local Churches

31. The ecclesiology of communion provides a helpful framework for considering the relation between the local church and the universal Church. Most Christians could agree that the local church is “a community of baptized believers in which the word of God is preached, the apostolic faith confessed, the sacraments are celebrated, the redemptive work of Christ for the world is witnessed to, and a ministry of *episkopé* exercised by bishops or other ministers in serving the community.”³¹ Culture, language and shared history all enter into the very fabric of the local church. At the same time, the Christian community in each place shares with all the other local communities all that is essential to the life of communion. Each local church contains within it the fullness of what it is to be the Church. It is wholly Church, but not the whole Church. Thus, the local church should not be seen in isolation from but in dynamic relation with other local churches. From the beginning communion was maintained between local churches by collections, exchanges of letters, visits, eucharistic hospitality and tangible expressions of solidarity (cf. 1 Cor. 16; 2 Cor. 8:1-9; Gal. 2:1-10). From time to time, during the first centuries, local churches assembled to take counsel together. All of these were ways of nurturing interdependence and maintaining communion. This communion of local churches is thus not an optional extra. The universal Church is the communion of all local churches united in faith and worship around the world.³² It is not merely the sum, federation or juxtaposition of local churches, but all of them together are the same Church present and acting in this world. Catholicity, as described in the baptismal catechesis of Cyril of Jerusalem, refers not simply to geographic extension but also to the manifold variety of local churches and their participation in the fullness of faith and life that unites them in the one *koinonia*.³³

32. Within this shared understanding of the communion of the local churches in the universal Church,

31. Cf. the report of the Joint Working Group of the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, “The Church: Local and Universal,” §15, in *Growth in Agreement II*, 866. “Local” should not be confused with “denominational” in this description.

32. Cf. the unity statements of the New Delhi, Uppsala, and Nairobi assemblies of the World Council of Churches in W. A. Visser ‘t Hooft (ed.), *The New Delhi Report: The Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches 1961*, London, SCM, 1962, 116-134; N. Goodall (ed.), *The Uppsala Report 1968: Official Report of the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, Geneva, WCC, 1968, 11-19; and D. M. Paton (ed.), *Breaking Barriers Nairobi 1975: The Official Report of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, London-Grand Rapids, SPCK-Eerdmans, 1976, 59-69.

33. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis 18*, in J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. 33, Paris, 1044.

differences arise, not only about the geographical extent of the community intended by the expression “local church” but also in relation to the role of bishops. Some churches are convinced that the bishop, as a successor to the apostles, is essential to the structure and reality of the local church. Thus, in a strict sense, the local church is a diocese, comprised of a number of parishes. For others, having developed various forms of self-understanding, the expression “local church” is less common and not defined in reference to the ministry of a bishop. For some of those churches, the local church is simply the congregation of believers gathered in one place to hear the Word and celebrate the Sacraments. Both for those who see the bishop as essential and for those who do not, the expression “local church” has also at times been used to refer to a regional configuration of churches, gathered together in a synodal structure under a presidency. Finally there is not yet agreement about how local, regional and universal levels of ecclesial order relate to one another, although valuable steps in seeking convergence about those relations can be found in both multilateral and bilateral dialogues.³⁴

The Relationship between Local and Universal Church

Many churches can embrace a shared understanding of the fundamental relationship and communion of local churches within the universal Church. They share the understanding that the presence of Christ, by the will of the Father and the power of the Spirit, is truly manifested in the local church (it is “wholly Church”), and that this very presence of Christ impels the local church to be in communion with the universal Church (it is not “the whole Church”). Where this fundamental agreement is found, the expression “local church” may nonetheless be used in varying ways. In our common quest for closer unity, we invite the churches to seek more precise mutual understanding and agreement in this area: what is the appropriate relation between the various levels of life of a fully united Church and what specific ministries of leadership are needed to serve and foster those relations?

34. A good example at the multilateral level is the report of the Joint Working Group of the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church “The Church: Local and Universal,” in www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/. Cf. also *Growth in Agreement II*, 862-875. From the bilateral dialogues, see “Ecclesial Communion—Communion of Churches” of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic “Church and Justification,” in *Growth in Agreement II*, 505-512; and especially the Orthodox-Roman Catholic statement on “Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Nature of the Church: Ecclesial Communion, Conciliarity and Authority” (2007) at: www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/ch_orthodox_docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20071013_documento-ravenna_en.html

CHAPTER IV: THE CHURCH: IN AND FOR THE WORLD

A. God's Plan for Creation: The Kingdom

58. The reason for the mission of Jesus is succinctly expressed in the words, "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son" (John 3:16). Thus the first and foremost attitude of God towards the world is love, for every child, woman and man who has ever become part of human history and, indeed, for the whole of creation. The kingdom of God, which Jesus preached by revealing the Word of God in parables and inaugurated by his mighty deeds, especially by the paschal mystery of his death and resurrection, is the final destiny of the whole universe. The Church was intended by God, not for its own sake, but to serve the divine plan for the transformation of the world. Thus, service (*diakonia*) belongs to the very being of the Church. The study document *Church and World* described such service in the following way: "As the body of Christ, the Church participates in the divine mystery. As mystery, it reveals Christ to the world by proclaiming the Gospel, by celebrating the sacraments (which are themselves called 'mysteries'), and by manifesting the newness of life given by him, thus anticipating the Kingdom already present in him."³⁵

59. The Church's mission in the world is to proclaim to all people, in word and deed, the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ (cf. Mk.16:15). Evangelization is thus one of the foremost tasks of the Church in obedience to the command of Jesus (cf. Matt. 28:18-20). The Church is called by Christ in the Holy Spirit to bear witness to the Father's reconciliation, healing and transformation of creation. Thus a constitutive aspect of evangelization is the promotion of justice and peace.

60. Today Christians are more aware of the wide array of different religions other than their own and of the positive truths and values they contain.³⁶ This occasions

35. *Church and World: The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community*, Geneva, WCC, 1990, Chapter III, §21, 27.

36. On questions relating to this topic, see "Religious Plurality and Christian Self-Understanding" (2006), the result of a study process in response to suggestions made in 2002 at the WCC central committee to the three staff teams on Faith and Order, Inter-religious Relations, and Mission and Evangelism, available at: www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/%20documents/assembly/porto-alegre-2006/3-preparatory-and-background-%20documents/religious-plurality-and-christian-self-understanding.html. This statement follows the discussion of the relation between mission and world religions at the conference of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism held in San Antonio in 1989. Because of its relevance to the general themes taken up in this chapter, some mention of interreligious relations will appear in each of its three sections.

Christians to recall those gospel passages in which Jesus himself speaks positively about those who were "foreign" or "others" in relation to his listeners (cf. Matt. 8:11-12; Luke 7:9; 13:28-30). Christians acknowledge religious freedom as one of the fundamental dimensions of human dignity and, in the charity called for by Christ himself, they seek to respect that dignity and to dialogue with others, not only to share the riches of Christian faith but also to appreciate whatever elements of truth and goodness are present in other religions. In the past, when proclaiming the Gospel to those who had not yet heard it, due respect was not always given to their religions. Evangelization should always be respectful of those who hold other beliefs. Sharing the joyful news of the truth revealed in the New Testament and inviting others to the fullness of life in Christ is an expression of respectful love.³⁷ Within the contemporary context of increased awareness of religious pluralism, the possibility of salvation for those who do not explicitly believe in Christ and the relation between inter-religious dialogue and the proclamation that Jesus is Lord have increasingly become topics of reflection and discussion among Christians.

Ecumenical Response to Religious Pluralism

There remain serious disagreements within and between some churches concerning these issues. The New Testament teaches that God wills the salvation of all people (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4) and, at the same time, that Jesus is the one and only saviour of the world (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5 and Acts 4:12). What conclusions may be drawn from these biblical teachings regarding the possibility of salvation for those who do not believe in Christ? Some hold that, in ways known to God, salvation in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit is possible for those who do not explicitly share Christian faith. Others do not see how such a view sufficiently corresponds to biblical passages about the necessity of faith and baptism for salvation. Differences on this question will have an impact upon how one understands and puts into practice the mission of the Church. Within today's context of increased awareness of the vitality of various

37. The "Charta Oecumenica" (2001) of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Council of European Episcopal Conferences (CCEE), §2, states: "We commit ourselves to recognise that every person can freely choose his or her religious and church affiliation as a matter of conscience, which means not inducing anyone to convert through moral pressure or material incentive, but also not hindering anyone from entering into conversion of his or her own free will.": See also "Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct," of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, the World Council of Churches and the World Evangelical Alliance, approved on 28 January 2011, and available at: www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_20111110_testimonianza-cristiana_en.html.

religions throughout the world, how may the churches arrive at greater convergence about these issues and cooperate more effectively in witnessing to the Gospel in word and deed?

B. The Moral Challenge of the Gospel

61. Christians are called to repent of their sins, to forgive others and to lead sacrificial lives of service: discipleship demands moral commitment. However, as St Paul so emphatically teaches, human beings are justified not through works of the law but by grace through faith (cf. Rom. 3:21-26; Gal. 2:19-21). Thus the Christian community lives within the sphere of divine forgiveness and grace, which calls forth and shapes the moral life of believers. It is of significant importance for the reestablishment of unity that the two communities whose separation marked the beginning of the Protestant Reformation have achieved consensus about the central aspects of the doctrine of justification by faith, the major focus of disagreement at the time of their division.³⁸ It is on the basis of faith and grace that moral engagement and common action are possible and should be affirmed as intrinsic to the life and being of the Church.

62. The ethics of Christians as disciples are rooted in God, the creator and revealer, and take shape as the community seeks to understand God's will within the various circumstances of time and place. The Church does not stand in isolation from the moral struggles of humankind as a whole. Together with the adherents of other religions as well as with all persons of good will, Christians must promote not only those individual moral values which are essential to the authentic realization of the human person but also the social values of justice, peace and the protection of the environment, since the message of the Gospel extends to both the personal and the communal aspects of human existence. Thus *koinonia* includes not only the confession of the one faith and celebration of common worship, but also shared moral values, based upon the inspiration and insights of the Gospel. Notwithstanding their current state of division, the churches have come so far in fellowship with one another that they are aware that what one does affects the life of others, and, in consequence, are increasingly conscious of the need to be accountable to each other with respect to their ethical reflections and decisions. As churches engage in mutual questioning and affirmation, they give expression to what they share in Christ.

63. While tensions about moral issues have always been a concern for the Church, in the world of today, philosophical, social and cultural developments have led to the rethinking of many moral norms, causing new conflicts

38. See the Lutheran-Roman Catholic *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2000.

over moral principles and ethical questions to affect the unity of the churches. At the same time, moral questions are related to Christian anthropology, and priority is given to the Gospel in evaluating new developments in moral thinking. Individual Christians and churches sometimes find themselves divided into opposing opinions about what principles of personal or collective morality are in harmony with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Moreover, some believe that moral questions are not of their nature "church-dividing," while others are firmly convinced that they are.

Moral Questions and the Unity of the Church

Ecumenical dialogue at the multilateral and bilateral levels has begun to sketch out some of the parameters of the significance of moral doctrine and practice for Christian unity.³⁹ If present and future ecumenical dialogue is to serve both the mission and the unity of the Church, it is important that this dialogue explicitly address the challenges to convergence represented by contemporary moral issues. We invite the churches to explore these issues in a spirit of mutual attentiveness and support. How might the churches, guided by the Spirit, discern together what it means today to understand and live in fidelity to the teaching and attitude of Jesus? How can the churches, as they engage together in this task of discernment, offer appropriate models of discourse and wise counsel to the societies in which they are called to serve?

C. The Church in Society

64. The world that "God so loved" is scarred with problems and tragedies which cry out for the compassionate engagement of Christians. The source of their passion for the transformation of the world lies in their communion with God in Jesus Christ. They believe that God, who is absolute love, mercy and justice, can work through them, in the power of the Holy Spirit. They live as disciples of the One who cared for the blind, the lame and the leper, who welcomed the poor and the outcast, and who challenged authorities who showed little regard for human dignity or the will of God. The Church needs to help those without power in society to be heard; at times it must become a voice for those who are voiceless. Precisely because of their faith, Christian communities cannot stand idly by in the face of

39. For example, the Anglican-Roman Catholic statement "Life in Christ: Morals, Communion and the Church," in *Growth in Agreement II*, 344-370; and the study document of the Joint Working Group of the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, "The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues: Potential Sources of Common Witness or of Divisions" (1995), in *The Ecumenical Review* 48(2), April 1996, 143-154. For recent work on "Moral Discernment in the Churches" see also *The Standing Commission on Faith and Order Meeting in Holy Etchmiadzin, Armenia*, Geneva, WCC, 2011, 9-10 and 18-20.

natural disasters which affect their fellow human beings or threats to health such as the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Faith also impels them to work for a just social order, in which the goods of this earth may be shared equitably, the suffering of the poor eased and absolute destitution one day eliminated. The tremendous economic inequalities that plague the human family, such as those in our day that often differentiate the global North from the global South, need to be an abiding concern for all the churches. As followers of the "Prince of Peace," Christians advocate peace, especially by seeking to overcome the causes of war (principal among which are economic injustice, racism, ethnic and religious hatred, exaggerated nationalism, oppression and the use of violence to resolve differences). Jesus said that he came so that human beings may have life in abundance (cf. John 10:10); his followers acknowledge their responsibility to defend human life and dignity. These are obligations on churches as much as on individual believers. Each context will provide its own clues to discern what is the appropriate Christian response within any particular set of circumstances. Even now, divided Christian communities can and do carry out such discernment together and have acted jointly to bring relief to suffering human beings and to help create a society that fosters human dignity.⁴⁰ Christians will seek to promote the values of the kingdom of God by working together with adherents of other religions and even with those of no religious belief.

65. Many historical, cultural and demographic factors condition the relation between Church and state, and between Church and society. Various models of this relation based on contextual circumstances can be legitimate expressions of the Church's catholicity. It is altogether appropriate for believers to play a positive role in civic life. However, Christians have at times colluded with secular authorities in ways that condoned or even abetted sinful and unjust activities. The explicit call of Jesus that his disciples be the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world" (cf. Matt. 5:13-16) has led Christians to engage with political and economic authorities in order to promote the values of the kingdom of God, and to oppose policies and initiatives which contradict them. This entails critically analyzing and exposing unjust structures, and working for their transformation, but also supporting initiatives of the civil authorities that promote justice, peace, the protection

40. See, for example, the Reformed-Roman Catholic text "The Church as Community of Common Witness to the Kingdom of God," whose second chapter narrates cooperation between these churches concerning aboriginal rights in Canada, apartheid in South Africa and peace in Northern Ireland and whose third chapter describes the patterns of discernment used in each community, in PCPCU, *Information Service* N. 125 (2007/III), 121-138, and *Reformed World* 57(2/3), June-September 2007, 105-207.

of the environment and the care for the poor and the oppressed. In this way Christians are able to stand in the tradition of the prophets who proclaimed God's judgment on all injustice. This will very likely expose them to persecution and suffering. The servanthood of Christ led to the offering of his life on the cross and he himself foretold that his followers should expect a similar fate. The witness (*martyria*) of the Church will entail, for both individuals and for the community, the way of the cross, even to the point of martyrdom (cf. Matt. 10:16-33).

66. The Church is comprised of all socio-economic classes; both rich and poor are in need of the salvation that only God can provide. After the example of Jesus, the Church is called and empowered in a special way to share the lot of those who suffer and to care for the needy and the marginalized. The Church proclaims the words of hope and comfort of the Gospel, engages in works of compassion and mercy (cf. Luke 4:18-19) and is commissioned to heal and reconcile broken human relationships and to serve God in the ministry of reconciling those divided by hatred or estrangement (cf. 2 Cor. 5:18-21). Together with all people of goodwill, the Church seeks to care for creation, which groans to share in the freedom of the children of God (cf. Rom. 8:20-22), by opposing the abuse and destruction of the earth and participating in God's healing of broken relationships between creation and humanity.

CONCLUSION

67. The unity of the body of Christ consists in the gift of *koinonia* or communion that God graciously bestows upon human beings. There is a growing consensus that *koinonia*, as communion with the Holy Trinity, is manifested in three interrelated ways: unity in faith, unity in sacramental life, and unity in service (in all its forms, including ministry and mission). The liturgy, especially the celebration of the eucharist, serves as a dynamic paradigm for what such *koinonia* looks like in the present age. In the liturgy, the people of God experience communion with God and fellowship with Christians of all times and places. They gather with their presider, proclaim the Good News, confess their faith, pray, teach and learn, offer praise and thanksgiving, receive the Body and Blood of the Lord, and are sent out in mission.⁴¹ St John Chrysostom spoke about two altars: one in the Church and the other among the poor, the suffering

41. The previous sentences largely repeat and paraphrase the statement from the 9th Forum on Bilateral Dialogues, held in Breklum, Germany, in March 2008. For the statement drawn up by this forum, see *The Ecumenical Review* 61(3), October 2009, 343-347; see also www.oikoumene.org/fileadmin/files/wcc-main/documents/p2/breklum-statement.pdf

and those in distress.⁴² Strengthened and nourished by the liturgy, the Church must continue the life-giving mission of Christ in prophetic and compassionate ministry to the world and in struggle against every form of injustice and oppression, mistrust and conflict created by human beings.

68. One blessing of the ecumenical movement has been the discovery of the many aspects of discipleship which churches share, even though they do not yet live in full communion. Our brokenness and division contradict Christ's will for the unity of his disciples and hinder the mission of the Church. This is why the restoration of unity between Christians, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is such an urgent task. Growth in communion unfolds within that wider fellowship of believers that extends back into the past and forward into the future to include the entire communion of saints. The final destiny of the Church is to be caught up in the *koinonial* communion of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, to be part

of the new creation, praising and rejoicing in God forever (cf. Rev. 21:1-4; 22:1-5).

69. "God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:17). The New Testament ends with the vision of a new heaven and a new earth, transformed by the grace of God (cf. Rev. 21:1-22:5). This new cosmos is promised for the end of history but is already present in an anticipatory way even now as the Church, upheld by faith and hope in its pilgrimage through time, calls out in love and worship "Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20). Christ loves the Church as the bridegroom loves his bride (cf. Eph. 5:25) and, until the wedding feast of the lamb in the kingdom of heaven (cf. Rev. 19:7), shares with her his mission of bringing light and healing to human beings until he comes again in glory.

42. St John Chrysostom, Homily 50, 3-4 on Matthew, in J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. 58, Paris, 508-509.

CHAPTER FOUR

Ecumenical Social Thought: Toward Solidarity in Humanity's Struggles

Introduction

A central concern running throughout the history of modern ecumenism is the relationship between church and society: How can Christians, together, best carry out their responsibility for promoting justice and peace in the human family? What vision of human community animates the church's social witness? These questions appear in other chapters of this anthology (especially in Chapters I, V and IX). The primary direction of ecumenical social thought can most easily be traced, however, by looking at the reports of five international conferences—Stockholm 1925, Oxford 1937, Geneva 1966, Boston 1979, and Seoul 1990—excerpts from which are found in the first part of this chapter.

The Stockholm conference on Life and Work can be seen as a response to the inability of the churches to speak an effective word of peace during the first world war—a conflict which was, in effect, a Christian civil war. The conference was able to affirm that the gospel must be applied to all realms of life and that “the world is too strong for a divided church”; but it limited the role of the church to stating “principles” and “ideals,” “while leaving to individual conscience and to communities the duty of applying them with charity, wisdom and courage.”

The overall tone of the Stockholm report reflects the optimistic spirit of the times (at least in Great Britain and North America); but speeches at the conference revealed deep theological differences over how to relate Christian hope for the kingdom of God to the churches' responsibility for the world. Little attempt was made to deal with such tensions, however, out of a conviction, voiced in preparatory materials for Stockholm, that “doctrine divides while service unites.”

Much had changed by the time of the second conference of the Life and Work movement, held at Oxford toward the end of a decade marked by global economic crisis, the rise of fascism, and signs of impending war. Not surprisingly, the Oxford delegates rejected any notion of establishing God's kingdom in history or of directly applying Christian moral principles to social-political dilemmas. “It cannot be assumed,” said the conference report, “that the practice of Christian love will ever obviate the necessity for coercive political and economic arrangements.”

The key to Oxford's social thought is the concept of “middle axioms” which scale down biblical absolutes to an ethos needed for pragmatic moral decision-making. These middle axioms, identified through ecumenical discussion, can help the churches contribute to relative justice in this sinful

world. This approach was informed by neo-Orthodox theology, including especially that of Reinhold Niebuhr.

The exceptional quality of Oxford's report, including seven volumes of preparatory studies, assured it a continuing influence in ecumenical social thought. By the time of the next world conference on Church and Society (Geneva 1966), however, the ecumenical movement was no longer dominated by North Atlantic churches and their perspectives. Beyond that, social activists on all continents had become convinced that any realization of political and economic justice would require not just revision but drastic, systemic change. The resulting discussion of social "revolution" made Geneva one of the WCC's most controversial meetings.

Theologically, Geneva marks a major transition from the "Christian realism" of Oxford to what is sometimes called "eschatological realism." This perspective urges the churches to live in anticipation of God's shalom which, after all, is the true "reality" of our world. Practically speaking, this has meant a shift within the ecumenical movement from attempting to influence those with power to participating in the struggles of those without it, from giving aid to history's victims to standing in solidarity with them.

Another way to approach the pages that follow is to note the different pictures of society, the different guiding images, that are set forth in various texts. The early years of the WCC, for example, were dominated by an Oxford-inspired image of "the responsible society," outlined below in the report of the Amsterdam assembly. Throughout the 1970s, the dominant image was that of a "just, participatory and sustainable society," a concept that is most fully described in the report from the 1979 conference at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston. Nearly half of the delegates to that meeting were from the fields of science and technology, which enabled the conference to speak credibly about the promise and threat of contemporary scientific developments.

A concern for the wholeness of creation—and, thus, for the church's ecological responsibility—was introduced into ecumenical discussion by Joseph Sittler in a famous address to the WCC's New Delhi assembly (see below). It was not until the 1980s, however, that this theme became central to the Council through its call for a "mutual covenant to justice, peace and the integrity of creation" (JPIC). The JPIC program or "process" sought to ensure that the churches' social witness was not fragmented by competing priorities (peace versus justice, justice versus ecology). This chapter includes affirmations developed at the program's international convocation in 1990.

The selections in the first half of this chapter chronicle the continuing search for a framework of social thought capable of undergirding common action and service. The second half contains an admittedly inadequate selection of texts dealing with particular themes that have been central to ecumenical discussion: combating racism and sexism, renouncing war and violence, overcoming poverty, and protecting the environment. Hopefully, they will demonstrate the significant impact the ecumenical movement has had on the witness of the church over the past six decades.

53. Message, Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work, Stockholm, 1925

One of the foundational events of the modern ecumenical movement, the Stockholm conference was conceived, at least in part, as a response to the divided helplessness of the church in the face of the First World War. The conference could not have taken place without the energy and vision of Bishop Söderblom (see Chapter I). • The Stockholm Conference 1925: Official Report, ed. G.K.A. Bell, London, Oxford UP, 1926, pp. 710-16.

I

2. . . . The sins and sorrows, the struggles and losses of the Great War and since, have compelled the Christian Churches to recognize, humbly and with shame, that “the world is too strong for a divided Church.” Leaving for the time our differences in Faith and Order, our aim has been to secure united practical action in Christian Life and Work. The Conference itself is a conspicuous fact. But it is only a beginning.

3. We confess before God and the world the sins and failures of which the Churches have been guilty, through lack of love and sympathetic understanding. Loyal seekers after truth and righteousness have been kept away from Christ, because His followers have so imperfectly represented Him to mankind. The call of the present hour to the Church should be repentance, and with repentance a new courage springing from the inexhaustible resources which are in Christ. . . .

II

5. The Conference has deepened and purified our devotion to the Captain of our Salvation. Responding to His call “Follow Me,” we have in the presence of the Cross accepted the urgent duty of applying His Gospel in all realms of human life—industrial, social, political and international.

6. Thus in the sphere of economics we have declared that the soul is the supreme value, that it must not be subordinated to the rights of property or to the mechanism of industry, and that it may claim as its first right the right of salvation. Therefore we contend for the free and full development of the human personality. In the name of the Gospel we have affirmed that industry should not be based solely on the desire for individual profit, but that it should be conducted for the service of the community. Property

should be regarded as a stewardship for which an account must be given to God. Co-operation between capital and labour should take the place of conflict, so that employers and employed alike may be enabled to regard their part in industry as the fulfilment of a vocation. Thus alone can we obey our Lord’s command, to do unto others even as we would they should do unto us.

7. In the realm of social morality we considered the problems presented by over crowding, unemployment, laxity of morals, drink and its evils, crime and the criminal. Here we were led to recognize that these problems are so grave that they cannot be solved by individual effort alone, but that the community must accept responsibility for them, and must exercise such social control over individual action as in each instance may be necessary for the common good. We have not neglected the more intimate questions which a higher appreciation of personality raises in the domain of education, the family and the vocation, questions which affect woman, the child and the worker. The Church must contend not for the rights of the individual as such, but for the rights of the moral personality since all mankind is enriched by the full unfolding of even a single soul.

8. We have also set forth the guiding principles of a Christian internationalism, equally opposed to a national bigotry and a weak cosmopolitanism. We have affirmed the universal character of the Church, and its duty to preach and practice the love of the brethren. We have considered the relation of the individual conscience to the state. We have examined the race problem, the subject of law and arbitration, and the constitution of an international order which would provide peaceable methods for removing the causes of war—questions which in the tragic conditions of today make so deep an appeal to our hearts. We summon the Churches to share with us our sense of the horror of war, and of its futility as a means of settling international disputes, and to pray and work for the fulfilment of the promise that under the sceptre of the Prince of Peace, “mercy and truth shall meet together, righteousness and peace shall kiss each other.”

9. We have not attempted to offer precise solutions, nor have we confirmed by a vote the results of our friendly discussions. This was due not only to our respect for the convictions of individuals or groups, but still more to the feeling that the mission of the Church is above all to state principles, and to assert the ideal, while leaving to individual consciences and to communities the duty of applying them with charity, wisdom and courage.

III

10. If this goal is to be attained we recognize the pressing need of education. The individual must be educated by the Church, so that he may be enabled to exercise a Christian discernment in all things. The Churches must educate themselves by study, conference and prayer, so that being led by the Spirit of Truth into all truth, they may be enabled in increasing measure to apprehend the mind of Christ. We recognize that the root of evil is to be found in the human will, and we therefore desire to re-emphasize our conviction that this will must be surrendered to the high and holy will of God, whose service is perfect freedom. Even Christian ideas and ideals cannot save the world, if separated from their personal source in the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and unless themselves taken up into the personal life of the believer.

11. To this end we address our appeal first to all Christians. Let each man, following his own conscience, and putting his convictions to the test of practical life, accept his full personal responsibility for the doing of God's will on earth as it is in heaven, and in working for God's Kingdom. Let him in entire loyalty to his own Church seek to have a share in that wider fellowship and co-operation of the Christian Churches of which this Conference is a promise and pledge. In the name of this wider fellowship we would send a special message of sympathy to all those who amid circumstances of persecution and trial are fulfilling their Christian calling, and we would comfort them with the thought that they are thus brought into fellowship with the sufferings of Christ.

12. But we cannot confine this appeal to the Churches, for we gratefully recognize that now we have many allies in this holy cause.

We turn to the young of all countries. With keen appreciation we have heard of their aspirations and efforts for a better social order as expressed in the youth movements of many lands. We desire to enlist the ardour and energy of youth, the freshness and the fullness of their life, in the service of the Kingdom of God and of humanity.

We think also of those who are seeking after truth, by whatever way, and ask their help. As Christ is the Truth, so Christ's Church heartily welcomes every advance of reason and conscience among men. Particularly we would invite the co-operation of those teachers and scholars who in many special realms possess the influence and command the knowledge without which the solution of our pressing practical problems is impossible.

In the name of the Son of Man, the Carpenter of Nazareth, we send this message to the workers of the world. We thankfully record the fact that at present even under difficult conditions a multitude of workers in the different

countries are acting in accordance with these principles. We deplore the causes of misunderstanding and estrangement which still exist and are determined to do our part to remove them. We share their aspirations after a just and fraternal social order, through which the opportunity shall be assured for the development, according to God's design, of the full manhood of every man. . . .

14. Only as we become inwardly one shall we attain real unity of mind and spirit. The nearer we draw to the Crucified, the nearer we come to one another, in however varied colours the Light of the World may be reflected in our faith. Under the Cross of Jesus Christ we reach out hands to one another. The Good Shepherd had to die in order that He might gather together the scattered children of God. In the Crucified and Risen Lord alone lies the world's hope. . . .

54. Message, Conference on Church, Community, and State, Oxford, 1937

Church historians generally agree that no subsequent ecumenical reflection on social ethics has matched Oxford, the second of the Life and Work conferences, in quality and thoroughness. Preliminary papers by leading theologians fill seven volumes, and the impact of this work was felt through the Protestant and Orthodox churches. • The Oxford Conference: Official Report, ed. J. H. Oldham, Chicago, Willett, Clare and Co., 1937, pp. 45-52.

. . . We meet at a time when mankind is oppressed with perplexity and fear. Men are burdened with evils almost insupportable and with problems apparently insoluble. Even in countries which are at peace unemployment and malnutrition sap men's strength of body, mind and spirit. In other countries war does its "devil's work," and threatens to overwhelm us all in its limitless catastrophe.

Yet we do not take up our task as bewildered citizens of our several nations, asking if anywhere there is a clue to our problems; we take it up as Christians, to whom is committed "the word of reconciliation," that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself."

The first duty of the church, and its greatest service to the world, is that it be in very deed the church—confessing the true faith, committed to the fulfillment of the will of

Christ, its only Lord, and united in him in a fellowship of love and service.

We do not call the world to be like ourselves, for we are already too like the world. Only as we ourselves repent, both as individuals and as corporate bodies, can the church call men to repentance. The call to ourselves and to the world is to Christ.

Despite our unfaithfulness God has done great things through his church. One of the greatest is this, that, notwithstanding the tragedy of our divisions and our inability in many important matters to speak with a united voice, there exists an actual world-fellowship. Our unity in Christ is not a theme for aspiration; it is an experienced fact. We can speak of it with boldness because our conference is an illustration of it. We are drawn from many nations and from many different communions, from churches with centuries of history behind them and from the younger churches whose story covers but a few decades; but we are one in Christ.

The unity of this fellowship is not built up from its constituent parts, like a federation of different states. It consists in the sovereignty and redeeming acts of its one Lord. The source of unity is not the consenting movement of men's wills; it is Jesus Christ whose one life flows through the body and subdues the many wills to his.

The Christian sees distinctions of race as part of God's purpose to enrich mankind with a diversity of gifts. Against racial pride or race antagonism the church must set its face implacably as rebellion against God. Especially in its own life and worship there can be no place for barriers because of race or color. Similarly the Christian accepts national communities as part of God's purpose to enrich and diversify human life. Every man is called of God to serve his fellows in the community to which he belongs. But national egotism tending to the suppression of other nationalities or of minorities is, no less than individual egotism, a sin against the Creator of all peoples and races. The deification of nation, race or class, or of political or cultural ideals, is idolatry, and can lead only to increasing division and disaster.

On every side we see men seeking for a life of fellowship in which they experience their dependence on one another. But because community is sought on a wrong basis, the intensity of the search for it issues in conflict and disintegration. In such a world the church is called to be in its own life that fellowship which binds men together in their common dependence on God and overleaps all barriers of social status, race or nationality.

In consonance with its nature as true community, the church will call the nations to order their lives as members of the one family of God. The universal church, surveying

the nations of the world, in every one of which it is now planted and rooted, must pronounce a condemnation of war unqualified and unrestricted. War can occur only as a fruit and manifestation of sin. This truth is unaffected by any question of what may be the duty of a nation which has to choose between entry upon war and a course which it believes to be a betrayal of right, or what may be the duty of a Christian citizen whose country is involved in war. The condemnation of war stands, and also the obligation to seek the way of freeing mankind from its physical, moral and spiritual ravages. If war breaks out, then preeminently the church must manifestly be the church, still united as the one body of Christ, though the nations wherein it is planted fight one another, consciously offering the same prayers that God's name may be hallowed, his kingdom come, and his will be done in both, or all, the warring nations. This fellowship of prayer must at all costs remain unbroken. The church must also hold together in one spiritual fellowship those of its members who take different views concerning their duty as Christian citizens in time of war.

To condemn war is not enough. Many situations conceal the fact of conflict under the guise of outward peace. Christians must do all in their power to promote among the nations justice and peaceful cooperation, and the means of peaceful adjustment to altering conditions. Especially should Christians in more fortunate countries press the demand for justice on behalf of the less fortunate. The insistence upon justice must express itself in a demand for such mitigation of the sovereignty of national states as is involved in the abandonment by each of the claim to be judge in its own cause.

We recognize the state as being in its own sphere the highest authority. It has the God-given aim in that sphere to uphold law and order and to minister to the life of its people. But as all authority is from God, the state stands under his judgment. God is himself the source of justice, of which the state is not lord but servant. The Christian can acknowledge no ultimate authority but God; his loyalty to the state is part of his loyalty to God and must never usurp the place of that primary and only absolute loyalty.

The church has duties laid upon it by God which at all cost it must perform, among which the chief is to proclaim the word of God and to make disciples, and to order its own life in the power of the Spirit dwelling in it. Because this is its duty it must do it, whether or not the state consents; and the state on its side should recognize the duty and assure full liberty for its performance. The church can claim such liberty for itself only as it is also concerned for the rights and liberties of others.

In the economic sphere the first duty of the church is to insist that economic activities, like every other department of human life, stand under the judgment of Christ. The existence of economic classes presents a barrier to human fellowship which cannot be tolerated by the Christian conscience. Indefensible inequalities of opportunity in regard to education, leisure and health continue to prevail. The ordering of economic life has tended to enhance acquisitiveness and to set up a false standard of economic and social success. The only forms of employment open to many men and women, or the fact that none is open, prevent them from finding a sense of Christian vocation in their daily life.

We are witnessing new movements which have arisen in reaction to these evils but which combine with their struggle for social justice the repudiation of all religious faith. Aware of the reality of sin, the church knows that no change in the outward ordering of life can of itself eradicate social evil. The church therefore cannot surrender to the utopian expectations of these movements, and their godlessness it must unequivocally reject; but in doing so it must recognize that Christians in their blindness to the challenging evils of the economic order have been partly responsible for the anti-religious character of these movements.

Christians have a double duty—both to bear witness to their faith within the existing economic order and also to test all economic institutions in the light of their understanding of God's will. The forces of evil against which Christians have to contend are found not only in the hearts of men as individuals, but have entered into and infected the structure of society, and there also must be combated. The responsibility of the church is to insist on the true relationship of spiritual and economic goods. Man cannot live without bread, and man cannot live by bread alone. Our human wealth consists in fellowship with God and in him with our brethren. To this fellowship the whole economic order must be made subservient.

The questions which have mainly engaged the attention of the conference are questions that can be effectively dealt with, in practice, only by the laity. Those who are responsible for the daily conduct of industry, administration and public life must discover for themselves what is the right decision in an endless variety of concrete situations. If they are to receive the help they need in making responsible Christian decisions new types of ministry will have to be developed by the church.

The fulfillment of the tasks to which the church is called today lies largely in the hands of youth. Many loud voices are calling on young people to give themselves to political and social ideals, and it is often hard for them to

hear the voice of Jesus Christ who calls them to be servants of the eternal kingdom. Yet many of the younger generation, often in spite of ridicule and sometimes of persecution, are turning to him, and individually as well as in Christian youth movements devote themselves to the renewal of the life of the churches and to making known the good news of Christ by word and action. We rejoice in their brave witness.

In the education of youth the church has a twofold task. First, it must be eager to secure for every citizen the fullest possible opportunity for the development of the gifts that God has bestowed on him. In particular, the church must condemn inequality of educational opportunity as a main obstacle to fullness of fellowship in the life of the community.

While the church is thus concerned with all education it has, also, a special responsibility to realize its own understanding of the meaning and end of education in the relation of life to God. In education, as elsewhere, if God is not recognized he is ignored. The church must claim the liberty to give a Christian education to its own children. It is in the field of education that the conflict between Christian faith and non-Christian conceptions of the ends of life, between the church and an all-embracing community life which claims to be the source and goal of every human activity, is in many parts of the world most acute. In this conflict all is at stake, and the church must gird itself for the struggle.

As we look to the future it is our hope and prayer that the Spirit of God may cause new life to break forth spontaneously in a multitude of different centers, and that there may come into being a large number of "cells" of Christian men and women associated in small groups for the discovery of fresh ways in which they may serve God and their fellow men.

We have deeply felt the absence from our fellowship of the churches that have not been represented at the conference. Our hearts are filled with anguish as we remember the suffering of the church in Russia. Our sympathy and gratitude go out to our Christian brethren in Germany; we are moved to a more living trust by their steadfast witness to Christ and we pray that we may be given grace to bear the same clear witness to the Lord.

We have much to encourage us since the conference at Stockholm twelve years ago. The sense of the unity of the church in all the world grows stronger every year. We trust that this cause will be yet more fully served by the world council of churches, proposals for which have been considered by the conference and commended to the churches.

We have tried during these days at Oxford to look without illusion at the chaos and disintegration of the world, the injustices of the social order and the menace and

horror of war. The world is anxious and bewildered and full of pain and fear. We are troubled, yet we do not despair. Our hope is anchored in the living God. In Christ, and in the union of man with God and of man with man, which he creates, life even in face of all these evils has a meaning. In his name we set our hands as the servants of God, and in him of one another, to the task of proclaiming God's message of redemption, of living as his children and of combating injustice, cruelty and hate. The church can be of good cheer; it hears its Lord saying, "I have overcome the world."

55. "Responsible Society," First Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Amsterdam, 1948

The theme of the "responsible society" dominated ecumenical social thought throughout the 1950s and early 1960s. This discussion of it is from the report of the WCC's first assembly. • Man's Disorder and God's Design, op. cit., pp. 189-97 (in vol. 3).

I. THE DISORDER OF SOCIETY

The world today is experiencing a social crisis of unparalleled proportions. The deepest root of that disorder is the refusal of men to see and admit that their responsibility to God stands over and above their loyalty to any earthly community and their obedience to any worldly power. Our modern society, in which religious tradition and family life have been weakened, and which is for the most part secular in its outlook, underestimates both the depth of evil in human nature and the full height of freedom and dignity in the children of God.

The Christian Church approaches the the disorder of our society with faith in the Lordship of Jesus Christ. In Him God has established His Kingdom and its gates stand open for all who will enter. Their lives belong to God with a certainty that no disorder of society can destroy, and on them is laid the duty to seek God's Kingdom and His righteousness.

In the light of that Kingdom, with its judgment and mercy, Christians are conscious of the sins which corrupt human communities and institutions in every age, but they are also assured of the final victory over all sin and death through Christ. It is He who has bidden us pray that God's Kingdom may come and that His will may be done on

earth as it is in heaven; and our obedience to that command requires that we seek in every age to overcome the specific disorders which aggravate the perennial evil in human society, and that we search out the means of securing their elimination or control.

Men are often disillusioned by finding that changes of particular systems do not bring unqualified good, but fresh evils. New temptations to greed and power arise even in systems more just than those they have replaced because sin is ever present in the human heart. Many, therefore, lapse into apathy, irresponsibility and despair. The Christian faith leaves no room for such despair, being based on the fact that the Kingdom of God is firmly established in Christ and will come by God's act despite all human failure.

Two chief factors contribute to the crisis of our age. One of these is the vast concentrations of power—which are under capitalism mainly economic and under communism both economic and political. In such conditions, social evil is manifest on the largest scale not only in the greed, pride, and cruelty of persons and groups, but also in the momentum or inertia of huge organisations of men, which diminish their ability to act as moral and accountable beings. To find ways of realising personal responsibility for collective action in the large aggregations of power in modern society is a task which has not yet been undertaken seriously.

The second factor is that society, as a whole dominated as it is by technics, is likewise more controlled by a momentum of its own than in previous periods. While it enables men the better to use nature, it has the possibilities of destruction, both through war and through the undermining of the natural foundations of society in family, neighbourhood and craft. It has collected men into great industrial cities and has deprived many societies of those forms of association in which men can grow most fully as persons. It has accentuated the tendency in men to waste God's gift to them in the soil and in other natural resources.

On the other hand, technical developments have relieved men and women of much drudgery and poverty, and are still capable of doing more. There is a limit to what they can do in this direction. Large parts of the world, however, are far from that limit. Justice demands that the inhabitants of Asia and Africa, for instance, should have benefits of more machine production. They may learn to avoid the mechanisation of life and the other dangers of an unbalanced economy which impair the social health of the older industrial peoples. Technical progress also provides channels of communication and interdependence which can be aids to fellowship, though closer contact may also produce friction.

There is no inescapable necessity for society to succumb to undirected developments of technology, and the

Christian Church has an urgent responsibility today to help men to achieve fuller personal life within the technical society.

In doing so, the churches should not forget to what extent they themselves have contributed to the very evils which they are tempted to blame wholly on the secularisation of society. While they have raised up many Christians who have taken the lead in movements of reform, and while many of them have come to see in a fresh way the relevance of their faith to the problems society, and the imperative obligations thus laid upon them, they share responsibility for the contemporary disorder. Our churches have often given religious sanction to the special privileges of dominant classes, races and political groups, and so they have been obstacles to changes necessary in the interests of social justice and political freedom. They have often concentrated on a purely spiritual or other-worldly or individualistic interpretation of their message and their responsibility. They have often failed to understand the forces which have shaped society around them, and so they have been unprepared to deal creatively with new problems as they have arisen in technical civilisation; they have often neglected the effects of industrialisation on agricultural communities.

II. ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ORGANISATION

In the industrial revolution economic activity was freed from previous social controls and outgrew its modest place in human life. It created the vast network of financial, commercial and industrial relations which we know as the capitalist order. In all parts of the world new controls have in various degrees been put upon the free play of economic forces, but there are economic necessities which no political system can afford to defy. In our days, for instance, the need for stability in the value of money, for creation of capital and for incentives in production, is inescapable and world-wide. Justice, however, demands that economic activities be subordinated to social ends. It is intolerable that vast millions of people be exposed to insecurity, hunger and frustration by periodic inflation or depression.

The Church cannot resolve the debate between those who feel that the primary solution is to socialise the means of production, and those who fear that such a course will merely lead to new and inordinate combinations of political and economic power, culminating finally in an omni-competent State. In the light of the Christian understanding of man we must, however, say to the advocates of socialisation that the institution of property is not the root of the corruption of human nature. We must equally say to the defenders of existing property relations that ownership

is not an unconditional right; it must, therefore, be preserved, curtailed or distributed in accordance with the requirements of justice.

On the one hand, we must vindicate the supremacy of persons over purely technical considerations by subordinating all economic processes and cherished rights to the needs of the community as a whole. On the other hand, we must preserve the possibility of a satisfying life for "little men in big societies." We must prevent abuse of authority and keep open as wide a sphere as possible in which men can have direct and responsible relations with one another as persons.

Coherent and purposeful ordering of society has now become a major necessity. Here governments have responsibilities which they must not shirk. But centres of initiative in economic life must be so encouraged as to avoid placing too great a burden upon centralised judgment and decision. To achieve religious, cultural, economic, social and other ends it is of vital importance that society should have a rich variety of smaller forms of community, in local government, within industrial organisations, including trade unions, through the development of public corporations and through voluntary associations. By such means it is possible to prevent an undue centralisation of power in modern technically organised communities, and thus escape the perils of tyranny while avoiding the dangers of anarchy.

III. THE RESPONSIBLE SOCIETY

Man is created and called to be a free being, responsible to God and his neighbour. Any tendencies in State and society depriving man of the possibility of acting responsibly are a denial of God's intention for man and His work of salvation. A responsible society is one where freedom is the freedom of men who acknowledge responsibility to justice and public order, and where those who hold political authority or economic power are responsible for its exercise to God and the people whose welfare is affected by it.

Man must never be made a mere means for political or economic ends. Man is not made for the State but the State for man. Man is not made for production, but production for man. For a society to be responsible under modern conditions it is required that the people have freedom to control, to criticise and to change their governments, that power be made responsible by law and tradition, and be distributed as widely as possible through the whole community. It is required that economic justice and provision of equality of opportunity be established for all the members of society.

We therefore condemn:

1. any attempt to limit the freedom of the Church to witness to its Lord and His design for mankind and any attempt to impair the freedom of men to obey God and to act according conscience, for those freedoms are implied in man's responsibility before God;
2. any denial to man of an opportunity to participate in the shaping of society, for this is a duty implied in man's responsibility toward his neighbour;
3. any attempt to prevent men from learning and spreading the truth.

IV. COMMUNISM AND CAPITALISM

Christians should ask why communism in its modern totalitarian form makes so strong an appeal to great masses of people in many of the parts of the world. They should recognise the hand of God in the revolt of multitudes against injustice that gives communism much of its strength. They should seek to recapture for the Church the original Christian solidarity with the world's distressed people, not to curb their aspirations towards justice, but, on the contrary, to go beyond them and direct them towards the only road which does not lead to a blank wall, obedience to God's will and His justice. Christians should realise that for many, especially for young men and women, communism seems to stand for a vision of human equality and universal brotherhood for which they were prepared by Christian influences. Christians who are beneficiaries of capitalism should try to see the world as it appears to many who know themselves excluded from its privileges and who see in communism a means of deliverance from poverty and insecurity. All should understand that the proclamation of racial equality by communists and their support of the cause of colonial peoples makes a strong appeal to the populations of Asia and Africa and to racial minorities elsewhere. It is a great tragedy that so much that is good that in the motives and aspirations of many communists and of those whose sympathies they win has been transformed into a force that engenders new forms of injustice and oppression, and that what is true in communist criticism should be used to give convincing power to untrustworthy propaganda.

Christians should recognise with contrition that many churches are involved in the forms of economic injustice and racial discrimination which have created the conditions favourable to the growth of communism, and that the atheism and the anti-religious teaching of communism are in part a reaction to the chequered record of a professedly Christian society. It is one of the most fateful facts

in modern history that often the working classes, including tenant farmers, came to believe that the churches were against them or indifferent to their plight. Christians should realise that the Church has often failed to offer to its youth the appeal that can evoke a disciplined, purposeful and sacrificial response, and that in this respect communism has for many filled a moral and psychological vacuum.

The points of conflict between Christianity and the atheistic Marxian communism of our day are as follows: (1) the communist promise of what amounts to a complete redemption of man in history; (2) the belief that a particular class by virtue of its role as the bearer of a new order is free from the sins and ambiguities that Christians believe to be characteristic of all human existence; (3) the materialistic and deterministic teachings, however they may be qualified, that are incompatible with belief in God and with the Christian view of man as a person, made in God's image and responsible to Him; (4) the ruthless methods of communists in dealing with their opponents; (5) the demand of the party on its members for an exclusive and unqualified loyalty which belongs only to God, and the coercive policies of communist dictatorship in controlling every aspect of life.

The Church should seek to resist the extension of any system that not only includes oppressive elements but fails to provide any means by which the victims of oppression may criticise or act to correct it. It is a part of the mission of the Church to raise its voice of protest wherever men are the victims of terror, wherever they are denied such fundamental human rights as the right to be secure against arbitrary arrest, and wherever governments use torture and cruel punishments to intimidate consciences of men.

The Church should make clear that there are conflicts between Christianity and capitalism. The developments of capitalism vary from country to country and often the exploitation of workers that was characteristic of early capitalism has been corrected in considerable measure by the influence of trade unions, legislation and responsible management. But (1) capitalism tends to subordinate what should be the primary task of any economy—the meeting of human needs—to the economic advantages of those who have most power over its institutions. (2) It tends to produce serious inequalities. (3) It has developed a practical form of materialism in Western nations in spite of their Christian background, for it has placed the greatest emphasis upon success in making money. (4) It has also kept the people of capitalist countries subject to a kind of fate which has taken the form of such social catastrophes as mass unemployment.

The Christian churches should reject the ideologies of both communism and laissez-faire capitalism, and should seek to draw men away from the false assumption that these extremes are the only alternatives. Each has made promises which it could not redeem. Communist ideology puts the emphasis upon economic justice, and promises that freedom will come automatically after the completion of the revolution. Capitalism puts the emphasis upon freedom, and promises that justice will follow as a by-product of free enterprise; that, too, is an ideology which has been proved false. It is the responsibility of Christians to seek new, creative solutions which never allow either justice or freedom to destroy the other.

V. THE SOCIAL FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH

The greatest contribution that the Church can make to the renewal society is for it to be renewed in its own life in faith and obedience to its Lord. Such inner renewal includes a clearer grasp of the meaning of the Gospel for the whole life of men. This renewal must take place both in the larger units of the Church and in the local congregations. The influence of worshiping congregations upon the problems of society is very great when those congregations include people from many social groups. If the Church can overcome the national and social barriers which now divide it, it can help society to overcome those barriers.

This is especially clear in the case of racial distinction. It is here that the Church has failed most lamentably, where it has reflected and then by its example sanctified the racial prejudice that is rampant in the world. And yet it is here that today its guidance concerning what God wills for it is especially clear. It knows that it must call society away from prejudice based upon race or colour and from the practices of discrimination and segregation as denials of justice and human dignity, but it cannot say a convincing word to society unless it takes steps to eliminate these practices from the Christian community because they contradict all that it believes about God's love for all His children.

There are occasions on which the churches, through their councils or through such persons as they may commission to speak on their behalf should declare directly what they see to be of God for the public decisions of the hour. Such guidance will often take the form of warnings against concrete forms of injustice or oppression or social idolatry. They should also point to the main objectives towards which a particular society should move.

One problem is raised by the existence in several countries of Christian political parties. The Church as such should not be identified with any political party, and it must not act as though it were itself a political party. In general,

the formation of such parties is hazardous because they easily confuse Christianity with the inherent compromises of politics. They may cut Christians off from the other parties which need the leaven of Christianity, and they may consolidate all who do not share the political principles of the Christian party not only against that party but against Christianity itself. Nevertheless, it may still be desirable in some situations for Christians to organize themselves into a political party for specific objectives, so long as they do not claim that it is the only possible expression of Christian loyalty in the situation.

But the social influence of the Church must come primarily from its influence upon its members through constant teaching and preaching of Christian truth in ways that illuminate the historical conditions in which men live and the problems which they face. The Church can be most effective in society as it inspires its members to ask in a new way what their Christian responsibility is whenever they vote or discharge the duties of public office, whenever they influence public opinion, whenever they make decisions as employers or as workers or in any other vocation to which they may be called. One of the most creative developments in the contemporary Church is the practice of groups of Christians facing much the same problems in their occupations to pray and to take counsel together in order to find out what they should do as Christians.

In discussing the social function of the Church, Christians should always remember the great variety of situations in which the Church lives. Nations in which professing Christians are in the majority, nations in which the Church represents only a few per cent of the population, nations in which the Church lives under a hostile and oppressive government offer very different problems for the Church. It is one of the contributions of the ecumenical experience of recent years that churches under these contrasting conditions have come not only to appreciate one another's practices, but to learn from one another's failures and achievements and sufferings.

VI. CONCLUSION

There is a great discrepancy between all that has been said here and the possibility of action in many parts of the world. Obedience to God will be possible under all external circumstances and no one need despair when conditions restrict greatly the area of responsible action. The responsible society of which we have spoken represents, however, the goal for which the churches in all lands must work, to the glory of the one God and Father of all, and looking for the day of God and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

56. Message and Section Reports, World Conference on Church and Society, Geneva, 1966

Geneva 1966, which stands in the tradition of Life and Work conferences (Stockholm 1925 and Oxford 1937), was the first major ecumenical gathering with a large group of Roman Catholic observers and a high percentage of participants from outside Europe and North America. Its openness to revolutionary change made Geneva both controversial and influential. • Christians in the Technical and Social Revolutions of Our Time: Official Report, World Conference on Church and Society, Geneva, WCC, 1967, pp. 48-50 and 135-45.

MESSAGE

1. We, participants in the World Conference on Church and Society, are grateful to God who has brought us together from 70 nations of the world. We thankfully acknowledge that he has granted us this experience of the world community which is emerging in this age of advanced technology and social revolution. By his grace we have come to a new awareness of the reality of the Church as the people of God, united in diversity, sustained in weakness by the power of the Holy Spirit, and called to participate in the freedom and reconciliation offered us by Jesus Christ.

2. During our days together, we have been reminded of the new possibilities now open before man, as well as of the new threats to human existence. We have been given a new sense of the urgency of the task before us. In the light of what is now happening in our society, we Christians cannot escape the call to serious study and dynamic action.

3. Throughout this Conference, our attention has been focussed on four issues:

- Modern technology. Aware of the new hope which it has aroused, we have attempted to understand how it can be so used and controlled that it will best contribute to human liberation, economic well-being and social justice.
- The need for accelerated development in Asia, Africa and Latin America, and for fundamental changes in the relationships between those countries and the advanced industrial nations.

- The struggle for world peace: the importance of doing everything possible to bring an end to the present military conflict in Vietnam and to find solutions for those explosive situations which would provide the occasion for new wars. We have noted with deep concern that a callous and hard attitude grows among many people concerning the means employed to wage war, both civil and international. All ancient cruelties and all new forms of warfare should provoke horror for the Christian conscience.
- The problem of a just political and social order and the changing role of the state. Here a fundamental issue is the function of law in our revolutionary times and its theological foundation.

4. It is not easy to come to a common understanding either of these problems or of how to solve them. Our discussions have revealed a wide variety of points of view which are due not only to the diversity of situations from which we come but also to the different perspectives from which we think about social questions. Our Christian faith provides us with a common foundation, basic attitudes and common objectives for our service to society; it does not produce an easy consensus on specific social issues. In this Conference, however, we have discovered that dialogue is possible between those representing different positions, and that such discussion exposes the limitations of our thought and challenges us to greater faithfulness.

5. If the Church is to provide its members with guidance in their service to the world, it must discover how to make possible a constant dialogue between the social scientists and the theologians, and between those who engage in the study of social problems and those who spend their time in the common tasks in society. The presence in this Conference of a large number of laymen and of experts in many different fields has created a unique situation for this dialogue. It has revealed the possibilities as well as the frustrations latent in it, and has led to the recommendation that long-term projects for such discussions be worked out.

6. As Christians, we are committed to working for the transformation of society. In the past, we have usually done this through quiet efforts at social renewal, working in and through the established institutions according to their rules. Today, a significant number of those who are dedicated to the service of Christ and their neighbour assume a more radical or revolutionary position. They do not deny the value of tradition nor of social order, but they are searching for a new strategy by which to bring about basic changes in society without too much delay. It is possible that the tension between these two positions will have an important place in the life of the Christian community for some time

to come. At the present moment, it is important for us to recognize that this radical position has a solid foundation in Christian tradition and should have its rightful place in the life of the Church and in the ongoing discussion of social responsibility.

7. In many parts of the world today, the Church represents a relatively small minority, participating in the struggle for the future of man alongside other religions and secular movements. Moreover, it can hope to contribute to the transformation of the world only as it is itself transformed in contact with the world. The God who sent his Son to the cross and manifests his power in weakness has brought us to this point, and offers his people new opportunities of service and witness in it. In this Conference, we have been led to perceive some of these new opportunities, and have been challenged to prepare ourselves for this task of service.

8. In fact, when the Church lives as servant it may discover the unique vocation that it has at the present time. In the face of the demands for a new relationship between the rich and poor nations and between the powerful and oppressed classes, the Church can understand that the powerful need the help of the weak as badly as the weak need the strong. Societies at different stages of development face difficult problems for which there are no easy solutions. Often they can perceive more clearly the nature of their own problems when they confront societies quite different from their own. The dynamic world in which we live calls for new experiments in social organization and for new structures. In some cases, these new forms may first emerge in the developing nations, where the impact of social change is most acute. The confrontation which has taken place here may prove to be a significant step towards the fulfilment of this vocation.

9. In keeping with the spirit of this Conference, our final word to the Churches must be a call to *repentance*, and to the recognition of God's judgement upon us, and of the reality of the new humanity in Jesus Christ offered to us all. It is also an urgent appeal for more effective and vigorous action, as an expression of our *witness* to the Gospel in the world in which we are living. We realize that this is a difficult task and requires a long and arduous struggle. But we pray for strength, sustained by the promise of Our Lord: "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. . . ."

III. WORLD SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

61. In the Christian understanding of society and human relations there is no place for discrimination against persons on the basis of race, religion, ideology, economic or

social condition, since all men are equal before God, and all benefit from his love and his grace in Jesus Christ and all stand under his judgement.

62. Further, Christians are responsibly committed to all men, and their action should fully express this commitment. Yet we Christians confess our sins of racial prejudice and injustice, our failure to treat each other as brothers, the violence we do not only to the body but also to the mind and soul of our brothers and ourselves. We honour all those, whether Christian or not, who are working actively to redeem their societies to make them inclusive of all God's children, and would support them in the transformation of economic, social and political structures to assure full participation and equality of opportunity and status. In every circumstance, the Christian is called actively to seek reconciliation where there is tension, justice where there is injustice, freedom where there is bondage, and opportunity where this is denied. We are aware that our failure to fulfil these missions promptly in our day is likely to lead to violence and war.

Racial Tensions and Discrimination

63. All societies are caught up in tensions, both internal and international, arising out of discrimination based upon differences in race, religion, culture, and the like. All have the problem of "the stranger in our midst." There is ample evidence of these tensions in all parts of the world.

64. At this time, racial discrimination appears of greatest immediate danger to humanity. It is often based not only upon fear or resentment of people of another colour or tradition, but also upon economic self-interest. The group practicing discrimination typically acts to protect its privileged position and its jobs; if the group being discriminated against is of another colour, it is all the easier to identify. There is growing fear that hostility between black men and white men is now reaching a point of no-return; many whites, both in Africa and America, refuse to accept black men as brothers, and as a consequence many black men fail to accept white men as brothers. It will take deeds, and not mere words, to overcome this hostility.

65. The international dimensions of these problems are great. Often foreign investment in countries officially sanctioning discrimination helps those groups which advocate such policies to entrench themselves and thus increases tensions and hostility between nations and peoples, rich and poor, white and non-white. The failure of some major powers to agree to the use of full economic sanctions against South Africa and Rhodesia appears to many as an expression of racial solidarity among whites and of the pursuit of profit in reckless disregard of the suffering

of the non-white majorities. Clearly any short-term economic advantage would be outweighed by the economic, political, and social consequences of an ultimate upheaval in Southern Africa which could involve the whole world in a racial war. . . .

68. The church as an institution has itself too frequently been a segregated body—it must increase its zeal in the reversal of this history, and strive to be faithful to its spiritual heritage and teaching. It must accept a much more determined preaching and teaching role. The pulpit shares with the classroom the important task of giving instruction in the Gospel and its meaning for full brotherhood without discrimination. It must press for adoption of educational curricula that stress the oneness of humanity instead of its differences, and inculcate appreciation and respect for the culture of other peoples. It must take positive initiatives to ensure such teaching especially within the church itself.

69. The church and every Christian must re-double efforts to ease tensions between local citizens and strangers in their midst, at local and at national levels. It must encourage the legitimate aspirations of suppressed minorities and majorities, and support all practicable measures aimed at changing any political and economic order which reflects the denial of political rights or economic opportunity, segregation, discrimination, or other suppression. Among other things, Christians should examine carefully and critically the foreign investment policies, both of their churches and of other groups in their nation in which Christians participate. . . .

Economic Development

71. Technological, economic, and social developments now make possible the achievement in our generation of true freedom from hunger, misery and poverty for all people. But this achievement is neither guaranteed nor assured. The rate of progress is unnecessarily slow. There are certain limitations on advance within nations, but in our economically interdependent world there are also limitations arising out of such factors as the following:

- a) International trade is still carried on according to market rules which, through private oligopoly and public restraints, give the rich and powerful such bargaining power that they have a massive advantage over the poor and small nations of the world. This power has sometimes been used selfishly to prevent the attainment of economic and social justice for the developing nations.
- b) The obligation to support development is too frequently accepted grudgingly; and it is often

inadequate and unpredictable in its timing, terms and quantity.

- c) The resources made available are largely administered bilaterally, and while generally helpful, they do permit and sometimes encourage intervention in the affairs of developing countries. Nations and individuals sometimes use their power in a way which encourages corruption in other lands, through bribery, evil propaganda, secret intelligence, or military influence and *coups d'état*. This destroys the moral fiber of both countries, prevents development and progress towards justice, and dangerously increases suspicion. Tragically, the outraged cries against such behaviour and efforts to correct the situation frequently lead to condemnation of the oppressed on ideological grounds, rather than of the oppressors on moral grounds, and to further intervention by the powerful against the poor.
- d) Wealthier countries, under the pretense of helping, are making loans at high interest rates that place upon the borrowers burdens of repayment often beyond their capacity to carry. This frustrates long-run development. Resources must be transferred on terms that do not overburden the recipients.
- e) Technical assistance, while necessary and welcome, has not always given sufficient attention to the training of counterparts who can carry forward the activity, nor to the training of middle-level manpower. It has not always been provided by men able and willing to listen and learn, rather than just to talk and tell, nor by persons sensitive to the consequences of their life and consumption patterns upon host communities. The spirit in which technical assistance is given and the cooperation of the host country are fully as important as its amount.

72. We confess with sorrow our involvement in all these failings, and call upon all Christians to join with others in seeking the necessary transformation of attitudes, practices, and international structures.

73. International commodity agreements could be of great assistance in financing development. However, it is most important that these be effectively administered. There is the risk of overproduction, smuggling, and thus of the failure of such agreements. Regional structures of economic cooperation with sufficient power, authority, and appeal to help enforce such agreements, deserve support. The weaker nations should consider joining together in such bodies and investing them with sufficient authority to assure that such agreements are successful.

74. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund were criticized by some for sometimes being more concerned with monetary stability than with growth, and for being dominated by the developed powers. The new regional development banks were seen as a partial response to this situation.

75. The self-respect of developing nations demands that development be seen as a joint or cooperative effort based on mutual interest rather than paternalism or charity. Since the scale of production of the richer nations is such that they require the markets of other nations as an outlet for their products, both sides benefit from progress in development.

76. We confess that because of ideological hostility Christians and some churches have been involved in efforts to destroy or oppose the extension of peaceful international trade. The use of national pressures or restraints upon trade as a weapon of ideological warfare is a deplorable denial of the rights of neighbours and of human brotherhood.

77. Mankind must accept collective concrete responsibility for development and for racial and economic justice. Events of the present and the recent past have shown that these will not be achieved when nations act as if they had the right to make decisions affecting other people, and as if they were responsible only for their own interests and not for those of others.

78. Sovereignty over the earth was given to all people, not only a few nations. But the presuppositions upon which the structures of power rest must be modified if there is to be hope for future peace and development. It is practically impossible for many nations to become truly sovereign over such matters as trade and development in the face of concentrations of power in a very small number of groups. This is why we believe that people can only effectively exercise their power in international affairs by cooperating closely in appropriate international institutions competent to raise international revenues for the administration of development and the achievement of social and economic justice, to deal effectively with international abuse of power by individuals, corporations, or nations, to administer international commodity agreements, etc.

79. In the coming period, Christians should both study and support action at the national and international level in order: (1) to arrive at effective international commodity agreements, (2) to improve international trade patterns and practices so as to widen the opportunities for every nation, on terms fair to all, (3) to strengthen and better coordinate existing regional institutions for international cooperation, and (4) to help to create appropriate regional institutions where they do not exist. Christians should arouse the conscience of all men to a recognition

of their human solidarity and their obligation to support the increase of development assistance. The doubling of such assistance would begin to make it adequate for the world's present needs. The transfer of resources should not impose undue burdens on the recipients, and should be made on terms which support creative development and social justice. This aid must be disinterested in the sense that it should never be used to further the donor's ideological or selfish interests. It should be given only where there is a real possibility for regional or national development, but the enforcement of such conditions is more properly a function of a regional or international institution than of a donor country.

80. In the long run, it may be necessary to create new instruments for the conduct of international trade in basic commodities. In addition to the present private and state trading organizations, mixed public international corporations, representing interested governments and peoples, as well as consumers and producers, may prove advantageous.

The Political Role of the Developing Nations

81. In recent years political changes in the so-called "developing" nations have been so numerous and diverse that they do not submit easily to generalizations. Africa, Asia and Latin America all have their distinct identities, and within each of these areas are many different nations and peoples. The peoples of the so-called "Third World" are in fact of many types and groups, with widely differing values, aspirations, and behaviour. Nonetheless, certain generalizations can be illuminating and helpful for Christians as they seek to understand and to respond constructively to the political dynamics of these nations.

82. Though the developed nations have made political development possible in Africa, Asia and Latin America, the fact remains that they have also contributed heavily to political conflict, injustice, and corruption. The attempt to use "Third World" nations as instruments of Cold War politics, for example, has resulted in several international wars of major proportions, such as those in Korea and Vietnam, as well as many lesser conflicts. In areas where there have been tensions, the big powers have added to the risk of these situations escalating into war by their gifts and sales of military equipment. Furthermore, the economic and ideological interests of developed nations, particularly some of those in the North Atlantic area, have often led them to support—economically, diplomatically and militarily—ruling elites in the developing nations whose rule is oppressive and whose policies are clearly indifferent to the aspirations of the majority of those whom they govern. In this connection we note the serious debate and struggle

over socialism, democracy and communism in their various forms. But the usually indiscriminate use of an ideology of "anti-communism" to resist change of any sort has had a divisive and destructive effect among many of the peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

83. Nevertheless, certain conflicts which have broken out, both between and within some of the sovereign nations of the "Third World," have been primarily the responsibility of the belligerents themselves. Whatever their origin, the majority of the victims of these conflicts have been the peoples of the regions involved. Such warfare is no less and no more contrary to the will of God than that engaged in by developed nations. Further, in today's inter-related world, such conflicts all too easily spread beyond the original parties to them.

84. While most of the developing nations have achieved formal political independence, many find that they are still economically dependent on the developed nations. And such dependence has tended to inhibit both economic and political development. It has also given rise to a widespread concern for rapid social change and reform among many of the peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Therefore, a second generalization can be made: a revolutionary mood pervades the thought of many of the more active and influential groups in public life in many nations of the "Third World" and is an important factor in their politics. These groups seek national independence, not simply in the formal political sense but in the wider sense which includes economic, social and cultural factors as well. They are concerned to reduce substantially dependence on and exploitation by the developed nations. They seek economic development—by which is meant industrialization, technological advance, and diversification of production—but at the same time they are concerned to promote equally fundamental changes in the organization of political and economic power, in order to enable the common man—workers, peasants, the emerging middle classes, students and intellectuals, etc.—to share more equally in national life.

85. These forces are interpreted as revolutionary, not only because of the magnitude of the changes which they seek, but also because of their concern for rapid change, accomplished, if necessary, by the use of violence. They are convinced that economic development must be accompanied by qualitative changes in the structures of power, if there is to be any improvement in the situation of those people who suffer because of the existing system. They reject the view of many in the industrialized nations that if economic development occurs rapidly enough, changes in the structures of power will be a natural by-product. Therefore they give priority to changes in the structures of power.

86. In many of the developing nations strong counter-revolutionary forces are also at work. These forces seek the maintenance and strengthening of the existing political and economic order and, in turn, the suppression of any forces working for change. The strength of these counter-revolutionary forces is leading, in many cases, to a polarization of political opinion.

87. These two sets of factors raise important and difficult questions for Christians as they seek to promote genuine international cooperation. Given the problems created by the political involvement of developed nations in the affairs of developing nations, what role ought they to play in the "Third World" in future years? What kinds of political relationships with the developing nations ought Christians in the developed nations to seek? How are Christians in Asia, Africa and Latin America to respond to the pressures for rapid social, political and economic change in their nations? In particular, how are they to respond to the pressures for revolution?

88. Because of the problems created by the involvement of developed nations in the "Third World," some groups and nations have been led to conclude that such involvement ought to be curtailed as much as possible. Such thought has led China and Burma, for example, to reduce quite substantially contact with many developed nations. It is also argued that the developing nations ought to give priority to self-reliance and to increased regional cooperation among themselves. Others hold that the trend towards increasing interregional interdependence is valuable and ought to be fostered. In this view, what is needed is not a reduction of the political involvement of the developed nations in the affairs of the "Third World," but rather a redirection of such involvement towards more just and humane ends. It has not proved possible or appropriate to resolve this debate in the course of these discussions, but certain conclusions about the way Christians ought to approach this problem have emerged. One is that if, as is to be expected, the developed nations do continue to be substantially involved in the affairs of the developing nations, their involvement should be shaped as much as possible by concern for the promotion of the welfare of peoples in the "Third World." A second is that, in shaping policies concerning their political involvement in the "Third World," the developed nations should consistently give careful attention to the views of people in these areas.

89. No generally valid over-all prescription can be given for the ways in which changes in the organization of political and economic power in developing nations should occur and how Christians should respond to such changes; as noted above, there are too many important differences between and within Africa, Asia and Latin

America. Therefore decisions about the organization of power—whether or not changes are needed, and if so, how they ought to occur—must be made contextually. What is done by Christians in Brazil, for example, may differ fundamentally from what is done by Christians in India or even in another part of Latin America. While in one situation revolutionary change may be necessary, in another more evolutionary methods may be appropriate.

90. There are, however, at least two generalizations which can be made about the approach of Christians to the reorganization of the structures of power in the “Third World.” One is that wherever small élites rule at the expense of the welfare of the majority, political change towards achieving a more just order as quickly as possible should be actively promoted and supported by Christians. The second is that in cases where such changes are needed, the use by Christians of revolutionary methods—by which is meant violent overthrow of an existing political order—cannot be excluded *a priori*. For in such cases it may very well be that the use of violent methods is the only recourse of those who wish to avoid prolongation of the vast covert violence which the existing order involves. But Christians should think of the day after the revolution when justice must be established by clear minds and in good conscience. There is no virtue in violence itself, but only in what will come after it. In some instances significant changes have been made by non-violent means and Christians must develop greater skill and wisdom in using these.

IV. THE CHURCH’S INVOLVEMENT

91. In the midst of the complex, dangerous and fearsome problems of contemporary international affairs we have five things to say to our fellow Christians.

- a) We thank God that a nuclear holocaust has not occurred, that men have been inspired with patience, restraint and courage, that new possibilities of communication and dialogue have emerged among the nations and peoples, and that in spite of our sin and guilt there is still time in which to strive for peace. We thank God for the men and women in many agencies and walks of life who labour tirelessly for peace.
- b) It is our belief and experience that in suffering God’s grace abounds. We know—because sometimes it is present in our hearts too—that a sense of futility and hopelessness concerning peace and justice lies in the background of millions of lives. But even in the midst of fear and futility God’s grace touches and opens the heart. In this lies our hope: no power

of earth or man can ultimately defeat the power of God. It is to men who live in the valley of the shadow of death that God’s power is manifest and the light of hope is given in Jesus Christ.

- c) We urge Christians and the churches, by every means at their disposal, to join those who seek to arouse the conscience of their fellow men concerning peace and justice. The life of the Church itself is the principal means, but others will also be needed. These will vary: patient political effort and impatient protest, advocacy of feasible measures and projection of long-range goals, the creation of greater order and the transformation of existing orders will all be involved. Whatever the means, Christians must bear one another’s burdens of loneliness and weakness, and support one another in their common witness. But the goal must always be to arouse the conscience of all men everywhere, that it may be made sensitive to the claims of justice and peace in our world.
- d) The witness of radical non-conformity has always been part of the Christian tradition. It may be an act of an individual or group, but all Christians should support the right of such individuals or groups to take such a stand. Such non-conformists do not, of course, any more than other Christians, escape responsibility for the disordered affairs of the world—they cannot do so. Their responsibility remains. However, a majority of Christians in working within the existing order believe themselves called to work for its transformation and to accept a role in its civil or military organization. They must never lose sight of its inherent imperfection which is obscured by the self-deceptions that come from within it, for then they will maintain a constant pressure for progress.
- e) We ask Christians to bear constant witness to their faith in the life of their nation in the world. Occasional action is not enough: continual witness is required. It is not enough to speak and act in isolation. In our time, churches may pioneer in the development of world community by formulating their own witness as part of the ecumenical community. Thus they may transcend the nations, contribute to their search for peace, and in their worship uphold the world before God. . . .

57. "Towards a New Christian Social Ethic and New Social Policies for the Churches," World Council of Churches Conference on Faith, Science and the Future, Boston, 1979

This conference, the first major WCC-sponsored gathering on social thought since Geneva 1966, explored the vision of a "just, participatory, and sustainable society" (JPSS). Nearly half the delegates were from the world of science and technology. • Faith and Science in an Unjust World: Report of the World Council of Churches' Conference on Faith, Science and the Future, vol. 2, ed. Paul Abrecht, Geneva, WCC, 1980, pp. 147-52, 155-64.

1. Introduction

The work of God, enacted in Jesus Christ, is love—a love without limits, a love that seeks justice. The fulfilment of God's love is the purpose of the world; its symbol, the Cross. On the Cross of Christ, the real possibilities of human beings find their limitations and God's power finds its expression.

God is Creator; the world is his creation. We men and women have failed to live the life of love which God intends for us, but Christians testify that the love of God overcomes our human guilt and the superpersonal structures of evil (the "principalities and powers"). Therefore, insofar as we are faithful, we await with confidence the coming of God's Kingdom of love, in which justice and peace and joy will be known by all and God will be all in all.

No human acts can bring God's Kingdom to its perfection, for it is God's work in his own time. We are dependent upon his Spirit. Yet, in the historical reality of God's work in Christ, we have grounds for hope. Hence we Christians can commit ourselves in the Spirit to our work now. Our work will be finite and limited, yet it is a commitment in which we have the real opportunity to live together in love. This is why we want to work together for a just, participatory and sustainable society. This is why Christians—though they themselves often defy God—can experience hope as a present reality, even in the direst suffering and loneliness.

As the Declaration of the Bangalore meeting of Faith and Order (1978) points out: "Our present hope is anchored in God's actions in history and in the eternal life of the age to come. . . . We know that we are accepted

by God as forgiven sinners, and therefore we are certain that we can here and now be co-workers with God in pointing to his rule. In Christ as a mirror we see the will of God. Christ will come as the revelation of truth and righteousness."

In this conference we have talked of a just, participatory and sustainable society, and we have found intimations of what such a society might be. We are not ready to define such a society; we expect to continue our venture of discovery of what it can be. But we can at least begin to give meaning to those pregnant words: just, participatory and sustainable.

A just society is the kind of society heralded by the prophets and Jesus in the words translated as *justice* and *righteousness*. "Let justice roll down as waters" (Amos 5:24). "Seek first his kingdom and his justice (or righteousness)" (Matt. 5:33). In a just society persons and groups (family, occupational, social, ethnic, national) relate to one another for the benefit of all. Persons and groups have the opportunity to become human in freedom and responsibility. We can give no single universal description of what truly human life is, for that is in part a function of cultural and social situations. Yet we recognize a common humanity among people all created "in the image of God."

We do not expect harmony without conflict. We believe that human beings are created for love and community, but in sin they encroach upon the just rights of others. Individuals find meaning in community, yet must sometimes resist domination from the community. Particular communities can work together in world community, yet must sometimes affirm their particular identities against the domination of the whole. Therefore, justice requires more than good intentions; it requires political and legal structures to hold the powerful accountable and to prevent their exploitation of the weak.

A *participatory* society includes in the process of decision-making all those whom any decision affects. Decisions are thus made by people, with people, for people. The modes of participation are likely to vary in different societies and in different decisions within societies. But everywhere participation is concerned not merely with the making of decisions but also with the sharing of resources, both material and spiritual, and the sharing of the suffering and the benefits. The achievement of meaningful participation in large, complex societies and on a world scale is difficult.

Our awareness of interdependence as partners and competitors has enabled us to recognize that we must see "society" as both particular societies and as the worldwide society of men and women. This leads us to ask about the ways in which human societies settle matters between them.

Justice and participation must characterize the relationship between societies as well as the relationships between individuals in society.

A *sustainable* society is one in which people live with each other and the physical environment in ways that lead to continuing life rather than destruction.

In recent years much of the world has discovered that its present habits of consumption threaten the physical environment and the resources by which people themselves live. Humanity is one member of the ecosystem (also part of God's creation) and has to live in continuing interaction with it. Practices destructive of the ecosystem will also destroy human society. In this respect justice characterizes a human relationship with the whole ecosystem as well as the relationship with other human persons and groups.

As we explore the dimensions of a just, participatory and sustainable society, we realize that no society—past or present—has achieved this goal in its fullness. Nor do Christians expect the full achievement of such a society within this human history. In fact, new historical achievements open up new possibilities and new perils. But we are capable of more profound justice, fuller participation, and greater concern for sustainability than we now know and practice. God gives us opportunities and calls us to responsibility.

2. The Historical and Social Situation in Which We Live and Make Decisions

Gathering in this conference, we realize the uniqueness of our historical situation. Never before has the human race faced the specific opportunities, responsibilities and perils that our generation faces. Whether we think of powers of healing or destroying, of communication on earth or travel in space, of splitting atoms or splicing genes, we today are masters—and victims—of immense technological power. We must make decisions that our ancestors did not make. We feel the force of the Christian belief that God meets his human creation, in grace and in judgment, in the events of history. We believe in a faithful God, a God whose love remains constant, but a God who in freedom does new things and calls on people in freedom to do new things.

Meeting people from many lands, we become aware of how much our diverse social situations affect our experiences, our perceptions of reality, our ethical decisions. Some of us are investing our lives in the scientific enterprise and finding it rewarding. None of us could be at this conference without the achievements of modern technology. Yet some of us are oppressed by technology: our lands have been invaded or our economies distorted by people with more technical power than our own. All of us have fears of

technological power misused. Our delights or pains, our picture of the world, our joy, our humour, our sense of moral outrage or guilt depend—not solely but significantly—on our place in society. We struggle to find an ethic more secure and authoritative than our feelings and our social location. But wherever we look, we see what is visible from our location. If, for example, we appeal to conscience, we find that our consciences are largely determined by our societal experiences. If we search the scriptures, we find that the parts that move us most powerfully are those that address us where we are, that the concepts by which we interpret the scriptures are those that we have developed in a given historical context. Sometimes we find with joy that our sensitivities—perhaps as women or as physically handicapped or as economically oppressed people—give the Church insights into biblical meanings that centuries of “official” interpretation have obscured.

Hence we realize that traditional ethical methods have rarely paid enough attention to the social situations of those who try to think ethically. We have to ask of ourselves and all people what the purpose of ethical affirmations is. Are we seeking to justify our own power and pretensions? If so, the most skillful ethical reasoning will only betray our responsibility.

According to our faith, it is not the most brilliant, but the pure in heart who see God. It is to the poor, both in spirit and in material wealth, that the Kingdom is promised. They remind us that all have a duty to seek insight from the exploited and oppressed in order that the whole of society may be liberated. We must remember that women generally are also oppressed; if they are poor or in a minority, they may be doubly oppressed. Faithfulness to the Gospel message warns us against the peculiar distortions and blindnesses that may haunt the powerful.

3. For the Christian Church: What Is the Relation between Faith and Ethics?

Faith, for Christians, is more than mere affirmation of truth. It is a response to God, a process, a directing of life, which influences the whole person and the Christian community. Christians are those who are called to realize the essential nature of creation and their own place within it, through Jesus Christ, who is the true image of the invisible God. Thus men and women find their anchor in life and set out to direct their actions and behaviour in relation to God, their fellow men and women, and nature.

Christian behaviour is rooted in the Christian love and understanding of God. The Church, the community of faith, exists to anticipate and celebrate the new era for humanity which God inaugurated in Christ. But this

Church, of course, proclaims its faith and lives among people of diverse faith and moral values. In the words of the report to the WCC of the Committee on a Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society (Jamaica, 1979): “Christians believe that all human beings are part of a dynamic pointing to the messianic Kingdom. . . . While Christians claim no monopoly, they live under a special call to obedience, to engage with other people in a search for the common aim: justice on earth, manifested in a peaceful community of all humankind in which every human being finds true fulfilment of life.”

Hence there is an obligation on Christians to examine and appreciate ethical insights that come from outside their own community of faith—from people of diverse faiths and ideologies. Christians cannot, should not and must not claim to possess all ethical truth. The ways in which they have tried to live out God’s love may have been distorted by any number of misleading influences. Since ethical norms may be influenced by many socio-cultural factors, we cannot assume that there is any simple or fixed language in which to state moral values. Christians are further called to be sensitive to fresh promptings of God’s spirit.

We believe that Christian love, as a response to God’s love for his creation, has particular relevance to a society which is influenced by scientific and technological innovation. Christians are called to work with all people of good will to build a just and peaceful society, in which the work of human minds and hands may serve the loving purposes of the Creator. They seek a world in which humanity enjoys the fruits of the earth as one family. This hope, set before us by Jesus Christ and signified by his whole community on earth, requires efforts of fortitude, patience and commitment, for it involves the bearing of a cross. In social terms this means that, in the difficult days that we now experience and foresee, Christians have no right to seek protection from the pains that humanity suffers.

4. What Is the Relation between Science and Ethics?

The authentic scientific enterprise requires honesty, a humility before truth and a willingness to set aside prejudice and accept correction from evidence. These moral values are inherent in science. The violation of them is a betrayal of the meaning of science as well as of ethics. At its best, the scientific openness to truth has sometimes shamed the rigid dogmatism and prejudices of many religious communities. Furthermore, the scientific enterprise requires a cultural setting that permits freedom to search for truth.

Even so, the values inherent in science are incomplete without the incorporation of humanistic values.

Competence in science may or may not be associated with love and passion for justice. The direction and application of scientific research depend largely upon the values in the culture (including its political and economic institutions) surrounding the scientist. The scientists in our midst have made this point forcefully and they are showing how scientists can contribute to the criticism and the shaping of cultural values.

Most policy decisions in our time include both scientific understanding and ethical purpose. Decision-makers (including all who participate in decision-making) must ask both what is possible and what is desirable. They must consult both the scientific evidence and their human purposes. It is sometimes said, erroneously, that scientific data dictate a policy; but what is meant is that, given certain assumptions about values and purposes, the data may point to a policy.

In the words of the WCC consultation on “Genetics and the Quality of Life” (1975): “Churchmen cannot expect precedents from the past to provide answers to questions never asked in the past. On the other hand, new scientific advances do not determine what are worthy human goals. Ethical decisions in uncharted areas require that scientific capabilities be understood and used by persons and communities sensitive to their own deepest convictions about human nature and destiny. There is no sound ethical judgment in these matters independent of scientific knowledge, but science does not itself prescribe the good.” . . .

8. What Certainties Are Possible in Christian Ethics?

Both science and ethics often deal with uncertainties. The progress of science during the past century has often meant that old certainties gave way to judgment of probability. Scientific uncertainty often arises from our lack of knowledge, but it may also be the result of the uncertainty intrinsic in natural phenomena. Scientific knowledge may enable us to predict the occurrence of an event, with an indication of the probability associated with our prediction.

In human social decisions there are some possibilities for estimating probabilities and quantifying the extent of possible error. But such decisions depend also upon ethical commitments that are not quantifiable. Decisions of Christians often combine:

- i) the certainty of faith in Jesus Christ; this is not the certainty of laboratory verification or mathematical computation; it is—at its most authentic—the certainty by which one is committed to live or die;
- ii) the uncertainty of knowing what actions will work to human benefit in a given situation.

There are many occasions, of course, in which Christians—like other people—know what is right; their problem is only the will to do what is right. There are other occasions in which Christians—like other people—are honestly perplexed about the best course of action; they need to learn, especially in new situations, what is right and good.

Such a distinction helps us to realize how easy self-deception is. An emphasis on certainty may be merely a way of escaping the anxiety of uncertainty and the necessity of genuinely listening to people who disagree with us. But an emphasis on uncertainty may be used as a pretext to enable people to avoid responsibility.

In this conference we have discussed many cases of human oppression due to the willing exercise of power by some over other people. The problem was not that the powerful people did not know the harm they were doing; they did not care. And if they did not know, it was because they did not care. We have discussed other cases where Christians of equally good will differed in their opinions of what was best for society and where both sides, if they were honest, realized that they were uncertain.

Like the biblical prophets, we may find occasions to speak with the assurance: “Thus saith the Lord.” We may find other occasions when, like those same prophets, we must be silent because we do not have a word from the Lord. And we may find still other times to say: “We are not sure, but it is our best opinion that . . .”

Christians, responsive to the Cross and the Resurrection, will seek for ways to make love and justice effective in the most complex social situations. We will realize that some of our moral failures are due to our unwillingness—and society’s unwillingness—to be born again, and we will look for possibilities of personal and social regeneration. We will realize that some of our perplexities require further exploration—like some of the debates in this conference—on the meaning of love and justice for evaluating the consequences of new technologies, answers to the energy crisis, and the appropriate use of new genetic knowledge. . . .

10. What Is the Ethical Significance of Particularistic Cultural Values?

The diffusion of technology usually means the diffusion of the culture that produces it. Today many peoples throughout the world feel threatened by imported technologies that weaken or destroy local cultures. People do not know how to resist the homogenization of culture.

There are some advantages in the adoption of worldwide practices in such areas as safety control at airports, universally recognizable traffic signs, some systems of communication. But the destruction of cultural roots, often

swift and violent, is a high price to pay. The phenomenon is often deceptive in that local and regional cultures are expected to yield to more “universal” human ways; but the “universal” is often, in fact, a western particularism masquerading as universal. One especially pernicious effect is the creation in some societies of wealthy elites oriented towards a foreign technologically dominant culture and contemptuous of the people and values of their own societies.

The diffusion of technology and culture requires a reassessment of the ethical significance of particularistic cultural values. It requires also reconsideration of the relation between Christianity—often associated, whether truly or falsely, with the world of elaborate technology—and the religions associated with other cultures.

Christianity must accept different cultures and religions; Christians have no monopoly of moral concern or ethical insight. For example, the values which Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist or Muslim traditions place upon humanity and nature are illuminating for their own sake. Quite apart from the fact that attention to them may awaken dimly remembered insights of the Christian tradition, it may also enable us to discover new insights and new applications. In a world which is daily becoming smaller our opportunities to learn from these traditions happily increase, and we urge all Christians, not just scholars, to make the most of them.

Furthermore, it is not merely religions but also secular philosophies which have often grasped an element of our human world to which we need to pay attention. In this respect the fact that one third of humanity is governed by a political system which is related to Karl Marx means that Christians should examine with discriminating care the values of Marxism. The worldwide extent of a scientific and technological culture has alerted us now in this conference precisely to the need to examine its motives and values.

The Bible acknowledges cultural differences and celebrates the many ways in which those who are not of the community of faith nevertheless do God’s will. We need to be more open to this possibility, for it is often the seeing of difference where no difference really is that frustrates the fulfilment of God’s purpose in the world.

The identity of Christians as a separate community is therefore implicitly essential. Others cannot learn of us and we cannot learn of them unless the integrity of each is mutually recognized. This might be seen as an important aspect of participation. Nothing in what is said here destroys the claims which Christians make for the uniqueness of Christ; what is challenged is the uniqueness and priority of the way in which Christians, as individuals and

communities, have interpreted the uniqueness of Christ in their own value systems.

An open society is certainly desirable, but this should not be seen to be in conflict with a Christian community standing fast on a particular human concern which may itself be a condition of openness in society. Thus the Black Church in South Africa justifiably stands its ground in favour of an open society in its community.

Technology should be in the hands of those who understand its meaning and can use it within the contexts of their own cultures. The Third World, for example, has the ethical right to choose for itself the purposes to which technology is put, in order to achieve participation in decisions affecting local and regional cultures. The ecumenical church has a responsibility to support the Third World in its struggles for self-determination.

11. What Is the Ethical Relation between Justice and Sustainability?

Justice is a dynamic process, which is already under way. But more constructive effort is required. A theology which accepts the belief that human beings are part of the wider creation is not new, as one can see, for example, in the life of St Francis of Assisi; yet the implications of this belief for our moral concern are not sufficiently appreciated. Sustainability, the appropriate relationship of human beings with their environment, is a long-term goal which must be seen both in economic and in human terms. The Christian impact will be felt through our attempts at an equitable redistribution of present-day resources, so that the whole human world can share the Creator's gifts of food, shelter, power and joy. All men and women should be able to participate as whole persons in the building of a just and sustainable society.

Sustainability is a part of justice also because it is a recognition that God's gifts belong not only to us who are living but also to those who come after us. In this sense the doctrine of the communion of saints—the community of all those who seek God and love God—may be seen to have a new moral significance for Christians. When we see that expanded production is not morally justifiable because it harms humane relation with the rest of nature, or of one society with another, then sharing is the only possible choice for the Christian. Just how important this moral task is becomes more evident as our knowledge of the physical and psychological world of man grows.

The JPSS Report (Jamaica, January 1979) stated: "In all regions . . . the sometimes conflicting claims of sustainability and social justice need urgent attention." In their deepest meaning, we repeat, justice and sustainability are

intimately related. But there may be immediate conflicts between the two. For example, the use of DDT may prevent deaths from malaria now, while inserting into the ecosystem and the food chain poisons that will harm people and wild life for generations to come. Such tragic conflicts must be acknowledged, while we seek new technological and moral processes to overcome them.

The issue of sustainability may be used hypocritically by the wealthy and powerful as a device to deny the poor the benefits of economic growth. We denounce the immorality of that stratagem and reaffirm that the ecological crisis makes more urgent equity of distribution.

We believe also that sustainability is an urgent issue for all societies, although in widely different ways. The unsustainability of present standards of consumption in the wealthiest nations may mean traumatic changes as people learn to reduce drastically their consumption of petroleum. In other parts of the world, the reliance upon firewood means the desertification of vast areas; already people suffer hunger because of past generations' practices. We are not making a moral judgment against people who in their poverty are unable to reduce consumption for the sake of the future. We say only that sustainability is a problem throughout the world.

It is meaningless to talk about sustainability, especially in relation to justice, unless political and economic forces of transformation are set in motion. Those of us in this conference who advocate sustainability accept the responsibility to struggle in our own countries against those political and economic forces that either oppose sustainability or seek to achieve it without an equally strong concern for justice.

12. What Is the Ethic of the Use of Scarce Resources?

It is the duty of every person and every society to recognize the fact that resources are limited. Further, it is a clear implication of the Christian understanding of the activity of God in creation, that all men and women are to benefit from it and that every person has the same right to use these resources responsibly. Hence no individual or group should be excluded from sharing in them or deciding how they should be used. When resources are scarce, the justice of the market system is most questionable, since it eliminates those who cannot afford the price from benefiting.

Clearly different resources raise the need for different criteria in their distribution since the needs of individuals and societies will differ. However, it is too easy for both individuals and societies to translate a "want" into a "need." When this happens the unjustifiable "wants" of one community may deny another community its justifiable needs.

As a Christian community we must become more aware of this issue and must attempt some definition of “wants” and “needs” in the wider context of understanding what it is to be human. A just society will attend to needs before it turns to the satisfaction of mere wants. Yet it will recognize that needs are not for mere physical subsistence, but include the expression of the gifts of artistic creation and imagination.

The particular problems raised by the scarcity of medical resources are very difficult. We should do everything possible to preserve the life of any individual patient, yet not without reference to the needs of the society as a whole. And especially as Christians, we should seek to take decisions for the individual in the light of an understanding of resurrection and the quality of human life. There may be times when prolongation of life is unwarranted interference with death.

Since it is clear that the most expensive techniques in medical practice cannot be available to all, we have to give continuing attention to the appropriate ways in which decisions should be taken. The role of the expert is particularly crucial here because of the sometimes unwarranted position in which society has put the doctor. Christian faith has an important contribution to make if it will look for creative moral contexts in which medical expertise may be evaluated. But there are basic medical needs, which we must seek for all; and this has particular relevance for the situation of the Third World, where such needs are far from being met. Again we see the importance of distinguishing between “needs” and “wants,” and of looking for a constructive way of recognizing which is which.

It is also worth noting that the rich world’s understanding of sophisticated medicine may have blinded it to the insights of the wise traditional medicine in developing societies. In this case we may be greatly helped by discovering that the most technologically sophisticated medicine is not the most humanly creative. Health is wholeness, not mere survival.

13. What Is the Relation between Human “Dominion” and Stewardship?

Language may by its very structure appear to determine the way in which human beings work out their moral responses. The way in which we conceive of our relation to nature and express it in language will condition what we consider appropriate human action with regard to nature. This is of particular importance to Christians, since it is often argued that the western approach to science and technology is rooted in a Christian understanding of the creation, which sees nature as given to human beings for their exclusive use. It cannot be affirmed too strongly that

whatever truth there is in this opinion as a comment on the way some Christians have treated the natural world, it rests on false understandings of the Bible and tradition. We repeat our earlier affirmation that justice includes the human relationship with the ecosystem.

Humanity is temporally the last link in God’s creation and, therefore, a part of nature, not apart from it. Persons share with the whole of creation in the ultimate purposes which God has for it. What authority they possess, they possess within creation and not over creation; furthermore that authority is a gift of God and one for which men and women will be called to account by God.

The dependence of human beings on non-human nature is becoming only too apparent as the sciences explore the natural world, including the physical and psychological wellbeing of persons and communities. Here the authority of human beings over nature is of an interdependent kind. We should perhaps think of ourselves as the self-conscious intelligence of the whole created order, with authority to act with and for it, not over it. We are therefore to care for nature, as if it were the body of humanity. This is good theologically, and it is good biologically.

Yet having said this, we must recognize that humanity is also called to take responsibility for itself within nature and to make decisions that will protect the lives of individuals and societies. Nature is the context for moral judgment, not a world from which human beings can take their values. Thus, for example, polio viruses may be destroyed in the interests of human life, and the tsetse fly attacked as the carrier of human diseases. It is not obvious that we must all become vegetarians, as the consequences of our respect for nature. What is clear is that the decisions which we take in these respects, as in others, involve considerations of a kind much more fundamental for the ecosystem than we have hitherto thought. Our present choices must be made with due sensitivity in the light of this fact. Our awareness of our participation in nature requires this from us, if we are to act with increasing responsibility and justice. The implications of this need careful attention if we are not to destroy our very humanity.

14. How Does the Ethic of the Kingdom of God Relate to Human Decisions and Political Actions?

St Paul emphasizes that the Kingdom of God is characterized by righteousness and peace. The Kingdom of God, moreover, is not a future possibility alone; it is a past and present fact in the life of Jesus Christ. But it is a presence which calls for active effort in the lives of each person and of each society; it cannot merely be assumed. Christians are called to work in society so as to make it more supportive

of the values of the Kingdom, more expressive of the purposes of God in Christ. Human fallibility and sin make this a perilous task for anyone, and no less for Christians; yet we dare not refuse the invitation of our Lord to seek his Kingdom.

Christians do not, therefore, bring in from outside history elements which are not present within it; they try to recognize in events—in the movements and ideas around them—the activity of God. Because we believe that God is working for the fulfilment of his purposes, we try to uncover, and to give physical shape to his activity. Our attempts to recognize where God is working have to be put continuously under the radical judgment of Christ, to whom the Bible witnesses. This judgment must be continuous because of the human tendency to prove what we want to prove, to fulfil our purposes, not God's. We can say, then, that the task of the Christian mission and of Christian moral judgment is constantly to point the world to the God who is active within it to bring righteousness and peace. The Christian community does this only when it is itself a community of love, which is prepared to suffer for the sake of its Lord.

Political ethics has the task of translating love into structures, for love is not so much an emotion as a determination of the will. Any form of power in human society tends to serve its own institutional interests independently of the persons and groups it should serve. Hence the Christian sees the neighbour and tries to criticize existing political structures from the point of view of those whom they should serve. In particular, Christians in power must avoid any tendency to preach submissive love to those with less power. They would do better to do whatever they can to empower the powerless. If this seems sometimes to encourage struggle rather than peace, it is actually the unmasking of the false peace that serves injustice.

Laws should have as their purpose the expression of love and the structuring of love into justice. They should give attention to relationships between groups as well as individuals, should attend to the need to promote authentic harmony, should present means of resolving conflicts without violence, should provide a possibility for working out social programmes for justice.

The constant criticism of existing laws and the promotion of a more equitable legal and political structure are requirements on Christians as individuals and communities. This struggle is necessary to enable those who are excluded from society by injustice to participate fully in the service of the Kingdom of God.

15. What Social Policies Are Possible and Appropriate for the Churches in Their Various Cultural Situations?

Christians believe that the rule of God is already present in nature and history through creation and the redemptive new creation of the whole cosmos (Rom. 8, Cor. 5, Col.). Acknowledging this cosmic new creation and experiencing its "birth-pangs," Christians can and must collaborate with secular groups (including Marxists) and with other religious communities who are participating in and supporting God's new creation of the whole world.

Yet there is a specific calling of the Christian community to respond to God's universal redemptive activity as a faithful, worshipping and actively obedient fellowship—that part of humanity which knows and proclaims what God is about as love, justice and truth for the whole world. In the Christian community there are specific and identifiable acts which illuminate, guide and support Christian action. However, prayer and worship in the Christian community should not isolate but rather, through the Holy Spirit, should be a means of expressing the basic commitment of the fellowship to the ultimate unity of all peoples. Nor is prayer opposite to action; rather it is both the beginning and the resource of political and social action.

When we ask what social policies are possible and appropriate for the churches, we see immediately that different churches in different situations have varying possibilities. The Christian Church in its historical pilgrimage has been a tiny persecuted community; it has established a Christendom in which it gave commands to emperors; it has lived as a community within pluralistic societies. These and many other varieties of existence still persist, as realities or as echoes, in various parts of the world. We cannot prescribe callings for the many churches in many situations. If some churches are powerless to influence national policies in their countries, others would be faithless and irresponsible if they did not exercise such influence. Yet in shaping their particular policies the churches must recognize the universal character of God's coming rule, which transcends the values and determining factors of a particular situation. The Church itself is intended to manifest the justice which every human society should seek. The present brokenness of the churches, which weakens and discredits Christian witness, is one reason for the failures and injustices of societies. The ecumenical movement for unity is indispensable for the validation and influence of the ethical convictions supported by Christian faith. Ecumenical conversations, such as the recent consultation of economists from different social systems, can enable churches to see beyond the limitations of their specific cultural milieu.

58. "Guidelines for Sharing," World Council of Churches World Consultation on *Koinonia*, El Escorial, 1987

The WCC programme, Ecumenical Sharing of Resources, attempted to provide a conceptual framework for new relationships that would free the churches from traditional patterns of dependency and paternalism. These guidelines were adopted at the programme's world consultation and were affirmed by numerous churches. • Sharing Life, Official Report, WCC World Consultation on *Koinonia*: Sharing Life in a World Community, El Escorial 1987, ed. Huibert van Beek, Geneva, WCC, 1989, pp. 27-30.

I

Out of abundant and outgoing love, God has created the world, and has given it to all humanity for faithful use and sharing. As recipients of God's gift of life, we are called to see the world through God's eyes, offering it in blessing through our own acts of love, sharing and appropriate use.

But because of our sin and selfishness, we have misused God's gift. We have allowed the interests of a few to diminish the life of many. It has led to the rise of unjust structures which perpetuate dependence and poverty for the majority of the world's people. This surely is contrary to the purpose of God.

It is in the midst of this sinful reality that in Jesus Christ God offered God's very self for the life of the world. Jesus' self-emptying love on the cross leads us to repentance. It becomes the power and pattern of our sharing.

The presence of the Risen Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit enables us to break down barriers and renew structures, preparing for the coming of God's kingdom of justice and peace.

The new life given by the Holy Spirit in Christ creates us as a new people—members of one body, bearing one another's burdens and sharing together in God's gift of life for all.

In the eucharist, we offer to God ourselves and the whole of creation in its brokenness, and receive all things back anew. The eucharist sends us back into the world to be Christ's body, broken and shared for the life of the world.

As the first-fruits of the new humanity, the church is called to stand in solidarity with all people, particularly

with the poor and the oppressed, and to challenge the value systems of this world.

Having confidence in the grace of God in Jesus Christ, who alone through the Holy Spirit enables us to live in obedience to the divine will, we, the participants in the world consultation on resource-sharing, coming from different regions, commit ourselves to a common discipline of sharing among all God's people.

II

In all such sharing we commit ourselves:

1. To a fundamentally new value system based on justice, peace and the integrity of creation. It will be a system that recognizes the rich resources of human communities, their cultural and spiritual contributions and the wealth of nature. It will be radically different from the value system on which the present economic and political orders are based and which lies behind the current crises like those of nuclear threat and industrial pollution.

2. To a new understanding of sharing in which those who have been marginalized by reason of sex, age, economic and political condition, ethnic origin and disability, and those who are homeless, refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants take their place at the centre of all decisions and actions as equal partners.

This means, for example, that:

- churches, councils and networks will establish for this purpose ecumenical mechanisms both nationally and regionally;
- equitable representation will be provided for women and youth in decision-making structures.

3. To identify with the poor and oppressed and their organized movements in the struggle for justice and human dignity in church and society. This in turn will imply the refusal to participate, either as giver or receiver, in ways of sharing that undermine this struggle.

4. To bear witness to the mission of God by identifying, exposing and confronting at all levels the root causes, and the structures, of injustice which lead to the exploitation of the wealth and people of the third world and result in poverty and the destruction of creation. This entails working for a new economic and political order.

This would mean, for example, that the churches of the North and the South commit themselves to strengthen and participate in the various anti-nuclear movements and to bring pressure upon their governments to stop nuclear testing and the dumping of nuclear waste. It will also mean joining with the people in their struggle against

transnational corporations, militarism and foreign intervention and occupation.

5. To enable people to organize themselves and realize their potential and power as individuals and communities, working towards the kind of self-reliance and self-determination which are an essential condition of interdependence.

6. To be open to one another as friends on the basis of common commitment, mutual trust, confession and forgiveness, keeping one another informed of all plans and programmes and submitting ourselves to mutual accountability and correction.

This implies, for example, the implementation of mutual accountability and participation in decision-making between the South and the North.

7. To represent to one another our needs and problems in relationships where there are no absolute donors, or absolute recipients, but all have needs to be met and gifts to give, and to work for the structural changes in the institutions of the North and the South which this calls for.

8. To promote through words and deeds the holistic mission of the church in obedience to God's liberating will. We are convinced that in responding only to certain parts of the mission we distort and disrupt mission as a whole.

9. To participate in the struggles of people for justice, and thereby overcome all barriers between different faiths and ideologies which today divide the human family.

This means, for example, churches in East and West making use of all opportunities to strengthen the process of detente and integrating the resources freed by this process for ecumenical sharing.

10. To resist international mechanisms (such as the International Monetary Fund/World Bank) which deprive the people of the South of their resources—transferring, for example, their hard-earned capital, which is more than the aid they receive, in payment of foreign debt, thereby putting them in a state of perpetual dependence—contributing instead to a fundamental and just redistribution of the wealth and resources of a country including the wealth of its churches.

11. To devise ways of shifting the power to set priorities and terms for the use of resources to those who are wrongfully denied both the resources and the power, such as movements for social justice.

This would imply that participation of the South in the decision-making must not only be on a consultative basis as it is practiced today.

12. To facilitate and encourage mutual involvement among the churches and people in the South who have common concerns, for example through the sharing of human resources.

13. To promote and strengthen ecumenical sharing at all levels, national, regional and international.

59. "Ten Affirmations on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation," World Council of Churches Convocation on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, Seoul, 1990

The 1983 WCC assembly in Vancouver called on the Council "to engage member churches in a conciliar process of mutual commitment (covenant) to justice, peace and the integrity of creation." This process/programme, known by the initials JPIC, spawned a number of regional and national meetings, and led to the 1990 world convocation in Seoul. • Between the Flood and the Rainbow, ed. D. Preman Niles, Geneva, WCC, 1992, pp. 168-76.

Introduction

In this world marked by injustice, violence and the degradation of the environment we want to reaffirm God's covenant which is open to all and holds the promise of life in wholeness and right relationships. Responding to God's covenant we profess our faith in the Triune God who is the very source of communion.

Our response to the covenant today leads us to make the following affirmations on urgent issues where justice, peace and the integrity of creation are at risk. They represent firm convictions that have grown out of years of ecumenical dialogue and struggle.

We make these affirmations as Christian people aware that many people of living faiths and ideologies share these concerns with us and are guided by their understanding of justice, peace and the integrity of creation. We therefore seek dialogue and co-operation with them, guided by a vision of the new future which is necessary for the survival for our planet.

We can make these affirmations only as we acknowledge our shortcomings and failures and commit ourselves anew to the reality of God's reign. This means to resist in thought, word and action the powers of separation and destruction and to live in active solidarity with the suffering people.

Affirmation I: We affirm that all exercise of power is accountable to God

The world belongs to God. Therefore, all forms of human power and exercise of authority should serve God's purposes in the world and are answerable to the people on whose behalf they are exercised. Those who wield power—economic, political, military, social, scientific, cultural, legal, religious—must be stewards of God's justice and peace. In Christ, God's power is demonstrated, in redemptive suffering, as compassionate love which identifies itself with broken and suffering humanity. This empowers people to proclaim the message of liberation, love and hope which offers new life, to resist injustice and to struggle against the powers of death.

Therefore we *affirm* that all forms of human power and authority are subject to God and accountable to people. This means the right of people to full participation. In Christ, God decisively revealed the meaning of power as compassionate love that prevails over the forces of death.

We *will resist* any exercise of power and authority which tries to monopolize power and so prohibits processes of transformation towards justice, peace and integrity of creation.

We *commit* ourselves to support the constructive power of people's movements in their struggle for human dignity and liberation as well as in achieving just and participatory forms of government and economic structures.

Affirmation II: We affirm God's option for the poor

The poor are the exploited and the oppressed. Their poverty is not accidental. It is very often a result of deliberate policies which result in the constantly increasing accumulation of wealth and power in the hands of a few. The existence of poverty is a scandal and a crime. It is blasphemy to say that it is the will of God. Jesus came that we should have "life in all its fullness" (John 10:10). In his death and resurrection, Christ exposed and thereby conquered the powers that deny the poor their right to abundant life (Luke 4:16-21). God shows a preferential option for the poor. "The glory of God is reflected in the poor person fully alive" (Archbishop Romero). In the cries of the poor we hear the challenging voice of God.

Those whom society treats as "the least" are described by Jesus as his sisters and brothers (Matt. 25:31-46). While we support the need for diaconal services and urgent response to emergencies, we recognize in our time that the needs of "the least" can only be met by fundamentally transforming the world economy through structural change. Charity and aid projects alone cannot meet the

needs and protect the dignity of the world's poorest billion people of whom women and children are the majority. The solution to the debt crisis can only be found through a just, equitable world economic order and not in palliative measures like the rescheduling of debts.

We *affirm* God's preferential option for the poor and state that as Christians our duty is to embrace God's action in the struggles of the poor in the liberation of us all.

We *will resist* all forces, policies and institutions which create and perpetuate poverty or accept it as inevitable and ineradicable.

We *commit* ourselves to be allies of those organizations and efforts which are dedicated to achieving the eradication of exploitation and oppression.

Affirmation III: We affirm the equal value of all races and peoples

In Jesus Christ, all people of whatever race, caste or ethnic descent are reconciled to God and to each other. Racism as an ideology and discrimination as a practice are a betrayal of the rich diversity of God's design for the world and violate the dignity of human personality. All forms of racism—whether individual, collective or systemic—must be named sin and their theological justification heresy.

We reject the perversion of the language of human and peoples' rights to assert so-called "group rights," an assertion which is divisive and seeks not to liberate but to preserve economic exploitation and political privilege by powerful minorities.

Therefore, remembering the covenant of God who declares "All the families of the earth are mine":

We *affirm* that people of every race, caste and ethnic group are of equal value. In the very diversity of their cultures and traditions, they reflect the rich plurality of God's creation.

We *will resist* the denial of the rights of human beings who are members of exploited and oppressed racial, ethnic, caste or indigenous groups. We will resist attempts by dominant cultures and groups to deprive them of their cultural identity, full citizenship and equal access to economic, social, political and ecclesial power. We will resist the oppression and exploitation of women and children belonging to these oppressed groups. They are the ones who are the most painfully affected.

We therefore *commit* ourselves to work against the forces of racism, ethnicism and casteism and to stand in solidarity with their victims and their struggles.

Affirmation IV: We affirm that male and female are created in the image of God

In God's image God created male and female (Gen. 1:27). This is the basis for a dynamic relationship between women and men for the transformation of society. Christ affirmed the personhood of women and empowered them to a life of dignity and fullness. Women with men, as "new creation in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17), must work towards a world where all forms of discrimination are eliminated. Therefore, as we remember the covenant of God:

We *affirm* the creative power given to women to stand for life wherever there is death. In Jesus' community women find acceptance and dignity and with them he shared the imperative to carry the good news.

We *will resist* structures of patriarchy which perpetuate violence against women in their homes and in a society which has exploited their labour and sexuality. Within this we pay special attention to the most vulnerable women—those who are poor and/or black, Dalits, members of indigenous communities, refugees, migrant workers and other oppressed groups. We will resist all structures of dominance which exclude the theological and spiritual contributions of women and deny their participation in decision-making processes in church and society.

Therefore, encouraged by the persistence of women all over the world in their struggles for life, we *commit* ourselves to seek ways of realizing a new community of women and men.

Affirmation V: We affirm that truth is at the foundation of a community of free people

Jesus Christ lived a life of truthfulness. In living God's truth he came into conflict with the values and powers of his society. He communicated his message of truth to the people, teaching and preaching in simple language, and with images and examples.

People's abilities to communicate and learn are among the greatest gifts of God. They relate and bind individuals together into communities, and communities into the one human family. Communication and education in the service of justice, peace and the integrity of creation carry a tremendous responsibility for the future.

The prophet Zechariah says: "These are things you should do: Speak the truth to one another. In the courts give real justice—the kind that makes for peace" (Zech. 8:16).

Today, new technologies offer possibilities of wider communication and education for all. At the same time their misuse threatens the true purpose of communication

and education. Ignorance, illiteracy, propaganda, misinformation and sheer falsehood face us everywhere; therefore, as we respond to the truth that makes us free (John 8:32):

We *affirm* that access to truth and education, information and means of communication are basic human rights. All people have the right to be educated, to tell their own stories, to speak their own convictions and beliefs, to be heard by others and to have the power to distinguish truth from falsehood.

We *will resist* policies that deny freedom of expression; that encourage the concentration of the communication media in the hands of the state or of economically powerful monopolies; that tolerate the spread of consumerism, racism, casteism, sexism, chauvinism in all its forms, religious intolerance, and a disposition to violence; and that acquiesce in increasing illiteracy and declining educational facilities in many countries. All this applies to every section of church and society.

We *commit* ourselves to create means by which the neglected and vulnerable may learn and the silenced may make themselves heard. We will seek to ensure that the truth, including the word of God and accurate representation of other faiths, is communicated through modern media in imaginative, prophetic, liberating and respectful ways.

Affirmation VI: We affirm the peace of Jesus Christ

The only possible basis for lasting peace is justice (Isa. 32:17). The prophetic vision of peace with justice is this:

They shall beat their swords into ploughshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more;
but they shall sit every[one]
under [their] vine and fig tree,
and none shall make them afraid;
for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken
(Micah 4:3-4).

Jesus said: "Blessed are the peace-makers" and "Love your enemies." The church as the community of the crucified and risen Christ is called to a reconciling role in the world. We have to discern what it entails to be makers of peace: the conscious acceptance of vulnerability.

In Jesus Christ, God has broken through the bonds of hostility between nations and peoples, and even now offers us the gift of peace with justice. No wound, hostility or sinfulness is beyond the reach of the peace that passes understanding. For biblical faith, true peace means every

human being dwelling in secure relatedness to God, neighbour, nature and self.

God's justice is to protect "the least" (Matt. 25:31-46), those who are the most vulnerable (Deut. 24). God is the defender of the poor (Amos 5).

There can be no peace without justice. Such a peace cannot be obtained or guaranteed through narrowly conceived doctrines of national security, for peace is indivisible. True security must be based on justice for the people, especially for those most at risk, and on respect for the environment.

We *affirm* the full meaning of God's peace. We are called to seek every possible means of establishing justice, achieving peace and solving conflicts by active non-violence.

We *will resist* doctrines and systems of security based on the use of, and deterrence by, all weapons of mass destruction, and military invasions, interventions and occupations. We will resist doctrines of national security which are aimed at the control and suppression of the people in order to protect the privileges of the few.

We *commit* ourselves to practice non-violence in all our personal relationships, to work for the banning of war as a legally recognized means of resolving conflicts, and to press governments for the establishment of an international legal order of peace-making.

Affirmation VII: We affirm the creation as beloved of God

As Creator, God is the Source and Sustainer of the whole cosmos. God loves the creation. Its mysterious ways, its life, its dynamism—all reflect the glory of its Creator. God's work of redemption in Jesus Christ reconciles all things and calls us to the healing work of the Spirit in all creation.

Because creation is of God and the goodness of God permeates all creation, we hold all life as sacred. Today all life in the world, both of present and future generations, is endangered because humanity has failed to love the living earth; and the rich and powerful in particular have plundered it as if it were created for selfish purposes. The magnitude of the devastation may well be irreversible and forces us to urgent action.

Biblical statements, such as "to have dominion" and "subdue the earth," have been misused through the centuries to justify destructive actions towards the created order. As we repent of this violation, we accept the biblical teaching that people, created in the image of God, have a special responsibility as servants in reflecting God's creating and sustaining love, to care for creation and to live in harmony with it.

We *affirm* that the world, as God's handiwork, has its own inherent integrity: that land, waters, air, forests, mountains and all creatures, including humanity, are "good" in God's sight. The integrity of creation has a social aspect which we recognize as peace with justice, and an ecological aspect which we recognize in the self-renewing, sustainable character of natural ecosystems.

We *will resist* the claim that anything in creation is merely a resource for human exploitation. We will resist the extinction of species for human benefit; consumerism and harmful mass production; pollution of land, air and waters; all human activities which are now leading to probable rapid climate change; and policies and plans which contribute to the disintegration of creation.

Therefore we *commit* ourselves to be members of both the living community of creation in which we are but one species, and members of the covenant community of Christ; to be full co-workers with God, with moral responsibility to respect the rights of future generations; and to conserve and work for the integrity of creation both because of its inherent value to God and in order that justice may be achieved and sustained.

Affirmation VIII: We affirm that the earth is the Lord's

The land and the waters provide life to people—indeed, to all that lives—now and for the future. But millions are deprived of land and suffer from the contamination of waters. Their cultures, their spirituality and their lives are destroyed. Peoples indigenous to the land and its historical caretakers have particularly suffered and still suffer oppressive separation from their land—by government policy and by violence, by theft and deceit, and by cultural and physical genocide. They await the fulfilment of the promise that the meek will inherit the earth. When there is justice in the land, the fields and forests and every living thing will dance and sing for joy (Ps. 96:11-12). Therefore:

We *affirm* that the land belongs to God. Human use of land and waters should release the earth to regularly replenish its life-giving power, protecting its integrity and providing spaces for its creatures.

We *will resist* any policy that treats land merely as a marketable commodity; that allows speculation at the expense of the poor; that dumps poisonous wastes into the land and the waters; that promotes the exploitation, unequal distribution or contamination of the land and its products; and that prevents those who live directly from the land from being its real trustees.

We *commit* ourselves to join in solidarity with indigenous communities struggling for their cultures, spirituality, and rights to land and sea; to be in solidarity with peasants,

poor farmers and seasonal agricultural workers seeking land reform; and to have reverence for the ecological space of other living creatures.

Affirmation IX: We affirm the dignity and commitment of the younger generation

Jesus actively upheld the dignity of the younger generation. His saying that unless we become like little children we cannot enter into the kingdom of God (Luke 18:17) and Paul's call to Timothy not to allow anyone to despise him because of his youth (1 Tim. 4:12) imply a challenge to society to build human communities which, with wonder and curiosity, playfulness and vulnerability, with heart, soul and body, ensure the continuity of generations in the love of God. Poverty, injustice and the debt crisis, war and militarism, hit children hard through the dislocation of families, forcing them into work at an early age just to survive, inflicting malnutrition upon them and even threatening their survival. Millions of children, particularly girls, have no security in order to enjoy their childhood. The increase in unemployment, especially among young people, causes despair. Therefore:

We affirm the dignity of children which derives from their particular vulnerability and need for nurturing love.

We affirm the creative and sacrificial role that young people are playing in building a new society, recognizing their right to have a prophetic voice in the structures that affect their life and their community.

We affirm the rights and needs of the younger generation as basic for establishing educational and developmental priorities.

We will resist any policy or authority which violates the rights of the younger generation, and which abuses and exploits them. The human right of conscientious objection must be fully respected.

We commit ourselves to our responsibility to support young people in their struggle for self-actualization, participation, and a life of hope and faith; and to create conditions which enable all children to live in dignity, and where old and young share experiences and learn from each other.

Affirmation X: We affirm that human rights are given by God

There is an inseparable relationship between justice and human rights. Human rights have their source in God's justice which relates to an enslaved, marginalized, suffering people in concrete acts of deliverance from oppression (Ex. 3:7b). We recognize with contrition that we as churches have not been in the forefront of the defense of human

rights, and many times have justified through our theology human rights violations.

The term "human rights" must be clearly understood to refer not only to individual rights but also to the collective social, economic and cultural rights of peoples (including those with disabilities) such as the right to land and its resources, to one's own ethnic and racial identity and to the exercise of religious and political freedom. The right to sovereignty and self-determination for peoples to work out their own models of development and to live free of fear and free of manipulation is a fundamental human right which should be respected, and so should be the rights of women and children to a life free of violence in home and society.

We affirm that human rights are God-given and that their promotion and protection are essential for freedom, justice and peace. To protect and defend human rights, an independent judicial system is necessary.

We will resist all structures and systems that violate human rights and deny the opportunity for the realization of the full potential of individuals and peoples. We will resist in particular torture, disappearances, and extra-judicial executions and the death penalty.

We commit ourselves to actions of solidarity with organizations and movements working for the promotion and protection of human rights; we will work for the acceptance and full implementation of human rights standards through effective instruments.

We further commit ourselves to work towards the full social integration of persons with disabilities into our communities through all possible means, including the removal of economic, religious, social and cultural barriers (particularly ensuring access to buildings, documentation and information) which prevent them from fully participating in our communities.

60. "JPIC and the Church as Moral Community," World Council of Churches Study on Ecclesiology and Ethics, 1993

This excerpt comes from the report of the first of three meetings that attempted to integrate the work of the program on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) with the ecclesiological concerns of Faith and Order. • Costly Unity: Presentations and Reports from the World Council of Churches Consultation in Ronde, Denmark, February 1993, eds Thomas F. Best and Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, Geneva, WCC, 1993, pp. 86-91.

I. JPIC and the Church as Moral Community

5. The being (*esse*) of the church is at stake in the justice, peace, and integrity of creation process. It is not sufficient to affirm that the moral thrust of JPIC is only *related* to the nature and function of the church. More than this is at issue. It can be described from two directions at once, the experience of JPIC as a conciliar process and the experience of the church's nature itself. *Koinonia* is an apt term for both. It is, for example, an empirically verifiable observation that commitment to and working for particular moral causes creates community among people. The experience of JPIC again and again has been that people have been gathered into a fellowship which can be described as *koinonia*. Involvement in these struggles of human community generates this *koinonia* and often enlightens doctrine. An "ecclesio-genetic" power is at work here, frequently moving participants to rich liturgical expression and raising deep religious questions for them, questions of faith and commitment. The power of the Holy Spirit is present here—this is the testimony.

6. At the same time, faith has always claimed the being of the church as itself a "moral" reality. Faith and discipleship are embodied in and as a community way of life. The memory of Jesus Christ (*anamnesis*), formative of the church itself, is a force shaping of moral existence. The Trinity is experienced as an image for human community and the basis for social doctrine and ecclesial reality. Such explication could continue, but need not, since it all comes to the same point: the church not only has, but is, a social ethic, a *koinonia* ethic.

7. Yet a number of complex qualifications must be made in treating the JPIC process and the church as, at heart, moral realities.

7.1. To participate in a particular moral cause does not necessarily signify entry into or belonging in the church. To claim that all approved moral action by non-members somehow makes them church members ("latent" or "anonymous" Christians) is a form of ecclesiastical imperialism. We affirm, however, the experience of fellowship and shared witness which extends beyond the boundaries of the church.

7.2. The church, it must be said, is not *constituted* by or dependent for its ongoing existence upon the moral activities of its members. Its origins and on-going life rest in the lavish grace and patience of God. However, moral lapses on the part of the members of the church may and often do threaten the credible witness of the church. At this time the church is called to the kind of resistance to the threats to life which JPIC sought to help accomplish. In any case, it is not too much to say that the holiness of the church means the constant moral struggle of its members.

7.3. Given the ambiguity and complexity of so many concrete moral challenges, it is not to be expected that all the members of a particular church, or all church organizations in a particular region, will arrive at the same moral decision in each particular situation. Christian freedom encompasses sincere and serious differences of moral judgment.

7.4. This observation is not an opening of the door to wholesale moral relativism, however. There are boundaries, and it will always be the case that certain decisions and actions are in contradiction to the nature and purpose of the church and the central teaching of the gospel. Instructive past instances of this are those German Christians who uncritically pledged allegiance to the Nazi State, and those South African churches which supported apartheid. In both cases those concerned excluded themselves from the church of Jesus Christ. They were guilty of what Visser 't Hooft described as "moral heresy." Here the being of the church is at stake. It should be added that heavy caution is in order when the stakes of moral judgment are this high, since the boundary is one which draws the line between true and false church. What is both safe to say and important is that serious moral struggle over life issues is always required of the church by its very nature.

7.5. Not all moral concerns carry equal weight, of course. We believe that the church is now called to respond above all, as JPIC did, to threats to life as a moral imperative. Given its role as God's co-worker in the created order and as the proclaimer of the gospel of salvation, the church is bound by its nature and purpose to act decisively when life itself is threatened by whatever forces—economic, political, military and through damage to the environment. Issues of survival are the most compelling for the church.

7.6. Moral issues and struggle often represent the line between “cheap” unity and “costly” unity. Cheap unity avoids morally contested issues because they would disturb the unity of the church. Costly unity is discovering the churches’ unity as a gift of pursuing justice and peace. It is often acquired at a price. Consider the struggle for independence in Namibia or the anti-apartheid campaign in South Africa. Forces tried to play off Roman Catholics against Lutherans, Anglicans against Methodists, and indigenous African churches against historic denominations. Genuine unity was discovered in joint struggle, often breaking new ecumenical ground (witness *The Kairos Document* and its ferment). In other cases costly unity is precisely to transcend loyalty to blood and soil, nation and ethnic or class heritage in the name of the God who is one and whose creation is one. It is the unity of the church accomplished on the way of the cross, paid for by the life of Christ and the lives of the martyrs, whose witness inevitably included moral witness. This is unity which, by God’s grace, breaks down dividing walls so that we might be reconciled to God and one another. JPIC as a process has often borne testimony to this costly unity. Its enemy is cheap unity—forgiveness without repentance, baptism without discipleship, life without daily dying and rising in a household of faith (the *oikos*) that is to be the visible sign of God’s desire for the whole inhabited earth (the *oikoumene*).

8. These comments about moral struggle and unity made, we go on to say that the threats to life today only intensify gratitude to God for the gift of life itself. All creation bears the stamp of holy things. The church, in its whole bearing, should, as a moral community, help foster a “sacramental” orientation towards life, just as the church understands itself, its being, its mission, and witness on a sacramental and eucharistic basis. There is no better place to begin than with the moral meaning of the sacraments themselves. Baptism, for example, is at the heart of the church insofar as the baptized become the effective witness—martyr—to gospel values in the world. Questions of faith and moral and social questions are inseparable from the act of Christian witness that baptism mandates. Eucharist as a sacrament of communion, to cite a second example, is real food for a scattered people in their moral struggle, to heal the brokenness of human being and community. The church sees both its inner unity and solidarity with others as expressions of sharing the bread of life. The sacraments as person-shaping rites can lead us into sacramental living.

9. From its side the efforts for justice, peace, and creation have so very often pointed to the essential place of worship and spirituality in our life together. Community is nurtured, hope is sustained, forgiveness is offered, bread for the journey is shared, new energy is discovered. We find

a bridge between ecclesiology and ethics in our experience of worship and the deepening of spirituality.

10. The eschatological dimension of both the unity of the church and of JPIC must be affirmed. While the requirements of each will finally be met in God’s time and in God’s way, that does not invite passivity on our part. On the contrary, our active participation in the concerns for the unity of the church and for justice, peace and the integrity of creation align us with God’s final work of fulfilment, just as that final fulfilment prods us to battle the threats to life and claim life itself as the treasure entrusted to us.

II. *Koinonia* and Its Implications

11. *Koinonia* is the term proposed as a description for that unity sought by Faith and Order and the conciliar process of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation. It entered ecumenical usage in the bilateral dialogues, where its Greek form proved useful in some contexts as a broadening of the Latin *communio*. *Koinonia* is used in some bilaterals to describe the goal of “communion” without organic union following the removal of possible doctrinal obstacles.

12. The implications of *koinonia* unfold in the discussion of several dimensions: the notion of Christian ethics itself, the concepts of covenant, conciliar fellowship, unity and diversity, the local and the global, and relationships with unofficial movements inside and beyond the church as such.

Koinonia and ethics

13. When in the New Testament *koinonia* refers to the interaction or sharing of believers within the local Christian community, it must be understood as referring to a concrete community of obedience. There can be no doubt that “following Christ” meant very practical things for the early Christians, matters that often brought them into tension and conflict with the surrounding world. Likewise the intimate connection we find in the New Testament between baptism and newness of life (Eph. 2:1-10) reminds us that choosing to belong to the community implied conscious moral choices.

14. In the course of history, this strong relation between faith and moral life was changed and in some cases also weakened. As the church grew and became more institutionalized, and as it became a factor to be reckoned with in the public accession of power in the western world, Christian obedience tended to become formalized; on the one hand along lines of penitence and on the other hand along lines of compliance with “public orders.” Even in churches where a basic connection between liturgy and life was maintained, the sense of radical obedience found in

New Testament—and in history exemplified by martyrs and saints—diminished.

15. The need to develop “ethics” as a particular discipline arose in modern times as people were faced with the growing complexity of social life. Ethics became the effort to deal with the moral dimension of this complexity on the basis of autonomous reason, individual judgment and communication by argument. Christians became aware of the growing cleavage between the substance of their tradition and the “foreign” world, and thus were challenged to match this development of ethics by finding ways of relating gospel and world, faith and life, more explicitly.

16. Christian ethics thus developed in different ways: both in alliance with secular approaches (Christian socialism, Christian liberalism) and in opposition to these, when there was a sharp awareness of the basic difference between allegiance to Jesus Christ and allegiance to some modern ideology. In most cases, however, the emphasis on the individual was taken for granted. As theologians spoke about the life of “the Christian,” personal and social-political responsibilities were distinguished.

17. It was an important development when the ecumenical movement, particularly the ecumenical council on Life and Work, began to institutionalize social ethical reflection as reflection of churches with a responsibility to each other and to the world. This effort, which was fuelled by events like the church struggle in Germany in the 1930s and later by analyses of neo-colonialism, dependence and structures of poverty and injustice, helped many Christians to overcome earlier habits of believing in which a certain distance between faith (as the “real” life of the community) and moral life was maintained, or in which the only connection was found in the observance of a certain personal life-style.

18. Recently, on the basis of these developments, Christians have sought to recover the fundamental relation between ethics and *koinonia*, between moral life and community, and to seek inspiration in the New Testament witness on this point. One of the valuable insights developed in this context is that the community of disciples rather than the individual Christian is the bearer of the tradition and the form and matrix of the moral life. Christian ethics, in this perspective, becomes the reflection on the life of the the community in the context and the perspective on the problems of human life in general.

19. *Koinonia* in relation to ethics does not mean in the first instance that the Christian community designs codes and rules; rather that it is a place where, along with the confession of faith and the celebration of sacraments, and as an inseparable part of it, the gospel tradition is probed permanently for moral inspiration and insight, and where

incessant moral counsel keeps the issues of humanity and world alive in the light of the gospel. As such the community is also a place of comfort and support. For some this might mean a consistent emphasis on non-violence; for others a permanent response to the guilt-and-forgiveness dimension of all human life; for still others an effort to recover a sense of calling and covenant in the experience of individual and social life. In all cases, *koinonia* implies an offer to all human beings involved in moral struggles and in need of frameworks and perspectives. When the moral life of the Christian is spoken of as witness, this is an essential aspect of it.

61. Willem Visser 't Hooft, from *The Ecumenical Movement and the Racial Problem*, 1954

Visser 't Hooft's small booklet, written while he was WCC general secretary, was one of the earliest efforts to examine the relationship between the struggle for racial justice and the emerging ecumenical movement. • The Ecumenical Movement and the Racial Problem, Paris, UNESCO, 1954, pp. 53-60.

The Supra-Racial Church

Our short survey of the attitude of the Churches with regard to race has shown that there is a growing consensus in their teaching on this subject. We must now define more clearly just what the nature and contents of this consensus are.

The starting point is the understanding which the Church has of its own nature. For the Church has no specific contribution to make to the solution of problems of interracial relations unless it is a body *sui generis* which has its own conception of the right relations between men. In other words the Church is ineffective in dealing with the racial issue when it forgets its own charter and adapts itself to its environment. The Church becomes effective in overcoming racial tension only when it realizes again its unique mission in the world.

It is one of the most remarkable characteristics of the theological situation today that, in the realms both of biblical scholarship and of systematic theology, the conception of the Church is again understood as a central category

of the Christian faith and that, in spite of considerable divergence on other points, there is substantial agreement on certain central aspects of the original and fundamental conception of the Church in the New Testament.

This agreement can be formulated as follows: "The Church is the people of God, gathered together by Jesus Christ, so as to represent the new humanity." The Church is the people *of God*. It is not a man-made institution. It has been created by an act of God. It belongs to Him and to Jesus Christ who died in order "to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad" (John 11:52). Men therefore cannot do in and with the Church what they may want to. They dare not treat the Church as an association in and for which they can draw up whatever rules and regulations they like. The basic constitution of the Church is given. It may be difficult to arrive at an agreement as to just what elements of faith and order belong to that given constitution, but there can be little doubt that this Church is intended to serve all humanity and that it cannot possibly become the monopoly of one race or nation. Where the Church is planted in a specific race or nation it is not in the first place the task of the Church to adapt itself to the life of that race or nation, but rather the task of that race or nation to adapt its life to the demands which arise from the very nature of the Church.

This Church is called a *people*. That is not meant as a mere hyperbole. It indicates that the followers of Jesus Christ are not unrelated individuals, but that they form a coherent whole held together by ties no less close than those of nationality. The early Christians were called by their critics a *tertium genus*, a third race, and they accepted this title as a true description of their fellowship, for they had indeed a common history and a common loyalty which distinguished them from other human groupings.

This people is a *new people*. It is new in that it belongs to the new age which has been inaugurated by the coming of Jesus Christ. It is also new in that it is characterised by new relationships among men. In the life of the old (Jewish) people, nationality and faith had coincided, with the result that deeper fraternal bonds could only exist among members of the Jewish nation. Only by being incorporated into that nation could others join in that deeper fellowship. The new people, however, is to demonstrate the true universality of God's concern for men. Within the new fellowship all racial barriers have fallen. To put on "the new nature" is to live in a community in which there "cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcized and uncircumcized, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all in all" (Colossians 3:11, cf. Galatians 3:28).

Should this new supra-racial and supra-national fellowship be understood as a purely "spiritual" phenomenon

which need not necessarily express itself in concrete and visible form? No, it is quite clear that the new people are to manifest this new relationship between men of differing race and nation in their common life in the Church. In fact the local Churches founded by St. Paul consisted of both Jewish and Gentile Christians who had unrestricted fellowship with each other. This did not happen without much searching of heart. For many Jewish Christian leaders it seemed sheer revolution to accept the heathen in full fellowship without incorporating them into the Jewish nation. The crisis at Antioch (Acts 15, Galatians 2) led to the victory of the principle defended by St. Paul, namely that national or racial background was to create no division in the Christian Church. Thus "the last barrier had fallen."¹

This basic principle of the supra-racial character of the Christian Church belongs then to its very nature. Where it is obscured the nature of the Church itself is obscured. Where it is manifested the true meaning of the Church as the new people of God is revealed.

The Christian Conception of Race

With regard to the conception of race there exists also a growing consensus among Christian thinkers. The Churches have always believed in the fundamental unity of mankind. When the scientists called together by Unesco declare "*que tous les hommes actuels appartiennent a une meme espece, dite Homo Sapiens, et qu'ils sont issus d'une meme souche*" (statement of September 1952), those who know their New Testament are reminded of the words spoken by St. Paul 19 centuries ago: "He made from one every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26). But it cannot be denied that at various periods in the history of the Christian Churches the strength of this basic conviction has been greatly weakened by the acceptance of ideologies or theories which established a hierarchy among the races. Thus the attitude of the Church to the Jewish people, which had in the early centuries of the Christian era been wholly based on religious and theological considerations, became from the days of Constantine the Great and especially in the Middle Ages a strange combination of justifiable theological and most un-Christian anti-Semitic motives.² The result was, as the laws of the period make clear, that the Jewish people were considered as a lower order of human beings. Again, when the Western nations came in direct contact with the African peoples and began to exercise control over them, certain theologians sought

1. Harnack, *Mission und Ausbreitung*, Leipzig, 1915; p. 63.

2. The transition has been clearly described by Oepke: *Das neue Gotteswolk in Schriftum Schauspiel, bildende Kunst und Weltgestaltung*, Gütersloh, 1950, see pp. 287, 295, 298.

to justify this domination by reference to Noah's cursing of the son of Ham, who was to be "a servant of servants to his brethren" (Genesis 9:25). More recently we have had the sad phenomenon of a movement which sought to combine Christianity with National Socialist racialism. Fortunately we can say that these aberrations have not remained unchallenged and that today it is difficult to find a serious theologian or responsible Church leader who would defend such shaky theological constructions thought out "*pour le besoin de la (mauvaise) cause.*" The declaration of the representative ecumenical conference at Oxford in 1937 reflects the general consensus of opinion: "There is no room for any differentiation between the races to their intrinsic value. All share alike in the concern of God, being created by Him to bring their unique and distinctive contributions to His service in the world."³

It should however be made clear that the Christian conception of race has its own distinctive characteristics in that it is God-centred rather than man-centred. The statement of St. Paul quoted above begins with the words: "He (God) made from one." In these words lies the difference between a vague cosmopolitanism which considers race and nations as purely accidental and the Christian conception which accepts them as part of the structure of human life which is a gift of God. The Christian Church does not stand for any form of racialism. "Against racial pride and race-antagonism the Church must set its face implacably as rebellion against God."⁴ But that does not mean that it stands for an abstract interracialism. In so far as race is a purely biological concept there is no reason to attach spiritual significance to it. The colour of the skin is irrelevant from the standpoint of Christian values. But in the course of history the main units which we call "races" have become the bearers of specific historical experiences and worked out particular forms of culture. It is useful that modern science tells us that these so-called races are by no means self-contained and unchanging entities, for that helps us to avoid the danger of absolutizing the distinctive cultural characteristics of any race. Nevertheless these characteristics exist and to neglect or deny them for the sake of a general uniformity is just as wrong as it is to deny individuals the right to the specific realization of their own gifts or talents. In this sense it is true that, as the Oxford Conference of 1937 put it "Each of the races of mankind has been blessed by God with distinctive and unique gifts," and that: "The Christian sees distinctions of race as part of God's purpose to enrich mankind with a diversity of gifts." The recognition of these different gifts does not mean a differentiation between the races as to their intrinsic value.

The situation is not static. New situations may arise—as they have arisen in the past and exist today in some parts of the world—in which the contributions of several races are brought together in a new synthesis. These are to be welcomed and respected as contributions to the common life of humanity. The great African leader, Dr. Aggrey, loved to tell the parable of the white and black keys of the piano which together produce harmonious music. That parable is true if it is not understood in terms of colour, but in terms of function. Racial differences are real, but they are relative because they are related to the calling of mankind as a whole. The last word about men is that they belong together to that one human race which was created by God and which He desires to save.

Race Relations in Society

What are the consequences which these convictions should have in society?

It is not difficult to see what this means for Christians in their personal relationships with men and women of other races. A spiritual attitude which does not affect the realities of human life has nothing to do with the faith in Christ, the Word made flesh.

When St. Paul writes to Philemon concerning the runaway slave Onesimus he asks Philemon to take him back "no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, as a beloved brother" and he adds: "both in the flesh and in the Lord." That is to say: not only as a brother in a spiritual sense, but at the same time as a brother in the everyday relationships of human life. This was indeed the great role which the Church played in its early days and has continued to play since whenever it has been true to its real nature; it has transformed personal relationships between men who belonged to different social, national or racial groupings. And this not merely within the Christian community—for once every man of every race is seen as a potential member of that community and as one called to serve the same Lord, the neighbour of another race is no longer a mere stranger but a human being for whom the Christian bears responsibility. There can be no doubt that this personal approach to the problem of inter-group contacts has had a deep influence on the total interracial situation. It has built bridges across the gulf of racial hatred, it has taken some of the bitterness out of the humiliation of one race by another, it has made exploitation less intolerable.

But the personal approach is not enough. In fact, as the Oxford Conference of the Churches in 1937 stated: "Undue emphasis upon the higher possibilities of love in personal relations, within the limits of a given system of justice or an established social structure, may tempt

3. *The Churches Survey Their Task*, London, 1937, p. 72.

4. *Idem*, p. 58.

Christians to allow individual acts of charity to become a screen for injustice and a substitute for justice.⁵⁵ The problem of the relationship between the races is by no means confined to the realm of personal associations. It is especially a problem of the social order which must be dealt with at the institutional, social, economic, political level. In a society in which the Churches have an opportunity to influence the shaping of social standards and in which their members share in responsibility for the working out of the total fabric of the life of the community, they can therefore not confine themselves to the mere proclamation of individual moral principles. They must direct the searching light of the Christian message upon evil practices which have become embedded in the institutions and laws of the nations.

It has taken the Churches a long time to rediscover this “prophetic” task. Even today they are by no means consistently accomplishing it. But they have at last begun. They raise their voice against racial discrimination and racial injustice. In doing so they take their stand on the rights of men. That does not mean that they isolate these rights from man’s duties. The Amsterdam Assembly said: “Man’s freedom has its counterpart in man’s responsibility.”⁵⁶ But it does mean that there exist certain essential human rights which belong to man “by virtue of his creation, redemption and calling.”⁵⁷ Some Churches would emphasize that these rights are especially derived from man’s status as a creature of God. Others would emphasize that in Christ we have “the assurance that victory of righteousness will have the last word concerning all the injustices of earth” and that we are therefore “spurred on to the quest of a greater measure of righteousness in the social and political sphere, and to fight against every unjust discrimination of class and race and every denial of human rights, whether political or economic.”⁵⁸ Yet all agree that these rights are God-given rather than man-made. “It is presumptuous for the State to assume that it can grant or deny fundamental rights. It is for the State to embody these rights in its own legal system and to ensure their observance in practice.”⁵⁹

What are these rights? With regard to race, the chief one is surely the right to equal opportunity for education and development. For men are entitled to look forward to a time when they may use their latent gifts and make their full contribution to the life of mankind. Nothing

is more deeply frustrating than a closed future. Closely related is the right to participate responsibly in the life of the community as one’s ability to do so has been proved. The Dutch Reformed Church Congress at Bloemfontein (South Africa) said rightly: “It must be remembered that no people in the world worth their salt will be content indefinitely with no say, or only an indirect say, in the political and socio-economic organization of the country in which decisions are taken about their interests and future.”¹⁰ It is a fundamentally sound factor in the present world situation that the existence of this right is increasingly realized.

We cannot enumerate all the rights which are relevant to the racial situation, but one further right must be mentioned—the right to be treated as a person rather than as a member of a biological unit. Implied in this is the right to associate freely with other men and women. To be discriminated against on the mere ground of colour, to become the victim of enforced segregation, is to be dealt with on a sub-human level. The Church of Christ which understands itself as a community of persons each of which has his own specific value *sub specie eternitatis*, and as a supra-racial fellowship must by its very nature react where these rights are violated.

62. Working Group Reports, World Consultation on Racism, the Netherlands, 1980

The WCC-sponsored world consultation on racism followed a decade of attacks on the Council’s Program to Combat Racism (PCR) and its highly controversial Special Fund. What follows are two of its working group reports. • Barbara Rogers, Race: No Peace without Justice, Geneva, WCC, 1980, pp. 118-24.

VII. RACISM AND THEOLOGY

Background

1. At the beginning of ecumenical debate about racism it was widely believed in the ecumenical movement “that by preaching the brotherhood of men and by the spreading of modern education, race-prejudice would soon be

5. *The Churches Survey Their Task*, London, 1937, p. 95.

6. *Report of the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, London, 1949, p. 3.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

8. “Report for Advisory Commission,” *The Ecumenical Review*, October, 1952, p. 96.

9. *Report of the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, London, 1949, p. 93.

10. Die natuurlijke-vraagstuk, *Report of Church Congress*, Bloemfontein, 1950.

eliminated" (cf. *World Council of Churches' Statements and Actions on Racism 1948-1979*, p. v). The Churches did not take seriously the "non-rational" character of overt and covert racism, and the influence of political and economic factors on racial discrimination. Instead they believed that the classical doctrines of the Christian faith were a sufficient guide for the work of the ecumenical movement in overcoming racial discrimination.

2. The launching of the PCR in 1969 was the result of major theological developments in the ecumenical movement since this early phase. This debate, however, is not yet concluded. This fact is confirmed by the controversies and publicity which the PCR has generated during the last decade.

3. By 1975 it was becoming increasingly clear that for many Christians the PCR seemed to have deviated from the theological stance of the ecumenical movement. Some critics even suggested that the PCR had lost its theological foundation. Among other initiatives a consultation was called in 1975 by the Commission on Faith and Order and PCR to reflect on "*Racism in Theology and Theology against Racism*" (September 1975).

4. Looking back on the last ten years, we observe that the PCR has led to a discovery of new theological insights, which call for review of theological assumptions. To these lessons we shall now turn.

Lessons Learnt

1. God is with the oppressed

God is the creator and saviour of all people and reveals himself to all humanity. All too often this has been misinterpreted as God being on the side of the powerful and strong. In this past decade we have, however, experienced God's presence in the struggle of the oppressed for liberation. This inspires us to reaffirm that God is the God of the oppressed and the poor. We further recognize the importance of this for the liberation of the oppressor.

2. Salvation and liberation are inseparable

The experience of the PCR has led us to a fuller understanding of the Gospel and of God's concern for the whole person. This enables us to say that personal salvation and socio-political liberation should not be separated. This is in accordance with Biblical teaching we have come to appreciate in a new way.

3. There is a social dimension to freedom

While humanity is one and all people are equal before God, our experience in the PCR has taught us to appreciate the importance of all individuals and communities.

Racism, however, is present whenever any one racial group dominates another. Freedom in Christ is, therefore, to be understood in addition to all else as freedom of the other calling for the creation of new structures of justice and peace for all people.

4. Racism is a perversion of cultural identity

We affirm that God created us as one humanity, and that in Christ we are called to a oneness which supersedes all our particularities. However, we have also learned to celebrate together the variety of our ethnic and cultural identities. All of us respond to the voice of Christ through the voice of our culture, and we believe this is for our mutual enrichment to the glory of God. Due to human sin, however, the distinctive inheritance of each group which is meant for the enrichment of others can become demonically perverted into an aggressive superiority to dominate others and as such becomes the root of racism. At the inception of PCR, racism was defined primarily in terms of superiority, prejudice, discrimination and violence based on colour expressed in the social structure as exemplified in Southern Africa. This must remain the dominant concern in relation to Namibia and South Africa. However, experience in other regions of the world has shown us that group prejudice, discrimination and violence is based not only on colour but also on ethnic and cultural superiority. We further recognize that racism is also rooted in economic factors.

5. The unity of the Church is inseparably related to the unity of mankind

The church is called upon to witness to this unity in the midst of cultural differences as a fellowship in Christ gathered from all peoples and cultures. It is meant to be a sign of the reconciled humanity. But our experience shows that denominationalism and racism have destroyed the unity of the church. Hitherto we have been preoccupied with the disunity arising from denominational divisions. We now realize that the sin of racism contradicts the nature of the church and its oneness which we confess.

Reconciliation between peoples, nations, and cultures demands repentance—radical changes of attitudes and sacrificial action. We have learnt to appreciate this anew—and to express solidarity with the oppressed. Thus combatting racism is a significant contribution to the search for both the unity of the church and humankind.

6. There are different ways of doing theology

We have learnt that there are different ways of doing theology. The theological affirmations underlying the PCR have arisen from our awareness of a particular method of

exercising theological reflection, within the contemporary church. It is described as contextual theology; and must be understood in terms of what it claims to do.

One basis of this method is a comprehensive analysis of the specific context in which we find ourselves. We become aware of the perspectives arising from this context which challenge us to a theology in action, living out our faith as Christians. *The other basis* is the biblical understanding of God's action among His people and the world, liberating people from various forms of oppression and enslavement. We search the Scriptures for paradigms relevant to our context and for the insights they yield.

These biblical insights may be sufficient to illuminate and inspire us to act as children of God in our context. On other occasions they may need to be reinterpreted in response to the challenging perspectives we derive from the context itself, and thus provide us with new dimensions to our understanding of God and His ways with us and all humankind.

This way of doing theology is partial in that it is found to be sufficient to evoke a response of faith in a particular context. It does not claim to be relevant or sufficient to all situations. It does not deny the more comprehensive tradition of theological thought, nor the history of any ecclesiastic tradition. It can however provide fresh insights into these traditions. We further affirm the Christian dialogue with other faiths as making an important contribution to contextual theology in our understanding of theological and ecclesiastical traditions.

Contextual theology is pluralist by its very method. Since specific historical and cultural contexts will yield only partial theological reflections, they will need to be correlated with each other within the worldwide church. This process of mutual learning and correction will yield a truly ecumenical vision.

7. *The struggle against racism is a struggle about power*

The biblical understanding of power demands that it be directed towards the greatest good of all people. Often the tendency of politicians is to acquire and to maintain power as an end in itself rather than to use it in the service of the people.

One form of the just use of politics is the constitutional provision of universal franchise. That is, wherever political power is misused, it should be possible to change the government by a vote of the people. Where this is impossible due to constitutional limitations, force should only be used as a last resort with the general criteria of a "just rebellion," recognizing that there are indiscriminate forms of violence in which Christians may not participate in any circumstances.

Christians, both within and without the state, should give every support to the oppressed in order to bring about a non-violent peaceful solution to the problems (such as economic and political sanctions against the offending government).

We recognize the position taken by the WCC in Addis Ababa 1971 to the effect that "the WCC does not and cannot identify itself completely with any political movement, nor does it pass judgement on those victims of racism who are driven to violence as the only way left to them to redress grievances, and so to open the way for a new and more just social order." . . .

VIII. WORKING DESCRIPTIONS OF RACISM

Traditionally, we have described racism's nature and scope existing in three basic forms: attitudinal, behavioural and institutional. In 1968, the Uppsala Assembly of the WCC defined racism as follows: "By racism we mean ethnocentric pride in one's own racial group and preference for the distinctive characteristics of that group; belief that these characteristics are fundamentally biological in nature and are thus transmitted to succeeding generations; strong negative feelings towards other groups who do not share these characteristics, coupled with the intention to discriminate against and exclude the out-group from full participation in the life of the community."

This description is adequate when speaking of individual or interpersonal prejudice and discrimination. But during the decade, we have learned that while individual change and commitment are essential, it is institutional racism which is causing the greatest suffering to the greatest number of people today, and it is the collective power of the churches and other groups which are required to combat institutional racism.

Through the work of PCR and the struggles which PCR is supporting, we have learned more about how racism functions systematically. We believe that this emerging understanding must be pursued if we are to have clear descriptions of the resultant mechanisms of oppression and the diversionary tactics employed by racist systems. For Christians, this requires, in addition, a mode of theological reflection based on *contextual, institutional involvement* in the struggle against racism in both Church and society. The theology of struggle and combat against racism is our struggle now; the theology of structure as over against interpersonal relations is our struggle now.

In this light, we offer the following observations and recommendations:

1. Racism is increasingly a pervasive, worldwide phenomenon. It is not confined to certain countries or continents.
2. The pervasiveness of racism means in part that no economic system, be it socialism or capitalism or any other, is intrinsically immune to the cancer of racism.
3. Racism manifests itself in a multiplicity of ways on the local, national and international levels.
4. In general, study and reflection have yet to produce a comprehensive definition or theory of racial oppression.
5. As a consequence, until such a comprehensive definition or theory of racial oppression is evolved, strategies for racism will have to be grounded in *contextually based* definitions and theories.
6. The broadest context in which racism manifests itself today is the international capitalist system. Studies of the functioning of racism within that context have revealed a number of principles that may be useful in formulating *contextually based* definitions and theories. They include the following:
 - a) Racism is first and foremost a *system* of domination and oppression.
 - b) Initially racism's basic motivations were economic, but at different stages of development racial domination has been maintained for political, social, cultural, religious, military and psychological reasons.
 - c) Manifestations of racism are socially determined and dependent on such factors as the racial character of the societal context; the nature of the competitive economic environment; the degree of perceived threat posed by the oppressed racial group(s); the nature of the economic, political and cultural resources that the oppressed group commands; and the level of demand for these resources in the local, national, and international political economy.
 - d) Racism is both overt and covert. It is enforced and maintained both consciously and unconsciously by the legal, cultural, religious, educational, economic, political and military institutions of society.
 - e) Undergirding systems of racial domination are myths of racial superiority and inferiority. The

systems are built on notions of superior and inferior groups. Individual racist actions are expressions of a process of *group interaction*.

- f) Racism confers certain privileges on the dominant group. It is the creation and defense of these group privileges that sustains and perpetuates racism.
- g) Racism can be a matter of result rather than intent. Dominant group actions—intended or unintended—can produce patterns of racial domination.
- h) Racism is one of at least three major sub-systems of domination in the modern world. It interacts with classism and sexism to produce the broad pattern of oppression and exploitation that plagues the world.

7. These factors should be considered in formulating theories and definitions of racism in other contexts.

The regional consultations preceding this world consultation have drawn our attention to various forms of racism and their manifestations all over the world. Racial, ethnic, and caste oppression today increasingly claim our special consideration and demand immediate action. The oppression and exploitation of the ethnic and cultural minorities, the Aborigines and the original inhabitants and the tribal populations are parts of a system characterized by the interaction and interdependence of social, cultural, political and economic forces. Thus land alienation, bonded labour, denial of other economic rights, untouchability, segregation, political and bureaucratic repression, and the denial of other economic rights exist together destroying the identity of vast sections of the people. The increasing number and intensity of specific acts of repression and atrocities perpetrated on these sections of the people are therefore not isolated or peripheral phenomena but central to the system of domination in different parts of the world. The pervasiveness of this system of discrimination and oppression has also affected the Church structures in these regions, and this is an additional cause for our concern.

Our priorities in these areas of oppression must be especially determined by the concrete struggles of the oppressed people who have already defined the areas of concern and action. In addition to the black people's fight against white racism, the past decade has seen the emergence and strengthening of the struggles of oppressed people in the other regions for justice, identity and transformation of society. The specific struggles that are now shattering the imposed harmony of many societies are those against

land alienation, development models which destroy the people's identity, and the denial of civil and human rights. Several sections of the oppressed people—tribal and cultural minorities—are demanding separate political institutions and self-determination as the first step towards their liberation. These struggles must be seen in the context of both the regional and the global structures of power as well as the growing authoritarian trends in many regions. . . .

63. "Racism and South Africa," General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, Ottawa, 1982

The World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC, now World Communion of Reformed Churches) is the organization that represents the global family of Reformed (Presbyterian) churches. It had a major stake in the fight against apartheid since the theological justification for this system of "separate development" was provided by Reformed churches in South Africa. Ottawa 1982: Proceedings of the 21st General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, ed. Edmond Perret, Geneva, WARC, 1983, pp. 176-80.

I

God in Jesus Christ has affirmed human dignity. Through his life, death and resurrection he has reconciled people to God and to themselves. He has broken down the wall of partition and enmity and has become our peace. He is the Lord of His church who has brought us together in the one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God who is the father of us all (Eph. 4:5-6).

The Gospel of Jesus Christ demands, therefore, a community of believers which transcends all barriers of race—a community in which the love for Christ and for one another has overcome the divisions of race and colour.

The Gospel confronts racism, which is in its very essence a form of idolatry. Racism fosters a false sense of supremacy, it denies the common humanity of believers, and it denies Christ's reconciling, humanising work. It systematises oppression, domination and injustice. As such the struggle against racism, wherever it is found, in overt and covert forms, is a responsibility laid upon the church by the Gospel of Jesus Christ in every country and society.

At the present time, without denying the universality of racist sin, we must call special attention to South Africa. Apartheid (or "Separate Development") in South Africa today poses a unique challenge to the Church, especially the churches in the Reformed tradition. The white Afrikaans Reformed Churches of South Africa through the years have worked out in considerable detail both the policy itself and the theological and moral justification for the system. Apartheid ("Separate Development") is therefore a pseudo-religious ideology as well as a political policy. It depends to a large extent on this moral and theological justification. The division of Reformed churches in South Africa on the basis of race and colour is being defended as a faithful interpretation of the will of God and of the Reformed understanding of the church in the world. This leads to the division of Christians at the table of the Lord as a matter of practice and policy, which has been continually affirmed save for exceptional circumstances under special permission by the white Afrikaans Reformed Churches. . . .

The General Council of the WARC meeting in Ottawa 1982 declares:

The promises of God for his world and for his church are in direct contradiction to apartheid ideals and practices. These promises, clearly proclaimed by the prophets and fulfilled in Christ, are peace, justice and liberation. They contain good news for the poor and deliverance for the oppressed, but also God's judgment on the denial of rights and the destruction of humanity and community.

We feel duty bound by the Gospel to raise our voice and stand by the oppressed. "None of the brethren can be injured, despised, rejected, abused, or any way offended by us, without at the same time injuring, despising and abusing Christ by the wrongs we do . . . We cannot love Christ without loving Him in the brethren." (Calvin)

In certain situations the confession of a church needs to draw a clear line between truth and error. In faithful allegiance to Jesus Christ it may have to reject the claims of an unjust or oppressive government and denounce Christians who aid and abet the oppressor. We believe that this is the situation in South Africa today.

The churches which have accepted Reformed confessions of faith have therefore committed themselves to live as the people of God and to show in their daily life and service what this means. This commitment requires concrete manifestation of community among races, of common witness to injustice and equality in society, and of unity at the table of the Lord. The Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk

and the Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk, in not only accepting, but actively justifying the apartheid system by misusing the Gospel and the Reformed confession, contradict in doctrine and in action the promise which they profess to believe.

Therefore, the General Council declares that this situation constitutes a *status confessionis* for churches, which means that we regard this as an issue on which it is not possible to differ without seriously jeopardizing the integrity of our common confession as Reformed churches.

We declare, with Black Reformed Christians of South Africa, that apartheid ("Separate Development") is a sin, and that the moral and theological justification of it is a travesty of the Gospel, and in its persistent disobedience to the Word of God, a theological heresy.

II

. . . 4. Therefore, the General Council, reluctantly and painfully, is compelled to suspend the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (in the Republic of South Africa) and the Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk van Afrika from the privileges of membership in the WARC (i.e. sending delegates to General Councils and holding membership in Departmental committees and commissions), until such time as the WARC Executive Committee has determined that these two Churches in their utterances and practice have given evidence of a change of heart. They will be warmly restored to the full privileges of membership when the following changes have taken place:

- a) Black Christians are no longer excluded from church services, especially from Holy Communion.
- b) Concrete support in word and deed is given to those who suffer under the system of apartheid ("separate development").
- c) Unequivocal synod resolutions are made which reject apartheid and commit the Church to dismantling this system in both church and politics.

III

Even as we say these things, we, the delegates at the General Council, confess that we are not without guilt in regard to racism. Racism is a reality everywhere and its existence calls for repentance and concerted action. And so, certain questions emerge for our Churches:

- a) How do we combat racism in our own societies and our own churches?

- b) How do we come to understand our complicity in the racist structures of South Africa through the economic involvement of especially Western European and North American countries and churches?
- c) How do we remain sensitive to the insidious way in which racism and social injustice are so often excused in the name of economic interest and national security?
- d) How can we give concrete manifestation to our concern for and solidarity with the victims of racism in South Africa and elsewhere in their struggle for justice, peace, reconciliation and human liberation?
- e) Churches should endeavour to develop relationships with Black Reformed churches in South Africa and with churches and Christians (black and white) who are engaged in this struggle.
- f) In expressing solidarity with those who struggle for justice in this situation, we also ask the churches to struggle with the painful and difficult questions of how to witness to the reconciling grace of God for those whom we see as oppressive and in error.

64. Madeleine Barot, "Considerations on the Need for a Theology of the Place of Women in the Church," 1955

Barot is an extraordinary figure in the history of modern ecumenism: general secretary of CIMADE, the French ecumenical committee to aid displaced persons during the Second World War; a leader in Christian youth conferences; and the first director of the WCC's Department on the Cooperation of Men and Women in the Church (1953-66). • The Ecumenical Review, vol. 7, no. 2, 1955, pp. 151-52, 154-60.

Why is it, some people ask, that the position of woman in the Church has not improved, in the same way as her position society?

Why, others ask, does the Church allow itself to be dominated by secular conceptions of the role of women, instead of proclaiming the message of the freedom brought

to women by Christianity and acting upon it in the churches?

The first group regard the Church as conservative in teaching and practice, while the world goes ahead. They wonder if this is simply because the Church has been very tardy in thinking about these problems, or whether the nature of the Church is different from that of secular society; whether the Christian conception of woman differs from the humanitarian conception based on justice and efficiency which is now held in post-Christian or non-Christian circles.

The second group regard the Church as being absorbed by the world, with nothing to distinguish it from the world. For them it is a matter of course that the Church must have different standards from those of secular society, and they think the Church has succumbed to the temptation to conform to the world, forgetting its own prophetic and teaching functions.

The first group insist that if there are special standards which Christians ought to respect, then those standards should at least be taught clearly to everyone; so that the faithful may know exactly what they are accepting, and may live according to those standards in faith and hope; and so that those who reject those standards may know why Christian communities should differ from secular communities.

The second group denounce the sin of the Church, which has not succeeded in embodying in its life the implications of the Redemption and setting an example to the world of a society of free, redeemed people as a sign of God's Kingdom. It is impatient, because Christ's message of liberation, "There is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female . . ." has not yet swept away all the old taboos, and because discrimination still survives in the Church and in the world.

All this seriously weakens the message which the Church ought to give to the world, whether the world is scandalised by what it calls the obscurantism of the Church, or whether the world aspires in vain to discover fresh insight into the relations between the sexes—an insight which is both purer and broader. In any case, the Church is bound to ask itself whether it is administering in the best possible way the spiritual gifts entrusted to it, whether it has not forgotten part of its message of liberation. And the very worst that could happen would be for the women to remain passive and the men indifferent to this question, as has for so long been the case. It is better if women are rebellious and men incoherent—as now seems to happen more frequently. All are then forced to reflect anew and to re-examine the traditional ways of thinking and acting. . . .

In the face of this rapid evolution in the world and all the crusades undertaken to promote the emancipation of women, the existing situation *within the Churches* is still

more difficult to describe in a few words. But it does not vary from church to church as much as appears at first sight, once one has grasped the differences in ecclesiastical vocabulary.

1. There are very few women in church councils. A distinction is normally made between those churches where the members of such councils are chosen among those who have been specially consecrated, thus entering an order of the Church, and those churches where the function of Elder or Deacon is only a provisional function, without sacerdotal character. Surprising as it may seem, one finds nevertheless some women in the former case and yet practically none in the latter. They are most frequently found on the councils of local churches, hardly ever in the national councils, except on very specialised commissions (missions—youth—financial campaigns).

2. Everywhere, women are employed professionally by the Church and receive a special training for this purpose, either in a special women's training college or frequently in the theological faculty of a university, obtaining the same diplomas as the men. But very few of them are afterwards given independent work, even when it is in the realm of lay activity. In some churches they are sometimes consecrated to the ministry and are officially called "pastors," but they are not usually given access to the full pastoral ministry in a parish, nor to the administration of the Sacraments.

In churches which employ a number of people in different capacities (as directors of Christian education and Sunday schools, youth leaders, secretaries for social work, etc.) women easily find opportunities to exercise their particular gifts, enjoying sufficient independence to develop them fully. But when two people are in charge of the work—the pastor and a woman assistant, as is frequently the case in Europe—the pastor rarely tries to make the maximum use of this duality of a masculine and of a feminine influence, of the complementary character, the enriching "polarity," of the two sexes. Most frequently he is only concerned to obtain the immediate help that a subordinate—of whatever sex—can give him in his own work. If the women's salaries were to become the same as the men's, and if there were enough men, very few pastors would continue to give preference to a woman assistant in the parish. They would prefer a man assistant who could take more of the work off the pastor's shoulders, but without contributing a different element to their mutual work.

3. On the other hand, in the majority of Christian institutions co-education is carried on as a matter of course, and there is a growing tendency to have mixed activities in the youth groups. This makes it very difficult for young women to adapt themselves; as soon as they get married or enter adult life, they are confined to strictly activities feminine activities within the Church.

4. The one place where women are really expected to make their full contribution is within the women's groups and women's movements. These movements have welcomed and turned to account all the spiritual gifts and the devotion which were not accepted by the Church; they have called to service and provided spiritual food for a large number of women who were starved of any communal life and disappointed by that found in the usual parish life, and who were prepared to give unlimited service to their neighbour. The women's organisations have certainly provided one effective solution for the problem of women in the Church, for in such organisations most women soon forget the bitterness they felt on having to leave the mixed groups when they became adults.

The whole position of women in the different churches is now more or less known, and its evolution is constantly compared with that of the society around it.

An ecumenical vocabulary, which is as precise as the different church traditions permit, is in process of formation, enabling useful comparisons to be made between churches.

Unfortunately the theological contributions received on the question are far less adequate. The most urgent task is for theologians and specialists in questions of church order to define clearly the different spheres of study, and to unravel the skein of questions of different kinds which have to be considered. A few points, however, seem to be already firmly established and generally accepted.

The position of women cannot be considered in isolation. It is related to that of men, just as men's position is related to that of women. What we need is not a new theology about women, but fresh and wider insight into anthropology.

Anything which tends to deny or to belittle the difference between the sexes is an attack on God's will for His creation. Mankind was created bi-sexual so that they might exercise love and communion, in the image of God. We are reminded of this in the second version of the Creation story and in St. Paul's comparison between Christ and the Church and husbands and wives. If we denied the differences we might risk failing to understand the new element of the New Testament message, as compared with the Old. That was the temptation of the first feminists, when they tried to identify themselves with men. The very idea of competition or rivalry between men and women should be banned as absurd. A man and a woman can do the same work—but they will probably not do it in the same way.

However, it is not enough merely to accept the differences between the sexes, and to be a real man *or* a real woman. We must also realise that what men and women have in common is more important than the differences

between them. We have all to be both men and women. This statement exposes a second temptation to which feminists are prone: the temptation to shut oneself up in a protected, exclusive world which is "specifically feminine" and to delight in "the eternal feminine" and its romanticism. Men seem to be even more open to a similar temptation, when they turn certain professions, church councils or politics into a masculine "preserve." It has been suggested that there is a biblical explanation for this fact. Men are supposed to be more prone than women to this temptation, because Adam lived alone until Eve was created, whereas Eve never knew life without a partner and from the very beginning had to live in communion with Adam. Personally, I am more inclined to regard this tendency as the result of a defense-complex set up in certain adolescent boys to protect themselves against over-possessive mothers, or as a result of a too strongly feminine influence in the life of the family.

The idea of one sex complementing the other must be extended to every sphere of life, not restricted merely to the physical side; it applies equally to social life and to the relationship between men and women at work, not merely to marriage. Marriage is the normal fulfilment of sex and should certainly be considered as an instructive example for the relations between men and women. But that is by no means the whole meaning of sex. The duality of man and woman is not merely a necessity for the propagation of the human race (as is generally taught by Roman Catholics). Christian marriage, for instance, achieves fresh significance in relation to the celibacy described by St. Paul, just as celibacy achieves its full signification in relation to marriage. When the Jews of the Old Covenant married, they were filled with the desire for posterity, for the promised Child, for the Messiah who was to be born of them. This is confirmed by the stories of miraculous births all through the Old Testament. The Christians of the New Covenant, when they marry, ought to remember that marriage is not solely a means of procreation, but is the symbol of the union between Christ and the Church, and that the quality of their conjugal life is of the highest significance, as a visible sign of that union. The celibate is the symbol of the transitory nature of this world, reminding us that the Kingdom of God is at hand, the Kingdom in which "there shall be neither male nor female," "neither marriage nor giving in marriage." This notion of the complementary nature of the sexes is quite often expressed by the terms "*vis-a-vis*" or "partners," and increasingly used in recent books or articles on our subject.

But although there is a real convergence of thought, divergences begin to appear with St. Paul's remarks on the

hierarchy of the sexes, man's authority and initiative, woman's submission and subordination.

There are two schools of thought. The first regards St. Paul's ethics as universal and applicable to all times and places. The other regards the same passages as merely a reflection of the patriarchal society (Jewish or Hellenistic) of twenty centuries ago. The first school thinks that the wife's subordination to her husband is the standard relationship for all women to all men. The second school thinks that the subordination of which St. Paul speaks applies only to marriage and should be understood as mutual submission, applying to both husband and wife. They suggest that the passage usually used in marriage services, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church: and he is the saviour of the body" (Eph. 5:22-24) should be replaced by I Cor. 7:4, "The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife."¹¹

There are also divergences between those who see no dogmatic reason for excluding women from any ministerial office in the Church, because they believe in the priesthood of all believers, and those who cannot accept the admittance of women to the priesthood, either because they have kept (it may be unconsciously) a trace of the Old Testament notion about the impurity of women, or because they want to maintain an order of hierarchy between the sexes, or again because of their conception of the "ministry" itself. The difference in dogma is acute, but the difference in practice is very slight because, as we have already seen, when all the Church's functions are thrown open to women, very few of them assume those functions—perhaps because they are discouraged by the present forms of the ministry, or by the pressure of public opinion (which is more clerical than the Church itself and is often unconsciously influenced by the Roman Catholic conception of priesthood).

This brings me to a final point: the importance of considering sociological and psychological factors, when working out a theology of the role of women in the Church. As we have just seen, the practices of the surrounding culture and society, and economic necessities (e.g. lower salaries paid to women) are often determining factors even in decisions taken by churches.

At any rate, when the World Council of Churches entrusted the Department on the Cooperation of Men and

Women in Church and Society with the study of the place of women in the Church, it was clearly specified that, at the same time, concrete action should be undertaken towards a more complete integration of women in the Church. This was to be done, on the one hand, by urging the churches to enable and stimulate women to share fully in the opportunities and responsibilities of church membership, and on the other, by helping women to accept and prepare themselves for such responsibilities, to which they are as yet unaccustomed.

Particular care ought to be taken to enable the responsible heads of women's groups and activities to benefit from the enrichment acquired through ecumenical contacts and exchanges, which up till now have been too exclusively reserved to theologians and the clergy, to the detriment of the laity.

Apart from the theoretical consideration of the relationships that should exist between men and women in a Christian community, the specificity, the complementarity, the equality or the hierarchical order of the sexes, the question of girls' education should be examined, including that of co-education, and the kind of training required by women called to professional service in the Church. At the same time, due thought should be given to the possibilities of employment and the material and financial conditions offered to women in the churches and Christian institutions.

May I venture to suggest that the reason why so much theological, and practical, study still needs to be done in the Protestant churches on the position of women, may be due to the exclusively clerical and monastic experience of the mediaeval theologians, as well the reaction of the Reformers—truly necessary at the time—against the abuses of Mariology? There again, in another way, sociological factors have influenced theology.

To the two conflicting questions mentioned at the outset and which have prompted me to make these few remarks, our reply should certainly be that the Church and all Christian communities should be guided by different principles and ethics from those of the secular or the non-Christian world. Christians must constantly remember that they are pilgrims, strangers on this earth, citizens of this world, but at the same time already citizens of God's Kingdom and they must show this in their lives. The standards of Christian communities should be based on that theology of the relationship between men and women to which we aspire, in the light of that hope of the Kingdom. It is because these standards must be different that they could, if forcefully proclaimed and really maintained, prove revolutionary as much for the secular world as for the Church, leavening both throughout with new life.

11. F. Dumas, *Man-Woman Relationships According to the Genesis and Apostolic Texts*, a study presented at a Theological Conference, held at St. Cloud, France, 1954. Translated from the French: mimeographed document of the World Council of Churches, Geneva, Switzerland.

65. Mary John Mananzan, Mercy Oduyoye, Letty Russell and Elsa Tamez, "The Spirit Is Troubling the Water," Statement on the Ecumenical Decade: Churches in Solidarity with Women, 1989

The Ecumenical Decade (1988-98) was called by the WCC's central committee after the UN-sponsored Decade of Solidarity with Women failed to generate much change within the churches. It prompted several major events on various continents, including a famous "Re-Imagining" conference in North America (1993). • To the Wind of God's Spirit, ed. Emilio Castro, Geneva, WCC, 1990, pp.99-102.

Genesis 1:1-2 tells us that when God began to create the heavens and the earth, the Spirit of God was moving over the face of watery chaos. At the beginning of the Ecumenical Decade as we search for signs of the Spirit, we often find that Spirit in chaotic situations of pain and struggle where women are working together with men to bring new life in the face of death. We search for God's wisdom to discern the signs of God's life-giving presence in church, community and nation. Often we discover that troubling presence in the "sighs too deep for words" that come from the hearts of women caught in the destructive forces of militarism, impoverishment, economic injustice, racism and patriarchal structures of domination (Rom. 8:26).

I. Struggle Is the Name for Hope

Looking at the task ahead of us we are very glad that the Decade is only a year old. We will need nine years and many more to discover what it would mean for us all to become really living children of God (Rom. 8:19). Yet at the same time we rejoice to see the ways that Wisdom is already calling her children forth in every continent and teaching them that struggle is the name for hope (Prov. 8:1-10).

In the Philippines women are responding to the ever more desperate social, economic and political situations by forming a coalition of Christian women's groups, including an association of women theologians, a national association of women religious, who work with other organizations of Gabriela, a national feminist movement. Struggling together on specific women's issues of prostitution,

trafficking of women and other forms of violence against women, and on national issues like foreign debt, foreign bases, militarization, etc., they are developing a genuine ecumenism coming from below. In the area of reproductive rights, they are beginning to ask why it is usually men who make up laws that govern women's control over their own bodies. An institute of women's studies has begun a regular course of study at St Scolastica's College in Manila and will soon hold an institute of women's studies for Asian and Pacific women of different cultures and countries.

In Africa women theologians are taking a long-range look at the need for new leadership and teachers in the churches and universities. A seven-year programme projected to begin with a meeting in 1989 with 25 theologians was oversubscribed with a registration of 75 women preparing to give papers and discuss the theme "Daughters of Africa, Arise."

In Latin America the consciousness of women is changing on all levels from the grassroots to the university. Usually this happens as women gather to struggle with a single issue such as the high cost of living, housing, water, or those who have disappeared. Then they begin to see with new eyes their own oppression and to think about their own rights at home, in church and community. The work itself goes forward ecumenically so that more and more Roman Catholics and Protestants find common ground as they struggle together against barriers of injustice. The WCC and the Decade have served to make connections between churches and these ongoing movements. Women have been encouraged to seek further theological education so that they can provide needed leadership in the churches and seminaries. At all levels, both Catholic and Protestant, women are beginning to see the importance of women's ordination. Meeting together they are beginning to develop their own critical feminist theory as they articulate the experience of women struggling for life and hope in Latin American reality.

In Europe and North America the ferment and the troubling of the waters in third-world contexts is becoming a new call for networking and response to global justice issues. First-world women find they need to do their own homework on racism, colonialism and classism as they seek to respond to challenges from the movement of women in third-world countries. In preparation for an Ecumenical Association of ThirdWorld Theologians international dialogue between third-world and first-world women in 1991, white women theologians in the USA have begun a re-examination of the deep contradictions in their lives as oppressed and oppressors in order to discover specific points of solidarity among women's movements.

II. Creation Groans

These responses that emerge in the midst of the groaning creation are part of the Decade and yet they began before it, and move ahead in parallel or overlapping ways. For this we give thanks, for the Decade is not for self-congratulation, but about churches in solidarity with women within their contexts, and about becoming connected to this particular part in creation's groaning.

In analyzing these groans from the perspectives of women struggling for liberation, we see certain socio-economic, political and religio-cultural realities that hold countless women, children and men in their death-dealing grip. Above all, the issue of the external debt payments and the destruction of national economies in the third world is a reality that women are coming to see as a personal and global issue which can be addressed only through mutual information, networking and solidarity across denominational and national lines. For example, 44 percent of the Philippine national budget goes to service the debt with a large portion of the remainder given to militarization. This is a reality that kills—with bullets, torture and imprisonment or through slow starvation, disease and suffering.

Along with militarization and violence there is ever-increasing destruction of family lives as women are forced into prostitution and overseas work and are sold to foreign husbands who use or abuse them at will. Issues of sexuality and control over their own bodies are important for women in any part of the world. The sale and promotion of contraceptives, e.g. Depo Provera, is sacrificing women's lives for corporate profit. The neglect of the ever growing number of women and children suffering from AIDS is a scandal.

Women are in double and triple jeopardy because of racism, sexism and classism in all parts of the world. In addition, those in places like South Africa find that all their struggles have to focus on the genocidal policy of apartheid that destroys their lives. Here the work of the Decade provides a new link among churches as women join their sisters, making common cause in their struggle for life and for truth.

As church women recognize their common linkages around these and other issues they also begin to see connections with ecological issues. Often nature and women have suffered the similar fate of objectification, domination and rape. The struggle for the integrity of creation is rooted in the recognition that the circle of God-given life is whole and not divided into body and intellect, nature and history. Neither women nor other parts of God's creation can fulfill God's intention when dominated by patriarchal forces of dualism, greed and oppression. Such sinful structures perpetuate the symphony of groaning.

III. Birth of New Creation

In this Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women, the groaning and travail of women may become a sign of hope in the fulfilment of God's promise of New Creation (Rom. 8:22-25). In the birth of Christ we know that childbirth brought about the revealing of a true child of God. But women of faith and struggle still groan as they await the fulfilment of this promise.

The question of whether creation, as described in Genesis 1-2, really points to a God who calls males to domination, or whether it shows how male and female together are to care for the earth and one another has been answered. The God who has cared for us and loved us in Jesus Christ makes clear that we are responsible for that same relationship to all of God's creation. It would seem to us that God is more in need of good housekeepers than rulers to straighten up the mess of creation so it may become a symphony of praise to God its Creator.

Women in different cultures are beginning to draw on their own cultural creation myths to understand more clearly the way different metaphors can carry the message of community between women and men and all creation. Thus, in the Philippines they speak of the bamboo creation myth in which woman and man "came out of the bamboo together"!

Our understanding of New Creation can be expanded with other metaphors for old creation, but also with stories of women's own lives. In their struggle for life in the midst of death, stories of martyrs, of mothers and of ordinary women's lives become more and more a part of the text and context for interpreting biblical and church tradition. Along with reason and tradition, the experience of women's faith and struggle and a commitment to change women's oppressive situation become ingredients of theology from women's perspective.

Not only is there a growing critique of the assumed right of people to rule over others, but also there is a growing critique of the ways religious traditions reinforce the roots of oppression by legitimizing the right of certain persons to dominate in the name of God. In the name of the *koinonia*-creating presence of Christ, women declare themselves set free to live now in a just and caring community, as if they are already part of the creation in which all things have been made new (Isa. 65:17-25).

IV. Participation in the Pain of Childbirth

It will take more than a Decade to discover how God is making all things new, but for the present we can all participate together in a decade of midwifery and childbirth. As a friend from Latin America said: "In ten years theology

will have another face in Latin America.” The waters are being troubled and some of the gifts of that troubling are the way the Spirit is raising up new sons and daughters to dream dreams and see new visions (Acts 2:17).

Across the world today there is a new ecumenical ferment at work. Up from the grassroots and mass movements, and out of the universities and labour unions is coming the internationalization of the women’s movement. These linkages are part of the hope for rebirth in the churches; a hope already upon us in the small signs of the Spirit as it troubles the waters.

In looking at the Decade and its purposes, we have seen the troubling of institutions, as women call for changes in structures and theology so that unique contributions of women’s movements and organizations are made visible and promoted. Here the encouraging institutional voice of the WCC is crucial to the response of the churches to these movements of the Holy Spirit.

At the same time the Decade is providing programmatic and educational opportunities that are stimulating projects of conscientization and leadership training in churches as women seek to equip themselves for solidarity work. Both men and women are called to work for the liberation and wellbeing of women.

66. “The Church and the International Disorder,” First Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Amsterdam, 1948

This report from the WCC’s first assembly, coming on the heels of World War II, contains the famous declaration that “War is contrary to the will of God.”

• Man’s Disorder and God’s Design, *op. cit.*, pp. 217-23 (in vol. 4).

The World Council of Churches is met in its first Assembly at a time of critical international strain. The hopes of the recent war years and the apparent dawn of peace have been dashed. No adequate system for effecting peaceful change has been established, despite the earnest desire of millions. In numerous countries, human rights are being trampled under foot and liberty denied by political or economic systems. Exhaustion and disillusionment have combined with spiritual apathy to produce a moral vacuum which will be

filled, either by Christian faith or by despair or even hatred. Men are asking in fear and dismay what the future holds.

The churches bear witness to all mankind that the world is in God’s hands. His purpose may be thwarted and delayed, but it cannot be finally frustrated. This is the meaning of history which forbids despair or surrender to the fascinating belief in power as a solvent of human trouble.

War, being a consequence of the disregard of God, is no inevitable if man will turn to Him in repentance and obey His law. There is, then, no irresistible tide that is carrying man to destruction. Nothing is impossible with God.

While we know that wars sometimes arise from immediate causes which Christians seem unable to influence, we need not work blindly or alone. We are labourers together with God, Who in Christ has given us the way of overcoming demonic forces in history. Through the churches, working together under His power, a fellowship is being developed which rises above those barriers of race, colour, class and nation that now set men against each other in conflict.

Every person has a place in the Divine purpose. Created by God in His image, the object of His redeeming love in Christ, he must be free to respond to God’s calling. God is not indifferent to misery or deaf to human prayer and aspiration. By accepting His Gospel, men will find forgiveness for all their sins and receive power to transform their relations with their fellow men.

Herein lies our hope and the ground of all our striving. It is required of us that we be faithful and obedient. The event is with God. Thus every man may serve the cause of peace, confident that—no matter what happens—he is neither lost nor futile, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.

In this confidence we are one in proclaiming to all mankind:

I. War Is Contrary to the Will of God

War as a method of settling disputes is incompatible with the teaching and example of our Lord Jesus Christ. The part which war plays in our present international life is a sin against God and a degradation of man. We recognise that the problem of war raises especially acute issues for Christians today. Warfare has greatly changed. War is now total and every man and woman is called for mobilisation in war service. Moreover, the immense use of air forces and the discovery of atomic and other new weapons render widespread and indiscriminate destruction inherent in the whole conduct of modern war in a sense never experienced in past conflicts. In these circumstances the tradition of a

just war, requiring a just cause and the use of just means, is now challenged. Law may require the sanction of force, but when war breaks out, force is used on a scale which tends to destroy the basis on which law exists.

Therefore the inescapable question arises: Can war now be an act of justice? We cannot answer this question unanimously, but three broad positions are maintained:

- (1) There are those who hold that, even though entering a war may be a Christian's duty in particular circumstances, modern warfare, with its mass destruction, can never be an act of justice.
- (2) In the absence of impartial supranational institutions, there are those who hold that military action is the ultimate sanction of the rule of law, and that citizens must be distinctly taught that it is their duty to defend the law by force if necessary.
- (3) Others, again, refuse military service of all kinds, convinced that an absolute witness against war and for peace is for them the will of God and they desire that the Church should speak to the same effect.

We must frankly acknowledge our deep sense of perplexity in face of these conflicting opinions, and urge upon all Christians the duty of wrestling continuously with the difficulties they raise and of praying humbly for God's guidance. We believe that there is a special call to theologians to consider the theological problems involved. In the meantime, the churches must continue to hold within their full fellowship all who sincerely profess such viewpoints as those set out above and are prepared to submit themselves to the will of God in the light of such guidance as may be vouchsafed to them.

On certain points of principle all are agreed. In the absence of any impartial agency for upholding justice, nations have gone to war in the belief that they were doing so. We hold that in international as in national life justice must be upheld. Nations must suppress their desire to save "face." This derives from pride, as unworthy as it is dangerous. The churches, for their part, have the duty of declaring those moral principles which obedience to God requires in war as in peace. They must not allow their spiritual and moral resources to be used by the state in war or in peace as a means of propagating an ideology or supporting a cause in which they cannot wholeheartedly concur. They must teach the duty of love and prayer for the enemy in time of war and of reconciliation between victor and vanquished after the war.

The churches must also attack the causes of war by promoting peaceful change and the pursuit of justice. They must stand for the maintenance of good faith and the honouring of the pledged word, resist the pretensions of imperialist power, promote the multilateral reduction of armaments, and combat indifference and despair in the face of the futility of war; they must point Christians to that spiritual resistance which grows from settled convictions widely held, themselves a powerful deterrent to war. A moral vacuum inevitably invites an aggressor.

We call upon the governments of those countries which were victors in the second world war to hasten the making of just peace treaties with defeated nations, allowing them to rebuild their political and economic systems for peaceful purposes; promptly to return prisoners of war to their homes; and to bring purges and trials for war crimes to a rapid end.

II. Peace Requires an Attack on the Causes of Conflict between the Powers

The greatest threat to peace today comes from the division of the world into mutually suspicious and antagonistic blocs. This threat is all the greater because national tensions are confused by the clash of economic and political systems. Christianity cannot be equated with any of these. There are elements in all systems which we must condemn when they contravene the First Commandment, infringe basic human rights, and contain a potential threat to peace. We denounce all forms of tyranny—economic, political or religious—which deny liberty to men. We utterly oppose totalitarianism, wherever found, in which a state arrogates to itself the right of determining men's thoughts and actions instead of recognising the right of each individual to do God's will according to his conscience. In the same way we oppose any church which seeks to use the power of the state to enforce religious conformity. We resist all endeavours to spread a system of thought or of economics by unscrupulous intolerance, suppression or persecution.

Similarly, we oppose aggressive imperialism—political, economic or cultural—whereby a nation seeks to use other nations or peoples for its own ends. We therefore protest against the exploitation of non-self-governing peoples for selfish purposes, the retarding of their progress towards self-government, and discrimination or segregation on the ground of race or colour.

A positive attempt must be made to ensure that competing economic systems such as Communism, Socialism, or free enterprise may co-exist without leading to war. No nation has the moral right to determine its own economic policy without consideration for the economic needs of

other nations and without recourse to international consultation. The churches have a responsibility to educate men to rise above the limitations of their national outlook and to view economic and political differences in the light of the Christian objective of ensuring to every man freedom from all economic or political bondage. Such systems exist to serve men, not men to serve them.

Christians must examine critically all actions of governments which increase tension or arouse misunderstanding, even unintentionally. Above all, they should withstand everything in the press, radio or school which inflames hatred or hostility between nations.

III. The Nations of the World Must Acknowledge the Rule of Law

Our Lord Jesus Christ taught that God, the Father of all, is Sovereign. We affirm, therefore, that no state may claim absolute sovereignty, or make laws without regard to the commandments of God and the welfare of mankind. It must accept its responsibility under the governance of God, and its subordination to law, within the society of nations.

As within the nations, so in their relations with one another, the authority of law must be recognised and established. International law clearly requires international institutions for its effectiveness. These institutions, if they are to command respect and obedience of nations, must come to grips with international problems on their own merits and not primarily in the light of national interests.

Such institutions are urgently needed today. History never stands still. New forces constantly emerge. Sporadic conflicts east and west, the attainment of independence by large masses of people, the apparent decline of European predominance, the clash of competing systems in Asia, all point to the inevitability of change. The United Nations was designed to assist in the settlement of difficulties and to promote friendly relations among the nations. Its purposes in these respects deserve the support of Christians. But unless the nations surrender a greater measure of national sovereignty in the interest of the common good, they will be tempted to have recourse to war in order to enforce their claims.

The churches have an important part in laying that common foundation of moral conviction without which any system of law will break down. While pressing for more comprehensive and authoritative world organisation, they should at present support immediate practical steps for fostering mutual understanding and goodwill among the nations, for promoting respect for international law and the establishment of the international institutions which are now possible. They should also support every effort

to deal on a universal basis with the many specific questions of international concern which face mankind today, such as the use of atomic power, the multilateral reduction of armaments, and the provision of health services and food for all men. They should endeavour to secure that the United Nations be further developed to serve such purposes. They should insist that the domestic laws of each country conform to the principles of progressive international law, and they gratefully recognise that recent demands to formulate principles of human rights reflect a new sense of international responsibility for the rights and freedoms of all men.

IV. The Observance of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms Should Be Encouraged by Domestic and International Action

The Church has always demanded freedom to obey God rather than men. We affirm that all men are equal in the sight of God and that the rights of men derive directly from their status as the children of God. It is presumptuous for the state to assume that it can grant or deny fundamental rights. It is for the state to embody these rights in its own legal system and to ensure their observance in practice. We believe, however, that there are no rights without duties. Man's freedom has its counterpart in man's responsibility, and each person has a responsibility towards his fellows in community.

We are profoundly concerned by evidence from many parts of the world of flagrant violations of human rights. Both individuals and groups are subjected to persecution and discrimination on grounds of race, colour, religion, culture or political conviction. Against such actions, whether of governments, officials, or the general public, the churches must take a firm and vigorous stand, through local action, in co-operation with churches in other lands, and through international institutions of legal order. They must work for an ever wider and deeper understanding of what are the essential human rights if men are to be free to do the will of God.

At the present time, churches should support every endeavour to secure within an international bill of rights adequate safeguards for freedom of religion and conscience, including rights of all men to hold and change their faith, to express it in worship and practice, to teach and persuade others, and to decide on the religious education of their children. They should press for freedom of speech and expression, of association and assembly, the rights of the family, of freedom from arbitrary arrest, as well as all those other rights which the true freedom of man requires. In the domestic and in the international

sphere, they should support a fuller realisation of human freedom through social legislation. They should protest against the expulsion of minorities. With all the resources at their disposal they should oppose enforced segregation on grounds of race or colour, working for the progressive recognition and application of this principle in every country. Above all it is essential that the churches observe these fundamental rights in their own membership and life, thus giving to others an example of what freedom means in practice.

V. The Churches and All Christian People Have Obligations in the Face of International Disorder

The churches are guilty both of indifference and of failure. While they desire more open honesty and less self-righteousness among governments and all concerned with international relations, they cannot cast a first stone or excuse themselves for complacency.

Therefore, it is the duty of the Christian to pray for all men, especially for those in authority; to combat both hatred and resignation in regard to war; to support negotiation rather than primary reliance upon arms as an instrument of policy; and to sustain such national policies as in his judgment best reflect Christian principles. He should respond to the demand of the Christian vocation upon his life as a Citizen, make sacrifices for the hungry and homeless, and, above all, win men for Christ, and thus enlarge the bonds of the supra-national fellowship.

Within this fellowship, each church must eliminate discrimination among its members on unworthy grounds. It must educate them to view international policies in the light of their faith. Its witness to the moral law must be a warning to the state against unnecessary concession to expediency, and it must support leaders and those in authority in their endeavour to build the sure foundations of just world order.

The establishment of the World Council of Churches can be made of great moment for the life of the nations. It is a living expression of this fellowship, transcending race and nation, class and culture, knit together in faith, service and understanding. Its aim will be to hasten international reconciliation through its own members and through the co-operation of all Christian churches and of all men of goodwill. It will strive to see international differences in the light of God's design, remembering that normally there are Christians on both sides of every frontier. It should not weary in the effort to state the Christian understanding of the will of God and to promote its application to national and international policy.

For these purposes special agencies are needed. To this end the World Council of Churches and the International Missionary Council have formed the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs. The Assembly commends it to the interest and prayers of all Christian people.

Great are the tasks and fateful the responsibilities laid on Christians today. In our own strength we can do nothing, but our hope is in Christ and in the coming of His Kingdom. With Him is the victory and in Him we trust. We pray that we may be strengthened by the power of His might and used by Him for accomplishing His design among the nations. For He is the Prince of Peace and the Risen and Living Head of the Church.

67. "Violence, Nonviolence and the Struggle for Social Justice," World Council of Churches Central Committee, 1973

This report is the result of a two-year study project that engaged scholars and activists from historic peace churches and those with "just war" traditions. The study, which was prompted by member church involvements in the social revolutions of the day, attracted considerable attention from the media. • The Ecumenical Review, vol. 25, no. 4, 1973, pp. 442-44.

. . . 28. It is in the context of this reality that the methods of resistance to unjust and oppressive political or economic power must be considered. There are among us three distinct points of view about methods:

- (a) Some believe that nonviolent action is the only possibility consistent with obedience to Jesus Christ. They recognize that this discipline is hard and will often be unsuccessful. They object to justifying nonviolence only by its success as a strategy for solving social problems. Nonviolent action is for them a witness to the transcendent power of God in Jesus Christ, a way of faith which will be justified by him and his power alone.
- (b) Some are prepared to accept the necessity of violent resistance as a Christian duty in extreme circumstances, but they would apply to it criteria similar

to those governing a just war. Not only must the cause be just and all other possibilities exhausted, but also there must be reasonable expectation that violent resistance will attain the ends desired, the methods must be just and there must be a positive understanding of the order which will be established after the violence succeeds. Violence will then be understood as the *ultima ratio*. It is the act of freedom which can only be undertaken, with the guilt it brings, confident in the final judgement of God.

- (c) Some find themselves already in situations of violence in which they cannot help but participate. Nonviolence does not present itself as an option unless they would withdraw totally from the struggle for justice. In this situation the problem becomes to reduce the sum total of violence in the situation and to liberate human beings for just and peaceful relations with each other. Some form of relatively just order must first be created before violence can cease. The problem of Christian responsibility, then, is to humanize the means of conflict and to build structures of peace wherever possible within it.

29. We have not been able to reduce these three radically different points of view to agreement. We are convinced however of three things:

- (a) There are some forms of violence in which Christians may not participate and which the churches must condemn. There are violent causes—the conquest of one people by another or the deliberate oppression of one class or race by another—which offend divine justice. There are violent means of struggle—torture in all forms, the holding of innocent hostages and the deliberate or indiscriminate killing of innocent non-combatants, for example—which destroy the soul of the perpetrator as surely as the life and health of the victim.
- (b) We are convinced that far too little attention has been given by the Church and by resistance movements to the methods and techniques of nonviolence in the struggle for a just society. There are vast possibilities for preventing violence and bloodshed and for mitigating violent conflicts already in progress, by the systematic use of forms of struggle which aim at the conversion and not the destruction of the opponent and which use means which do not foreclose the possibility of a positive relationship with him. Nonviolent action represents

relatively unexplored territory: initiatives being taken by various groups and individuals to help the exploration happen deserve the strongest possible support from the WCC and the churches.

- (c) We reject, however, some facile assumptions about nonviolence which have been current in the recent debate. Nonviolent action is highly political. It may be extremely controversial. It is not free of the compromise and ambiguity which accompany any attempt to embody a love-based ethic in a world of power and counter-power, and it is not necessarily bloodless. Moreover, most struggles for freedom—and most government actions—have been, as a matter of fact, mixtures of violent and nonviolent action. A nonviolent movement may produce peripheral violence and have the problem of controlling it. An armed struggle may also have nonviolent dimensions such as education designed to persuade and win over the enemy. In one movement violent and nonviolent groups may be working for the same ends. In all of these Christians will have hard choices to make. The more these choices are informed by a responsible spirit and knowledge of constructive nonviolent options, the more creative they will be.

30. Christians reflecting on these dilemmas must avoid the trap of seeming to dictate strategies and tactics to people living in distant and different situations. No single one can have universal validity; and those who live outside a particular social conflict do well to be wary of handing out advice, whether towards violent or nonviolent strategies, when it is not they, but others, who will be called upon to pay the price of following it. In particular those who sit comfortably close to the top of the world's socio-economic pyramid must be sensitive to the severe limitations their affluence places on their giving moral advice to others less well placed.

31. Yet, with this qualification in mind, it is essential that the process of mutual challenge and help should continue and grow. Many of these seemingly different local situations have in fact a great deal in common, and human feelings of fear and frustration are shared the world over, and by those on both sides of conflicts. Furthermore, the dialogue between Christians needs to take place on the widest scale, because Christians associated with the world's power centres bear more responsibility for hidden or open violence in distant places than they often realize. Also the ecumenical movement has taught us the importance of hearing uncomfortable questions which challenge our facile compromises with the various cultures within which we

live and witness; and it has brought home to us that Christians cannot remain indifferent to these issues of political and social justice.

68. "Basic Theological and Ethical Issues" and "Urgent Tasks for the Churches," Public Hearing on Nuclear Weapons and Disarmament, Amsterdam, 1981

This public hearing, held at the request of the WCC's Central Committee, came at a moment of considerable Cold War tension. The report is the work of a panel of leaders from different churches who received statements from, and engaged in discussion with, forty expert witnesses. • Before It's Too Late: The Challenge of Nuclear Disarmament, eds Paul Abrecht and Ninan Koshy, Geneva, WCC, 1983, pp. 28-34.

III. Basic Theological and Ethical Issues

In trying to tackle these huge problems from a Christian standpoint, we cannot now enter into the larger debate, as old as Christianity itself, about Christian attitudes to war as such: Christians ought to be peace-makers. War, any war, is an undoubted evil. There is a stark contradiction between the way of love and suffering, which is Christ's way, and the deliberate infliction of suffering and death on others. Yet most Christians in most ages have believed that there are circumstances in which fighting can be the lesser of two evils.

All the theologians who gave evidence to the Hearing were, in their different ways, caught in this dilemma, and none presumed any hope that theology could provide easy answers. The questions posed by nuclear weapons are new. There has been little world discussion from a theological perspective of the issues involved and it is not surprising that there is no consensus. Each spoke against a different political background, and illustrated the extent to which theological and ethical judgements have to be related to the circumstances in which they are formed, and to the practical details of the subject in hand.

Theology does not exist in a vacuum. But neither is it mere common sense reflection about current affairs. The theologian is all the time aiming to grasp at something

more, some new perspective, some new dimension of hope, a further awareness of the breadth and magnitude of the issues at stake, a sense that there are moral constraints within which human beings have to live if they are to retain their humanity. Professor Schillebeeckx, a Roman Catholic theologian from the Netherlands, warned that "the churches should not pretend any kind of ethical superiority; they share the uncertainties of our so-called "culture." In spite of this they will have no choice but to speak out in all humility but from within a fundamental, prophetic ethical indignation." That nuclear weapons in some unique way give ground for such indignation was the clear message of our witnesses. It arises from the perception that there are major ethical differences between nuclear weapons and all those which have preceded them.

Nuclear and conventional weapons

This is not the place to describe the horrors of nuclear war. Nor do we pursue here the arguments put to us about the waste of economic resources and the consequent global injustice of nuclear strategies; the same arguments apply, sometimes even more strongly, to the build-up of conventional arms. Waste and horror form the background to what we say, but the first crucial ethical difference, as we understand it, derives from the scale of nuclear devastation, a scale out of all proportion to any reasonable war aim. Warfare on such a scale involves a degree of unpredictability humanity cannot afford to risk.

The second crucial difference derives from the indiscriminate character of such weapons, entailing as they would a degree and type of destructiveness which could not even in theory be confined to combatants: indeed not only would non-combatants inevitably suffer major casualties wherever such a weapon was used, but much of the biosphere might be devastated as well. The long-term effects of radiation add a further indiscriminate element, comparable to that of biological warfare, which has already been outlawed. Humanity's responsibility under God for his Creation is one of the issues at stake. To say this is not to claim that a sharp dividing line can in all instances be drawn between nuclear and conventional arms in terms of their immediate results. There are degrees of devastation and degrees of unacceptability even within the limits of conventional warfare. There are those who argue that, in some special circumstances, a very limited use of a few nuclear weapons might be no more unacceptable than a conventional attack. Such a limited use would, however, carry with it unpredictable long-term consequences. The point has already been made that it would be highly dangerous to cross the important psychological threshold between the use of nuclear and non-nuclear weapons. This

enormous additional risk of escalation inherent in the use of any nuclear weapon decisively alters the ethical balance. We do not believe therefore that the use of such weapons can ever be considered as ethically equivalent to the use of conventional weapons.

In light of these special characteristics of nuclear weapons, and fully recognizing that there is no Christian consensus on the subject of war as such, we wish to state unequivocally that nuclear warfighting is morally wrong, whatever the circumstances.

Advocates of the strategy of nuclear deterrence, who might endorse this condemnation of nuclear war, argue that the strategy is ethically justifiable precisely because its aim is to prevent war. The ambiguities of the strategy have been discussed earlier in this report. The ethical point at issue is whether the possession of, preparation for the use of, and readiness to use, nuclear weapons fall under the same moral condemnation as their actual use. There is, of course, a profound difference between intentions and deeds, not least in terms of their possible consequences. There is also an element of ambiguity in threats, especially when part of their effectiveness lies in the uncertainty about whether they will actually be carried out. But we cannot escape the conclusion that the readiness to do something wrong shares in the wrongness of the action itself. It would be an exaggeration to claim that the strategy of nuclear deterrence, and the weapons on which it depends, are as unmitigated an evil as an actual nuclear war would be. We believe, however, that they are evil, and that the possession of such weapons and the readiness to use them are wrong in the sight of God and should be treated as such by the churches.

Pragmatic considerations

The practical consequences of recognizing something as evil may not be immediate or obvious. What may be possible for individuals, and even for churches, may not be possible, or at least not possible in the same way, for governments and nations. What may be feasible in one set of circumstances may not be feasible in another. The exercise of collective responsibility frequently entails compromises, and politicians are not slow to remind those who make moral judgements of this kind that evil cannot be removed merely by condemning it.

It does not follow from this pragmatic estimate of the limits of political action, however, that the adoption of a clear moral stance is politically ineffective. To recognize evil as evil is to set a direction, and define an imperative, as well as to do something important in itself. A moral stance can make feasible what was not perceived to be feasible before it was adopted. It changes the climate of opinion. It may give a new sense of urgency to a process, in this instance the

process of disarmament, which might otherwise have stagnated, or failed through lack of moral clarity and conviction. It may gradually begin to change political perceptions of what is actually in the long-term interests of the people.

The worldwide condemnation of racism provides a useful parallel. It has neither removed racism nor solved all the problems associated with it. But it has set a standard. In the same way a worldwide denial of the moral legitimacy of nuclear weapons could set the whole disarmament process within a new and more fruitful context.

Christian responses

Beyond this, the precise way in which the adoption of a moral stance might affect churches and individual Christians would depend upon circumstances. Churches differ as well as nations. Within certain traditions the declaration of a *status confessionis* (article of faith) indicates that an issue has ultimate moral significance. One of our witnesses, Dr. Gunter Krusche, a Lutheran theologian from the German Democratic Republic, referred to the Dar es Salaam resolution of the Lutheran World Federation on apartheid as an example of how the *status confessionis* can be an instrument for sharpening the consciousness of Christians: "its intention is not to exclude people from the Kingdom of God, but to point out clearly what is believed to be the Christian way."

In other traditions the growth of a moral consensus may take place in different ways and with different degrees of formality. Whatever the method, though, it is important for Christians to grasp that the issue of nuclear weapons is one which, in its most extreme form, concerns the whole future of life on God's earth. It raises profound questions about the nature of Christian hope and the basis of Christian confidence. It challenges us to consider whether we are faced with a new form of the demonic which is driving humanity to self-destruction.

Some Christians are tempted to react to the size, complexity and threatening character of the problem of nuclear weapons by sinking into a kind of apocalyptic fatalism, as if thoughts of God's judgement on a sinful world were an adequate response to the Gospel message. Others may be tempted into a facile optimism or a despairing resignation in the belief that matters have now passed beyond the powers of human intervention. Others, conscious of the absurdity of a world destroying itself, appear to lose faith in God altogether.

We believe that the authentic Christian response to such threats is to accept our calling to be fellow-workers with Christ in the redemption of the world from evil. Our mandate is to go on praying, believing, working and hoping, no matter how daunting the task.

Part of the task must be to keep the whole issue within a broad perspective and to relate it to long-term goals. We have pointed out, more than once, in the previous section, the inseparability of peace and justice. In our earlier discussion of deterrence, we made the point that security is a global concept, and that there can be no ultimate security for any without security for all. We draw attention now to the fact that, just as particular strategic questions need to be studied critically in the light of a broad concept of security, so the concept of security itself needs to be studied critically in the light of the Gospel. There can be blind, selfish, and ultimately self-defeating, security aims, just as there can be narrowly conceived, and ultimately destabilizing, strategies. An ultimate reliance on nuclear weapons as the guarantee of security could become a new form of idolatry.

In the maintenance of such a broad perspective, Christians need each other, since none of us can remain unprejudiced in the assessment of our own goals. We end this section, therefore, by reminding the WCC of its own unique role and responsibility as a worldwide fellowship of Christians in which, on the basis of mutual acceptance, all can have the benefit of radical criticism from other perspectives and cultures.

Further study

Part of that role and responsibility is to press ahead with deeper reflection on the theological and moral issues raised by nuclear arms. As a result of the questions raised during the course of the Hearing, we are convinced that the whole Church and especially the world theological community has a responsibility to continue urgent study of these matters, in particular such issues as the following :

1. If twentieth-century concepts of total war have rendered much traditional thinking about Just War doctrine obsolete, is it nevertheless still justifiable to condemn some forms of warfare as disproportionate and indiscriminate? In the event of escalation to nuclear war what would be the moral difference between first strike and retaliation? What are the theological and moral grounds for such judgements?

2. Christian attitudes to war have in the past developed in the context of conventional warfare. The development of nuclear weapons has started a process of reformulation of Christian attitudes and approaches to war and pacifism. Can Christians take a position of "nuclear pacifism" and still justify conventional warfare?

IV. Urgent Tasks for the Churches

The testimony of many experts and their vivid descriptions of the potential effects of present-day nuclear arsenals reinforce our conviction that nuclear war would mean the end of civilization as we know it. Yet, ever larger and more sophisticated stockpiles of weapons are demanded in order to maintain the balance of military power. We have also learnt that in some countries, despite all evidence about the consequences of any use of nuclear weapons, military strategists think in terms of nuclear exchanges based on the tacit assumption either that nuclear war is winnable through a surprise first strike or that limited nuclear wars are possible through the use of relatively small nuclear weapons.

In this situation of great danger, of uncertainty and confusion about political and moral obligations, it is our conviction that the churches have a great responsibility to serve the interests of all peoples along the following lines :

1. We believe that the time has come when the churches must unequivocally declare that the production and deployment as well as the use of nuclear weapons are a crime against humanity and that such activities must be condemned on ethical and theological grounds. The nuclear weapons issue is, in its import and threat to humanity, a question of Christian discipline and faithfulness to the Gospel. We recognize that nuclear weapons will not disappear because of such an affirmation by the churches. But it will involve the churches and their members in a fundamental examination of their own implicit or explicit support of policies which, implicitly or explicitly, are based on the possession and use of these weapons. Further, the churches must become involved in whatever ways are appropriate in active and effective programmes for disarmament.

2. We realize that this places a special responsibility on Christians and churches in those countries which possess nuclear weapons and especially on churches in the two major powers, the USA and the USSR. These countries and their allies bear a heavy burden of responsibility for the nuclear arms race and nuclear weapons proliferation. The rest of the world Christian community has a right to expect that Christians in these countries will be active in challenging present nuclear arms policies. We take into account, of course, the different situations of the churches in these countries.

3. Recognizing that the present state of confrontation between nations reduces the possibility of effective disarmament, the churches must give the highest priority to efforts to create confidence and understanding between nations and peoples all over the world by a more constructive use

of their international links with one another. They must also develop and support measures to overcome widespread cynicism, despair and indifference and expose narrow nationalistic thinking.

4. Many people, including many Christians, are in danger of being paralyzed by the immensity and complexity of the problems. Churches can help to clarify the issues in a way which combines moral urgency with political understanding, and so to create a new climate of opinion. This should be done not only for their own members but also for the public at large, including decisionmakers in political and military circles. We ask churches to think through the implications of these issues for their educational programmes.

5. Increasing popular resistance to nuclear weapons in many countries, both East and West, is creating a political climate in which the issues of disarmament and arms control have become matters of central concern. Some movements include wider consideration about the relationship between disarmament and development. We support such movements, both as expressions of effective participation by large numbers of people in matters of vital importance to them, and as opportunities for popular education about peace, justice and security. We have received striking evidence of the effectiveness of some of these movements, particularly those in which the tradition of education extends over many years, and we urge Churches and Christian individuals, where appropriate, to play a responsible part within them.

6. The churches have a particular responsibility to remind public opinion of the close links between disarmament and development policies, and associate the efforts for disarmament with the wider issues of justice, nationally and globally.

7. We cannot make detailed proposals for the specific actions of particular countries. However, in light of the principles enumerated above and in view of the suggestions received at the Hearing we urge consideration of the following proposals:

- a) encourage the spread of information to remove the myths surrounding, and to challenge the legitimacy of, nuclear weapons and the driving forces behind the arms race;
- b) help political, military and scientific workers to understand the moral implications of what they are doing;
- c) explore ways of cooperating with other organizations and movements in the field of peace and

disarmament and co-operate with peoples of other faiths;

- d) support the victims of weapons testing, development and production; this will involve acts of international solidarity, e.g. support for the campaign of the Pacific Islands for an end to nuclear testing. Work on such specific concerns could also help to strengthen political determination to achieve a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

69. "An Ecumenical Call to Just Peace," International Ecumenical Peace Convocation, Kingston, 2011

This statement, which was issued by a global conference marking the end of the WCC-sponsored Decade to Overcome Violence, highlights the intimate connection between justice and peace. • http://www.overcomingviolence.org/fileadmin/dov/files/iepc/resources/ECJustPeace_English.pdf.

"Guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:79)

Preamble: This call is a concerted Christian voice addressed primarily to the worldwide Christian community. Inspired by the example of Jesus of Nazareth, it invites Christians to commit themselves to the Way of Just Peace. Aware that the promise of peace is a core value of all religions, it reaches out to all who seek peace according to their own religious traditions and commitments. The call is received by the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches and commended for study, reflection, collaboration and common action. . . .

1. Justice embracing peace. Without peace, can there be justice? Without justice, can there be peace? Too often, we pursue justice at the expense of peace, and peace at the expense of justice. To conceive peace apart from justice is to compromise the hope that "justice and peace shall embrace" (Ps. 85:10). When justice and peace are lacking,

or set in opposition, we need to reform our ways. Let us rise, therefore, and work together for peace and justice.

2. *Let the peoples speak:* There are many stories to tell—stories soaked with violence, the violation of human dignity and the destruction of creation. If all ears would hear the cries, no place would be truly silent. Many continue to reel from the impact of wars; ethnic and religious animosity, discrimination based on race and caste mar the façade of nations and leave ugly scars. Thousands are dead, displaced, homeless, refugees within their own homeland. Women and children often bear the brunt of conflicts: many women are abused, trafficked, killed; children are separated from their parents, orphaned, recruited as soldiers, abused. Citizens in some countries face violence by occupation, paramilitaries, guerrillas, criminal cartels or government forces. Citizens of many nations suffer governments obsessed with national security and armed might; yet these fail to bring real security, year after year. Thousands of children die each day from inadequate nutrition while those in power continue to make economic and political decisions that favor a relative few.

3. *Let the Scriptures speak:* The Bible makes justice the inseparable companion of peace (Isaiah 32:17; James 3:18). Both point to right and sustainable relationships in human society, the vitality of our connections with the earth, the “well-being” and integrity of creation. Peace is God’s gift to a broken but beloved world, today as in the lifetime of Jesus Christ: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you” (John 14:27). Through the life and teachings, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we perceive peace as both promised and present—a hope for the future and a gift here and now.

4. Jesus told us to love our enemies, pray for our persecutors, and not to use deadly weapons. His peace is expressed by the spirit of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-11). Despite persecution, he remains steadfast in his active non-violence, even to death. His life of commitment to justice ends on a cross, an instrument of torture and execution. With the resurrection of Jesus, God confirms that such steadfast love, such obedience, such trust, leads to life. This is true also for us.

5. Wherever there is forgiveness, respect for human dignity, generosity, and care for the weak in the common life of humanity, we catch a glimpse—no matter how dim—of the gift of peace. It follows therefore that peace is lost when injustice, poverty and disease—as well as armed conflict, violence, and war—inflict wounds on the bodies and souls of human beings, on society and on the earth.

6. Yet some texts in the scriptures associate violence with the will of God. On the basis of these texts, sections

of our Christian family have legitimized and continue to legitimize the use of violence by themselves and others. We can no longer read such texts without calling attention to the human failure to answer the divine call to peace. Today, we must interrogate texts that speak of violence, hate and prejudice, or call for the wrath of God to annihilate another people. We must allow such texts to teach us to discern when, like the people in the Bible, our purposes, our schemes, our animosities, passions and habits reflect our desires rather than the will of God.

7. *Let the church speak:* As the Body of Christ, the church is called to be a place of peacemaking. In manifold ways, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist, our liturgical traditions illustrate how God’s peace calls us to share peace with each other and with the world. Yet, more often than not, churches fail to live out their call. Christian disunity, which in many ways undermines the churches’ credibility in terms of peacemaking, invites us to a continuous conversion of hearts and minds. Only when grounded in God’s peace can communities of faith be “agents of reconciliation and peace with justice in homes, churches and societies as well as in political, social and economic structures at the global level” (WCC Eighth Assembly, 1998). The church that lives the peace it proclaims is what Jesus called a city set on a hill for all to see (Matt. 5:14). Believers exercising the ministry of reconciliation entrusted to them by God in Christ point beyond the churches to what God is doing in the world (see 2 Cor. 5:18).

The Way of Just Peace

8. There are many ways of responding to violence; many ways of practicing peace. As members of the community that proclaims Christ the embodiment of peace, we respond to the call to bring the divine gift of peace into contemporary contexts of violence and conflict. So we join the Way of Just Peace, which requires both movement towards the goal and commitment to the journey. We invite people of all world-views and religious traditions to consider the goal and to share of their journeys. Just Peace invites all of us to testify with our lives. To pursue peace we must prevent and eliminate personal, structural and media violence, including violence against people because of race, caste, gender, sexual orientation, culture or religion. We must be responsible to those who have gone before us, living in ways that honor the wisdom of our ancestors and the witness of the saints in Christ. We also have a responsibility to those who are the future: our children, “tomorrow people.” Our children deserve to inherit a more just and peaceful world.

9. Nonviolent resistance is central to the Way of Just Peace. Well-organized and peaceful resistance is active, tenacious and effective—whether in the face of governmental oppression and abuse or business practices which exploit vulnerable communities and creation. Recognizing that the strength of the powerful depends on the obedience and compliance of citizens, of soldiers and, increasingly, of consumers, nonviolent strategies may include acts of civil disobedience and non-compliance.

10. On the Way of Just Peace the justifications of armed conflict and war become increasingly implausible and unacceptable. The churches have struggled with their disagreement on this matter for decades; however, the Way of Just Peace now compels us to move forward. Yet, to condemn war is not enough; we must do everything in our power to promote justice and peaceful cooperation among peoples and nations. The Way of Just Peace is fundamentally different from the concept of “just war” and much more than criteria for protecting people from the unjust use of force; in addition to silencing weapons it embraces social justice, the rule of law, respect for human rights and shared human security.

11. Within the limitations of tongue and intellect, we propose that Just Peace may be comprehended as *a collective and dynamic yet grounded process of freeing human beings from fear and want, of overcoming enmity, discrimination and oppression, and of establishing conditions for just relationships that privilege the experience of the most vulnerable and respect the integrity of creation.*

Living the Journey

12. Just Peace is a journey into God’s purpose for humanity and all creation, trusting that God will “guide our feet into the way of peace” (Luke 1:79).

13. *The journey is difficult.* We recognize that we must face up to truth along the way. We come to realize how often we deceive ourselves and are complicit with violence. We learn to give up looking for justifications of what we have done, and train ourselves in the practice of justice. This means confessing our wrong-doings, giving and receiving forgiveness and learning to reconcile with each other.

14. The sins of violence and war divide communities deeply. Those who have stereotyped and demonized their adversaries will need long-term support and accompaniment in order to work through their condition and be healed. To reconcile with enemies and to restore broken relationships is a lengthy process as well as a necessary goal. In a process of reconciliation there are no longer powerful

and powerless, superior and inferior, mighty and lowly. Both victims and victimizers are transformed.

15. Peace agreements are often fragile, temporary, and inadequate. Places where peace is declared may still be filled with hatred. Repairing the damage of war and violence may take longer than the conflict that caused it. But what exists of peace along the way, though imperfect, is a promise of greater things to come.

16. *We journey together.* The church divided about peace, and churches torn by conflict, have little credibility as witnesses or workers for peace. The churches’ power to work for and witness to peace depends on finding a common purpose in the service of peace despite differences in ethnic and national identity, and even in doctrine and church order.

17. We travel as a community, sharing an ethic and practice of peace that includes forgiveness and love of enemies, active nonviolence and respect for others, gentleness and mercy. We strive to give of our lives in solidarity with others and for the common good. We pursue peace in prayer, asking God for discernment as we go and for the fruits of the spirit along the way.

18. In loving communities of faith that journey together, there are many hands to unburden the weary. One may have a witness of hope in the face of despair; another, a generous love for the needy. People who have suffered much find the courage to keep on living despite tragedy and loss. The power of the gospel enables them to leave behind even the unimaginable burdens of personal and collective sin, of anger, bitterness and hatred, which are the legacy of violence and war. Forgiveness does not erase the past; but when we look back we may well see that memories were healed, burdens were set aside and traumas were shared with others and with God. We are able to travel on.

19. *The journey is inviting.* With time and dedication to the cause, more and more people hear the call to become peacemakers. They come from wide circles within the church, from other communities of faith, and from society at large. They work to overcome divisions of race and religion, nation and class; learn to stand with the impoverished; or take up the difficult ministry of reconciliation.

Many discover that peace cannot be sustained without caring for creation and cherishing God’s miraculous handiwork.

20. Sharing the road with our neighbours, we learn to move from defending what is ours towards living generous, open lives. We find our feet as peacemakers. We discover people from different walks of life. We gain strength in working with them, acknowledging our mutual

vulnerability and affirming our common humanity. The other is no longer a stranger or an adversary but a fellow human being with whom we share both the road and the journey.

Signposts on the Way of Just Peace

21. *Just Peace and the transformation of conflict.* Transforming conflicts is an essential part of peacemaking. The process of transformation begins with unmasking violence and uncovering hidden conflict in order to make their consequences visible to victims and communities. Conflict transformation aims at challenging adversaries to redirect their conflicting interests towards the common good. It may have to disturb an artificial peace, expose structural violence or find ways to restore relationships without retribution. The vocation of churches and religious communities is to accompany the victims of violence and be their advocates. It also includes strengthening civic mechanisms for managing conflicts and holding public authorities and other perpetrators accountable—even perpetrators from within church communities. The “rule of law” is a critical framework for all such efforts.

22. *Just Peace and the use of armed force.* Yet there are bound to be times when our commitment to Just Peace is put to a test, since peace is pursued in the midst of violence and under the threat of violent conflict. There are extreme circumstances where, as the last resort and the lesser evil, the lawful use of armed force may become necessary in order to protect vulnerable groups of people exposed to imminent lethal threats. Yet, even then we recognise the use of armed force in situations of conflict as both a sign of serious failure and a new obstacle on the Way of Just Peace.

23. While we acknowledge the authority of the United Nations under international law to respond to threats to world peace in the spirit and the letter of the UN Charter, including the use of military power within the constraints of international law, we feel obliged as Christians to go further—to challenge any theological or other justifications of the use of military power and to consider reliance on the concept of a “just war” and its customary use to be obsolete.

24. We acknowledge the moral dilemma inherent in these affirmations. The dilemma is partially resolved if the criteria developed in the just war tradition may still serve as a framework for an ethic of the lawful use of force. That ethic would allow, for example, consideration of “just policing,” the emergence of a new norm in international law around the “responsibility to protect” and the exercise in good faith of the peacemaking mechanisms enshrined in the UN Charter. Conscientious objection to service in

armed forces should be recognized as a human right. Much else that is antithetical to peace and the international rule of law must be categorically and finally rejected, starting with the possession or use of all weapons of mass destruction. Our common life invites convergence in thought, action and law for the making and building of peace. As Christians we therefore commit to a transformed ethical discourse that guides the community in the praxis of non-violent conflict transformation and in fostering conditions for progress toward peace.

25. *Just Peace and human dignity.* Our scriptures teach us that humanity is created in the likeness of God and is graced with dignity and rights. The recognition of this dignity and these rights is central to our understanding of Just Peace. We affirm that universal human rights are the indispensable international legal instrument for protecting human dignity. To that end we hold states responsible for ensuring the rule of law and guaranteeing civil and political as well as economic, social and cultural rights. However, we observe that abuse of human rights is rampant in many societies, in war and in peace, and that those who should be held accountable benefit from impunity. In response we must reach out in friendship and cooperation to all partners in civil society, including people of other religions, who seek to defend human rights and strengthen the international rule of law.

26. *Just Peace and caring for creation.* God made all things good and has entrusted humankind with the responsibility to care for creation (Gen. 2:4b-9). The exploitation of the natural world and the misuse of its finite resources disclose a pattern of violence that often benefits some people at the expense of many. We know that all creation groans to be set free, not least from the abusive actions of humans (Romans 8:22). As people of faith, we acknowledge our guilt for the damage we have done to creation and all living things, through action and our inaction. The vision of Just Peace is much more than the restoration of right relationships in community; it also compels human beings to care for the earth as our home. We must trust in God’s promise and strive for an equitable and just sharing of the earth’s resources.

27. *Building cultures of peace.* We are committed to building cultures of peace in cooperation with people of other religious traditions, convictions and worldviews. In this commitment we seek to respond to the gospel imperatives of loving our neighbours, rejecting violence and seeking justice for the poor, the disinherited and the oppressed (Matthew 5:1-12; Luke 4:18). The collective effort relies on the gifts of men and women, the young and the old, leaders and workers. We acknowledge and value women’s gifts for building peace. We recognize the unique role of

religious leaders, their influence in societies and the potentially liberating power of religious wisdom and insight in promoting peace and human dignity. At the same time, we lament the cases where religious leaders have abused their power for selfish ends or where cultural and religious patterns have contributed to violence and oppression. We are especially concerned about aggressive rhetoric and teaching propagated under the guise of religion and amplified by the power of media. While we acknowledge with deep humility Christian complicity—past and present—in the manifestation of prejudice and other attitudes that fuel hate, we commit ourselves to build communities of reconciliation, acceptance and love.

28. *Education for peace.* Education inspired by the vision of peace is more than instruction in the strategies of peace work. It is a profoundly spiritual formation of character that involves family, church, and society. Peace education teaches us to nurture the spirit of peace, instill respect for human rights, and imagine and adopt alternatives to violence. Peace education promotes active nonviolence as an unequalled power for change that is practiced and valued in different traditions and cultures. Education of character and conscience equips people to seek peace and pursue it. . . .

70. Report of the Section on Church, Community and State in Relation to the Economic Order, Conference on Church, Community and State, Oxford, 1937

The reflections on economic order of the famous Oxford Conference, coming in the midst of global depression, received wide attention. • The Oxford Conference: Official Report, *op.cit.*, pp. 75-80 and 86-108.

1. The Basis of Christian Concern for the Economic Order

The Christian church approaches the problems of the social and economic order from the standpoint of her faith in the revelation of God in Christ. In the life and death of our Lord, God is revealed as a just God who condemns sin and as a merciful God who redeems sinners. The nature and

will of God as thus revealed form the basis of human existence and the standard of human conduct. The chief end of man is to glorify God, to honor and love him, in work and life as in worship. This love involves the obligation to love our neighbors as ourselves, a second commandment which Jesus declared to be like unto the first.

This love of neighbor is an obligation which rests partly upon the native worth and dignity of man as made in the image of God. In all systems of morality this obligation is to a greater or less degree recognized. Christianity, however, recognizes that the image of God in man is so defaced by sin that man's native worth and dignity are largely obscured. For this reason it must be emphasized that our obligation to the neighbor springs not so much from our recognition of man's native dignity as from the Christian revelation of God's purpose to restore that dignity through the redemption that is in Christ. The obligation is therefore a duty toward God and continues to be operative even when the neighbor does not obviously demand or deserve respect. We must love our fellow men because God loves them and wills to redeem them.

The kingdom of God, as proclaimed in the gospel, is the reign of God which both has come and is coming. It is an established reality in the coming of Christ and in the presence of his Spirit in the world. It is, however, still in conflict with a sinful world which crucified its Lord, and its ultimate triumph is still to come. In so far as it has come, the will of God as revealed in Christ (that is, the commandment of love) is the ultimate standard of Christian conduct. Standards drawn from the observation of human behavior or prompted by immediate necessities are not only less complete than the commandment of love but frequently contain elements that contradict it. In so far as the kingdom of God is in conflict with the world and is therefore still to come, the Christian finds himself under the necessity of discovering the best available means of checking human sinfulness and of increasing the possibilities and opportunities of love within a sinful world.

The relative and departmental standard for all the social arrangements and institutions, all the economic structures and political systems, by which the life of man is ordered is the principle of justice. Justice, as the ideal of a harmonious relation of life to life, obviously presupposes the sinful tendency of one life to take advantage of another. This sinful tendency it seeks to check by defining the rightful place and privilege which each life must have in the harmony of the whole and by assigning the duty of each to each. Justice does not demand that the self *sacrifice* itself completely for the neighbor's good, but seeks to define and to maintain the good which each member of the community may rightfully claim in the harmony of the whole.

The principle of justice has both a positive and a negative significance. Negatively, principles of justice restrain evil and the evildoer. They must therefore become embodied in systems of coercion which prevent men from doing what sinful ambition, pride, lust and greed might prompt them to do. This necessary coercion is itself a root of new evils, since its exercise involves power and power tempts the possessor to its unrighteous use. Furthermore, coercion may rouse resentment among those coerced even when its purpose is a necessary social end. The use of power and coercion cannot therefore be regarded by Christians as ultimately desirable. Criticism against its abuses must be constantly maintained. On the other hand, it cannot be assumed that the practice of Christian love will ever obviate the necessity for coercive political and economic arrangements.

The laws of justice are not purely negative. They are not merely "dikes against sin." The political and economic structure of society is also the mechanical skeleton which carries the organic element in society. Forms of production and methods of cooperation may serve the cause of human brotherhood by serving and extending the principle of love beyond the sphere of purely personal relations.

The commandment of love therefore always presents possibilities for individuals beyond the requirements of economic and social institutions. There is no legal, political or economical system so bad or so good as to absolve individuals from the responsibility to transcend its requirements by acts of Christian charity. Institutional requirements necessarily prescribe only the minimum. Even in the best possible social system they can only achieve general standards in which the selfishness of the human heart is taken for granted and presupposed. But the man who is in Christ knows a higher obligation which transcends the requirements of justice—the obligation of a love which is the fulfillment of the law.

The love which is the fulfillment of the law is, however, no substitute for law, for institutions or for systems. Individual acts of charity within a given system of government or economics may mitigate its injustices and increase its justice. But they do not absolve the Christian from seeking the best possible institutional arrangement and social structure for the ordering of human life. Undue emphasis upon the higher possibilities of love in personal relations, within the limits of a given system of justice or an established social structure, may tempt Christians to allow individual acts of charity to become a screen for injustice and a substitute for justice. Christianity becomes socially futile if it does not recognize that love must will justice and that the Christian is under an obligation to secure the best possible

social and economic structure, in so far as such structure is determined by human decisions.

The relation of the commandment of love to the justice of political and economic systems is twofold. It is an ideal which reaches beyond any possible achievements in the field of political relations, but it is nevertheless also a standard by which various schemes of justice may be judged. In attempting to deal with political and economic problems, the Christian must therefore be specially on his guard against two errors.

The one is to regard the realities of social justice incorporated in given systems and orders as so inferior to the law of love that the latter cannot be a principle of discrimination among them but only a principle of indiscriminate judgment upon them all. This error makes Christianity futile as a guide in all those decisions which Christians, like other people, must constantly be making in the political and economic sphere. Practically, it gives the advantage to established systems as against the challenge of new social adventures and experiments; for it tempts Christians to make no decisions at all, and such efforts to reserve decision become in practice decisions in favor of the status quo.

The other error is to identify some particular social system with the will of God or to equate it with the kingdom of God. When conservatives insist on such an identification in favor of the status quo, they impart to it a dangerous religious sanction which must drive those who challenge it into a secular revolt against religion itself. If, on the other hand, this identification is made in the interests of a new social order, it will lead to the same complacency which the critic deprecates in the old social situation. Every tendency to identify the kingdom of God with a particular social structure or economic mechanism must result in moral confusion for those who maintain the system and in disillusionment for those who suffer from its limitations. The former will regard conformity with its standards as identical with the fulfillment of the law, thus falling into the sin of pharisaism. The latter will be tempted to a cynical disavowal of the religion because it falsely gives absolute worth to partial values and achievements. Both errors are essentially heretical from the point of view of Christian faith. The one denies the reality of the kingdom of God in history; the other equates the kingdom of God with the processes of history. In the one case, the ultimate and eternal destiny of human existence, which transcends history, is made to support an attitude of indifference toward historical social issues; in the other case, the eternal destiny of human existence is denied or obscured. The law of love which is the standard of the Christian life is properly to be regarded as being at the same time a present reality and an

ultimate possibility. It is not only a criterion of judgment in all the fateful decisions which men must make in history, but also an indictment against all historical achievements.

As a criterion of judgment upon the relative merits of economic arrangements and social structures, the law of love gives positive guidance in terms of justice, even though it transcends the realities of all possible social structures. The obligation to love our neighbors as ourselves places clearly under condemnation all social and economic systems which give one man undue advantage over others. It must create an uneasy conscience (for example) in all Christians who are involved in a social system which denies children, of whatever race or class, the fullest opportunity to develop whatever gifts God has given them and makes their education depend upon the fortuitous circumstance of a father's possession or lack of means to provide the necessary funds. It must challenge any social system which provides social privileges without reference to the social functions performed by individuals, or which creates luxury and pride on the one hand and want and insecurity on the other. It makes the conscience of Christians particularly uneasy in regard to the deprivation of basic security for large masses of human beings. . . .

3. Points at Which the Christian Understanding of Life Is Challenged

At the beginning of this part of the report attention should be called to the potentialities for good in the economic order. Situations vary in different parts of the world but in many countries it already seems possible, through the full utilization of the resources of the new technology and through the release of human productive power, to remove the kind of poverty which is crippling to human personality. There is a sense in which poverty is a relative matter and hence in any situation would be present in some form; but we are thinking of the poverty which would be regarded in any age as denying the physical necessities of life. The abolition of such poverty now seems to depend on the human organization of economic life, rather than on factors given in nature or on what might be called the inevitable constitution of every economic order. But the possibility of economic "plenty" has this moral importance, that to an increasing extent it makes the persistence of poverty a matter for which men are morally responsible. This possibility marks off our time from the period of the New Testament and from other periods in which Christian thinking about economic life has been formulated. In the light of it the direction of Christian effort in relation to the economic order should henceforth be turned from charitable

paternalism to the realization of more equal justice in the distribution of wealth. Moreover, Christians who live in the more privileged geographical areas must recognize that the securing of economic plenty and greater justice in its distribution within their respective national groups is not the whole of their duty in this connection; they cannot escape some measure of responsibility for those areas where for years to come there will doubtless be desperate economic need.

It seems to us that the moral and spiritual nature of man, according to the Christian understanding of that nature, is affronted by the assumptions and operation of the economic order of the industrialized world in four respects to which we wish to draw special attention.

- a) *The Enhancement of Acquisitiveness.* That economic order results, in the first place, in a serious danger that the finer qualities of the human spirit will be sacrificed to an overmastering preoccupation with a department of life which, though important on its own plane, ought to be strictly subordinated to other more serious aspects of life. We are warned by the New Testament that riches are a danger to their possessors, and experience would appear to confirm that diagnosis. It is not possible to serve both God and Mammon. When the necessary work of society is so organized as to make the acquisition of wealth the chief criterion of success, it encourages a feverish scramble for money, and a false respect for the victors in the struggle which is as fatal in its moral consequences as any other form of idolatry. In so far as the pursuit of monetary gain becomes the dominant factor in the lives of men, the quality of society undergoes a subtle disintegration. That such a society should be the scene of a perpetual conflict of interests, sometimes concealed, sometimes overt, between the economic groups composing them, is not surprising. Men can cooperate only in so far as they are united by allegiance to a common purpose which is recognized as superior to their sectional interests. As long as industry is organized primarily not for the service of the community but with the object of producing a purely financial result for some of its members, it cannot be recognized as properly fulfilling its social purpose.
- (b) *Inequalities.* The second feature of the economic system which challenges the conscience of Christians is the existence of disparities of economic circumstance on a scale which differs from country to country, but in some is shocking, in all considerable. Not only is the product of industry distributed with an inequality

so extreme (though the extent of this inequality also varies considerably from country to country) that a small minority of the population are in receipt of incomes exceeding in the aggregate those of many times their number, but—even more seriously—the latter are condemned throughout their lives to environmental evils which the former escape, and are deprived of the opportunities of fully developing their powers which are accessible as a matter of course, to their more fortunate fellows. It is no part of the teaching of Christianity that all men are equally endowed by nature or that identical provision should be made for all, irrespective of difference of capacity and need. What Christianity does assert is that all men are children of one Father, and that, compared with that primary and overwhelming fact, the differences between the races, nationalities and classes of men, though important on their own plane, are external and trivial. Any social arrangement which outrages the dignity of man by treating some men as ends and others as means, any institution which obscures the common humanity of men by emphasizing the external accidents of birth or wealth or social position is *ipso facto* anti-Christian. One aspect of the matter deserves special emphasis. Whatever their differences on other subjects, Christians cannot be in doubt as to the primary duty of insuring that the conditions required for full personal development are enjoyed by the whole of the rising generation. In some countries that obligation receives fuller recognition than in others, but of few, if any, can it be said that equal opportunities of physical and mental growth are available for all. It is still the case, even in some of the wealthy nations of western Europe, that large numbers of children undergo grave injury to their health before they reach the age of school attendance, though the methods by which such injury can be prevented are well known; that the education given them at school is often, owing to reluctance to spend the sums required, gravely defective in quality; that many of them are plunged prematurely into full-time work in industry, where too often they are employed under conditions injurious both to their characters and to their physical well-being; and that diversities of educational provision correspond to differences of income among parents rather than of capacity among children. It often happens that these disadvantages are greatly increased where economic opportunities are denied on racial grounds. This racial discrimination is seen in various forms: a standard of wages; the inability of members

of certain races, whatever their competence may be, to rise above a certain level of responsibility in their respective callings; their exclusion in some circumstances from labor unions; and the refusal to admit members of some racial groups to occupations reserved for members of the dominant race.

- (c) *Irresponsible Possession of Economic Power.* A third feature of the existing situation which is repugnant to the Christian conscience consists in the power wielded by a few individuals or groups who are not responsible to any organ of society. This gives the economic order in many countries some resemblance to a tyranny, in the classical sense of that term, where rulers are not accountable for their actions to any superior authority representing the community over whom power is exercised. . . . Economic like political autocracy is attended doubtless by certain advantages. However, it is liable to produce both in individuals and in society a character and an outlook on life which it is difficult to reconcile with any relationship that can be described as Christian. It tends to create in those who wield authority, and in the agents through whom they exercise it, a dictatorial temper which springs not from any defect of character peculiar to them but from the influence upon them of the position they occupy. The effect of excessive economic power on those over whom it is exercised is equally serious. Often it makes them servile; fear of losing their jobs, and a vague belief in the end the richer members of society always hold the whip hand, tends to destroy their spiritual virility. Often, again, it makes them bitter and cynical; they feel that force, not justice, rules their world, and they are tempted to dismiss as insincere cant words which imply a different view.
- (d) *The Frustration of the Sense of Christian Vocation.* A profound conflict has arisen between the demand that the Christian should be doing the will of God in his daily work, and the actual kinds of work which Christians find themselves forced to do within the economic order. With regard to the worker and employee, there is the fact that most of them are *directly* conscious of working for the profit of the employer (and for the sake of their wages) and only *indirectly* conscious of working for any public good; while this fact may in some cases be only part of the mechanism by which the work is done for the public good, the difficulty in some degree remains. Again, there is the fact that at present many workers must produce things which are useless or shoddy or destructive. Finally, one other form of

work which seems clearly to be in conflict with the Christian's vocation is salesmanship of a kind which involves deception—the deception which may be no more than insinuation and exaggeration, but which is a serious threat to the integrity of the worker. But even more serious is the constant threat of unemployment. This produces a feeling of extreme insecurity in the minds of masses of the people. Unemployment, especially when prolonged, tends to create in the mind of the unemployed person a sense of uselessness or even of being a nuisance, and to empty his life of any meaning. This situation cannot be met by measures of unemployment assistance, because it is the lack of significant activity which tends to destroy his human self-respect. . . .

5. Christian Teaching in Relation to the Economic Order

We stated in the third section of this report the special points at which there is a conflict between the present economic order and the Christian understanding of life. In the next section we pointed out the kind of social decisions which have to be made by all Christians as citizens.

But it is not enough to say that these problems are chiefly the responsibility of Christian individuals or Christian lay groups and leave the matter there. The further question must be raised: What guidance can those who must make these decisions concerning the economic order receive from their Christian faith? That question places great responsibility upon those in the church who have the task of interpreting the meaning of Christian faith. In this work of interpretation the clergy should have a specially important contribution to make, but that contribution must be made with understanding of the experience of laymen. It is important that whenever this Christian guidance is crystalized in the reports and pronouncements of official church bodies, or of such a conference as the Oxford Conference, laymen should share with the clergy this task of formulation. These laymen should come from various economic groups. This section of the report will be an attempt to formulate the kind of guidance which it is now possible to receive from Christian faith for economic life. We are here dealing directly with what the teaching of the church as a church should be concerning economic order.

We must begin by recognizing that there are some factors in economic life which are more clearly within the province of the church and concerning which more light can be gained from the Christian message than others, and that there are many matters of judgment in particular

situations which involve chiefly expert knowledge. Recognizing, then, the importance of attempting to mark out as clearly as possible the precise areas within which the Christian can expect to receive light from the Christian faith and within which the teaching of the church as church in regard to economic life should be carried on, we proceed to suggest three such areas. In presenting these areas we are suggesting what might be the framework of the Christian message in relation to the economic order in the next decade.

(1) *Christian teaching should deal with ends, in the sense of long-range goals, standards and principles in the light of which every concrete situation and every proposal for improving it must be tested.* It is in the light of such ends and principles that the four characteristics of the existing economic order discussed in section two stand out as challenges to the Christian church. There are differences in theory concerning the way in which these ends are related to the Christian faith. Some would be very careful not to call these ends Christian and yet they would recognize that they are ends which *Christians* should seek in obedience to God.

We suggest five such ends or standards, by way of example, as applicable to the testing of any economic situation.

- (a) Right fellowship between man and man being a condition of man's fellowship with God, every economic arrangement which frustrates or restricts it must be modified—and in particular such ordering of economic life as tends to divide the community into classes based upon differences of wealth and to occasion a sense of injustice among the poorer members of society. To every member of the community there must be made open a worthy means of livelihood. The possibilities of amassing private accumulations of wealth should be so limited that the scale of social values is not perverted by the fear and the envy, the insolence and the servility, which tend to accompany extreme inequality.
- (b) Regardless of race or class every child and youth must have opportunities of education suitable for the full development of his particular capacities, and must be free from those adventitious handicaps in the matter of health and environment which our society loads upon large numbers of the children of the less privileged classes. In this connection, the protection of the family as a social unity should be an urgent concern of the community.

- (c) Persons disabled from economic activity, whether by sickness, infirmity or age, should not be economically penalized on account of their disability, but on the contrary should be the object of particular care. Here again the safeguarding of the the family is involved.
- (d) Labor has intrinsic worth and dignity, since it is designed by God for man's welfare. The duty and the right of men to work should therefore alike be emphasized. In the industrial process, labor should never be considered a mere commodity. In their daily work men should be able to recognize and fulfill a Christian vocation. The workingman, whether in field or factory, is entitled to a living wage, wholesome surroundings and a recognized voice in the decisions which affect his welfare as a worker.
- (e) The resources of the earth, such as the soil and mineral wealth, should be recognized as gifts of God to the whole human race and used with due and balanced consideration for the needs of the present and future generations.

The implications of even one of these standards, seriously taken, will involve drastic changes in economic life. Each one of them must be made more definite in terms of the problems which face particular communities.

Closely connected with the foregoing paragraphs is the whole questions of property—so closely indeed that any action on the part of the community which affects property rights will also affect the application of the standards mentioned. This is a sphere in which Christian teaching on ends and principles in relation to economic life could have immediate results if it were translated into actual economic decisions. Christian thought has already supplied a background which is of great importance, but it has not been brought into effective relationship with the development of the institutions of property under modern economic conditions. This subject should be given close attention by any agencies for further study which may be established in the future. Meanwhile we suggest a few of the directions along which Christian thought should move.

- (a) It should be reaffirmed without qualification that all human property rights are relative and contingent only, in virtue of the dependence of man upon God as the giver of all wealth and as the creator of man's capacities to develop the resources of nature. This fundamental Christian conviction

must express itself both in the idea of stewardship or trusteeship and in the willingness of the Christian to examine accumulations of property in the light of their social consequences.

- (b) The existing system of property rights and the existing distribution of property must be criticized in the light of the largely nonmoral processes by which they have been developed, and criticism must take account of the fact that every argument in defense of property rights which is valid for Christian thinking is also an argument for the widest possible distribution of these rights.
- (c) It should further be affirmed that individual property rights must never be maintained or exercised without regard to their social consequences or without regard to the contribution which the community makes in the production of all wealth.
- (d) It is very important to make clear distinction between various forms of property. The property which consists in personal possessions for use, such as the home, has behind it a clearer moral justification than property in the means of production and in land which gives the owners power over other persons. All property which represents social power stands in special need of moral scrutiny, since power to determine the lives of others is the crucial point in any scheme of justice. The question must always be asked whether this is the kind of power which can be brought under adequate social control or whether it is of the type which by its very nature escapes and evades social control. Industrial property in particular encourages the concentration of power; for it gives the owner control over both the place and the instruments of labor and thus leaves the worker powerless so far as property relations are concerned, allowing him only the organized strength of his union and his political franchise to set against the power of ownership. Property in land on a large scale may represent a similar power over those who are forced to rent it for a livelihood. . . .

(2) *The message of Christianity should throw a searchlight on the actual facts of the existing situation, and in particular reveal the human consequences of present forms of economic behavior.* It is this which saves statements of principles from being platitudes. The kind of critical analysis which is set forth in section two must be a part of the message of the

church. Here it is important not to impute motives or to denounce individuals (except where special circumstances call for such denunciation) but to present facts in such a way that they speak for themselves to the individual conscience. What in isolation seems to be purely destructive criticism is a necessary part of the total process by which constructive change is brought about.

The most obvious human consequences of existing economic behavior are quite as much, if not more, within the province of the Christian as they are within the province of the expert in the social sciences. The clergyman in the course of pastoral work has opportunities, if he is capable of using them, of knowing what the present economic situation does to the character, the morale, the true welfare of men, women and children and to family life. The expert may have to supply statistics, but the meaning of the statistics can be known only to those who see the particular results of an economic situation in the lives of persons. As it has been said, "Love implies the ability to read statistics with compassion." Christian insight ought to enable men and women to see more deeply into the effects of an economic situation. Where there are secular agencies which have the facts, the task of the church is to aid in making those facts available to its members and especially to those who have a teaching function within the church. But there are occasions on which some agency of the church may have the task of securing the facts. This can be most helpful in controversial situations in which the church has a position of relative independence of the parties to the controversy.

It is not enough to catalogue particular cases of poverty and exploitation or to call attention to specific cases of selfish and irresponsible conduct on the part of those in power. It is the business of the church to point out where the economic institutions of our time are in themselves infected with evil. They place narrow limits on the choices of the best men who work within them. The individual employer, for example, is often greatly handicapped in paying a living wage if he must compete with less scrupulous employers. There are multitudes of high-minded Christians who as employers, businessmen and trade unionists do a great deal to develop happy relationships between employers and employees and to preserve the highest standards of personal integrity within their spheres of influence. Many of the most praiseworthy human motives—constructive service to mankind, the creation of cultural and material values, the desire to achieve conditions essential to the development of human personality—inspire their conduct. No criticisms of the present consequences of economic behavior in general

should obscure the positive contribution of such men. On the other hand the presence of such conscientious Christians in places of responsibility should not create the expectation that, without changes in institutions and legal relationships, they will be able to overcome the evils set forth in section three of this report.

(3) *This searchlight of the Christian message can also make clear the obstacles to economic justice in the human heart, and especially those that are present in the hearts of people within the church.* It is not enough that individual Christians become good in their intentions or become changed in their conscious motives. What is needed is the kind of self-knowledge which will help Christians to understand how far their attitudes are molded by the position which they hold in the economic order. Self-knowledge is no less important than knowledge of external conditions, and more important than the knowledge of the sins of others.

Christians must come to understand how far they really do seek, in spite of all pretensions to the contrary, a world in which they and their group are on top, how far their opinions on economic issues are controlled by the interests of the group or class to which they belong, how far they are deceived by false slogans and rationalizations, how far they are callous to "evil at a distance" or to evil experienced by another national or class group than their own—evil to which they may consent, for which they may vote, or by which they may profit. Here, again, the important activity is not to denounce, but to help people to that self-knowledge which comes from the perspective of the Christian emphasis upon sin, so that they will condemn themselves.

The various parts of the church must at this point be guided in the relative emphasis they place on different forms of self-deception by the character of their constituencies. Those parts of the church which contain chiefly the comfortable middle classes should create an atmosphere in which it is most likely that the peculiarly middle class illusions will be punctured. There is, for example, in these classes a tendency to take the present property system for granted and to regard as unjust changes which alter the present distribution of property or the present rights of owners. The kind of Christian teaching about property which is outlined above is at this stage of special importance for these classes.

These classes must also come to see how one-sided those conceptions of Christianity are which assume that because Christianity is a spiritual religion economic conditions do not greatly matter, or that it is enough to leave it

to the grace of God to save souls in all varieties of external circumstances. Justice may at this stage be embodied in the distribution of bread, but for that reason the quest for

justice is not less spiritual. Moreover, it is unseemly for people to be complacent in the face of existing obstacles to the personal development of others, obstacles which they have not themselves experienced. To be complacent in this way because of a religious belief concerning the soul or God is to turn religion into an opiate for the conscience.

Also it is important in some countries that Christians in the comfortable middle classes be helped to realize that they are controlled by class interests quite as much as the workers or farmers, and that in some countries where organizations of workers and farmers are not far advanced they are themselves even more controlled by class interests than these other groups. The assumption that the interests of the middle classes are identical with interests of the community is an illusion which unconsciously blinds many of the most sincere Christians and makes them unfair and self-righteous in their attitude toward those classes which at present are the chief sufferers from the economic order.

At the proper time and in the proper place the teaching of the church should also create an atmosphere in which the illusions of the working class and other groups can readily be punctured. It is an illusion, for example, to suppose that the interests of the industrial workers are identical with those of the community.

What is important is that each group, in the most effective ways possible, be brought under the criticism which is implicit in Christian faith. In relationships between classes, we tend at present to see only the mote in our brother's eye. Christians have a special obligation, as they ought to have a special gift for this purpose, to try to interpret separate groups in society to one another. Barriers have to be broken through before they can be broken down. Self-sacrifice and compassion are good, but they are not, for example, what the poor today want of the well-to-do. Without the understanding mind which is able to think and feel the position of the other man, suspicion and distrust cannot be broken down. This power of delicate discernment and sensibility is rare in the world, because it is, in truth, a God-given grace and as such should be the peculiar contribution of the church to the making of true community.

Self-knowledge is a necessary condition for Christian repentance. The church should be able to bring about this condition of repentance because at the heart of its gospel it has a conception of human nature which should make men naturally suspicious of their own motives and which

should thus lead them to put a strong burden of proof on themselves when their decisions coincide with their own economic advantage. In some cases it can also be said that the church (and this would mean especially the clergy) have some degree of detachment from the immediate pressure of the interests of economic groups and should be able to see the world from the point of view of more than one group. That this is true at present to only a small degree is itself one of the most tragic and sinful factors in the life of the church.

In the next decade those who are responsible for guiding the life of the church must seek, by means of these and other forms of teaching, to bring under moral control the attitude of their members in economic relationships—just as they have always sought to bring under moral control the attitude of their members in direct personal relationships. This task will involve far more than preaching. It must become an integral part of the whole life and atmosphere of the church. The church as a worshipping community must relate its acts of repentance and dedication to the economic order in which its members live. Emphasis must here be placed upon the importance of teaching children and young people before the crusts formed by class and convention close their minds. The training of the clergy must include preparation for this kind of teaching.

In concluding this part of the report, we wish to emphasize that the work of teaching to which we have drawn attention above cannot be performed without the cooperation of the laity. Groups of men and women who are responsible for the conduct of industry and the functioning of the economic order must be helped to discover for themselves how the principles which we have tried to enunciate can be worked out in the spheres of life which are in some measure under their control. This opens up a large field for experiment and calls for fresh developments in many directions as well as for new types of ministry. . . .

71. Report of Section I, World Conference on Mission and Evangelism, Melbourne, 1980

Melbourne 1980, one in a series of world mission conferences, clearly reflects the theme of God's "good news to the poor" so prevalent in liberation theology. • Your Kingdom Come: Report on the World Conference on Mission and Evangelism, Melbourne, 1980, Geneva, WCC, 1980, pp. 171-78.

The Poor and the Rich and the Coming of the Kingdom

1. The kingdom of God which was inaugurated in Jesus Christ brings justice, love, peace and joy, and freedom from the grasp of principalities and powers, those demonic forces which place human lives and institutions in bondage and infiltrate their very textures. God's judgement is revealed as an overturning of values and structures of this world. In the perspective of kingdom, God has a preference for the poor.

Jesus announced at the beginning of his ministry, drawing upon the Word given to the prophet Isaiah, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor . . ." (Luke 4:18). This announcement was not new; God had shown his preference for the poor throughout the history of Israel. When Israel was a slave in Egypt, God sent Moses to lead the people out to the land which he had promised, where they established a society according to God's revelation given through Moses, a society which all were to share equally. After they had come into the land, God required them to remember that they had once been slaves. Therefore, they should care for the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner within their gates, their debtors, their children, their servants and even their animals (Deut. 5:13-15, 15:1-18). Time and again the prophets had to remind Israel of the need to stand for the poor and oppressed and to work for God's justice.

God identified with the poor and oppressed by sending his Son Jesus to live and serve as a Galilean speaking directly to the common people; promising to bless those who met the needs of the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and the prisoner; and finally meeting death on a cross as a political offender. The good news handed on to the Church is that God's grace was in Jesus Christ, who "though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (II Cor. 8:9).

2. Poverty in the Scriptures is affliction, deprivation and oppression. But it can also include abundant joy and overflow in liberality (II Cor. 8:1f). The Gospel which has been given to the Christian Church must express this continuing concern of God for the poor to whom Jesus has granted the blessing of the kingdom.

Jesus' option for the poor challenges everyone and shows how kingdom of God is to be received. The poor are "blessed" because of longing for justice and their hope for liberation. They accept the promise that God has come to their rescue, and so discover in his promise their hopes for liberation and a life of human dignity.

3. The Good News to the rich affirms what Jesus proclaims as the Gospel for the poor; that is, a calling to trust in God and his abundant mercy. This is a call to repentance:

- to renounce the security of wealth and material possessions which is, in fact, idolatry;
- to give up the exploiting power which is the demonic feature of wealth;
- to turn away from indifference and enmity toward the poor and toward solidarity with the oppressed.

4. The coming of the kingdom as hope for the poor is thus a time of judgement for the rich. In the light of this judgement and this hope, all human beings are shown to be less than human. The very identification of people as either rich or poor is now seen to be a symptom of this dehumanization. The poor who are sinned against are rendered less human by being deprived. The rich are rendered less human by the sinful act of depriving others.

The judgement of God thus comes as a verdict in favour of the poor. This verdict enables the poor to struggle to overthrow the powers that bind them, which then releases the rich from the necessity to dominate. Once this has happened, it is possible for both the humbled rich and the poor to become human, capable of response to the challenge of the kingdom.

To the poor this challenge means the profound assurance that God is with them and for them. To the rich it means a profound repentance and renunciation. To all who yearn for justice and forgiveness Jesus Christ offers discipleship and the demand of service. But he offers this in the assurance victory and in sharing the power of his risen life. As the kingdom in its fulness is solely the gift of God himself, any human achievement in history can only be approximate and relative to the ultimate goal—that promised new heaven and new earth in which justice abides. Yet that kingdom is the inspiration and constant challenge in all our struggles.

Who Are the Poor Today?

5. Poverty is an obvious fact in the world today. The majority of the nations are poor by comparison with the few countries that hoard the wealth and resources of the whole earth. And even within the rich nations there are large segments of the population that are poor by comparison with their fellow citizens. Yet we have had great difficulty in arriving at a common understanding of who the people are who should be identified as “the poor” today.

Part of our difficulty comes from the fact that, although we live on the same globe, we come from different situations and speak of different realities which, although clearly related to one another, have quite different characteristics (context). Part of our difficulty comes from the fact that, although we serve a common Lord and share a common faith, we read the Scriptures in different ways and emphasize different aspects of our understanding of the kingdom of God (content). We have struggled long with this question and hope that further prayer and study and engagement in mission will bring us closer together.

6. We have been helped by a simple definition given to us in one of the papers: “To be poor is to have not, to experience lack and deficiency . . . the poor are the ‘little ones’ (Matt. 11:25), the insignificant people of no consequence. They are powerless, voiceless and at the mercy of the powerful. . . . The dynamics of being poor are such that the oppressed poor finally accept the inhumanity and humiliation of their situation; in other words, they accept the status quo as the normal course of life. Thus, to be poor becomes both a state of things and an attitude to life, an outlook, even a worldview” (Canaan Banana, “Good News to the Poor,” Melbourne Conf. doc. No. 1.04, p. 3f).

Although at times we have been tempted to contrast “material” poverty and “spiritual” poverty, we have found that an inadequate way to understand the situation. Humanity has been created by God as “living souls,” and lack of food and shelter and clothing produces anguish and misery, while lack of identity and love and fulfilment can make even the most affluent circumstances unbearable. The Gospel of the kingdom is addressed to whole people in all of their life relationships. God is working for the total liberation of the whole of human life—indeed, for the redemption of the cosmos.

7. We have not agreed on where to place the emphasis, but we have used several ways to identify the poor in the world today:

a) *Poverty in the Necessities of Life*—those who have been deprived of material and cultural riches. In some situations, this poverty is a result of environmental scarcity, lack

of adequate technology and of economies and policies that have been imposed from outside. In most cases, the necessities of life have been expropriated by others in an unjust accumulation of wealth by the few.

b) *Poverty amid Material Wealth*—those who, possessing material and cultural riches, still do not live in a state of well-being. In both capitalist and socialist states among persons who have enough—and more than enough—of the necessities of life, there is malaise, anomie and self-destructive behaviour that has social and personal causes. Not all of these poor can be described as the result of unjust exploitation. Some would say that these should not be called “poor,” although they are in a situation of need.

(c) *Voluntary Poverty*—those who, possessing the possibility of having material riches, are prepared to live a life of frugality or self-denial, in order to make responsible use of those riches. For some this goes as far as solidarity with the poor in which they voluntarily give up their wealth and security to join themselves with the poor in order to struggle against the poverty produced by injustice.

8. We share a common conviction that God intends all humanity to have the necessities of life and to enjoy a personal and a social state of well-being. We feel that this is what our Lord meant when he said: “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10: 10) (fulness of life). They are to have life and to share in his life. . . .

The Churches and the Poor

16. The Church of Jesus Christ is called to preach Good News to the poor, even as its Lord has in his ministry announced the kingdom of God to them. The churches cannot neglect this evangelistic task. Most of the world's people are poor and they wait for a witness to the Gospel that will really be “Good News.” The Church of Jesus Christ is commissioned to disciple the nations, so that others may know that the kingdom of God has already drawn near and that its signs and first fruits can be seen in the world around the churches, as well as in their own life. Mission that is conscious of the kingdom will be concerned for liberation, not oppression; justice, not exploitation; fulness, not deprivation; freedom, not slavery; health, not disease; life, not death. No matter how the poor may be identified, this mission is for them.

17. As we look at the churches in the world today, we find some places where a new era of evangelization is dawning, where the poor are proclaiming the Good News. We find other places where the churches understand the situation of the poor and have begun to witness in ways

that are Good News. Some of the stories we have mentioned above show the possibilities for a witness with and on behalf of the poor. The base communities in Latin America are churches of the poor that have been willing to share in their poverty and oppression, so that they can struggle to reach a just society and the end of exploitation. Some local churches and church organizations have been willing to redistribute their wealth for the benefit of the self-development of the poor. Some church leaders and denominational groups have been working to challenge the transnational corporations at their business meetings and in their board rooms. Through ecumenical bodies, churches have joined in the search for a new social, political and economic order, and committed themselves to support those organizations, churches and national leaders that share this vision.

18. We have heard of more places where the churches are indifferent to the situation of the poor or—far worse—actively allied with those forces which have made them poor, while enjoying the fruits of riches been accumulated at the expense of the poor. All over the world in many countries with a capitalist system, the churches are part of the establishment, assisting in the maintenance of a status quo that exploits not only nations and nature but the poor of their own country. The churches are alienated from the poor by their middle-class values. Whereas Jesus identified with the poor in his life and ministry, the churches today are full of satisfied, complacent people who are not willing to look at the Lazarus on their doorstep. In some socialist countries, although a measure of economic equality has been achieved, the churches have yet to recognize their responsibility toward the kinds of poverty that still exist among the people. And in developing countries where poverty is the inescapable lot of the overwhelming majority of the population, some churches have been content to make ways for a limited number of the poor to join the elite without working to overcome injustice. We have also heard many stories of ways in which the missionary enterprise of the churches, both overseas and in their own countries, has been financed with the fruits of exploitation, conducted in league with oppressive forces, and has failed to join the struggle of the poor and oppressed against injustice. We need to become more aware of these shortcomings and sins, to repent genuinely and find ways to act that will be Good News to the world's poor.

19. The message which the churches proclaim is not only what they preach and write and teach. If they are to preach Good News, their own lifestyle and what they do—or fail to do—will also carry a message. In his earthly ministry, Jesus Christ was consistent in proclaiming Good

News by what he said, what he did and what he was. If the churches are to be faithful disciples and living members of the body of Christ, they too must be consistent in what they say, what they do and what they are.

20. We wish to *recommend* the following to the churches:

a) *Become churches in solidarity with the struggles of the poor.* The poor are already in mission to change their own situation. What is required from the churches is a missionary movement that supports what they have already begun, and that focuses on building evangelizing and witnessing communities of the poor that will discover and live out expressions of faith among the masses of the poor and oppressed.

The churches will have to surrender their attitudes of benevolence and charity by which they have condescended to the poor; in many cases this will mean a radical change in the institutional life of the missionary movement. The churches must be ready to listen to the poor, to hear the Gospel from the poor, to learn about the ways in which they have helped to make them poor.

Ways of expressing this solidarity are several, but each must be fitted to the situation of the poor and respect their leadership in the work of evangelization and mission. There is the call to act in support of the struggles of the poor against oppression. This means support across national boundaries and between continents, without neglecting the struggles within their own societies. There is the call to participate in the struggle themselves. To free others of poverty and oppression is also to release the bonds that entangle the churches in the web of international exploitation. There is the call to become churches of the poor. Although not all will accept the call to strip themselves of riches, the voluntary joining in the community of the poor of the earth could be the most telling witness to the Good News.

b) *Join the struggle against the powers of exploitation and impoverishment.* Poverty, injustice and oppression do not voluntarily release their grip on the lives of the poor. Therefore, the struggle against the powers that create and maintain the present situation must be actively entered. These powers include the transnational corporations, governments and the churches themselves and their missionary organizations where they have joined in exploitation and impoverishment. In increasing numbers, those who will claim the rewards that Jesus promised to those who are persecuted or the martyr's crown of victory in today's world are those who join the struggle against these powers at the side of the poor.

c) *Establish a new relationship with the poor inside the churches.* Many of the poor belong to the churches, but only the voices of a few are heard or their influence

felt. The New Testament churches were taught not to be respecters of persons but many churches today have built the structures of status, class, sexual and racial division into their fellowship and organization. The churches should be open to the presence and voice of the poor in their own life. The structures of mission and church life still must be changed to patterns of partnership and servanthood. This will require a more unified mission outreach that does not perpetuate the wastefulness and confusion of denominational divisions. The lifestyles of both clergy and lay leaders need to be changed to come closer to the poor. The churches, which now exploit women and youth, will need to create opportunities for them to participate in leadership and decision-making.

d) *Pray and work for the kingdom of God.* When the churches emphasize their own life, their eyes are diverted from the kingdom of God, the heart of our Lord's message and the hope of poor. To pray for the kingdom is to concentrate the church's attention on that which God is trying to give to his whole creation. To pray for the kingdom will enable the churches to work more earnestly for its development, to look more eagerly for its signs in human history and to await more patiently its final consummation.

72. "Economy of Life, Justice, and Peace for All: A Call to Action," Tenth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Busan, 2013

This "call to action" is the result of a six-year process of consultations and regional studies initiated by the WCC. It is a follow-up to the Council's Alternative Globalization Addressing People and Earth (AGAPE) study programme. • http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/public-witness-addressing-power-affirming-peace/poverty-wealth-and-ecology/neoliberal-paradigm/agape-call-for-action-2012/economy-of-life-justice-and-peace-for-all?set_language=en

Preamble

1. This call to action comes in a time of dire necessity. People and the Earth are in peril due to the over-consumption of some, growing inequalities as evidenced in the persistent poverty of many in contrast to the extravagant wealth of a few, and intertwined global financial, socio-economic, ecological and climate crises. Throughout our dialogue, we as participants in consultations and regional studies expressed differing, sometimes even contrasting, perspectives. We also grew to share a common consciousness that life in the global community as we know it today will come to an end if we fail to confront the sins of egotism, callous disregard and greed which lie at the root of these crises. With a sense of urgency, we bring this dialogue to the churches as a call to action. This urgency is born of our profound hope and belief: An Economy of Life is not only possible, it is in the making—and God's justice lies at its very foundation!

Theological and Spiritual Affirmations of Life

2. The belief that God created human beings as part of a larger web of life and affirmed the goodness of the whole creation (Genesis 1) lies at the heart of biblical faith. The whole community of living organisms that grows and flourishes is an expression of God's will and works together to bring life from and give life to the land, to connect one generation to the next, and to sustain the abundance and diversity of God's household (*oikos*). Economy in God's household emerges from God's gracious offering of abundant life for all (John 10:10). We are inspired by Indigenous Peoples' image of "Land is Life" (*Macliing Dulag*) which recognizes that the lives of people and the land are woven together in mutual interdependence. Thus, we express our belief that the "creation's life and God's life are intertwined" (Commission on World Mission and Evangelism) and that God will be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:28).

3. Christian and many other expressions of spirituality teach us that the "good life" lies not in the competitive quest for possessions, the accumulation of wealth, fortresses and stockpiles of armaments to provide for our security, or in using our own power to lord it over others (James 3: 13-18). We affirm the "good life" (*Sumak Kausay* in the Kichua language and the concept of *Waniambi a Tobati Engros* from West Papua) modeled by the communion of the Trinity in mutuality, shared partnership, reciprocity, justice and loving-kindness.

4. The groaning of the Creation and the cries of people in poverty (Jeremiah 14:2-7) alert us to just how much our current social, political, economic and ecological state of emergency runs counter to God's vision for life in abundance. Many of us too easily deceive ourselves into

thinking that human desires stand at the centre of God's universe. We construct divisions, barriers and boundaries to distance ourselves from neighbour, nature and God's justice. Communities are fragmented and relationships broken. Our greed and self-centredness endanger both people and planet Earth.

5. We are called to turn away from works that bring death and to be transformed into a new life (*metanoia*). Jesus calls humanity to repent of our sins of greed and egotism, to renew our relationships with the others and creation, to restore the image of God, and to begin a new way of life as a partner of God's life-affirming mission. The call of the prophets is heard anew from and through people submerged in poverty by our current economic system and those most affected by climate change: Do justice and bring a new Earth into being!

6. Our vision of justice is rooted in God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ who drove money changers from the temple (Matthew 21:12), made the weak strong and strong weak (1 Corinthians 1:25-28), and redefined views of poverty and wealth (2 Corinthians 8:9). Jesus identified himself with the marginalized and excluded people not only out of compassion, but because their lives testified to the sinfulness of the systems and structures. Our faith compels us to seek justice, to witness to the presence of God and to be part of the lives and struggles of people made weak and vulnerable by structures and cultures—women, children, people living in poverty in both urban and rural areas, Indigenous Peoples, racially oppressed communities, people with disabilities, Dalits, forced migrant workers, refugees and religious ethnic minorities. Jesus says "Whatever you did to the least of these you did to me" (Matthew 25: 40).

7. We must embody a "transformative spirituality" (Commission on World Mission and Evangelism) that reconnects us to others (*Ubuntu* and *Sansaeng*), motivates us to serve the common good, emboldens us to stand against all forms of marginalization, seeks the redemption of the whole Earth, resists life-destroying values and inspires us to discover innovative alternatives. This spirituality provides the means to discover the grace to be satisfied with enough, while sharing with any who have need (Acts 4:35).

8. Churches must be challenged to remember, hear and heed Christ's call today: "The time has come. . . . The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15). We are called to be transformed, to continue Christ's acts of healing and reconciliation and "to be what [we] have been sent to be—a people of God and a community in the world" (AGAPE consultation on Poverty, Wealth, and Ecology in Africa). Therefore, the Church is God's agent for transformation. The Church is

a community of disciples of Jesus Christ, who affirm the fullness of life for all, against any denial of life.

Intertwined and Urgent Crises

9. Our present stark global reality is so fraught with death and destruction that we will not have a future to speak of unless the prevailing development paradigm is radically transformed and justice and sustainability become the driving force for the economy, society and the Earth. Time is running out.

10. We discern the fatal intertwining of the global financial, socio-economic, climate, and ecological crises accompanied in many places of the world by the suffering of people and their struggle for life. Far-reaching market liberalization, deregulation and unrestrained privatization of goods and services are exploiting the whole Creation and dismantling social programs and services and opening up economies across borders to seemingly limitless growth of production. Uncontrolled financial flows destabilize the economies of an increasing number of countries all over the world. Various aspects of climate, ecological, financial and debt crises are mutually dependent and reinforce each other. They cannot be treated separately anymore.

11. Climate change and threats to the integrity of creation have become the significant challenge of the multifaceted crises that we have to confront. Climate change directly impacts peoples' livelihoods, endangers the existence of small island states, reduces the availability of fresh water and diminishes Earth's biodiversity. It has far-reaching impacts on food security, the health of people and the living habits of a growing part of the population. Due to climate change, life in its many forms as we know it can be irreversibly changed within the span of a few decades. Climate change leads to the displacement of people, to the increase of forced climate migration, and to armed conflicts. Unprecedented challenges of climate change go hand-in-hand with the uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources and lead to the destruction of the Earth and to a substantial change of the habitat. Global warming and ecological destruction become more and more a question of life or death.

12. Our world has never been more prosperous, and, at the same time, more inequitable than it is today. Inequality has reached a level that we can no longer afford to ignore. People who have been submerged into poverty, driven into overwhelming debt, marginalized, and displaced are crying out with a greater sense of urgency and clarity than ever before. The global community must recognize the need for all of us to join hands together and to do justice in the face

of unparalleled and catastrophic inequalities in the distribution of wealth.

13. Greed and injustice, seeking easy profit, unjust privileges and short-term advantages at the expense of long term and sustainable aims are root causes of the intertwined crises and cannot be overlooked. These life-destroying values have slowly crept in to dominate today's structures and lead to lifestyles that fundamentally defy the regenerative limits of the Earth and the rights of human beings and other forms of life. Therefore, the crisis has deep moral and existential dimensions. The challenges that are posed are not first and foremost technological and financial, but ethical and spiritual.

14. Market fundamentalism is more than an economic paradigm: it is a social and moral philosophy. During the last thirty years, market faith based on unbridled competition and expressed by calculating and monetizing all aspects of life has overwhelmed and determined the direction of our systems of knowledge, science, technology, public opinion, media and even education. This dominating approach has funneled wealth primarily toward those who are already rich and allowed humans to plunder resources of the natural world far beyond its limits to increase their own wealth. The neoliberal paradigm lacks the self-regulating mechanisms to deal with the chaos it creates with far-reaching impacts, especially for the impoverished and marginalized.

15. This ideology is permeating all features of life, destroying it from the inside as well as from the outside, as it seeps into the lives of families and local communities, wreaks havoc upon the natural environment and traditional life-forms and cultures, and spoils the future of the Earth. The dominant global economic system in this way threatens to put an end to both the conditions for peaceful coexistence and life as we know it.

16. The one-sided belief that social benefits automatically follow from economic (GDP) growth is misguided. Economic growth without constraints strangles the flourishing of our own natural habitat: climate change, deforestation, ocean acidification, biodiversity loss and so on. The ecological commons have been degraded and appropriated, through the use of military force, by the political and economic elite. Over-consumption based on the costs of uncovered debts generates massive social and ecological indebtedness, which are owed by the developed countries of the global North to the global South, as well as indebtedness over against the Earth, is unjust and creates enormous pressure on future generations. The notion that the Earth is the Lord's and everything in it (Psalm 24: 1; 1 Corinthians 10: 26) has been dismissed.

Well-Springs of Justice

17. We confess that churches and church members are complicit in the unjust system when they partake in unsustainable lifestyles and patterns of consumption and remain entangled in the economy of greed. There are churches who continue to preach theologies of prosperity, self-righteousness, domination, individualism and convenience. Some support theologies of charity rather than justice for the impoverished. Others fail to question and even legitimize systems and ideologies founded on unlimited growth and accumulation, and ignore the reality of ecological destruction and the plights of victims of globalization. Some focus on short-term, quantifiable results at the expense of deep-seated, qualitative changes. However, we are also aware that even when many fail to examine and change their own production, consumption and investment behaviour, an increasing number of churches from all continents are stepping up their efforts and expressing their belief that transformation is possible.

18. Ultimately, our hope springs from Christ's resurrection and promise of life for all. We see evidence of that resurrection hope in the churches and movements committed to making a better world. They are the light and salt of the Earth. We are profoundly inspired by numerous examples of transformation from within the family of churches and in growing movements of women, people in poverty, youth, people with disabilities and Indigenous Peoples who are building an Economy of Life and promoting a flourishing ecology.

19. People of faith, Christian, Muslim and Indigenous leaders in the Philippines, have given their lives to maintain their connection to and to continue to sustain themselves from the land to which they belong. Churches in South America, Africa and Asia are conducting audits of external debts and challenging mining and resource-extractive companies to be accountable for human rights violations and environmental damages. Churches in Latin America and Europe are sharing and learning from differing experiences with globalization and working towards defining common but differentiated responsibilities, building solidarity and strategic alliances. Christians are defining indicators of greed and conducting intentional dialogues with Buddhists and Muslims which discover common ground in the fight against greed. Churches in partnership with civil society are engaged in discussing the parameters of a new international financial and economic architecture, promoting life-giving agriculture and building economies of solidarity.

20. Women have been developing feminist theologies that challenge patriarchal systems of domination as well as feminist economics that embed the economy in society and society in ecology. Youth are in the forefront of campaigns

for simple living and alternative lifestyles. Indigenous Peoples are making demands for holistic reparations and the recognition of Earth rights to address social and ecological debt.

Commitments and Call

21. The 10th General Assembly of the WCC is meeting at a time when the vibrant life of God's whole creation may be extinguished by human methods of wealth creation. God calls us to a radical transformation. Transformation will not be without sacrifice and risk, but our faith in Christ demands that we commit ourselves to be transformative churches and transformative congregations. We must cultivate the moral courage necessary to witness to a spirituality of justice and sustainability, and build a prophetic movement for an Economy of Life for all. This entails mobilizing people and communities, providing the required resources (funds, time and capacities), and developing more cohesive and coordinated programs geared toward transforming economic systems, production, distribution, and consumption patterns, cultures and values.

22. The process of transformation must uphold human rights, human dignity and human accountability to all of God's creation. We have a responsibility that lies beyond our individual selves and national interests to create sustainable structures that will allow future generations to have enough. Transformation must embrace those who suffer the most from systemic marginalization, such as people in poverty, women, Indigenous Peoples and persons living with disabilities. Nothing determined without them is for them. We must challenge ourselves and overcome structures and cultures of domination and self-destruction that are rending the social and ecological fabric of life. Transformation must be guided by the mission to heal and renew the whole creation. . . .

26. The process is envisioned as a flourishing space where churches can learn from each other and from other faith traditions and social movements about how a transformative spirituality can counter and resist life-destroying values and overcome complicity in the economy of greed. It will be a space to learn what an Economy of Life means, theologically and practically, by reflecting together and sharing what concrete changes are needed in various contexts. It will be a space to develop joint campaigns and advocacy activities at the national, regional and global levels with a view to enabling policy and systemic changes leading to poverty eradication and wealth redistribution; ecologically respectful production, consumption and distribution; and to develop healthy, equitable, post-fossil fuel and peace-loving societies.

*God of Life calls us to justice and peace.
Come to God's table of sharing!
Come to God's table of life!
Come to God's table of love!*

73. Joseph Sittler, "Called to Unity," Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, New Delhi, 1961

In this widely acclaimed address, Sittler, a leading Lutheran theologian, attempted to expand ecumenical horizons to the whole of creation. It was nearly a generation later, however, before ecology became a major item on the movement's agenda. • The Ecumenical Review, vol. 14, no. 2, 1962, pp.181-87.

The Split between Grace and Nature in Western Thought

The doctrinal cleavage, particularly fateful in western Christendom, has been an element in the inability of the church to relate the powers of grace to the vitalities and processes of nature. At the very time, and in that very part of the world where men's minds were being deepeningly determined by their understanding and widened control of the powers of nature, they were so identifying the realm of history and the moral as the sole realm of grace as to shrink to no effect the biblical Christology of nature. In the midst of vast changes in man's relation to nature the sovereignty and scope of grace was, indeed, attested and liberated by the Reformers. But post-Reformation consolidations of their teaching permitted their Christic recovery of all of nature as a realm of grace to slip back into a minor theme.

In the Enlightenment the process was completed. Rationalism, on the one hand, restricted redemption by grace to the moral soul, and Pietism, on the other hand, turned down the blaze of the Colossian vision so radically that its *ta panta* was effective only as a moral or mystical incandescence. Enlightenment man could move in on the realm of nature and virtually take it over because grace had either ignored or repudiated it. A bit of God died with each new natural conquest; the realm of grace retreated as more of the structure and process of nature was claimed by now autonomous man. The rood-screen in the Church, apart from its original meaning, has become a symbol of man's devout but frightened thought permitting to fall asunder what God joined together. . . .

Claiming Nature for Christ

Is it again possible to fashion a theology catholic enough to affirm redemption's force enfolding nature, as we have affirmed redemption's force enfolding history? That we should make that effort is, in my understanding, the commanding task of this moment in our common history; and by common history I refer to that which is common to all of the blessed obediences of the household of faith: Antioch and Aldersgate, Constantinople and Canterbury, Geneva and Augsburg, Westminster and Plymouth.

For the problem which first drove the Church, as our text [Col. 1:15-20] reminds us, to utter a Christology of such amplitude is a problem that has persisted and presses upon us today with absolute urgency. We are being driven to claim the world of nature for God's Christ just as, in the time of Augustus, the Church was driven to claim the world of history as the city of God for his Lordship and purpose. For fifteen centuries the Church has declared the power of grace to conquer egocentricity, to expose idolatry, to inform the drama of history with holy meaning. But in our time we have beheld the vision and promises of the Enlightenment come to strange and awesome maturity. The cleavage between grace and nature is complete. Man's identity has been shrunken to the dimensions of privatude within social determinism. The doctrine of the creation has been made a devout datum of past time. The mathematization of meaning in technology and its reduction to operational terms in philosophy has left no mental space wherein to declare that nature, as well as history, is the theatre of grace and the scope of redemption.

When millions of the world's people, inside the church and outside of it, know that damnation now threatens nature as absolutely as it has always threatened men and societies in history, it is not likely that witness to a light that does not enfold and illumine the world-as-nature will be even comprehensible. For the root-pathos of our time is the struggle by the peoples of the world in many and various ways to find some principle, order, or power which shall be strong enough to contain the raging." . . . thrones, dominions, principalities" which restrict and ravage human life.

If, to this longing of all men everywhere, we are to propose "Him of whom, and through whom, and in whom are all things," then that proposal must be made in redemptive terms that are forged in the furnace of man's crucial engagement with nature as both potential to blessedness and potential to hell.

The matter might be put another way: the address of Christian thought is most weak precisely where man's ache is most strong. We have had, and have, a Christology of the moral soul, a Christology of history, and, if not

a Christology of the ontic, affirmations so huge as to fill the space marked out by ontological questions. But we do not have, at least not in such effective force as to have engaged the thought of the common life, a daring, penetrating, life-affirming Christology of nature. The theological magnificence of cosmic Christology lies, for the most part, still tightly folded in the Church's innermost heart and memory. Its power is nascent among us all in our several styles of teaching, preaching, worship; its waiting potency is available for release in kerygmatic theology, in moral theology, in liturgical theology, in sacramental theology. And the fact that our separate traditions incline us to one or another of these as central does not diminish either the fact or our responsibility. For it is true of us all that the imperial vision of Christ as coherent in *ta panta* has not broken open the powers of grace to diagnose, judge, and heal the ways of men as they blasphemously strut about this hurt and threatened world as if they owned it. Our vocabulary of praise has become personal, pastoral, too purely spiritual, static. We have not affirmed as inherent in Christ—God's proper man for man's proper selfhood and society—the world political, the world economic, the world aesthetic, and all other commanded orderings of actuality which flow from the ancient summons to tend this garden of the Lord. When atoms are disposable to the ultimate hurt then the very atoms must be reclaimed for God and his will. . . .

It is the thesis of this address that our moment in history is heavy with the imperative that faith proposes for the madly malleable and grandly possible potencies of nature, that holiest, vastest, confession: that by him, for him, and through him all things subsist in God, and therefore are to be used in joy and sanity for his human family.

The Church is both thrust and lured toward unity. The thrust is from behind and within: it is grounded in God's will and promise. The lure is God's same will and power operating upon the Church from the needs of history within which she lives her life. The thrust of the will and the promise is a steady force in the Church's memory: the lure is clamant in the convulsions that twist our times in the Church's present. The way forward is from Christology expanded to its cosmic dimensions, made passionate by the pathos of this threatened earth, and made ethical by the love and the wrath of God. For as it was said in the beginning that God beheld all things and declared them good, so it was uttered by an angel in the apocalypse of St. John, ". . . ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, hurt not the earth neither the sea, nor the trees . . ." The care of the earth, the realm of nature as a theatre of grace, the ordering

of the thick, material procedures that make available to or deprive men of bread and peace—these are Christological obediences before they are practical necessities.

We live in a *kairos* where Christ and chaos intersect, a moment in which the fullest Christology is marvelously congruent with man's power-founded anxiety and need. Contemporary man expresses his hurt in terms of his broken or uncertain relationship to society and nature. We cannot, indeed, extrude from these the substance of his God-relationship. But it might be possible so to say to him that he entertain the possibility of its truth, that the problems that appear in this earthy and societal relationship are not soluble in terms of it. For created life is a triad of God, and man, and nature. If we meet him where he hurts he may be given new ears and eyes for that triadic Word from which the Church lives in confessed acknowledgement, and under which all men live by creation. . . .

The Church has found a melancholy number of ways to express her variety. She has found fewer ways to express her unity. But if we are indeed called to unity, and if we can obey that call in terms of a contemporary Christology expanded to the dimensions of the New Testament vision, we shall, perhaps, obey into fuller unity. For in such obedience we have the promise of the Divine blessing. This radio-active earth, so fecund and so fragile, is his creation, our sister, and the material place where we meet the brother in Christ's light. Ever since Hiroshima the very term light has ghastly meanings. But ever since creation it has had meanings glorious; and ever since Bethlehem meanings concrete and beckoning.

74. "God's Earth Is Sacred," National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, 2005

This text is intended to be an "open letter" to church and society that lays out the theological basis for stewardship of God's creation, along with guidelines for action. It was drafted by a group of prominent theologians gathered by the Ecojustice Working Group of the U.S. National Council of Churches.

• <http://www.nccusa.org/news/14.02.05theologialstatement.html>.

God's creation delivers unsettling news. Earth's climate is warming to dangerous levels; 90 percent of the world's fisheries have been depleted; coastal development and pollution are causing a sharp decline in ocean health; shrinking habitat threatens to extinguish thousands of species; over 95 percent of the contiguous United States forests have been lost; and almost half of the population in the United States lives in areas that do not meet national air quality standards. In recent years, the profound danger has grown, requiring us as theologians, pastors, and religious leaders to speak out and act with new urgency.

We are obliged to relate to Earth as God's creation "in ways that sustain life on the planet, provide for the [basic] needs of all humankind, and increase justice."¹² Over the past several decades, slowly but faithfully, the religious community in the United States has attempted to address issues of ecology and justice. Our faith groups have offered rich theological perspectives, considered moral issues through the lens of long-standing social teaching, and passed numerous policies within our own church bodies. While we honor the efforts in our churches, we have clearly failed to communicate the full measure and magnitude of Earth's environmental crisis—religiously, morally, or politically. It is painfully clear from the verifiable testimony of the world's scientists that our response has been inadequate to the scale and pace of Earth's degradation.

To continue to walk the current path of ecological destruction is not only folly; it is sin. As voiced by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who has taken the lead among senior religious leaders in his concern for creation: "To commit a crime against the natural world is a sin. For humans to cause species to become extinct and to destroy the biological diversity of God's creation . . . for humans to degrade the integrity of Earth by causing changes in its climate, by stripping the Earth of its natural forests, or destroying its wetlands . . . for humans to injure other humans with disease . . . for humans to contaminate the Earth's waters, its land, its air, and its life, with poisonous substances . . . these are sins."¹³ We have become un-Creators. Earth is in jeopardy at our hands.

This means that ours is a theological crisis as well. We have listened to a false gospel that we continue to live out in our daily habits—a gospel that proclaims that God cares for the salvation of humans only and that our human calling is to exploit Earth for our own ends alone. This false gospel still finds its proud preachers and continues to

12. American Baptist Policy Statement on Ecology, 1989, p. 2.

13. "Address of His All Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew at the Environmental Symposium, Saint Barbara Greek Orthodox Church, Santa Barbara, California, 8 November 1997," John Chryssavgis, *Cosmic Grace, Humble Prayer*, Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003, pp. 220-221.

capture its adherents among emboldened political leaders and policy makers.

The secular counterpart of this gospel rests in the conviction that humans can master the Earth. Our modern way of life assumes this mastery. However, the sobering truth is that we hardly have knowledge of, much less control over, the deep and long-term consequences of our human impacts upon the Earth. We have already sown the seeds for many of those consequences. The fruit of those seeds will be reaped by future generations of human beings, together with others in the community of life.

The imperative first step is to repent of our sins, in the presence of God and one another. This repentance of our social and ecological sins will acknowledge the special responsibility that falls to those of us who are citizens of the United States. Though only five percent of the planet's human population, we produce one-quarter of the world's carbon emissions, consume a quarter of its natural riches, and perpetuate scandalous inequities at home and abroad. We are a precious part of Earth's web of life, but we do not own the planet and we cannot transcend its requirements for regeneration on its own terms. We have not listened well to the Maker of Heaven and Earth.

The second step is to pursue a new journey together, with courage and joy. By God's grace, all things are made new. We can share in that renewal by clinging to God's trustworthy promise to restore and fulfill all that God creates and by walking, with God's help, a path different from our present course. To that end, we affirm our faith, propose a set of guiding norms, and call on our churches to rededicate themselves to this mission. We firmly believe that addressing the degradation of God's sacred Earth is the moral assignment of our time comparable to the Civil Rights struggles of the 1960s, the worldwide movement to achieve equality for women, or ongoing efforts to control weapons of mass destruction in a post-Hiroshima world.

Ecological Affirmations of Faith

We stand with awe and gratitude as members of God's bountiful and good creation. We rejoice in the splendor and mystery of countless species, our common creaturehood, and the interdependence of all that God makes. We believe that the Earth is home for all and that it has been created intrinsically good (Genesis 1).

We lament that the human species is shattering the splendid gifts of this web of life, ignoring our responsibility for the well being of all life, while destroying species and their habitats at a rate never before known in human history.

We believe that the Holy Spirit, who animates all of creation, breathes in us and can empower us to participate in working toward the flourishing of Earth's community of life. We believe that the people of God are called to forge ways of being human that enable socially just and ecologically sustainable communities to flourish for generations to come. And we believe in God's promise to fulfill all of creation, anticipating the reconciliation of all (Colossians 1:15), in accordance with God's promise (II Peter 3:13).

We lament that we have rejected this vocation and have distorted our God-given abilities and knowledge in order to ransack and often destroy ecosystems and human communities rather than to protect, strengthen, and nourish them.

We believe that, in boundless love that hungers for justice, God in Jesus Christ acts to restore and redeem all creation (including human beings). God incarnate affirms all creation (John 1:14), which becomes a sacred window to eternity. In the cross and resurrection we know that God is drawn into life's most brutal and broken places and there brings forth healing and liberating power. That saving action restores right relationships among all members of "the whole creation" (Mark 16:15).

We confess that instead of living and proclaiming this salvation through our very lives and worship, we have abused and exploited the Earth and people on the margins of power and privilege, altering climates, extinguishing species, and jeopardizing Earth's capacity to sustain life as we know and love it.

We believe that the created world is sacred—a revelation of God's power and gracious presence filling all things. This sacred quality of creation demands moderation and sharing, urgent antidotes for our excess in consumption and waste, reminding us that economic justice is an essential condition of ecological integrity.

We cling to God's trustworthy promise to restore, renew, and fulfill all that God creates. We long for and work toward the day when churches, as embodiments of Christ on Earth, will respond to the "groaning of creation" (Romans 8:22) and to God's passionate desire to "renew the face of the Earth" (Psalm 104:30). We look forward to the day when the lamentations and groans of creation will be over, justice with peace will reign, humankind will nurture not betray the Earth, and all of creation will sing for joy.

Guiding Norms for Church and Society

These affirmations imply a challenge that is also a calling: to fulfill our vocation as moral images of God, reflections of divine love and justice charged to "serve and preserve"

the Garden (Genesis 2:15). Given this charge and the urgent problems of our age—from species extinctions and mass poverty to climate change and health-crippling pollution—how shall we respond? What shall we be and do? What are the standards and practices of moral excellence that we ought to cultivate in our personal lives, our communities of faith, our social organizations, our businesses, and our political institutions? We affirm the following norms of social and environmental responsibility:

Justice—creating right relationships, both social and ecological, to ensure for all members of the Earth community the conditions required for their flourishing. Among human members, justice demands meeting the essential material needs and conditions for human dignity and social participation. In our global context, economic deprivation and ecological degradation are linked in a vicious cycle. We are compelled, therefore, to seek eco-justice, the integration of social justice and ecological integrity. The quest for eco-justice also implies the development of a set of human environmental rights, since one of the essential conditions of human well being is ecological integrity. These moral entitlements include protection of soils, air, and water from diverse pollutants; the preservation of biodiversity; and governmental actions ensuring the fair and frugal use of creation's riches.

Sustainability—living within the bounds of planetary capacities indefinitely, in fairness to both present and future generations of life. God's covenant is with humanity and all other living creatures "for all future generations" (Genesis 9:8-17). The concern for sustainability forces us to be responsible for the truly long-term impacts of our lifestyles and policies.

Bioresponsibility—extending the covenant of justice to include all other life forms as beloved creatures of God and as expressions of God's presence, wisdom, power, and glory. We do not determine nor declare creation's value, and other creatures should not be treated merely as instruments for our needs and wants. Other species have their own integrity. They deserve a "fair share" of Earth's bounty—a share that allows a biodiversity of life to thrive along with human communities.

Humility—recognizing, as an antidote to arrogance, the limits of human knowledge, technological ingenuity, and moral character. We are not the masters of creation. Knowing human capacities for error and evil, humility keeps our own species in check for the good of the whole of Earth as God's creation.

Generosity—sharing Earth's riches to promote and defend the common good in recognition of God's purposes for the whole creation and Christ's gift of abundant life. Humans are not collections of isolated individuals, but

rather communities of socially and ecologically interdependent beings. A measure of a good society is not whether it privileges those who already have much, but rather whether it privileges the most vulnerable members of creation. Essentially, these tasks require good government at all levels, from local to regional to national to international.

Frugality—restraining economic production and consumption for the sake of eco-justice. Living lives filled with God's Spirit liberates us from the illusion of finding wholeness in the accumulation of material things and brings us to the reality of God's just purposes. Frugality connotes moderation, sufficiency, and temperance. Many call it simplicity. It demands the careful conservation of Earth's riches, comprehensive recycling, minimal harm to other species, material efficiency and the elimination of waste, and product durability. Frugality is the corrective to a cardinal vice of the age: prodigality—excessively taking from and wasting God's creation. On a finite planet, frugality is an expression of love and an instrument for justice and sustainability: it enables all life to thrive together by sparing and sharing global goods.

Solidarity—acknowledging that we are increasingly bound together as a global community in which we bear responsibility for one another's well being. The social and environmental problems of the age must be addressed with cooperative action at all levels—local, regional, national and international. Solidarity is a commitment to the global common good through international cooperation.

Compassion—sharing the joys and sufferings of all Earth's members and making them our own. Members of the body of Christ see the face of Christ in the vulnerable and excluded. From compassion flows inclusive caring and careful service to meet the needs of others.

A Call to Action: Healing the Earth and Providing a Just and Sustainable Society

For too long, we, our Christian brothers and sisters, and many people of good will have relegated care and justice for the Earth to the periphery of our concerns. This is not a competing "program alternative," one "issue" among many. In this most critical moment in Earth's history, we are convinced that the central moral imperative of our time is the care for Earth as God's creation.

Churches, as communities of God's people in the world, are called to exist as representatives of the loving Creator, Sustainer, and Restorer of all creation. We are called to worship God with all our being and actions, and to treat creation as sacred. We must engage our political leaders in supporting the very future of this planet. We are

called to cling to the true Gospel—for “God so loved the cosmos” (John 3:16)—rejecting the false gospels of our day.

We believe that caring for creation must undergird, and be entwined with, all other dimensions of our churches’ ministries. We are convinced that it is no longer acceptable to claim to be “church” while continuing to perpetuate, or even permit, the abuse of Earth as God’s creation. Nor is it acceptable for our corporate and political leaders to engage in “business as usual” as if the very future of life-support systems were not at stake.

Therefore, we urgently call on our brothers and sisters in Christ, and all people of good will, to join us in:

Understanding our responsibilities as those who live within the United States of America—the part of the human family that represents five percent of the world population and consumes 25 percent of Earth’s riches. We believe that one of the surest ways to gain this understanding is by listening intently to the most vulnerable: those who most immediately suffer the consequences of our overconsumption, toxication, and hubris. The whole Earth is groaning, crying out for healing—let us awaken the “ears of our souls” to hear it, before it’s too late.

Integrating this understanding into our core beliefs and practices surrounding what it means to be “church,” to be “human,” to be “children of God.” Such integration will be readily apparent in: congregational mission statements, lay and ordained ministries, the preaching of the Word, our hymns of praise, the confession of our sins, our financial stewardship and offerings to God, theological education, our evangelism, our daily work, sanctuary use, and compassionate service to all communities of life. With this integrated witness we look forward to a revitalization of our human vocation and our churches’ lives that parallels the revitalization of God’s thriving Earth.

Advocating boldly with all our leaders on behalf of creation’s most vulnerable members (including human members). We must shed our complacency, denial, and fears and speak God’s truth to power, on behalf of all who have been denied dignity and for the sake of all voiceless members of the community of life.

In Christ’s name and for Christ’s glory, we call out with broken yet hopeful hearts: join us in restoring God’s Earth—the greatest healing work and moral assignment of our time.

75. Bartholomew I, “Saving the Soul of the Planet,” 2009

H.A.H. Bartholomew is known as the “Green Patriarch” for his prophetic work on the environment, much of it done with ecumenical partners. This is an address given to the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C. • <http://patriarchate.org/documents/saving-the-soul-of-the-planet>.

At first glance, it may appear strange for the leader of a religious institution concerned with *spiritual values* to speak about the environment at a secular institution that deals with *public policy*. What exactly does preserving the planet or promoting democracy have to do with saving the soul or helping the poor? It is commonly assumed that ecological issues—global climate change and the exploitation of nature’s resources—are matters that concern politicians, scientists, technocrats, and interest groups.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate is certainly no worldly institution. It wields no political authority; it leads by example and by persuasion. And so the preoccupation of the Orthodox Christian Church and, in particular, her highest spiritual authority, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, with the environmental crisis will probably come to many people as a surprise. But it is neither surprising nor unnatural within the context of Orthodox Christian spirituality.

Indeed, it is now exactly twenty years since our revered predecessor, Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios, sparked the ecological initiatives of our Church by issuing the first encyclical encouraging our faithful throughout the world to pray for and preserve the natural environment. His exhortation was subsequently heeded by the member churches of the World Council of Churches.

What, then, does preserving the planet have to do with saving the soul? Let us begin to sketch an answer by quoting an Orthodox Christian literary giant, Fyodor Dostoevsky, echoing the profound mysticism of Isaac the Syrian in the seventh century through Staretz Zossima in *The Brothers Karamazov*:

Love all God’s creation, the whole of it and every grain of sand. Love every leaf, every ray of God’s light! If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things. Everything is like an ocean, I tell you, flowing and coming into contact with everything else: touch it

in one place and it reverberates at the other end of the world.

This passage illustrates why, with respect to the priority and urgency of environmental issues, we do not perceive any sharp line of distinction between the pulpit and this lectern. One of our greatest goals has always been to weave together the seemingly disparate threads of issues related to human life with those related to the natural environment and climate change. For as we read the mystical teachings of the Eastern Church, these form a single fabric, a seamless garment that connects every aspect and detail of this created world to the Creator God that we worship.

For how can we possibly separate the *intellectual* goals of this institution—namely, the advancement of democracy, the promotion of social welfare, and the security of international cooperation—from the *inspirational* purpose of the church to pray, as we do in every Orthodox service, “for the peace of the whole world,” “for favorable weather, an abundance of the fruit of the earth,” and “for the safety of all those who suffer”?

Over the past two decades of our ministry, we have come to appreciate that one of the most valuable lessons to be gained from the ecological crisis is neither the political implications nor the personal consequences. Rather, this crisis reminds us of the connections that we seem to have forgotten between previously unrelated areas of life.

It is a kind of miracle, really, and you don’t have to be a believer to acknowledge that. For, the environment unites us in ways that transcend religious and philosophical differences as well as political and cultural differences. Paradoxically, the more we harm the environment, the more the environment proves that we are all connected.

The global connections that we must inevitably recognize between previously unrelated areas of life include the need to discern connections between the *faith communities*. We must also perceive the connections between all *diverse disciplines*; climate change can only be overcome when scientists and activists cooperate for a common cause. And, finally, we can no longer ignore the connections in our hearts between the *political and the personal*; the survival of our planet depends largely on how we translate traditional faith into personal values and, by extension, into political action.

That is why the Orthodox Church has been a prime mover in a series of inter-disciplinary and interfaith ecological symposia held on the Adriatic, Aegean, Baltic, and Black Seas, along the Amazon and Danube Rivers, as well as on the Arctic Ocean. The last of these symposia concluded only a few days ago in New Orleans, seeking ways to restore the balance of the great Mississippi River.

The mention of New Orleans brings to mind another truth. Not only are we all connected in a seamless web of existence on this third planet from the Sun, but there are profound analogies between the way we treat the earth’s natural resources and the attitude we have toward the disadvantaged. Sadly, our willingness to exploit the one reflects our willingness to exploit the other. There cannot be distinct ways of looking at the environment, the poor, and God.

This is one of the reasons why we selected New Orleans as the site of our latest symposium; and this is why our visit there was in fact the second since the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. There, images of poverty abound, too close for comfort. We witnessed them in August of 2005 on the Gulf of Mexico; they are still evident over four years later—not only sealed forever in our memory, but soiling the Ward 9 to this day! How could the most powerful nation on earth appear so powerless in the face of such catastrophe? Certainly not because of lack of resources. Perhaps because of what St. Seraphim of Sarov once called “lack of firm resolve.”

The truth is that we tend—somewhat conveniently—to forget situations of poverty and suffering. And yet, we must learn to open up our worldview; we must no longer remain trapped within our limited, restricted point of view; we must be susceptible to a fuller, global vision. Tragically, we appear to be caught up in selfish lifestyles that repeatedly ignore the constraints of nature, which are neither deniable nor negotiable. We must relearn the sense of connectedness. For we will ultimately be judged by the tenderness with which we respond to human beings and to nature.

Surely one area of common ground, where all people of good will—of all political persuasion and every social background—can agree is the need to respond to those who suffer. Even if we cannot—or refuse to—agree on the root causes and human impact on environmental degradation; even if we cannot—or refuse to—agree about what would define success in sustainable development, no one would doubt that the consequences of climate change on the poor and disadvantaged is unacceptable. Such denial would be inhumane at the very least and politically disadvantageous at worst.

Of course, poverty is not merely a local phenomenon; it is also a global reality. It applies to the situation that has existed for so long in such countries as China, India, and Brazil. To put it simply, someone in the “third-world” is the most impacted person on the planet; yet, that person’s responsibility is incomparably minute: what that person does for mere survival neither parallels nor rivals our actions in the “first-world.”

Many argue that the wealthy nations of the West became so by exploiting the environment—they polluted rivers and oceans, razed forests, destroyed habitats, and poisoned the atmosphere. But now that the poorer nations are developing and improving the quality of life for their citizens—like the West did during the 19th and 20th centuries—all of a sudden the rules are being changed and developing nations are being asked to make sacrifices the nations of the West never made as they were developing. They are being asked to reduce their impact on the environment—in other words, to curb their development. They are being asked to drive fewer cars, consume less oil, build fewer factories, raze fewer forests, and harm fewer habitats—all in the name of protecting the environment.

Brothers and sisters, this simply cannot be. Not only is it unfair to ask the developing nations to sacrifice when the West does not—it is futile. They care not what we say—they watch what we do. And if we are unwilling to make sacrifices, we have no moral authority to ask others, who have not tasted the fruits of development and wealth, to make sacrifices. . . .

Sacrifices will have to be made by all. Unfortunately, people normally perceive sacrifice as loss or surrender. Yet, the root meaning of the word has less to do with “going without” and more to do with “making sacred.” Just as pollution has profound spiritual connotations, related to the destruction of creation when disconnected from its Creator, so too sacrifice is the necessary corrective for reducing the world to a commodity to be exploited by our selfish appetites. When we sacrifice, we render the world sacred, recognizing it as a gift from above to be shared with all humanity—if not equally, then at least justly. Sacrifice is ultimately an expression of gratitude (for what we enjoy) and humility (for what we must share).

For our part, in addition to our international ecological symposia, the Orthodox Church has decided to establish a center for environment and peace. Hitherto, the Ecumenical Patriarchate has endeavored to raise regional and global *awareness* on the urgency of preserving the natural environment and promoting inter-religious dialogue and understanding. Henceforth, the emphasis will be *educational*—on the regional and international levels. . . .

The Center will focus on climate change and the related changes needed in human behavior and ethics. It will serve as a source of inspiration and awareness for resolving religious issues related to the environment and peace, in cooperation with universities, and policy centers on both local and international levels.

Dear friends, as we humbly learned very early on, and as we have repeatedly stressed throughout our ministry over the last twenty years, the environment is not only a

political issue; it is also—indeed, it is primarily—a spiritual issue. Moreover, it directly affects all of us in the most personal and the most tangible manner. We can no longer afford to be passive observers in this crucial debate.

In 2002, at the conclusion of the Adriatic Symposium, together with His Holiness, the late Pope John Paul II, we signed a declaration in Venice that proclaimed, in optimism and prayer, our conclusion that:

It is not too late. God's world has incredible healing powers. Within a single generation, we could steer the earth toward our children's future. Let that generation start now.

Because now is the *kairos*—the decisive moment in human history, when we can truly make a difference.

Because now is the *kairos*—when the consciousness of the world is rising to the challenge.

Because now is the *kairos*—for us to save the soul of our planet.

Because now is the *kairos*—there is no other day than this day, this time, this moment.

Indeed, let it start now.

CHAPTER FIVE

Mission and Evangelism: Toward Common Witness throughout the Earth

Introduction

Historians agree that “the ecumenical movement owes its existence largely to the missionary movement” (L. Newbigin). By the late 19th century, numerous church leaders had become aware that Christians were competing for souls in the mission fields, thereby undermining their witness to the message of reconciliation in Christ, and exporting their divisions. The Edinburgh missionary conference of 1910, the climax of a series of mission gatherings intended to produce cooperation among those who sought “to evangelize the world in this generation” (J.R. Mott), is remembered, therefore, as the symbolic beginning of modern ecumenism. A witness to reconciliation required a reconciled chorus of voices.

The speeches, essays, and conference reports found in this chapter give some indication of the ecumenical debate over the meaning and practice of mission that has unfolded since Edinburgh. Several themes stand out:

- *the need for mutuality between Christians of the West and those of the “newer churches” (see the speech by Azariah and the WCC text from 1982);*
- *the need for the whole church, not just mission societies, to be the primary instrument of mission (see the reports from Tambaram and Willingen);*
- *the expansion of what is meant by “mission” to include service, solidarity, dialogue, and work for justice—as well as evangelism (see nearly any text after 1950);*
- *the essential connection between the mission and unity of the church, symbolized by the integration of the International Missionary Council (IMC) and the WCC in 1961 (see the speech by Newbigin);*
- *the emphatic rejection of proselytism (i.e., witness that is coercive or intended to draw members away from another church), a rejection which opened doors for deeper ecumenical involvement on the part of Orthodox and Roman Catholics (see the 1970 study document of the Joint Working Group between the Vatican and the WCC);*

- *the importance of affirming the cultural identity of those who are the objects of mission (see the report from Bangkok and every more recent statement);*
- *the intimate relationship between worship and mission (see the essay by Bria);*
- *the idea that “reconciliation” is at the heart of the gospel Christians proclaim (see the speech by Schreiter);*
- *the conviction that the church’s mission is founded in the nature of the triune God, who sent the Son for the world’s redemption and who sends the Spirit to gather the followers of Christ into one body that it might bear witness to God’s reconciling grace (see, e.g., the address by Anastasios).*

Most of the texts in this chapter relate to the IMC and its successor within the WCC, the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME). Though its roots are in the Edinburgh conference, the IMC began officially in 1921. Its early international conferences managed to hold together what today might be called “liberal” and “conservative” approaches to mission. This synthesis began to fray in the 1950s, however, as a result of plans to integrate with the WCC (many conservative Christians were not interested in organizational unity, especially with Christians they regarded as nominal) and the expansion of mission to include priorities other than conversion-oriented evangelism.

One result of this theological split has been a series of evangelical “congresses,” international gatherings aimed at promoting evangelization of the “unreached.” The first of these—called by North American evangelist, Billy Graham—was held in Berlin in 1966. It was followed in 1974 by a meeting in Lausanne, Switzerland, which produced the well-known “covenant” included in this chapter. Subsequent gatherings, organized by the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, met in Manila (1989) and Cape Town (2010). An excerpt from the Cape Town report is also included below.

When the reports from these conferences are set alongside the reports from meetings of CWME (Bangkok 1973, Melbourne 1980, San Antonio 1989, Salvador 1996, Athens 2005, Edinburgh 2010), three significant differences are quickly apparent:

1) CWME documents typically stress that the “spiritual and material gospels” are inseparable. Christians relate to their neighbors not just in terms of their religious convictions but their whole human condition, remembering that the missionary calling comes from the One who identified with the poor and was killed “outside the gates” by those in power (see the speech by Koyama). Evangelism, thus, can never be separated from social justice. The church’s response to the poor and oppressed is its deepest witness to the gospel and the clearest measure of its missionary faithfulness. From the perspective of the Lausanne Covenant, this approach confuses categories since “reconciliation with men is not reconciliation with God nor is social action evangelism nor is political liberation salvation.” This collapse of the spiritual and material means that insufficient attention is given to the invitational dimension of evangelism.

2) Lausanne emphasizes the responsibility of all churches to be sending churches, just as early Christians understood themselves to be sent from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. CWME texts look at the fact that churches are already present in nearly every culture, as well as at the history of western imperialism, and emphasize the need for indigenous churches to take responsibility for mission in their setting. The strategy is one of ecumenical partnership more than overseas evangelism.

3) *The two groups differ on how Christians should relate to people of other faiths. Lausanne contends that the deepest love Christians can show to people of other faiths is to invite them to accept salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. CWME documents also emphasize the importance of witnessing to the love they have known in Christ, but affirm, as well, that interfaith neighbors can be vital partners in dialogue and service. This tension is explored in depth in chapter VI of this anthology.*

It is important to add that these differences are also found within and between churches that belong to the WCC. The most notable attempt to bridge these differences, both within the WCC and the wider Christian family, is the text, "Mission and Evangelism—An Ecumenical Affirmation," which is included in this chapter. It continues to be regarded as a most important and influential mission text—although other ecumenical statements have been developed, including "Together towards Life" (printed below).

76. Message from the Conference to the Church, World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh, 1910

The 1910 World Mission Conference in Edinburgh, referred to often in these pages, is frequently cited as the symbolic beginning of the modern ecumenical movement—a reminder of the intimate connection between the unity of the church and its mission.

• The History and Records of the Conference Together with Addresses Delivered at the Evening Meetings: World Missionary Conference, 1910 (Vol. IX), *Edinburgh and London, Oliphant, Anderson, and Ferrier, 1910, pp. 108-10.*

To the Members of the Church in Christian Lands

Dear Brethren of the Christian Church: We members of the World Missionary Conference assembled in Edinburgh desire to send you a message which lies very near to our hearts. During the past ten days we have been engaged in a close and continuous study of the position of Christianity in non-Christian lands. In this study we have surveyed the field of missionary operation and the forces that are available for its occupation. For two years we have been gathering expert testimony about every department of Christian Missions, and this testimony has brought home to our entire Conference certain conclusions which we desire to set forth.

Our survey has impressed upon us the momentous character of the present hour. We have heard from many quarters of the awakening of great nations, of the opening of long-closed doors, and of movements which are placing all at once before the Church a new world to be won for Christ. The next ten years will in all probability constitute a turning-point in human history, and may be of more critical importance in determining the spiritual evolution of mankind than many centuries of ordinary experience. If those years are wasted, havoc may be wrought that centuries are not able to repair. On the other hand, if they are rightly used, they may be among the most glorious in Christian history.

We have therefore devoted much time to a close scrutiny of the ways in which we may best utilise the existing forces of missionary enterprise by unifying and consolidating existing agencies, by improving their administration and the training of their agents. We have done everything within our power in the interest of economy and efficiency;

and in this endeavour we have reached a greater unity of common action than has been attained in the Christian Church for centuries.

But it has become increasingly clear to us that we need something far greater than can be reached by any economy or reorganisation of the existing forces. We need supremely a deeper sense of responsibility to Almighty God for the great trust which He has committed to us in the evangelisation of the world. That trust is not committed in any peculiar way to our missionaries, or to societies, or to us as members of this Conference. It is committed to all and each within the Christian family; and it is as incumbent on every member of the Church, as are the elementary virtues of the Christian life—faith, hope, and love. That which makes a man a Christian makes him also a sharer in this trust. This principle is admitted by us all, but we need to be aroused to carry it out in quite a new degree. Just as a great national danger demands a new standard of patriotism and service from every citizen, so the present condition of the world and the missionary task demands from every Christian, and from every congregation, a change in the existing scale of missionary zeal and service, and the elevation of our spiritual ideal.

The old scale and the old ideal were framed in view of a state of the world which has ceased to exist. They are no longer adequate for the new world which is arising out of the ruins of the old.

It is not only of the individual or the congregation that this new spirit is demanded. There is an imperative spiritual demand that national life and influence as a whole be Christianised: so that the entire impact, commercial and political, now of the West upon the East, and now of the stronger races upon the weaker, may confirm, and not impair, the message of the missionary enterprise.

The providence of God has led us all into a new world of opportunity, of danger, and of duty.

God is demanding of us all a new order of life, of a more arduous and self-sacrificing nature than the old. But if, as we believe, the way of duty is the way of revelation, there is certainly implied, in this imperative call of duty, a latent assurance that God is greater, more loving, nearer and more available for our help and comfort than any man has dreamed. Assuredly, then, we are called to make new discoveries of the grace and power of God, for ourselves, for the Church, and for the world; and, in the strength of that firmer and bolder faith in Him, to face the new age and the new task with a new consecration.

To the Members of the Church in Non-Christian Lands

Dear Brethren in Christ: We desire to send you greeting in the Lord from the World Missionary Conference gathered in Edinburgh. For ten days we have been associated in prayer, deliberation, and the study of missionary problems, with the supreme purpose of making the work of Christ in non-Christian lands more effective, and throughout the discussions our hearts have gone forth to you in fellowship and love.

Many causes of thanksgiving have arisen as we have consulted together, with the whole of the Mission Field clear in view. But nothing has caused more joy than the witness borne from all quarters as to the steady growth in numbers, zeal, and power of the rising Christian Church in newly awakening lands. None have been more helpful in our deliberations than members from your own Churches. We thank God for the spirit of evangelistic energy which you are showing, and for the victories that are being won thereby. We thank God for the longing after unity which is so prominent among you and is one of our own deepest longings today. Our hearts are filled with gratitude for all the inspiration that your example has brought to us in our home-lands. This example is all the more inspiring because of the special difficulties that beset the glorious position which you hold in the hottest part of the furnace wherein the Christian Church is being tried.

Accept our profound and loving sympathy, and be assured of our confident hope that God will bring you out of your fiery trial as a finely tempered weapon which can accomplish His work in the conversion of your fellow-countrymen. It is you alone who can ultimately finish this work: the word that under God convinces your own people must be your word; and the life which will win them for Christ must be the life of holiness and moral power, as set forth by you who are men of their own race. But we rejoice to be fellow-helpers with you in the work, and to know that you are being more and more empowered by God's grace to take the burden of it upon your own shoulders. Take up that responsibility with increasing eagerness, dear brethren, and secure from God the power to carry through the task; then we may see great marvels wrought beneath our own eyes.

Meanwhile we rejoice also to be learning much ourselves from the great peoples whom our Lord is now drawing to Himself; and we look for a richer faith to result for all from the gathering of the nations in Him.

There is much else in our hearts that we should be glad to say, but we must confine ourselves to one further matter, and that the most vital of all:

A strong co-operation in prayer binds together in one all the Empire of Christ. Prayer, therefore, for us, the

Christian communities in home-lands, as we pray for you: remember our difficulties before God as we remember yours, that He may grant to each of us the help that we need, and to both of us together that fellowship in the Body of Christ which is according to His blessed Will.

77. V.S. Azariah, "The Problem of Co-operation between Foreign and Native Workers," World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh, 1910

Azariah, the first Indian to become a bishop in the Anglican communion, was one of only seventeen participants from "younger churches" at Edinburgh, where his provocative address had considerable impact. He went on to become a prominent ecumenical leader in the International Missionary Council and the formation of the Church of South India.

• The History and Records of the Conference together with Addresses Delivered at the Evening Meetings: World Missionary Conference, 1910, *Edinburgh and London, Oliphant, Anderson, and Ferrier, 1910, pp. 306-11, 313-15.*

The problem of race relationships is one of the most serious problems confronting the Church today. The bridging of the gulf between the East and West, and the attainment of a greater unity and common ground in Christ as the great Unifier of mankind, is one of the deepest needs of our time. Co-operation between the foreign and native workers can only result from proper relationship. Co-operation is ensured when the personal, official, and spiritual relationships are right, and is hindered when these relationships are wrong. The burden of my message is that, speaking broadly, at least in India, the relationship too often is not what it ought to be, and things must change, and change speedily, if there is to be a large measure of hearty co-operation between the foreign missionary and the Indian worker. . . .

1. Let us first consider the *personal* relationship that ought to exist for effective co-operation. For the ideal of this relationship we look to our Master and Lord. The relationship between Him and His immediate disciples and fellow workers was not only one of Teacher and pupils, Master and disciples, but, above all, that of Friend and

friends. He placed Himself alongside of those weak, frail, and stumbling disciples as their Friend and Brother, and lifted them up to a clearer vision, stronger faith, and nobler life. The disciples were admitted into the closest friendship with their Divine Teacher, they learned to love Him, confide in Him, follow Him, and walk even as He walked.

Can it be truly said that the foreign missionary has become a *friend* to his fellow-workers? Can it be said that this has been his aim? I am afraid in many cases the answer must be in the negative. If it has been the aim, as I trust it has been, at least it has not been sufficiently avowed, nor always made manifest in action. I thankfully remember that there are scores of missionaries all over the country who are justly proud of the fact that they can count some at least of their Indian Christian fellow-workers among their truest friends, and there are Indian Christians in all parts of India who are deeply thankful to count among their closest friends many foreign missionaries. But such are far too few.

Friendship is more than condescending love. I do not for a moment deny that the foreign missionaries love the country and the people of the country for whom they have made such noble sacrifices, but friendship is more than the love of a benefactor. I cannot do better than quote the words of one who is himself a foreign missionary in South India. He writes: "The popular appellation in use about missionaries in this country is "father"; but a time comes when children ought to begin—and if they develop normally, do begin—to think for themselves and to have aspirations and plans of their own. That is a critical time for the father in his relation to his children. His continued influence for good, at any rate for the greatest good, in his son's life now depends on his becoming the son's friend. This change from benefactor to friend implies that a new element of reciprocity is introduced. If I rightly regard a person as my friend, I respect his individuality and remember that he has peculiarities, rights, and responsibilities of his own, which require, in some measure at any rate, that a feeling of equality and freedom shall pervade our relations and our intercourse with one another. This is the point where we find ourselves in India to-day."

But while "East is East and West is West," is such a friendship possible between two races, that in habits, customs, and modes of thought are so diametrically opposed to each other? I know in my own experience that such friendships *are* possible. I am thankful to say that some of my best friends are among the foreign missionaries. I can testify to the great enrichment that has come into my own life through these real friendships. This very enrichment impels me to plead with my missionary brethren that they will lay themselves out to form friendships with their Indian fellow-workers.

I quote another authority, this time from North India, the Lord Bishop of Lahore. He says: "With abundance of kind feeling for, and unsparing labour and self-denial on behalf of, Indian Christians, the missionaries, except a few of the very best, seem to me to fail very largely in getting rid of an air of patronage and condescension, and in establishing a genuinely brotherly and happy relation as between equals with their Indian flocks, though amongst these there are gentlemen in every truest and best sense of the word, with whom relations of perfect equality ought easily to be established." Do not these voices from North and South call attention to the same danger and the one remedy?

The pioneer missionaries were "fathers" to the converts. The converts in their turn were glad to be their "children." But the difficulty in older missions now is that we have a new generation of younger missionaries who would like to be looked upon as fathers, and we have a new generation of Christians who do not wish to be treated like children. If the Christian community of the second and third generations, through the success of missionary work, has risen to the position when they do not any longer care to be treated like children, should we not be the first to recognise this new spirit and hasten to strengthen the relationship, by becoming their friends? Is it not such a relationship, and such alone, that can, more than anything else, prevent the growth of the spirit of false independence, foolish impudence, and flagrant bitterness against missionaries that we often meet with in Indian Christian young men today?

The Bishop of Lahore goes on to make some practical suggestions. He says: "If we could get into the way of treating Indian Christians with perfect naturalness, exactly as we treat English friends, asking them more frequently to stay with us in our houses, and genuinely making friends of them, realising in how very many things we have to learn from them, and how large are the contributions which they can bring into the common stock—this, I believe, would do more than anything else to draw us more closely together again, and it would be to the non-Christian world an illustration of boundless potency and effect, of the unity into which our races can be brought within the body of Christ. . . ."

2. The effective co-operation will only be possible with a proper *official* relationship. The official relationship generally prevalent at present between the missionary and the Indian worker is that between a master and servant; in fact, the word often used in South India by the low grade Indian workers in addressing missionaries is *ejaman* or master. The missionary is the paymaster, the worker his servant. As long as this relationship exists, we must admit that no sense of self-respect and individuality can grow in the Indian Church. . . .

I plead, therefore, that an advance step may be taken by transferring from foreigners to Indians responsibilities and privileges that are now too exclusively in the hands of the foreign missionary. Native Church Councils should be formed, where Indians could be trained in the administration of their own Churches. Missionary Conferences should find a place for Indian leaders, so that the Indian and the European may consult and work together for the welfare of the common work. The favourite phrases, "our money," "our control," must go. Native Christian opinion ought to be constantly consulted in regard to any fresh step taken. In short, all along the line, the foreign missionary should exhibit unmistakably that he is not afraid to give up positions of leadership and authority into the hands of his Indian fellow-worker, and that his joy is fulfilled when he decreases and the Indian brother increases.

I am fully aware of the fact that all advance in responsibility should be transferred *gradually* and not by the sudden withdrawal of foreign funds and control. But gradually, but none the less steadily, it *should be done*. For, without growing responsibility, character will not be made. We shall learn to walk only by walking—perchance only by falling and learning from our mistakes, but never by being kept in leading strings until we arrive at maturity. . . .

3. True co-operation is possible only with a proper *spiritual* relationship. No personal relationship will be true and permanent that is not built on a spiritual basis. India is a land that has a "religious atmosphere." To the Hindu "the one and only ultimate is God: his great and only reality the unseen: his true and eternal environment the spiritual."

In such a land, therefore, the easiest point of contact with the heart is on the spiritual side. The Indian nature has aptitude to develop devotional meditation and prayer, resignation and obedience to the will of God, the Christian graces of patience, meekness, and humility, the life of denial of self, the cultivation of fellowship and communion and the practice of the presence of God. These elements of Christian mysticism find a natural soil in the Indian heart. Not by decrying this aspect of the Christian life, but only by cultivating it and developing it in himself can a foreigner win the heart of an Indian. It is then, and then only, the westerner can impart to him what naturally he has not: elements of Christian character, Christian activity, and Christian organisation. These characteristics which the westerner has developed often fail to appeal to the Indian, because too often they are advocated by men who have not reached the heart of the Indian through finding the point of contact.

Whatever others may think, I do not myself look forward to any time in the near future when we in India will not need the western missionary to be our spiritual

guides and helpers. Through your inheritance of centuries of Christian life you are able to impart to us many things that we lack. And in this sphere I think the westerner will be for years to come a necessity. It is in this co-operation of joint study at the feet of Christ that we shall realise the oneness of the Body of Christ. The exceeding riches of the glory of Christ can be fully realised not by the Englishman, the American, and the Continental alone, nor by the Japanese, the Chinese, and the Indians by themselves—but by all working together, worshipping together, and learning together the Perfect Image of our Lord and Christ. It is only "with all Saints" that we can "comprehend the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we might be filled with all the fulness of God." This will be possible only from spiritual friendships between the two races. We ought to be willing to learn from one another and to help one another.

Through all the ages to come the Indian Church will rise up in gratitude to attest the heroism and self-denying labours of the missionary body. You have given your goods to feed the poor. You have given your bodies to be burned. We also ask for *love*. Give us FRIENDS!

78. "The Call of the Church" and "The Relevance of the Church," Reports of Sections I and II, Meeting of the International Missionary Council, Tambaram, 1938.

Tambaram, near Chennai in south India, was the site of the second international gathering of the IMC. Representatives of "younger churches" now constituted slightly more than half of the official delegates. • The Authority of the Faith: Report of the International Missionary Council Meeting at Tambaram, Madras, Vol. 1, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1939, pp. 191-91, and The Growing Church: Report of the International Missionary Council Meeting at Tambaram, Madras, Vol. 2, pp. 292-93.

The Call to the Church (from the report of Section I)

In this time when brute force stalks the earth, the Church is summoned to bear courageous and unflinching witness to the nations that the base purposes of men, whether of

individuals or of groups, cannot prevail against the will of the Holy and Compassionate God. It is commissioned to warn mankind of the judgment which shall assuredly overtake a civilisation which will not turn and repent. It is under obligation to speak fearlessly against aggression, brutality, persecution and all wanton destruction of human life and torturing of human souls.

Recognising that Christ came to open to all the way to life abundant but that the way for millions is blocked by poverty, war, racial hatred, exploitation and cruel injustice, the Church is called to attack social evils at their roots. It must seek to open the eyes of its members to their implication in unchristian practices. Those who suffer from bitter wrong it is constrained to succour and console, while it strives courageously and persistently for the creation of a more just society.

Above all it is called to declare the Gospel of the compassion and pardon of God that men may see the Light which is in Christ and surrender themselves to His service. And all this it must do at any cost, in fidelity and gratitude to Him who at so great cost wrought its salvation.

But the further summons to the Church is to become in itself the actualisation among men of its own message. No one so fully knows the failings, the pettiness, the faithlessness which infect the Church's life as we who are its members. Yet, in all humility and penitence, we are constrained to declare to a baffled and needy world that the Christian Church, under God, is its greatest hope. The decade since last we met has witnessed the progressive rending of the fabric of humanity; it has witnessed an increasing unification of the body of Christ. As we meet here, from over sixty nations out of every continent, we have discovered afresh that that unity is not merely an aspiration but also a fact; our meeting is its concrete manifestation. We are one in faith; we are one in our task and commission as the body of Christ; we are resolved to become more fully one in our life and work. Our nations are at war with one another; but we know ourselves brethren in the community of Christ's Church. Our peoples increase in suspicion and fear of one another; but we are learning to trust each other more deeply through common devotion to the one Lord of us all. Our Governments build instruments of mutual destruction; we join in united action for the reconciliation of humanity. Thus in broken and imperfect fashion the Church is even now fulfilling its calling to be within itself a foretaste of the redeemed family of God which He has purposed humanity to be. The Church itself must stand ever under the ideal of the Kingdom of God which alone can guard it against becoming an end in itself and hold it true to God's purpose for it. By faith, but in deep assurance, we

declare that this body which God has fashioned through Christ cannot be destroyed.

Meanwhile, in countless obscure places in the world where through the centuries disease and darkness, poverty and fear have reigned, the Christian Church today is bringing effective healing, enlightenment, alleviation and a true and living faith.

To all who care for the peace and health of mankind we issue a call to lend their aid to the Church which stands undaunted amidst the shattered fragments of humanity and works tirelessly for the healing of the nations. And those who already share in its life, and especially its leaders, we summon to redouble their exertions in its great tasks, to press forward the evangel among all peoples, to strengthen the younger Churches, to speed practical co-operation and unity, to bear in concrete ways the burdens of fellow-Christians who suffer, and above all to take firm hold again of the faith which gives victory over sin, discouragement and death. Look to Christ, to His Cross, to His triumphant work among men, and take heart. Christ, lifted up, draws all men unto Himself. . . .

The Relevance of the Church (from the report of Section II)

We recognise that both in the East and in the West, especially among the younger generation, there are many who are not convinced of the relevance of the Church to the life of the Christian and the spread of the Gospel. We find in many countries those who desire to follow Jesus Christ as their Lord, but do not join in the fellowship of the organised Church, and even more frequently those who, though baptised, do not accept the privileges nor fulfil the duties of membership in the Church. We are aware that there may be circumstances which make it unwise or even impossible for one to join the Church immediately after conversion, but we would ask all Christians who are unaffiliated or only loosely affiliated to the Church, to consider the following affirmations:

1. In spite of all its past and present failure to live up to its divine mission, the Church is and remains the fellowship to which our Lord has given His promises, and through which He carries forward His purpose for mankind.

2. This fellowship is not merely invisible and ideal, but real and concrete, taking a definite form in history. It is therefore the duty of all disciples of Christ to take their place in a given Christian Church, that is, one of those concrete bodies in which and through which the Universal Church of Christ, the world-wide company of His followers, is seeking to find expression.

3. It is part of the obedience and sacrifice which Jesus Christ demands of us that we accept participation in the humiliation and suffering which membership in the Church may often mean in actual practice.

4. It is indeed precisely when we realise deeply that there is a gulf between the Church as it is and the Church as Jesus Christ desires it that we shall devote ourselves to the task of vitalising and reforming it from within.

It is the Church and the Church alone which can carry the responsibility of transmitting the Gospel from one generation to another, of preserving its purity and of proclaiming it to all creatures. It is the Church and the Church alone which can witness to the reality that man belongs to God in Christ with a higher right than that of any earthly institution which may claim his supreme allegiance. It is within the Church and the Church alone that the fellowship of God's people receive together the gifts which He offers to His children in Word and Sacrament.

We may and we should doubt whether the churches as they are do truly express the mind of Christ, but we may never doubt that Christ has a will for His Church, and that His promises to it hold good. If we desire to live according to that will and to become worthy of those promises we shall accept both the joy and the pain of membership in His Body.

79. "Statement on the Missionary Calling of the Church," Meeting of the International Missionary Council, Willingen, 1952

Willingen, coming at the end of the colonial period, represents a turning point in ecumenical reflection. Its attack on a church-centred view of mission (it is not that the church has a mission but that God's mission has a church) led eventually to significant differences between "evangelical" and "ecumenical" approaches. • Missions under the Cross, ed. Norman Goodall, London, Edinburgh House, 1953, pp. 188-92.

I. The Missionary Situation and the Rule of God

We meet here at Willingen as a fellowship of those who are committed to the carrying out of Christ's commission

to preach the Gospel to every creature. Like the great missionary gatherings which have gone before, we face a world largely ignorant of the Gospel. But, unlike them, we face a world in which other faiths of revolutionary power confront us in the full tide of victory, faiths which have won swift and sweeping triumphs, and which present to the Christian missionary movement a challenge more searching than any it has faced since the rise of Islam. Amid the world-shaking events of our time, when men's hearts are failing them for fear of the things coming on the earth, what does the Spirit say to the churches about their missionary task?

The answer given to us is this: "Lift up your heads, because your redemption draweth nigh." Our word in this dark hour is not one of retreat but one of advance. We have to confess with penitence our share of responsibility for the terrible events of our time. Yet we preach not ourselves but Christ crucified—to human seeming a message of defeat, but to those who know its secret, the very power of God. We who take our stand here can never be cast down by any disaster, for we know that God rules the revolutionary forces of history and works out His purpose by the hidden power of the Cross. The Cross does not answer the world's questions, because they are not the real questions. It confronts the world with the real questions, which are God's questions—casting down all that exalts itself in defiance of Him, bringing to nothing the idolatries by which men are deceived, and raising up those who are sunk in disillusionment and despair. Inside the Church and out, men are asking: What is happening to us in our time? We answer with this word of the Cross, and demand of all men everywhere that they should put their whole trust in Him who was cast out and crucified by men, but was raised by God to the right hand of His power. His rule is hidden but sure, and His word to us is this: "These good tidings of the Kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony to all the nations, and then shall the end come." The battle is set between His hidden Kingdom and those evil spiritual forces which lure men on towards false hopes, or bind them down to apathy, indifference and despair. There is no room for neutrality in this conflict. Every man must choose this day whom he will serve.

II. The Missionary Obligation of the Church

The missionary movement of which we are a part has its source in the Triune God Himself. Out of the depths of His love for us, the Father has sent forth His own beloved Son to reconcile all things to Himself, that we and all men might, through the Spirit, be made one in Him with the Father in that perfect love which is the very nature of God.

In the following affirmations we seek to set forth the nature of the duty and authority which are given to the Church to be His witness to all men everywhere:

- i) God has created all things and all men that in them the glory of His love might be reflected; nothing therefore is excluded from the reach of His redeeming love.
- ii) All men are involved in a common alienation from God, from which none can escape by his own efforts.
- iii) God has sent forth one Saviour, one Shepherd to seek and save all the lost, one Redeemer who by His death, resurrection and ascension has broken down the barrier between man and God, accomplished a full and perfect atonement, and created in Himself one new humanity, the Body of which Christ is the exalted and regnant Head.
- iv) On the foundation of this accomplished work God has sent forth His Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, to gather us together in one Body in Him, to guide us into all truth, to enable us to worship the Father in spirit and in truth, to empower us for the continuance of His mission as His witnesses and ambassadors, the first fruits and earnest of its completion.
- v) By the Spirit we are enabled both to press forward as ambassadors of Christ, beseeching all men to be reconciled to God, and also to wait with sure confidence for the final victory of His love, of which He has given us most sure promises. We who have been chosen in Christ, reconciled to God through Him, made members of His Body, sharers in His Spirit, and heirs through hope of His Kingdom, are by these very facts committed to full participation in His redeeming mission. There is no participation in Christ without participation in His mission to the world. That by which the Church receives its existence is that by which it is also given its world-mission. "As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you."

III. The Total Missionary Task

God sends forth the Church to carry out His work to the ends of the earth, to all nations, and to the end of time.

- i) The Church is sent to every inhabited area of the world. No place is too far or too near. Every group of Christians is sent as God's ambassadors to the

people in its immediate neighbourhood. But its responsibility is not limited to its neighbourhood. Because Christ is King of kings and Saviour of the world, each group of Christians is also responsible for the proclamation of His Kingship to the uttermost parts of the earth.

- ii) The Church is sent to every social, political and religious community of mankind, both to those near at hand and to those far off. It is sent to those who deny or rebel against the reign of Christ; and no weakness, persecution or opposition may be allowed to limit this mission. Such are the conditions which the Church must expect for its warfare. Faithfulness to Christ will require the Church to come to grips with the social, political, economic and cultural life of the people to whom it is sent.
- iii) The Church is sent to proclaim Christ's reign in every moment and every situation. This means that the mission of the Church forbids it to drift or to flee before the events of our time. At one and the same moment opportunities for advancing the mission of the Church lie alongside the catastrophic destruction of that mission. Because the Church is sent forth to do its work until the completion of time, and because Christ is the only One sent forth to judge and redeem the life of men, the Church is bidden in its mission to seek out the moments of opportunity and to interpret the catastrophes as the judgments of God which are the other side of His mercy.

The Church is thus compelled by the terms of its charter not merely to build up its life where it is and as it is, but also to go forth to the ends of the earth, to all nations, and to the completion of time. The mission of the Church will always transcend boundaries, but these can no longer be identified with national frontiers, and certainly not with any supposed line between the "Christian West" and the "non-Christian East." The mission involves both geographical extension and also intensive penetration of all spheres of life.

The call to missionary service may come to any believer in any church anywhere in the world. If and when that call comes, he is bound to leave land and kindred, and go out to do that missionary job. The Church is like an army living in tents. God calls His people to strike their tents and go forward. And Christ's promise holds that He will be with them even to the end of the world.

IV. Solidarity with the World

The Church's words and works, its whole life of mission, are to be a witness to what God has done, is doing, and will do in Christ. But this word "witness" cannot possibly mean that the Church stands over against the world, detached from it and regarding it from a position of superior righteousness or security. The Church is in the world, and as the Lord of the Church identified Himself wholly with mankind, so must the Church also do. The nearer the Church draws to its Lord the nearer it draws to the world. Christians do not live in an enclave separated from the world; they are God's people in the world.

Therefore the Church is required to identify itself with the world, not only in its perplexity and distress, its guilt and its sorrow, but also in its real acts of love and justice—acts by which it often puts the churches to shame. The churches must confess that they have often passed by on the other side while the unbeliever, moved by compassion, did what the churches ought to have done. Wherever a church denies its solidarity with the world, or divorces its deeds from its words, it destroys the possibility of communicating the Gospel and presents to the world an offence which is not the genuine offence of the Cross.

V. Discerning the Signs of the Times

Our Lord bade His disciples discern the signs of the times. To human sight this may be a time of darkness and confusion. But eyes opened by the Crucified will discern in it sure signs of God's sovereign rule. We bear witness to the mighty works of His Spirit among us in many parts of the Church since we met together at Whitby. We believe that the sovereign rule of Him who is Saviour and Judge of all men is no less to be discerned by eyes of faith in the great events of our day, in the vast enlargements of human knowledge and power which this age is witnessing, in the mighty political and social movements of our time, and in countless personal experiences of which the inner history cannot be revealed until the Last Day. Above all, we are encouraged by our Lord Himself to discern at such a time as this His summons to us to go forward.

When all things are shaken, when familiar landmarks are blotted out, when war and tumult engulf us, when all human pride and pretension are humbled, we proclaim anew the hidden reign of our crucified and ascended Lord. We summon all Christians to come forth from the securities which are no more secure and from boundaries of accepted duty too narrow for the Lord of all the earth, and to go forth with fresh assurance to the task of bringing all things into captivity to Him, and of preparing the whole earth for the day of His Coming.

80. Lesslie Newbigin, "The Missionary Dimension of the Ecumenical Movement," Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, New Delhi, 1961

Newbigin, a missionary to India from Great Britain who was instrumental in the formation of the united Church of South India, was one of the most respected ecumenical leaders of his era. He was secretary of the International Missionary Council (IMC) when it became integrated into the WCC in 1961.

• The Ecumenical Review, vol. 14, no. 2, 1962, pp. 208-15.

. . . The deepest reason for our coming together lies in the nature of the Gospel itself. As the Central Committee said 10 years ago at Rolle:

The obligation to take the Gospel to the whole world, and the obligation to draw all Christ's people together, both rest upon Christ's whole work and are indissolubly connected. Every attempt to separate these tasks violates the wholeness of Christ's ministry to the world.

And the Central Committee statement was right, therefore, in drawing attention to the danger of a false use of the word *ecumenical*, a use which omits the missionary dimension and therefore parts company wholly with the original meaning of the word. It is time to say again plainly that the words *ecumenical* and *interdenominational* are not synonymous. A meeting among churchmen is not, in itself, an *ecumenical* occasion. This is not a minor matter. The way we use words eventually shapes the way we act. This is a moment, surely, to remember what the word *ecumenical* really means.

II. The Contribution of the IMC to the Integrated World Council

I have sought to remind you of the deep inter-connection between our two councils from the very beginning of their histories, and of the source of this inter-connection in the nature of the Gospel itself. Mission and unity are two sides of the same reality, or rather two ways of describing the same action of the living Lord who wills that all should be drawn to Himself. But it would be a false simplification to suggest that, within the whole ecumenical movement,

the IMC stands for mission and the WCC for unity. A moment's reflection on the history of the two councils is enough to dispel the idea. From the Edinburgh Conference onwards the IMC has been profoundly concerned about unity. No stronger call for visible reunion has come from any meeting than those which were given by the IMC conferences at Tambaram in 1938 and at Willingen in 1952. Perhaps the most massive single piece of ecumenically organized inter-church aid at the present time is the Theological Education Fund of the IMC. And on the other hand the World Council of Churches has from the beginning concerned itself deeply with the missionary task—as witness the work of the 2nd Commission at Amsterdam.

Few things have done more to strengthen the understanding of the missionary task of the Church than the work of the WCC's Department on the Laity. Both Councils have been drawn by the logic of the Gospel itself to concern themselves both with the mission of the Church and with its unity. Their coming together is a wholly natural and proper response to the continuing pressure of that logic.

But human structures are never simply visible embodiments of theological principles. They have the particular and individual characteristics that arise from their history, from the obedience and disobedience of the many men and women whose lives have shaped them. The IMC is no exception. Rather than speaking only of mission and unity as theological principles, it will be wise at this moment to look at the concrete character of that which is brought from the side of the IMC into the integrated council. Let me suggest three characteristics which seem to me worthy of special attention at this moment in our common history.

1. The original base of the IMC was in the mission boards and societies of the western churches. Of its 17 original member councils, 13 were missionary councils. Today, of course, the majority of the 38 member councils represent the churches in what were formerly called the mission fields, and a great part of the history of the Council during the past 40 years has been concerned with the shift in the centre of gravity from mission boards to younger churches. Nevertheless it remains true and important that a very great part of the spiritual substance—if I may put it so—which the IMC will bring into the integrated council is constituted by the foreign missionary movement. This movement is a concrete historic phenomenon of the past 250 years. It has its own particular characteristics arising from its coincidence in time with the movement of colonial expansion from the West, and from other particular historical circumstances. We are familiar with the criticism which can be directed against it. I am not concerned here either with criticism or with defence. It is enough to say in this Assembly that the ecumenical movement owes its existence largely to the

missionary movement, and that millions of those whom we here represent owe their existence as Christians to it. My concern here is to draw attention to elements in it which are of permanent importance, and which—with whatever changes of form—must remain part of the essential spiritual substance of any living ecumenical movement.

Among these elements I would place the presence at the heart of missions of a continuing and costly concern for individual people and places, expressed in sustained intercessory prayer, sacrificial giving, and personal commitment. The many thousands of people, often poor and hard-pressed by their own troubles, who give regularly and pray constantly for people and causes known only through an occasional meeting or magazine article, these have given the missionary movement the spiritual force which it has had. . . . New contacts and broad horizons, the vision conjured up by a big international meeting of a world-wide fellowship and a world-wide task, these can be exhilarating and liberating experiences. But for the long haul, for the days and years of routine without which no great enterprise is brought to victory, there can be no substitute for that kind of personal commitment expressed in unremitting intercession, unwearied giving and life-long commitment by which missions have lived for these 200 years.

2. Secondly, the missionary movement whether in East or West has been above all concerned to reach out beyond the existing frontiers of the Christian fellowship, to go to the place where men live without the knowledge of the Gospel, and there to be so identified with those men that they may hear and see, in their own idiom and in the forms of their own life, the grace and power of the Lord Jesus Christ. This impulse to go is at the heart of missions, and must remain so. It is true that both the starting point of the journey and its end are different now from what they were in the 19th century. The starting point now is everywhere that the Church is, and the end is every place where men are without the knowledge of Christ. Christendom is no longer a geographical area. The very fact that we now bring the affairs of missions right into the heart of the day-to-day work of a World Council of Churches will expose more vividly the impropriety of some ways of thinking and speaking about the missionary journey which still illegitimately survive into the 20th century. The decision that the IMC's studies in the life and growth of the younger churches should now be extended to enable representatives of the younger churches to make parallel studies in the life of the older churches is an example of the kind of changes that we must hope for. I hope also that these studies will be followed by real missionary journeys; that the churchmen of Asia and Africa, having studied the spiritual situation of some of the older churches, their conflicts, their victories,

and their defeats, will be moved to send missionaries to Europe and America to make the Gospel credible to the pagan masses of those continents who remain unmoved by the witness of the churches in their midst. My point is that this impulse to *go*, to reach out beyond the accustomed boundaries for the sake of witness to Him who is Lord of all, has been central to the missionary movement and must remain so in the new circumstances which integration will create. Among the many things which change, this must not change. If we will think for a moment of the multitudes who are out of effective earshot of the Gospel, we shall realize how absurd is the suggestion that the call to go is less urgent than it was when Carey wrote his "Enquiry" or when St. Paul wrote "How shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall men preach unless they be sent?"

I emphasize this point because there are those who deprecate this emphasis upon the command to go, who point to the very large place taken in the Bible by the centripetal as opposed to the centrifugal understanding of the mission of God's people, to the fact that this mission is a gathering and not just a sending. In certain contexts this reminder is needed, missions are not the whole content of the Church's mission. God's mission is more than the activities called missions. But the activities called missions are an indispensable part (a part, not the whole) of the obedience which the churches must render to God's calling. To quote Walter Freytag, missions have to remind every church "that it cannot be the Church in limiting itself within its own area, that it is called to take part in the responsibility of God's outgoing into the whole world, that it has the Gospel because it is meant for the nations of the earth." This remains true in the new situation in which we shall be after integration.

The Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, which—God willing—will be established immediately after this Assembly, will exist "to further the proclamation of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to all men to the end that they may turn to Him and be saved." It will be the task of the Commission within the life of the World Council to press upon every church in every part of the world the obligation to take its share in that task, as an indispensable element without which its own confession of the Gospel would lack something of full integrity.

3. The IMC has been from the beginning of its existence deeply concerned with the issues—spiritual and administrative—which have arisen in the development from mission to church, and in the relation between older and younger churches. These issues have been deep and often perplexing. There have been—on the positive side—the abiding love, knowledge and concern which the sending boards and societies have had, and continue to have,

for the churches which are the fruit of their work, and the reciprocal affection and trust which—thank God—bind these younger churches to those from whom their first knowledge of the Gospel came. There have also been—on the negative side—the strains and stresses that that intimate relation has often entailed. The World Council has made possible a series of relationships between churches in which these strains were absent and everything could begin with all the freshness, the surprise, and the delight of first love. It is of God's goodness that this has been so and we can all rejoice in it. The coming together of the IMC and the World Council of Churches, means that these two kinds of relationship are to be held increasingly within one continuing fellowship. There will be much to learn on both sides. It will be necessary to remember, and sometimes to say sharply, both that paternalism is a sin which (like all sin) tends to blind the sinner to its existence, and also that paternity is a fact with enduring implications.

It is, I think, not out of place to mention these things in this moment, for it is only if we recognize them and face them in a spirit of mutual forgiveness and forbearance that the integration of our two councils will be fruitful, and that, speaking the truth in love, we shall grow up to him who is the Head of the whole body, and in obedience to him who is the one Father of us all.

My purpose in speaking of these three matters has been to remind you that we have to think at this moment not only of the mission of the Church in general, but of those particular activities which are called missions, and of the issues with which those involved in these activities have sought to wrestle together in the International Missionary Council. The form of these activities must change with the changing human situation. I am convinced that the step which we are proposing to take at this Assembly will in due course lead to fruitful changes in the pattern of missionary action. Many responsibilities which were carried in the past by the International Missionary Council because it was the only world Christian body able to carry them can now be fruitfully shared with or transferred to other divisions of the World Council of Churches. Relations between churches which were formerly linked only through the activity of a mission board can now be diversified through the opening of the many other channels of communication now available. Through all of these changes I hope that the effect will be to make the specific missionary task stand out more clearly. But this will only come about if there is—along with the administrative integration which is now proposed—a deep-going spiritual integration of the concerns which have been central in our two councils. For those who have been traditionally related to the IMC, this means a willingness to acknowledge that the particular forms and relationships

characteristic of the missionary activity of the past two centuries must—like all things human—be held constantly open to the new insights that God may have to give us in the wider fellowship into which we now enter. For the churches which constitute the World Council this means the acknowledgment that the missionary task is no less central to the life of the Church than the pursuit of renewal and unity. No movement is entitled to the use of the word ecumenical which is not concerned that witness be borne to the Gospel throughout the whole earth, and which is not committed to taking its share in bearing that witness.

III. The Missionary Dimension

But God forbid that we should talk thus in negatives! Our mission is not a duty but a doxology. “O give thanks to the Lord for he is good. . . . Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he has redeemed and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south” (Ps. 107). How can those whom he has redeemed be silent? They exist only as the first-fruit of his loving purpose for all mankind; how can they pretend otherwise? How can we, who rejoice in this gathering together by the one Lord, think that his plans end with us? How can we think that we are more than mere witnesses of what he is doing? Where is there any light in this dark world—or in our dark minds—except in him? Where is there any hope of salvation for mankind but in him? What sort of sense does this world make, if there be not at the heart of it the dying and rising of the Son of God? What are we in this World Council of Churches but a mere global sectarianism unless we are missionary through and through?

Sixty-six years ago a group of graduates of Madras Christian College sent a letter to the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland to thank them for what the College had done. The Assembly’s reply thanked them for the letter and spoke of the mutual sharing of gifts between East and West which such experience made possible. The Assembly then went on: “But in that spirit we desire affectionately and above all things to commend to you, as our missionaries have often done, the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . We have no better claim to him than you have. We possess nothing so precious—we value nothing so much—we have no source of good so full, fruitful, and enduring—we have nothing to compare with the Lord Jesus Christ. To him we must bear witness. And we should gladly consent that you should cease to listen to us if you would be led to give your ear and your heart to him.”

There is the missionary dimension of any movement, any labour, any programme that bears the name of Christ! Over every phase of it there will be written urgently and insistently “Don’t look at us; look at him.”

81. “Common Witness and Proselytism: A Study Document,” Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, 1970

The distinction between true witness and proselytism is a crucial one for ecumenical relations. The WCC’s New Delhi assembly (1961) received and commended an important statement on this subject, one that paved the way for greater Orthodox involvement. The document printed here came as the Roman Catholic Church was increasing its participation in the movement. • The Ecumenical Review, vol. 23, no. 1, 1971, pp. 15-19.

Proselytism and Relations between Churches

Christian witness, to those who have not yet received or responded to the announcement of the Gospel or to those who are already Christians, should have certain qualities, in order to avoid being corrupted in its exercise and thus becoming proselytising. Furthermore, the ecumenical movement itself had made Christians more sensitive to the conditions proper to witness borne among themselves. This means that witness should be completely

- conformed to the spirit of the Gospel, especially by respecting the other’s right to religious freedom, and
- concerned to do nothing which could compromise the progress of ecumenical dialogue and action.

1. Required Qualities for Christian Witness

In order that witness be conformed to the spirit of the Gospel:

- a) The deep and true source of witness should be the commandment: “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind... You must love your neighbour as yourself” (Mt. 22:37, 39, cf. Lev. 19:18; Deut. 6:5).
- b) Witness should be inspired by the true end of the Church: the glory of God through the salvation of men. Witness does not seek the prestige of one’s own community and of those who belong to, represent or lead it.

- c) Witness should be nourished by the conviction that it is the Holy Spirit who, by his grace and light, brings about the response of faith to witness.
- d) Witness respects the free will and dignity of those to whom it is given, whether they wish to accept or to refuse the faith.
- e) Witness respects the right of every man and community to be free from any coercion which impedes them from witness to their own convictions, including religious convictions.

Witness should avoid behaviour such as:

- a) Every type of physical coercion, moral constraint or psychological pressure which would tend to deprive man of his personal judgement, of his freedom of choice, of full autonomy in the exercise of his responsibility. A certain abuse of mass communications can have this effect.
- b) Every open or disguised offer of temporal or material benefits in return for change in religious adherence.
- c) Every exploitation of the need or weakness or of lack of education of those to whom witness is offered, in view of inducing their adherence to a Church.
- d) Everything raising suspicion about the “good faith” of others—“bad faith” can never be presumed; it should always be proved.
- e) The use of a motive which has no relation to the faith itself but is presented as an appeal to change religious adherence: for example, the appeal to political motives to win over those who are eager to secure for themselves the protection or favours of civil authority, or those who are opposed to the established regime. Churches which form a large majority in a state should not use legal methods, social, economic or political pressure, in the attempt to prevent members of minority communities from the exercise of their right to religious freedom.
- f) Every unjust or uncharitable reference to the beliefs or practices of other religious communities in the hope of winning adherents. This includes malevolent criticism which offends the sensibilities of members of other communities. In general, one should compare the good qualities and ideals or the weaknesses and practices of one community with those of the others, not one’s ideals with the other’s practice.

2. Christian Witness and Relations between the Churches

The Lord has willed that his disciples be one in order that the world believe. Thus it is not enough for Christians to conform to the above. They should also be concerned in fostering whatever can restore or strengthen between them the bonds of true brotherhood. Proposed suggestions:

- a) In each Church one is conscious that conversion of heart and the renewal of his own community are essential contributions to the ecumenical movement.
- b) Missionary action should be carried out in an ecumenical spirit which takes into consideration the priority of the announcement of the Gospel to non-Christians. The missionary effort of one Church in an area or milieu where another Church is already at work depends on an honest answer to the question: what is the quality of the Christian message proclaimed by the Church already at work, and in what spirit is it being proclaimed and lived? Here frank discussion between the Churches concerned would be highly desirable, in order to have a clear understanding of each other’s missionary and ecumenical convictions, and with the hope that it would help to determine the possibilities of cooperation, of common witness, of fraternal assistance, or of complete withdrawal. In the same manner and spirit the relations between minority and majority Churches should be considered.
- c) Particularly all competitive spirit should be avoided by which a Christian community might seek a position of power and privilege, and concern itself less with proclaiming the Gospel to those who have not yet received it than with profiting by chances to recruit new members among the other Christian communities.
- d) To avoid causes of tension between Churches because of the free exercise of the right of every man to choose his ecclesial allegiance and, if necessary, to change it in obedience to conscience, it is vital:
 - i) that this free choice should be exercised in full knowledge of what is involved and, if possible, after counsel with the pastors of the two Churches concerned. Particular care is necessary in the case of children and young people; in such cases, the greatest weight and respect should be given to the views and rights of the parents and tutors;

- ii) that the Church which admits a new member should be conscious of the ecumenical repercussions, and not draw vain glory from it;
 - iii) that the Church which has lost a member should not become bitter or hostile, nor ostracise the person concerned; that it examines its conscience as to how it has done its duty of bringing the Gospel to that person. Has it made an effort to understand how his Christian convictions ought to affect his life, or rather was it content that he should remain a nominal and official member of that community?
 - iv) that any change of allegiance motivated mainly by the desire to secure some material advantage should be refused.
- e) Some points of tension between the Churches are difficult to overcome because what is done by one Church, in view of its theological and ecclesiological convictions, is considered by the other as implicit proselytism. In this case, it is necessary that the two sides try to clarify what is really in question and to arrive at mutual understanding of different practices, and if possible, to agree to a common policy. This can be realized only if the carrying out of these theological and ecclesiological convictions clearly exclude every type of witness which would be tainted by proselytism, as described above. Some examples of such tensions:
- i) The fact that a Church which reserves baptism to adults (“believer’s baptism”) persuades the faithful of another Church, who have already been baptized as infants, to receive baptism again is often regarded as proselytising. A discussion on the nature of baptism and its relation to faith and to the Church could lead to new attitudes.
 - ii) The discipline of certain Churches concerning the marriage of their members with Christians of other communities is often considered as proselytic. In fact, these rules depend on theological positions. Conversations on the nature of marriage and the Church membership of the family could bring about progress and resolve in a joint way the pastoral question raised by such marriages.
 - iii) The Orthodox consider that the existence of the Eastern Catholic Churches is the fruit of proselytism. Catholics level the same criticism against the way in which certain of these

Churches have been reunited to the Orthodox Church. Whatever has been the past, the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church are determined to reject not only proselytism but also the intention even to draw the faithful of one Church to another. An example of this pledge is the common declaration of Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I, on October 28, 1967. The resolution of these questions, evidently important for the ecumenical movement, should be sought in frank discussion between the Churches concerned.

82. “Culture and Identity” and “Salvation and Social Justice,” Reports of Sections I and II, Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, Bangkok, 1973

Bangkok was the second conference of the WCC’s Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (created by the integration of the International Missionary Council and the WCC in 1961). Among its central insights, as indicated in this selection, is the unbreakable connection between individual and social dimensions of salvation. • Bangkok Assembly 1973: Minutes and Report of the Assembly of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, Geneva, WCC, 1973, pp. 75-78, 88-90.

REPORT OF SECTION I

On Conversion and Cultural Change

1. It is very difficult to describe the existential experience of conversion—whether personal or corporate, as an event or as process—in terms which do justice to rational thinking as well as other levels of consciousness. In order to express this experience one has to seek other ways of communication than just report-language. Conversion as a phenomenon is not restricted to the Christian community; it finds its place in other religions as well as in certain political and ideological communities; its forms may vary. The content of the experience differs according to the person or to the

ideological system within which the person or the group is converted.

Conversion is a comprehensive concept: it changes the person's or the group's thinking, perspectives on reality and action. It relates a person to people who have similar experiences or who are committed to the same person or ideology.

The Christian conversion relates to God and especially to his son Jesus Christ. It introduces people into the Christian community, the structure of which may differ greatly from one culture to another, and which will always include a great variety of persons.

Christian conversion gathers people into the worshiping community, the teaching community and the community of service to all men. Even if Christians are not called out of their culture and separated from the society in which they were born, they still will form cells of worship, or reflection and of service within their original cultures.

Personal conversion always leads to social action, but here again the forms will greatly differ. We heard action reports which gave us some idea how diverse the consequences may be. In the one case, people who had never known an identity of their own formed a very closely knit group, within which intensive social care for each other developed. When such a group grows it almost inevitably enters into the full civic life at the local level; if it grows further it will acquire political power which may align it to either conservative or progressive political platforms. Where conversion takes place among the destitute and powerless, the sustaining community will tend to begin to empower the poor and oppressed.

But it is also possible that conversion means a calling out of people, away from what is regarded as an oppressive power structure or even away from a type of social action which is regarded as dehumanising or superficial.

It is important that the community of those converted to Christ is so sustained by the study of Scripture and the work of service that renewal of the conversion experience is possible.

Our group was unanimous in thinking that conversion is always related to the place and the circumstances where it occurs; therefore we recommend that detailed study be made of the form and consequences of conversion in different situations.

The relation between conversion and social change may be clear, but the relation between social change and conversion is much less easily described. It may be that secular conversion experiences remind the Christian community of elements in their own life which need to be renewed; it may also be that conversion phenomena within a new cultural situation will force Christians back on their

unique identity and make them oppose the cultural development; their conversion in such instances is away from the prevailing cultural situation. To generalise about these various possibilities would hardly be helpful.

2. Everywhere people are seeking for new experiences of community, whatever the name: cultural revolution, sub-culture or counter-culture. The relation of the Christian community to such a search cannot be described without serious consideration of each of these scenes. We have learned in our group that the line between culture, sub-culture and even counter-culture is not as sharp as these groups themselves often proclaim. People move from one to the other without observing strict sociological or theological rules.

It is difficult to describe "the community in Christ and in the Holy Spirit" in this context. We played with the concept of the Christian community itself as a counter-culture; but we abandoned this idea because it cut us off too definitely from the communities of men of which we are also a part. Only in extreme cases may we be called to shake the dust of the city from our shoes; usually we shall have to live in a somewhat dialectical relationship, participating with a certain hesitation, identifying ourselves while keeping our critical distance. This dialectic should not hinder us however from being fully engaged with others in the search for justice and freedom. Our identity is in Christ and with him we identify ourselves; by Him also we may be withdrawn. The criteria for so tender a relationship are taught us only when we let the Scriptures continuously surprise us and keep our communion with the Lord and his people.

3. The manifestations of God are always surprising. Basically there is no realm of life and no situation where he cannot reveal himself. We believe that he is present in his whole creation. But we do not want to make this belief an operative principle for pointing out exactly where he is at work, lest we say: here is the Messiah, or there is the Messiah, when he is not there.

Although we expect his presence with men and although we know that the Spirit translates the groaning of all mankind into prayers acceptable to God, we believe that this insight is more a reason to worship his freedom than an invitation to build our theological theories. Our preoccupation is with the revealed Christ and with the proclamation of him as he has been made known to us. Scripture tells us that Christ identifies himself with the poor and that the Spirit translates the groaning of men; this may indicate the direction in which we are invited to move but it does not give us power to pinpoint the details of his presence. The observation that Christ-like action and insights which we know from the Gospels are also present among other groups does not give us the right to claim such groups for

Christ; it should lead us deeper into the process of our own conversion and bring us to worship Our Lord even more humbly. He asked us to follow him, not to spy on him.

4. Traditional and charismatic groups can live together and witness together if that means that they find each other continuously under the critique and inspiration of the revealed Christ as made known to us in his Word. In this conference we have once again experienced the way in which common Bible study unites us, by surprising us again and again and by leading us together into a deeper understanding of God's will for all men.

REPORT OF SECTION II

1. The Mission of God

In the power of the Spirit Christ is sent from God, the Father, into this divided world "to preach the Gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of God's favour" (Luke 4:18). Through Christ men and women are liberated and empowered with all their energies and possibilities to participate in his Messianic work. Through his death on the Cross and his resurrection from the dead, hope of salvation becomes realistic and reality hopeful. He liberates from the prison of guilt. He takes the inevitability out of history. In him the Kingdom of God and of free people is at hand. Faith in Christ releases in man creative freedom for the salvation of the world. He who separates himself from the mission of God separates himself from salvation.

The salvation which Christ brought, and in which we participate, offers a comprehensive wholeness in this divided life. We understand salvation as newness of life—the unfolding of true humanity in the fulness of God (Col. 2:9). It is salvation of the soul and the body, of the individual and society, mankind and "the groaning creation" (Rom. 8:19). As evil works both in personal life and in exploitative social structures which humiliate humankind, so God's justice manifests itself both in the justification of the sinner and in social and political justice.

As guilt is both individual and corporate so God's liberating power changes both persons and structures. We have to overcome the dichotomies in our thinking between soul and body, person and society, human kind and creation. Therefore we see the struggles for economic justice, political freedom and cultural renewal as elements in the total liberation of the world through the mission of God. This liberation is finally fulfilled when "death is swallowed

up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:55). This comprehensive notion of salvation demands of the whole of the people of God a matching comprehensive approach to their participation in salvation.

2. Salvation and Liberation of Churches and Christians

Many Christians who for Christ's sake are involved in economic and political struggles against injustice and oppression ask themselves and the churches what it means today to be a Christian and a true church. Without the salvation of the churches from their captivity in the interests of dominating classes, races and nations, there can be no saving church. Without liberation of the churches and Christians from their complicity with structural injustice and violence, there can be no liberating church for mankind. Every church, all Christians face the question whether they serve Christ and his saving work alone, or at the same time also the powers of inhumanity. "No man can serve two masters, God and Mammon" (Matt. 6:24). We must confess our misuse of the name of Christ by the accommodation of the churches to oppressive powers, by our self-interested apathy, lovelessness, and fear. We are seeking the true community of Christ which works and suffers for his Kingdom. We seek the charismatic church which activates energies for salvation (1 Cor. 12). We seek the church which initiates actions for liberation and supports the work of other liberating groups without calculating self-interest. We seek a church which is the catalyst of God's saving work in the world, a church which is not merely the refuge of the saved but a community serving the world in the love of Christ.

3. Salvation in Four Dimensions

Within the comprehensive notion of salvation, we see the saving work in four social dimensions:

- a) Salvation works in the struggle for economic justice against the exploitation of people by people.
- b) Salvation works in the struggle for human dignity against political oppression of human beings by their fellow men.
- c) Salvation works in the struggle for solidarity against the alienation of person from person.
- d) Salvation works in the struggle of hope against despair in personal life.

In the process of salvation, we must relate these four dimensions to each other. There is no economic justice

without political freedom, no political freedom without economic justice. There is no social justice without solidarity, no solidarity without social justice. There is no justice, no human dignity, no solidarity without hope, no hope without justice, dignity and solidarity. But there are historical priorities according to which salvation is anticipated in one dimension first, be it the personal, the political or the economic dimension. These points of entry differ from situation to situation in which we work and suffer. We should know that such anticipations are not the whole of salvation, and must keep in mind the other dimensions while we work. Forgetting this denies the wholeness of salvation. Nobody can do in any particular situation everything at the same time. There are various gifts and tasks, but there is one spirit and one goal. In this sense, it can be said, for example, that salvation is the peace of the people in Vietnam, independence in Angola, justice and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and release from the captivity of power in the North Atlantic community, or personal conversion in the release of a submerged society into hope, or of new life styles amidst corporate self-interest and lovelessness.

4. Means and Criteria of Saving Work

Speaking of salvation realistically, we cannot avoid the question of proper means. The means are different in the four dimensions referred to. We will produce no economic justice without participation in, and use of, economic power. We will win no political freedom without participation in, and discriminating use of, political power. We cannot overcome cultural alienation without the use of cultural influence. In this framework we discussed the physical use of liberating violence against oppressive violence. The Christian tradition is ambiguous on this question because it provides no justification of violence and no rejection of political power. Jesus' commandment to love one's enemy presupposes enmity. One should not become the enemy of one's enemy, but should liberate him from his enmity (Matt. 5:43-48). This commandment warns against the brutality of violence and reckless disregard of life. But in the cases of institutionalized violence, structural injustice and legalized immorality, love also involves the right of resistance and the duty "to repress tyranny" (Scottish Confession) with responsible choice among the possibilities we have. One then may become guilty for love's sake, but can trust in the forgiveness of guilt. Realistic work for salvation proceeds through confrontation, but depends, everywhere and always, on reconciliation with God.

83. "Lausanne Covenant," International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne, 1974

This meeting, sponsored by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, brought together nearly 2500 "evangelicals" (sixty percent of them from churches belonging to the WCC). The Lausanne Covenant, signed by a majority of the participants, represents a significant response to the WCC's Bangkok conference. • Let the Earth Hear His Voice: Official Reference Volume, International Congress on World Evangelism, Lausanne, ed. J.D. Douglas, Minneapolis, World Wide Publications, 1975, pp. 3-9.

Introduction

We, members of the Church of Jesus Christ, from more than 150 nations, participants in the International Congress on World Evangelization at Lausanne, praise God for his great salvation and rejoice in the fellowship he has given us with himself and with each other. We are deeply stirred by what God is doing in our day, moved to penitence by our failures and challenged by the unfinished task of evangelization. We believe the Gospel is God's good news for the whole world, and we are determined by his grace to obey Christ's commission to proclaim it to all mankind and to make disciples of every nation. We desire, therefore, to affirm our faith and our resolve, and to make public our covenant.

1. The Purpose of God

We affirm our belief in the one eternal God, Creator and Lord of the world, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who governs all things according to the purpose of his will. He has been calling out from the world a people for himself, and sending his people back into the world to be his servants and his witnesses, for the extension of his kingdom, the building up of Christ's body, and the glory of his name. We confess with shame that we have often denied our calling and failed in our mission, by becoming conformed to the world or by withdrawing from it. Yet we rejoice that even when borne by earthen vessels the Gospel is still a precious treasure. To the task of making that treasure known in the power of the Holy Spirit we desire to dedicate ourselves anew. (Isa. 40:28; Matt. 28:19; Eph. 1:11; Acts 15:14; John 17:6,18; Eph. 4:12; I Cor. 5:10; Rom. 12:2; II Cor. 4:7)

2. The Authority and Power of the Bible

We affirm the divine inspiration, truthfulness and authority of both Old and New Testament Scriptures in their entirety as the only written Word of God, without error in all that it affirms, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice. We also affirm the power of God's Word to accomplish his purpose of salvation. The message of the Bible is addressed to all mankind. For God's revelation in Christ and in Scripture is unchangeable. Through it the Holy Spirit still speaks today. He illumines the minds of God's people in every culture to perceive its truth freshly through their own eyes and thus discloses to the whole church ever more of the many-colored wisdom of God. (II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 1:21; John 10:35; Isa. 55:11; I Cor. 1:21; Rom. 1:16; Matt. 5:17,18; Jude 3; Eph. 1:17,18; 3:10,18)

3. The Uniqueness and Universality of Christ

We affirm that there is only one Savior and only one Gospel, although there is a wide diversity of evangelistic approaches. We recognize that all men have some knowledge of God through his general revelation in nature. But we deny that this can save, for men suppress the truth by their unrighteousness. We also reject as derogatory to Christ and the Gospel every kind of syncretism and dialogue which implies that Christ speaks equally through all religions and ideologies. Jesus Christ, being himself the only God-man, who gave himself as the only ransom for sinners, is the only mediator between God and man. There is no other name by which we must be saved. All men are perishing because of sin, but God loves all men, not wishing that any should perish but that all should repent. Yet those who reject Christ repudiate the joy of salvation and condemn themselves to eternal separation from God. To proclaim Jesus as "the Savior of the world" is not to affirm that all men are either automatically or ultimately saved, still less to affirm that all religions offer salvation in Christ. Rather it is to proclaim God's love for a world of sinners and to invite all men to respond to him as Savior and Lord in the wholehearted personal commitment of repentance and faith. Jesus Christ has been exalted above every other name; we long for the day when every knee shall bow to him and every tongue shall confess him Lord. (Gal. 1:6-9; Rom. 1:18-32; I Tim. 2:5,6; Acts 4:12; John 3:16-19; II Pet. 3:19; II Thess. 1:7-9; John 4:42; Matt. 11:28; Eph. 1:20,21; Phil. 2:9-11)

4. The Nature of Evangelism

To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures. and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gift of the Spirit to all who repent and believe. Our Christian presence in the world is indispensable to evangelism, and so is that kind of dialogue whose purpose is to listen sensitively in order to understand. But evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Savior and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God. In issuing the Gospel invitation we have no liberty to conceal the cost of discipleship. Jesus still calls all who would follow him to deny themselves, take up their cross, and identify themselves with his new community. The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his church and responsible service in the world. (I Cor. 15:3,4; Acts 2:32-39; John 20:21; I Cor. 1:23; II Cor. 4:5; 5:11,20; Luke 14:25-33; Mark 8:34; Acts 2:40,47; Mark 10:43-45)

5. Christian Social Responsibility

We affirm that God is both the Creator and the Judge of all men. We therefore should share his concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men from every kind of oppression. Because mankind is made in the image of God, every person, regardless of race, religion, color, culture, class, sex or age, has an intrinsic dignity because of which he should be respected and served, not exploited. Here too we express penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive. Although reconciliation with man is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbor and our obedience to Jesus Christ. The message of salvation implies also a message of judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist. When people receive Christ they are born again into his kingdom and must seek not only to exhibit but also to spread its righteousness in the midst of an unrighteous world. The salvation we claim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities. Faith without works is dead. (Acts 17:26, 31; Gen. 18:25; Isa. 1:17; Psa. 45:7; Gen. 1:26,27; Jas. 3:9; Lev. 19:18; Luke 6:27, 35; Jas. 2:14-26; John 3:3, 5; Matt 5:20; 6:33; II Cor. 3:18; Jas. 2:20)

6. The Church and Evangelism

We affirm that Christ sends his redeemed people into the world as the Father sent him, and that this calls for a similar deep and costly penetration of the world. We need to break out of our ecclesiastical ghettos and permeate non-Christian society. In the church's mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary. World evangelization requires the whole church to take the whole Gospel to the whole world. The church is at the very center of God's cosmic purpose and is his appointed means of spreading the Gospel. But a church which preaches the Cross must itself be marked by the Cross. It becomes a stumbling block to evangelism when it betrays the Gospel or lacks a living faith in God, a genuine love for people, or scrupulous honesty in all things including promotion and finance. The church is the community of God's people rather than an institution, and must not be identified with any particular culture, social or political system, or human ideology. (John 17:18; 20:21; Matt. 28:19,20; Acts 1:8; 20:27; Eph. 1:9,10; 3:9-11; Gal. 6:14,17; II Cor. 6:3,4; II Tim. 2:19-21; Phil. 1:27)

7. Cooperation in Evangelism

We affirm that the church's visible unity in truth is God's purpose. Evangelism also summons us to unity, because our oneness strengthens our witness, just as our disunity undermines our gospel of reconciliation. We recognize, however, that organizational unity may take many forms and does not necessarily forward evangelism. Yet we who share the same biblical faith should be closely united in fellowship, work and witness. We confess that our testimony has sometimes been marred by sinful individualism and needless duplication. We pledge ourselves to seek a deeper unity in truth, worship, holiness and mission. We urge the development of regional and functional cooperation for the furtherance of the church's mission, for strategic planning, for mutual encouragement, and for the sharing of resources and experience. (John 17:21,23; Eph. 4:3,4; John 13:35; Phil. 1:27; John 17:11-23)

8. Churches in Evangelistic Partnership

We rejoice that a new missionary era has dawned. The dominant role of western missions is fast disappearing. God is raising up from the younger churches a great new resource for world evangelization, and is thus demonstrating that the responsibility to evangelize belongs to the whole body of Christ. All churches should therefore be asking God and themselves what they should be doing both to reach their own area and to send missionaries to

other parts of the world. A re-evaluation of our missionary responsibility and role should be continuous. Thus a growing partnership of churches will develop and the universal character of Christ's Church will be more clearly exhibited. We also thank God for agencies which labor in Bible translation, theological education, the mass media, Christian literature, evangelism, missions, church renewal, and other specialist fields. They too should engage in constant self-examination to evaluate their effectiveness as part of the Church's mission. (Rom. 1:8; Phil. 1:5; 4:15; Acts 13:1-3; I Thess. 1:6-8)

9. The Urgency of the Evangelistic Task

More than 2,700 million people, which is more than two-thirds of mankind, have yet to be evangelized. We are ashamed that so many have been neglected; it is a standing rebuke to us and to the whole church. There is now, however, in many parts of the world an unprecedented receptivity to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are convinced that this is the time for churches and para-church agencies to pray earnestly for the salvation of the unreached and to launch new efforts to achieve world evangelization. A reduction of foreign missionaries and money in an evangelized country may sometimes be necessary to facilitate the national church's growth in self-reliance and to release resources for unevangelized areas. Missionaries should flow ever more freely from and to all six continents in a spirit of humble service. The goal should be, by all available means and at the earliest possible time, that every person will have the opportunity to hear, understand, and receive the good news. We cannot hope to attain this goal without sacrifice. All of us are shocked by the poverty of millions and disturbed by the injustices which cause it. Those of us who live in affluent circumstances accept our duty to develop a simple life-style in order to contribute more generously to both relief and evangelism. (John 9:4; Matt. 9:35-38; Rom. 9:1-3; I Cor. 9:19-23; Mark 16:15; Isa. 58:6,7; Jas. 1:27; 2:1-9; Matt. 25:31-46; Acts 2:44,45; 4:34, 35)

10. Evangelism and Culture

The development of strategies for world evangelization calls for imaginative pioneering methods. Under God, the result will be the rise of churches deeply rooted in Christ and closely related to their culture. Culture must always be tested and judged by Scripture. Because man is God's creature, some of his culture is rich in beauty and goodness. Because he has fallen, all of it is tainted with sin and some of it is demonic. The Gospel does not presuppose the superiority of any culture to another, but evaluates all cultures

according to its own criteria of truth and righteousness, and insists on moral absolutes in every culture. Missions have all too frequently exported with the Gospel an alien culture, and churches have sometimes been in bondage to culture rather than to the Scripture. Christ's evangelists must humbly seek to empty themselves of all but their personal authenticity in order to become the servants of others, and churches must seek to transform and enrich culture, all for the glory of God. (Mark 7:8,9,13; Gen. 4:21,22; I Cor. 9:19-23; Phil. 2:5-7; II Cor. 4:5)

11. Education and Leadership

We confess that we have sometimes pursued church growth at the expense of church depth, and divorced evangelism from Christian nurture. We also acknowledge that some of our missions have been too slow to equip and encourage national leaders to assume their rightful responsibilities. Yet we are committed to indigenous principles, and long that every church will have national leaders who manifest a Christian style of leadership in terms not of domination but of service. We recognize that there is a great need to improve theological education, especially for church leaders. In every nation and culture there should be an effective training program for pastors and laymen in doctrine, discipleship, evangelism, nurture and service. Such training programs should not rely on any stereotyped methodology but should be developed by creative local initiatives according to biblical standards. (Col. 1:27, 28; Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5,9; Mark 10:42-45; Eph. 4:11,12)

12. Spiritual Conflict

We believe that we are engaged in constant spiritual warfare with the principalities and powers of evil, who are seeking to overthrow the church and frustrate its task of world evangelization. We know our need to equip ourselves with God's armor and to fight this battle with the spiritual weapons of truth and prayer. For we detect the activity of our enemy, not only in false ideologies outside the church, but also inside it in false gospels which twist Scripture and put man in the place of God. We need both watchfulness and discernment to safeguard the biblical Gospel. We acknowledge that we ourselves are not immune to worldliness of thought and action, that is, to a surrender to secularism. For example, although careful studies of church growth, both numerical and spiritual, are right and valuable, we have sometimes neglected them. At other times, desirous to insure a response to the Gospel, we have compromised our message, manipulated our hearers through pressure techniques, and become unduly preoccupied with statistics or

even dishonest in our use of them. All this is worldly. The church must be in the world; the world must not be in the church. (Eph. 6:12; II Cor. 4:3,4; Eph. 6:11,13-18; II Cor. 10:3-5; I John 2:18-26; 4:1-3; Gal. 1:6-9; II Cor. 2:17; 4:2; John 17:15)

13. Freedom and Persecution

It is the God-appointed duty of every government to secure conditions of peace, justice, and liberty in which the church may obey God, serve the Lord Christ, and preach the Gospel without interference. We, therefore, pray for the leaders of the nations and call upon them to guarantee freedom of thought and conscience, and freedom to practice and propagate religion in accordance with the will of God and as set forth in The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We also express our deep concern for all who have been unjustly imprisoned, and especially for our brethren who are suffering for their testimony to the Lord Jesus. We promise to pray and work for their freedom. At the same time we refuse to be intimidated by their fate. God helping us, we too will seek to stand against injustice and to remain faithful to the Gospel, whatever the cost. We do not forget the warnings of Jesus that persecution is inevitable. (I Tim. 1:1-4; Acts 4:19; 5:29; Col. 3:24; Heb. 13:1-3; Luke 4:18; Gal. 5:11; 6:12; Matt. 5:10-12; John 15:18-21)

14. The Power of the Holy Spirit

We believe in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Father sent his Spirit to bear witness to his Son; without his witness ours is futile. Conviction of sin, faith in Christ, new birth, and Christian growth are all his work. Further, the Holy Spirit is a missionary spirit; thus evangelism should arise spontaneously from a Spirit-filled church. A church that is not a missionary church is contradicting itself and quenching the Spirit. Worldwide evangelization will become a realistic possibility only when the Spirit renews the church in truth and wisdom, faith, holiness, love, and power. We, therefore, call upon all Christians to pray for such a visitation of the sovereign Spirit of God that all his fruit may appear in all his people and that all his gifts may enrich the body of Christ. Only then will the whole church become a fit instrument in his hands, that the whole earth may hear his voice. (I Cor. 2:4; John 15:26,27; 16:8-11; I Cor. 12:3; John 3:6-8; II Cor. 3:18; John 7:37-39; I Thess. 5:19; Acts 1:8; Pss. 85:4-7; 67:1-3; Gal. 5:22,23; I Cor. 12:4-31; Rom. 12:3-8)

15. The Return of Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly, in power and glory, to consummate his salvation and his judgment. This promise of his coming is a further spur to our evangelism, for we remember his words that the Gospel must first be preached to all nations. We believe that the interim period between Christ's ascension and return is to be filled with the mission of the people of God, who have no liberty to stop before the end. We also remember his warning that false Christs and false prophets will arise as precursors of the final Antichrist. We, therefore, reject as a proud, self-confident dream the notion that man can ever build a utopia on earth. Our Christian confidence is that God will perfect his kingdom, and we look forward with eager anticipation to that day, and to the new heaven and earth in which righteousness will dwell and God will reign forever. Meanwhile, we rededicate ourselves to the service of Christ and of men in joyful submission to his authority over the whole of our lives. (Mark 14:62; Heb. 9:28; Mark 13:10; Acts 1:8-11; Matt. 28:20; Mark 13:21-23; John 2:18; 4:1-3; Luke 12:32; Rev. 21:1-5; II Pet. 3:13; Matt. 28:18)

Conclusion

Therefore, in the light of this our faith and our resolve, we enter into a solemn covenant with God and with each other, to pray, to plan, and to work together for the evangelization of the whole world. We call upon others to join us. May God help us by his grace and for his glory to be faithful to this our covenant! Amen, Alleluia!

84. Ion Bria, "The Liturgy after the Liturgy," 1978

The description of mission as "the liturgy after the Liturgy," developed by Romanian Orthodox theologian and former WCC staff member Ion Bria is frequently quoted in ecumenical discussions. • Orthodox Visions of Ecumenism, ed. Gennadios Limouris, Geneva, WCC, 1994, pp. 217-20.

What Is the Meaning of "the Liturgy after the Liturgy"?

In recent years, there has been a strong emphasis in Orthodox Ecclesiology on the eucharistic understanding of the Church.¹ Truly, the Eucharist Liturgy is the climax of the Church's life, the event in which the people of God are celebrating the incarnation, the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, sharing His glorified body and blood, tasting the Kingdom to come. The ecclesial *koinonia* is indeed constituted by the participation of the baptized in the eucharistic communion, the sacramental actualization of the economy of salvation, a living reality which belongs both to history and to eschatology. While this emphasis is deeply rooted in the biblical and patristic tradition and is of extreme importance today, it might easily lead to the conclusion that Orthodox limit the interpretation of the Church to an exclusive worshipping community, to protecting and to preserving the Good News for its members. Therefore a need was felt to affirm that the Liturgy is not a self-centred service and action, but is a service for the building of the one Body of Christ within the economy of salvation which is for all people of all ages. The liturgical assembly is the Father's House, where the invitation to the banquet of the heavenly bread is constantly voiced and addressed not only to the members of the Church, but also to the non-Christians and strangers.²

This liturgical concentration, "the liturgy within the Liturgy," is essential for the Church, but it has to be understood in all its dimensions. There is a double movement in the Liturgy: on the one hand, the assembling of the people of God to perform the memorial of the death and resurrection of our Lord "until He comes again." It also manifests and realizes the process by which "the cosmos is becoming ecclesia." Therefore the preparation for Liturgy takes place not only at the personal spiritual level, but also at the level of human historical and natural realities. In preparing for Liturgy, the Christian starts a spiritual journey which affects everything in his life: family, properties, authority, position, and social relations. It re-orientates the direction of his entire human existence towards its sanctification by the Holy Spirit.

On the other hand, renewed by the Holy Communion and the Holy Spirit, the members of the Church are sent to be authentic testimony to Jesus Christ in the world. The mission of the Church rests upon the radiating and transforming power of the Liturgy. It is a stimulus in

1. Stanley Harakas, "The Local Church: an Eastern Orthodox Perspective," *The Ecumenical Review*, vol. 29, no. 2, April 1977, pp. 141-153.

2. Ion Bria, "Concerns and Challenges in Orthodox Ecclesiology Today," *Lutheran World*, no. 3, 1976, pp. 188-191.

sending out the people of God to the world to confess the Gospel and to be involved in man's liberation.

Liturgically, this continual double movement of thanksgiving is expressed in the ministry of the deacon. On the one hand he brings and offers to the altar the gifts of the people; on the other, he shares and distributes the Holy Sacraments which nourish the life of Christians. Everything is linked with the central action of the Church, which is the Eucharist, and everybody has a diaconal function in reconciling the separated realities.

The Etchmiadzine consultation states that "the Church seeks to order the whole life of man by the sanctification of the time, by the liturgical cycles, the celebration of the year's festival, the observance of fasts, the practices of asceticism, and regular visitation." It was therefore recommended that "an effort must be made to bring into everyday life the liturgical rhythm of consecration of the time (matins, hours, vespers, Saints' days, feast days)." The problem remains, however, for the Church today not only to keep its members in the traditional liturgical cycles, but to find ways to introduce new people into this rhythm.

How does the Church, through its liturgical life, invite the world into the Lord's House and seek the Kingdom to come? The actualization of this will be the great success of the Church's mission, not only because there is an urgent need for the Church to widen its vision of those outside its influence (Mt. 8:10), but also because the worshipping assembly cannot be a protected place any longer, a refuge for passivity and alienation.

In what sense does the worship constitute a permanent missionary impulse and determine the evangelistic witness of every Christian? How does the liturgical order pass into the order of human existence, personal and social, and shape the life style of Christians? In fact the witness of faith, which includes evangelism, mission and church life, has always taken place in the context of prayer, worship and communion. The missionary structures of the congregation were built upon the liturgy of the Word and Sacraments. There was a great variety of liturgies, confessions and creeds in the first centuries of Christianity, as there is today.

"The liturgy after the Liturgy," which is an essential part of the witnessing life of the Church, requires:

1. An ongoing re-affirming of the true Christian identity, fulness and integrity which have to be constantly renewed by the eucharistic communion. A condition for discipleship and church membership is the existential personal commitment made to Jesus Christ the Lord (Col. 2:6). A lot of members of the Church are becoming "nominal Christians who attend the Church just as a routine." As the Bucharest consultation report³ states: There are many

who have been baptized, and yet have put off Christ, either deliberately or through indifference. Often such people still find it possible sociologically or culturally or ethnically to relate in some manner to the Christian community. The re-Christianization of Christians is an important task of the Church's evangelistic witness.

2. To enlarge the space for witness by creating a new Christian milieu, each in his own environment (family, society, office, factory, etc.), is not a simple matter of converting the non-Christians in the vicinity of the parishes, but also a concern for finding room where the Christians live and work and where they can publicly exercise their witness and worship. The personal contact of the faithful with the non-believers in the public arena is particularly relevant today. Seeking for a new witnessing space means, of course, to adopt new styles of mission, new ecclesiastical structures, and especially to be able to face the irritations of the principalities and powers of this age.

There the missionary zeal of the saints and the courage of the confessors who run risks every hour and face death every day (1 Cor. 15:31) has a vital role. Since they are those who take the kingdom of heaven by force (Mt. 11:12), the Church should identify and support the members who confess and defend the hope in Christ against persecutors (Mt. 5:10-12; John 15:20).

3. The liturgical life has to nourish the Christian life not only in its private sphere, but also in its public and political realm. One cannot separate the true Christian identity from the personal sanctification and love and service to man (1 Pet. 1:14-15). There is an increasing concern today about the ethical implications of the faith, in terms of life style, social, ethic and human behaviour. What is the *ethos* of the Church which claims to be the sign of the kingdom? What is the "spirituality" which is proposed and determined in spreading the Gospel and celebrating the Liturgy today? How is the liturgical vision which is related to the Kingdom, as power of the age to come, as the beginning of the future life which is infused in the present life (John 3:5; 6:33), becoming a social reality? What does sanctification or *theosis* mean in terms of ecology and human rights?

Christian community can only proclaim the Gospel—and be heard—if it is a living icon of Christ. The equality of the brothers and freedom in the Spirit, experienced in the Liturgy, should be expressed and continued in economic sharing and liberation in the field of social oppression.⁴ Therefore, the installation in history of a visible Christian fellowship which overcomes human barriers against justice, freedom and unity is a part of that liturgy after the Liturgy.

3. "The Bucharest Report," *International Review of Mission*, vol. 54, no. 253, 1975, pp. 67-94.

4 George Munuvel, "La mission, incarnation et proclamation liturgique," *Journal des missions evangeliques*, nos. 1-2-3, 1977, pp. 30-38.

The Church has to struggle for the fulfilment of that justice and freedom which was promised by God to all men and has constantly to give account of how the Kingdom of heaven is or is not within it. It has to ask itself if by the conservatism of its worship it may appear to support the violation of human rights inside and outside the Christian community.

4. Liturgy means public and collective action and therefore there is a sense in which the Christian is a creator of community; this particular charisma has crucial importance today with the increasing lack of human fellowship in the society. The Christian has to be a continual builder of a true *koinonia* of love and peace even if he is politically marginal and lives in a hostile surrounding. At the ideological and political level that *koinonia* may appear almost impossible.

However, there is an “open gate,” namely the readiness of the human heart to hear the voice of the beloved (John 3:29) and to receive the power of God’s Word (Mt. 8:8). Therefore more importance has to be given to the presentation of the Good News as a calling addressed to a person, as an invitation to the wedding house and feast (Luke 14:13). God himself is inviting people to his house and banquet. We should not forget the personal aspect of the invitation. In fact the Christian should exercise his personal witnessing as he practices his family life.

It is very interesting to mention in this respect that St John Chrysostom, who shaped the order of the eucharistic Liturgy ordinarily celebrated by Orthodox, strongly underlined “the sacrament of the brother,” namely the spiritual sacrifice, the philanthropy and service which Christians have to offer outside the worship, in public places, on the altar of their neighbour’s heart. For him there is a basic coincidence between faith, worship, life and service; therefore the offering on “the second altar” is complementary to the worship at the Holy Table.

There are many evidences that Orthodoxy is recapturing today that inner unity between the Liturgy, mission, witness and social diakonia, which gave it this popular character and historical vitality. The New Valamo Consultation (1977) confirmed once more the importance of the missionary concern for “liturgy after the Liturgy” within the total ecumenical witness of Orthodoxy. The consultation declared: “In each culture the eucharistic dynamics lead into a ‘liturgy after the Liturgy’, i.e. a liturgical use of the material world, a transformation of human association in society into *koinonia*, of consumerism into an ascetic attitude towards creation and the restoration of human dignity.”⁵

Thus, through “liturgy after the Liturgy,” the Church, witnessing to the cosmic dimension of the salvation event, puts into practice, daily and existentially, its missionary vocation.

85. Kosuke Koyama, “The Crucified Christ Challenges Human Power,” Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, Melbourne, 1980

This address—by the Japanese theologian and missionary, Kosuke Koyama—lifts up themes and images now associated with the Melbourne conference (sponsored by the WCC’s Commission on World Mission and Evangelism). • Your Kingdom Come: Report on the World Conference on Mission and Evangelism, Melbourne 1980, Geneva, WCC, 1980, pp. 159-64.

Who Says It to Whom?

The sincerity and reliability of the crucified Lord exposes human deception. If someone, quoting from the Bible, says “Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God” (Luke 6:20), let us ask, who is this person who is saying this, and to whom? Is a wealthy man saying this to a famished man? The rich to the poor? Literate person to the illiterate? Well-fed to the starved? If someone quoting from the Bible, says “Man does not live by bread alone, but by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord,” let us ask again who is saying it and to whom? I am not saying that no rich man can say, “Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.” Indeed, he may say this *to himself*. Then it will become an extremely embarrassing and painful thought. It will become a call to surrender wealth to God and to work towards a more just society. The passage, “Man does not live by bread alone, but by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord” does not idealize poverty. It plainly tells us that humanity needs both bread and the word of God. It does not say that the word of God is more important than bread, or vice versa. We cannot live by bread alone. We cannot live by the word of God alone. We need both. This must be the charter of the Christian commitment towards a more just society. Often, however,

5. Report of the New Valamo Consultation, WCC, Geneva, 1978, p. 20.

the well-fed tend to preach to the hungry people that all they need is the word of God.

The hungry do not recognize sincerity in these words of the well-fed people. It is therefore difficult for the missionaries sent by the rich and mighty nations to preach the word of God in the poor and starved nations. Not impossible, but difficult. Poverty and hunger are not something the God of the Bible is happy about. They must be eliminated. Poverty-stricken people cannot and do not idealize poverty. The rich can afford to idealize it.

If a rich man says to the poor "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God," he is gossiping. Gossip is irresponsible talk. It does not heal. It causes a dangerous inflation in human spirituality, which makes us believe that this gossip is the word of God. Idealization of poverty by the rich is just such an arrogant bit of gossip, and not theology. Behind such gossip there must be a "duplication" and "filing cabinet" way of looking at people. The poor are quickly classified and labelled. But when living persons are reduced to sets of numbers, someone begins to have demonic power over them. Such a destructive force ignores the living context in which we all find ourselves. "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God"—even this becomes a detached, classified statement which can be applied, and is indeed applied, in order to enhance the prestige of those who are technologically and bureaucratically in power.

There is a difference between gossip and theology. The presence of the "contrite heart" (Ps. 51:17) makes the distinction between gossip and theology. Contrite heart? Yes. It is the heart shaken by the sincerity and reliability of the crucified Lord. When the one who "saved others but cannot save himself" touches us, the necessity of repentance comes to us. The crucified Christ judges our technological and bureaucratic gossips. With his mutilated hands he disapproves of our gossips. A theology which is not rooted in the contrite heart is gossip. It is irresponsible talk. It may be an impressive theological system with tremendous intellectual cohesion and abundant relevant information. Yet it may be a gossip and not a theology. Our world conferences of Christian churches are impressive, yet it is possible that what is said there may be a gossip and not a theology.

One of the prevalent gossips is a talk of ascribing all good things to us Christians and bad things to others. "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. . . ." (Matt. 10:16). Immediately we think that we are sheep and the other people are wolves. We seldom stop and think that we can be rapacious wolves eating up sheep. Do we know how the Christians destroyed the Jewish people, for instance, through the centuries? Have you thought how the Christians looked down on the people of other great faiths?

When we look down on something, we will soon find ourselves planning to destroy it.

Will not action save us from gossip? Yes, if it is action which is touched by the crucified Christ. When his mutilated hands hold us, we are delivered from the deception.

Then we begin to see the difference between "*he saved others—he cannot save himself*" and "*he saves himself—he cannot save others.*" Deception takes place when we think we are other-oriented, while in truth we are self-oriented. The mutilated hands of Christ are sincere and reliable. "For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (I Cor. 1:25).

Is the church performing the mission and evangelism of God with the mutilated hands? Are the resources of the church managed by attractive hands or by mutilated hands? Are we free from "teachers' complex"? Do we have a crusading mind or a crucified mind? Are not the mutilated hands themselves the resource that is given to the church by her head, the crucified Lord?

Beware lest you say in your heart, "My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth." You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant which he swore to your fathers, as at this day" (Deut. 8:17,18).

The crucified Christ who is the centre is always in motion towards the periphery; he challenges the power of religious and political idolatry.

"My God, My God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?"

"Centre" is a fascinating subject to think about. Many cities have their centres. The palace sits at the centre of Tokyo. I can make the same observation of Bangkok. I have difficulty, however, to find the centre in New York. It is in that sense that New York is a psychologically unsettling city in which to live. I lived in a small university city in New Zealand for five years. The city is located near the southern tip of the South Island. In this end-of-the world city there is a beautiful centre area called the Octagon. The Octagon is the centre of the whole city and of the countryside beyond. There one finds shopping complexes, post office, court, city hall, church and so on. To make contact with the centre is to come into contact with salvation. The centre is the point of salvation. It is there that the confusing reality of life finds a point of integration and meaning.

The church believes that Jesus Christ is the centre of all peoples and all things. "He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:2, 3). But he is the centre who is always in motion towards the periphery.

In this he reveals the mind of God who is concerned about the people on the periphery.

When you make your neighbour a loan of any sort, you shall not go into his house to fetch his pledge. You shall stand outside, and the man to whom you make the loan shall bring the pledge out to you. And if he is a poor man, you shall not sleep in his pledge; when the sun goes down, you shall restore to him the pledge that he may sleep in his cloak and bless you; and it shall be righteousness to you before the Lord Your God. (Deut. 24:10-13)

Jesus was the centre person laid in a manger “because there was no place for them in the inn” (Luke 2:7). He “came not to call the righteous [respectable] but sinners [outcasts]” (Mark 2:17). Jesus Christ is the centre becoming periphery. He affirms his centrality by giving it up. That is what this designation “crucified Lord” means. The Lord is supposed to be at the centre. But he is now affirming his lordship by being crucified! “Jesus also suffered outside the gate” (Heb. 13:12).

His life moves towards the periphery. He expresses his centrality in the periphery by reaching the extreme periphery. Finally on the cross, he stops this movement. There he cannot move. He is nailed down. This is the point of ultimate periphery. “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34). He is the crucified Lord. “Though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself” (Phil. 2:6-7). From this uttermost point of periphery he establishes his authority. This movement towards the periphery is called the love of God in Christ. In the periphery his authority and love meet. They are one. His authority is substantiated by love. His love is authoritative. In the periphery this has taken place, as in the periphery the sincerity and reliability of Christ were demonstrated.

In the sixth century B.C. the people of Judah were threatened by the invading army of Babylonia. This pagan army, the people thought, could not touch the holy city of God. In this centre city is the temple of God, the sacred centre of all the traditions of Israel. Jerusalem is therefore safe. It is the divinely protected centre. It is the seat of “religion” and the kings. “This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.” “Do not trust these deceptive words” says Jeremiah. Jerusalem was destroyed in 587 B.C. The people of Tokyo in the twentieth century recited “This is the palace of the sacred emperor, the palace of the sacred emperor, the palace of the sacred emperor” in the face of the powerful American army. “Do not trust in these deceptive words.” Tokyo was destroyed in 1945. . . .

Over against such destructive centrism in the world of religion and politics, the crucified Christ affirms his centrality by giving it up for the sake of the periphery. This is his way to *shalom*. Jesus Christ is not “imperial.” His kingdom does not work in the way that the Japanese empire worked and destroyed itself. “My kingship is not from the world” (John 18:36).

Theological Education

Jesus Christ moves towards the periphery. He thus bestows his authority upon the periphery. With the presence of the centre at the periphery the periphery becomes dynamic. Our thoughts on mission, evangelism and theological education must be examined in the light of the periphery-oriented authority of Jesus Christ. Historically the West has been the centre of theological education, mission and evangelism. Jesus Christ has been mostly presented to the wider world in the mould of the mind of the West. Languages such as Spanish, French, English and German are the centre languages in this Christian enterprise. Cultural and religious zones which are outside of these languages have been asked to adjust themselves to the image of Jesus Christ presented in these languages. These “centre-theologies” (of the “blond Jesus”) have had more than one hundred years of painful irrelevance to the world outside of the West, and most likely to the West itself. Even today most of the world’s Christians, including their theologians, believe that somehow Jesus Christ is more present in America than in Bangladesh, and therefore America is the centre and Bangladesh is a periphery. By thus thinking, they unwittingly entertain the idea that in all our Christian mission, evangelism and theological education, America is the standard for all. Such centre-complex, coupled with teacher-complex, must be judged in the light of the periphery-oriented authority of Jesus Christ. Christians have only one centre. He is Jesus Christ, who affirmed his centrality by giving it up! It is he who stands at the centre of our obedience and worship. As we worship him, we are taken into his centrality which he gave up.

86. "Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation," World Council of Churches Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, 1982

The result of lengthy discussions with churches of all regions and confessions, this "ecumenical affirmation" was for a generation the most comprehensive and influential statement on mission produced by the ecumenical movement. It was prepared by the WCC's Commission on World Mission and Evangelism at the request of the Council's central committee. • International Review of Mission, vol. 71, no. 284, 1982, pp. 432-47.

ECUMENICAL CONVICTIONS

. . . 9. In the ecumenical discussions and experience, churches with their diverse confessions and traditions and in their various expressions as parishes, monastic communities, religious orders, etc., have learned to recognize each other as participants in the one worldwide missionary movement. *Thus, together, they can affirm an ecumenical perception of Christian mission expressed in the following convictions under which they covenant to work for the kingdom of God.*

1. Conversion

10. The proclamation of the Gospel includes an invitation to recognize and accept in a personal decision the saving lordship of Christ. It is the announcement of a personal encounter, mediated by the Holy Spirit, with the living Christ, receiving his forgiveness and making a personal acceptance of the call to discipleship and a life of service. God addresses himself specifically to each of his children, as well as to the whole human race. *Each person is entitled to hear the Good News.* Many social forces today press for conformity and passivity. Masses of poor people have been deprived of their right to decide about their lives and the life of their society. While anonymity and marginalization seem to reduce the possibilities for personal decisions to a minimum, God as Father knows each one of his children and calls each of them to make a fundamental personal act of allegiance to him and his kingdom in the fellowship of his people.

11. While the basic experience of conversion is the same, the awareness of an encounter with God revealed in Christ, the concrete occasion of this experience and the actual shape of the same differs in terms of our personal situation. *The calling is to specific changes, to renounce evidences of the domination of sin in our lives and to accept responsibilities in terms of God's love for our neighbour.* John the Baptist said very specifically to the soldiers what they should do; Jesus did not hesitate to indicate to the young ruler that his wealth was the obstacle to his discipleship.

Conversion happens in the midst of our historical reality and incorporates the totality of our life, because God's love is concerned with that totality. Jesus' call is an invitation to follow him joyfully, to participate in his servant body, to share with him in the struggle to overcome sin, poverty and death.

12. The importance of this decision is highlighted by the fact that God himself through his Holy Spirit helps the acceptance of his offering of fellowship. The New Testament calls this a new birth (John 3:3). It is also called conversion, *metanoia*, total transformation of our attitudes and styles of life. Conversion as a dynamic and ongoing process "involves a turning *from* and a turning *to*. It always demands reconciliation, a new relationship both with God and with others. It involves leaving our old security behind (Matt. 16:24) and putting ourselves at risk in a life of faith."⁶ It is "conversion *from* a life characterized by sin, separation from God, submission to evil and the unfulfilled potential of God's image, *to* a new life characterized by the forgiveness of sins, obedience to the commands of God, renewed fellowship with God in Trinity, growth in the restoration of the divine image and the realization . . . of the love of Christ. . . ."⁷

The call to conversion, as a call to repentance and obedience, should also be addressed to nations, groups and families. To proclaim the need to change from war to peace, from injustice to justice, from racism to solidarity, from hate to love is a witness rendered to Jesus Christ and to his kingdom. The prophets of the Old Testament addressed themselves constantly to the collective conscience of the people of Israel calling the rulers and the people to repentance and to renewal of the covenant.

13. Many of those who are attracted to Christ are put off by what they see in the life of the churches as well as in individual Christians. How many of the millions of people in the world who are not confessing Jesus Christ have rejected him because of what they saw in the lives of Christians! *Thus the call to conversion should begin with the repentance of those who do the calling, who issue the*

6. *Your Kingdom Come: Report on the World Conference on Mission and Evangelism, Melbourne* (Geneva: WCC, 1980), p. 196.

7. *Confessing Christ Today*, Reports of Groups at a Consultation of Orthodox Theologians, p. 8

invitation. Baptism in itself is a unique act, the covenant that Christians no longer belong to themselves but have been bought forever with the blood of Christ and belong to God. But the experience of baptism should be constantly re-enacted by daily dying with Christ to sin, to themselves and to the world and rising again with him into the servant body of Christ to become a blessing for the surrounding community.

The experience of conversion gives meaning to people in all stages of life, endurance to resist oppression, and assurance that even death has no final power over human life because God in Christ has already taken our life with him, a life that is "hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3).

2. The Gospel to All Realms of Life

14. In the Bible, religious life was never limited to the temple or isolated from daily life (Hos. 6:4-6; Isa. 58:6-7). *The teaching of Jesus on the kingdom of God is a clear reference to God's loving lordship over all human history. We cannot limit our witness to a supposedly private area of life. The lordship of Christ is to be proclaimed to all realms of life.* In the Great Commission, Jesus said to his disciples: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Matt. 28:19-20). The Good News of the kingdom is a challenge to the structures of society (Eph. 3:9-10; 6:12) as well as a call to individuals to repent. "If salvation from sin through divine forgiveness is to be truly and fully personal, it must express itself in the renewal of these relations and structures. Such renewal is not merely a consequence but an essential element of the conversion of whole human beings."⁸

15. "The Evangelistic Witness is directed towards all of the *ktisis* (creation) which groans and travails in search of adoption and redemption. . . . The transfiguring power of the Holy Trinity is meant to reach into every nook and cranny of our national life. . . . The Evangelistic Witness will also speak to the structures of this world; its economic, political, and societal institutions. . . . We must re-learn the patristic lesson that the Church is the mouth and voice of the poor and the oppressed in the presence of the powers that be. In our own way we must learn once again 'how to speak to the ear of the King,' on the people's behalf. . . . Christ was sent for no lesser purpose than bringing the world into the life of God."⁹

8. *Breaking Barriers: Nairobi 1975*, ed. David Paton (London, SPCK, and Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1976), p. 233.

9. *Confessing Christ Today*, *op. cit.*, pp. 10 and 3.

16. In the fulfilment of its vocation, the Church is called *to announce* Good News in Jesus Christ, forgiveness, hope, a new heaven and a new earth; *to denounce* powers and principalities, sin and injustice; *to console* the widows and orphans, healing, restoring the brokenhearted; and *to celebrate* life in the midst of death. In carrying out these tasks, churches may meet limitations, constraints, even persecution from prevailing powers which pretend to have final authority over the life and destiny of people.

17. In some countries there is pressure to limit religion to the private life of the believer—to assert that freedom to believe should be enough. The Christian faith challenges that assumption. *The Church claims the right and the duty to exist publicly—visibly—and to address itself openly to issues of human concern.* "Confessing Christ *today* means that the Spirit makes us struggle with . . . sin and forgiveness, power and powerlessness, exploitation and misery, the universal search for identity, the widespread loss of Christian motivation, and the spiritual longings of those who have not heard Christ's name. It means that we are in communion with the prophets who announced God's will and promise for humankind and society, with the martyrs who sealed their confession with suffering and death, and also with the doubtful who can only whisper their confession of the Name."¹⁰

18. The realm of science and technology deserves particular attention today. The everyday life of most children, women and men, whether rich or poor, is affected by the avalanche of scientific discoveries. Pharmaceutical science has revolutionized sexual behaviour. Increasingly sophisticated computers solve problems in seconds for which formerly a whole lifetime was needed; at the same time they become a means of invading the privacy of millions of people. Nuclear power threatens the survival of life on this planet, while at the same time it provides a new source of energy. Biological research stands at the awesome frontier of interference with the genetic code which could—for better or for worse—change the whole human species. Scientists are, therefore, seeking ethical guidance. Behind the questions as to right or wrong decisions and attitudes, however, there are ultimate theological questions: what is the meaning of human existence? the goal of history? the true reality within and beyond what can be tested and quantified empirically? The ethical questions arise out of a quest for a new world view, a faith.

19. The biblical stories and ancient creeds do furnish precious insights for witnessing to the Gospel in the scientific world. Can theologians, however, with these insights, help scientists achieve responsible action in genetic engineering or nuclear physics? It would hardly seem possible

10. *Breaking Barriers*, p. 48

so long as the great communication gap between these two groups persists. Those directly involved in and affected by scientific research can best discern and explicate the insights of Christian faith in terms of specific ethical positions.

Christian witness will point towards Jesus Christ in whom real humanity is revealed and who is in God's wisdom the centre of all creation, the "head over all things" (Eph. 1:10; 22f). This witness will show the glory and the humility of human stewardship on this earth.

3. The Church and Its Unity in God's Mission

20. To receive the message of the kingdom of God is to be incorporated into the body of Christ, the Church, the author and sustainer of which is the Holy Spirit. The churches are to be a sign for the world. They are to intercede as he did, to serve as he did. *Thus Christian mission is the action of the body of Christ in the history of humankind—a continuation of Pentecost. Those who through conversion and baptism accept the Gospel of Jesus partake in the life of the body of Christ and participate in an historical tradition.* Sadly there are many betrayals of this high calling in the history of the churches. Many who are attracted to the vision of the kingdom find it difficult to be attracted to the concrete reality of the Church. They are invited to join in a continual process of renewal of the churches. "The challenge facing the churches is not that the modern world is unconcerned about their evangelistic message, but rather whether they are so renewed in their life and thought that they become a living witness to the integrity of the Gospel. The evangelizing churches need themselves to receive the Good News and to let the Holy Spirit remake their life when and how he wills."¹¹

21. The celebration of the eucharist is the place for the renewal of the missionary conviction at the heart of every congregation. According to the Apostle Paul, the celebration of the eucharist is in itself a "proclamation of the death of the Lord until he comes" (I Cor. 11:26). "In such ways God feeds his people as they celebrate the mystery of the Eucharist so that they may confess in word and deed that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."¹²

The eucharist is bread for a missionary people. We acknowledge with deep sorrow the fact that Christians do not join together at the Lord's table. This contradicts God's will and impoverishes the body of Christ. The credibility of our Christian witness is at stake.

22. Christians are called to work for the renewal and transformation of the churches. Today there are many signs

of the work of the Holy Spirit in such a renewal. *The house gatherings of the Church in China or the Basic Ecclesial Communities in Latin America, the liturgical renewal, biblical renewal, the revival of the monastic vocation, the charismatic movement, are indications of the renewal possibilities of the Church of Jesus Christ.*

23. In the announcement to the world of the reconciliation in Jesus Christ, churches are called to unite. Faced with the challenge and threat of the world, the churches often unite to defend common positions. *But common witness should be the natural consequence of their unity with Christ in his mission.* The ecumenical experience has discovered the reality of a deep spiritual unity. The common recognition of the authority of the Bible and of the creeds of the ancient Church and a growing convergence in doctrinal affirmations should allow the churches not only to affirm together the fundamentals of the Christian faith, but also to proclaim together the Good News of Jesus Christ to the world. In solidarity, churches are helping each other in their respective witness before the world. In the same solidarity, they should share their spiritual and material resources to announce together and clearly their common hope and common calling.

24. "Often it is socially and politically more difficult to witness together since the powers of this world promote division. In such situations common witness is particularly precious and Christ-like. Witness that dares to be common is a powerful sign of unity coming directly and visibly from Christ and a glimpse of his kingdom."¹³

The impulse for common witness comes from the depth of our faith. "Its urgency is underlined when we realize the seriousness of the human predicament and the tremendous task waiting for the churches at present."¹⁴

25. It is at the heart of Christian mission to foster the multiplication of local congregations in every human community. The planting of the seed of the Gospel will bring forward a people gathered around the Word and sacraments and called to announce God's revealed purpose.

Thanks to the faithful witness of disciples through the ages, churches have sprung up in practically every country. *This task of sowing the seed needs to be continued until there is, in every human community, a cell of the kingdom, a church confessing Jesus Christ and in his name serving his people.* The building up of the Church in every place is essential to the Gospel. The vicarious work of Christ demands the presence of a vicarious people. A vital instrument for the fulfilment of the missionary vocation of the Church is the local congregation.

11. Philip Potter's speech to the Roman Catholic Synod of Bishops, Rome, 1974

12. *Your Kingdom Come*, p. 206.

13. *Common Witness*, p. 28.

14. *Ibid.*

26. The planting of the Church in different cultures demands a positive attitude towards inculturation of the Gospel. Ancient churches, through centuries of intimate relations with the cultures and aspirations of their people, have proved the powerful witnessing character of this rooting of the churches in the national soil. "Inculturation has its source and inspiration in the mystery of the Incarnation. The Word was made flesh. Here flesh means the fully concrete, human and created reality that Jesus was. Inculturation, therefore, becomes another way of describing Christian mission. If proclamation sees mission in the perspective of the Word to be proclaimed, inculturation sees mission in the perspective of the flesh, or concrete embodiment, which the Word assumes in a particular individual, community, institution or culture."¹⁵

Inculturation should not be understood merely as intellectual research; it occurs when Christians express their faith in the symbols and images of their respective culture. *The best way to stimulate the process of inculturation is to participate in the struggle of the less privileged for their liberation. Solidarity is the best teacher of common cultural values.*

27. This growing cultural diversity could create some difficulties. In our attempt to express the catholicity of the Church we may lose the sense of its unity. *But the unity we look for is not uniformity but the multiple expression of a common faith and a common mission.*

"We have found this confession of Christ out of our various cultural contexts to be not only a mutually inspiring, but also a mutually corrective exchange. Without this sharing our individual affirmations would gradually become poorer and narrower. We need each other to regain the lost dimensions of confessing Christ and to discover dimensions unknown to us before. Sharing in this way, we are all changed and our cultures are transformed."¹⁶

The vision of nations coming from the East, the West, the North and the South to sit at the final banquet of the kingdom should always be before us in our missionary endeavour.

4. Mission in Christ's Way

28. *"As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (John 20:21). The selfemptying of the servant who lived among the people, sharing in their hopes and sufferings, giving his life on the cross for all humanity—this was Christ's way of proclaiming the Good News, and as disciples we are summoned to follow the same way. "A servant is not greater than his master, nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him" (John 13:16).*

15. SEDOS Bulletin 81/No.7.

16. *Breaking Barriers*, p. 46.

Our obedience in mission should be patterned on the ministry and teaching of Jesus. He gave his love and his time to all people. He praised the widow who gave her last coin to the temple; he received Nicodemus during the night; he called Matthew to the apostolate; he visited Zacchaeus in his home; he gave himself in a special way to the poor, consoling, affirming and challenging them. He spent long hours in prayer and lived in dependence on and willing obedience to God's will.

An imperialistic crusader's spirit was foreign to him. *Churches are free to choose the ways they consider best to announce the Gospel to different people in different circumstances. But these options are never neutral. Every methodology illustrates or betrays the Gospel we announce. In all communications of the Gospel, power must be subordinate to love.*

29. Our societies are undergoing a significant and rapid change under the impact of new communication technologies and their applications. We are entering the age of the information society, characterized by an ever increasing media presence in all relationships, both interpersonal and intersocial. Christians need to rethink critically their responsibility for all communication processes and re-define the values of Christian communications. In the use of all new media options, the communicating church must ensure that these instruments of communication are not masters, but servants in the proclaiming of the kingdom of God and its values. As servants, the new media options, kept within their own limits, will help to liberate societies from communication bondage and will place tools in the hands of communities for witnessing to Jesus Christ.

30. Evangelism happens in terms of interpersonal relations when the Holy Spirit quickens to faith. Through sharing the pains and joys of life, identifying with people, the Gospel is understood and communicated.

Often, the primary confessors are precisely the non-publicized, unsensational people who gather together steadfastly in small caring communities, whose life prompts the question: "What is the source of the meaning of your life? What is the power of your powerlessness?" giving the occasion to name THE NAME. Shared experiences reveal how often Christ is confessed in the very silence of a prison cell or of a restricted but serving, waiting, praying church.

Mission calls for a serving church in every land, a church which is willing to be marked with the stigmata (nailmarks) of the crucified and risen Lord. In this way the church will show that it belongs to that movement of God's love shown in Christ who went to the periphery of life. Dying outside the gates of the city (Heb. 13:12) he is the high priest offering himself for the salvation of the world. Outside the city gates the message of a self-giving, sharing love is truly proclaimed; here the Church renews its

vocation to be the body of Christ in joyful fellowship with its risen Lord (I John 3:16).

5. Good News to the Poor

31. There is a new awareness of the growing gap between wealth and poverty among the nations and inside each nation. It is a cruel reality that the number of people who do not reach the material level for a normal human life is growing steadily. An increasing number of people find themselves marginalized, second-class citizens unable to control their own destiny and unable to understand what is happening around them. Racism, powerlessness, solitude, breaking of family and community ties are new evidences of the marginalization that comes under the category of poverty.

32. *There is also a tragic coincidence that most of the world's poor have not heard the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; or they could not receive it, because it was not recognized as Good News in the way in which it was brought. This is a double injustice: they are victims of the oppression of an unjust economic order or an unjust political distribution of power, and at the same time they are deprived of the knowledge of God's special care for them. To announce the Good News to the poor is to begin to render the justice due to them. The Church of Jesus Christ is called to preach the Good News to the poor following the example of its Lord who was incarnated as poor, who lived as one among them and gave to them the promise of the kingdom of God. Jesus looked at the multitudes with compassion. He recognized the poor as those who were sinned against, victims of both personal and structural sin.*

Out of this deep awareness came both his solidarity and his calling to them (Matt. 11:28). His calling was a personalized one. He invited them to come to him, to receive forgiveness of sins and to assume a task. He called them to follow him, because his love incorporated his respect for them as people created by God with freedom to respond. He called them to exercise this responsibility towards God, neighbours and their own lives. *The proclamation of the Gospel among the poor is a sign of the messianic kingdom and a priority criterion by which to judge the validity of our missionary engagement today.*

33. This new awareness is an invitation to re-think priorities and lifestyles both in the local church and in the worldwide missionary endeavour. Of course, churches and Christians find themselves in very different contexts: some in very wealthy settings where the experience of poverty as it is known to millions in the world today is practically unknown, or in egalitarian societies where the basic needs of life seem to be assured for almost everybody, to situations of extreme poverty. *But the consciousness of the*

global nature of poverty and exploitation in the world today, the knowledge of the interdependence between nations and the understanding of the international missionary responsibility of the Church—all invite, in fact oblige, every church and every Christian to think of ways and means to share the Good News with the poor of today. An objective look at the life of every society, even the most affluent and those which are, theoretically, more just, will show the reality of the poor today in the marginalized, the drop-outs who cannot cope with modern society, the prisoners of conscience, the dissidents. All of them are waiting for a cup of cold water or for a visit in the name of Christ. *Churches are learning afresh through the poor of the earth to overcome the old dichotomies between evangelism and social action. The "spiritual Gospel" and "material Gospel" were in Jesus one Gospel.*

34. *There is no evangelism without solidarity; there is no Christian solidarity that does not involve sharing the knowledge of the kingdom which is God's promise to the poor of the earth. There is here a double credibility test: A proclamation that does not hold forth the promises of the justice of the kingdom to the poor of the earth is a caricature of the Gospel; but Christian participation in the struggles for justice which does not point towards the promises of the kingdom also makes a caricature of a Christian understanding of justice.*

A growing consensus among Christians today speaks of God's preferential option for the poor.¹⁷ We have there a valid yardstick to apply to our lives as individual Christians, local congregations and as missionary people of God in the world.

35. This concentration point, God's preferential option for the poor, raises the question of the Gospel for all those who objectively are not poor or do not consider themselves as such. *It is a clear Christian conviction that God wants all human beings to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth, but we know that, while God's purpose is for the salvation of all, he has worked historically through the people of Israel and through the incarnation of his own son Jesus Christ. While his purpose is universal, his action is always particular.* What we are learning anew today is that God works through the downtrodden, the persecuted, the poor of the earth. And from there, he is calling all humanity to follow him. "If any one would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matt. 16:24).

For all of us, the invitation is clear: to follow Jesus in identification and sharing with the weak, marginalized and poor of the world, because in them we encounter him. Knowing from the Gospel and from historical experience that to be rich is to risk forfeiting the kingdom, and knowing how close the links are, in today's world, between the abundance of some

17. Catholic Bishops Conference, Puebla, 1979, para. 1134.

and the needs of others, Christians are challenged to follow him, surrendering all they are and have to the kingdom, to a struggle that commits us against all injustice, against all want. The preferential option for the poor, instead of discriminating against all other human beings, is, on the contrary, a guideline for the priorities and behaviour of all Christians everywhere, pointing to the values around which we should organize our lives and the struggle in which we should put our energy.

36. There is a long experience in the Church of voluntary poverty, people who in obedience to their Christian calling cast aside all their belongings, make their own the fate of the poor of the earth, becoming one of them and living among them. Voluntary poverty has always been recognized as a source of spiritual inspiration, of insight into the heart of the Gospel.

Today we are gratefully surprised, as churches are growing among the poor of the earth, by the insight and perspective of the Gospel coming from the communities of the poor. They are discovering dimensions of the Gospel which have long been forgotten by the Church. The poor of the earth are reading reality from the other side, from the side of those who do not get the attention of the history books written by the conquerors, but who surely get God's attention in the book of life. Living with the poor and understanding the Bible from their perspective helps to discover the particular caring with which God both in the Old and in the New Testament thinks of the marginalized, the downtrodden and the deprived. We realize that the poor to whom Jesus promised the kingdom of God are blessed in their longing for justice and in their hope for liberation. They are both subjects and bearers of the Good News; they have the right and the duty to announce the Gospel not only among themselves, but also to all other sectors of the human family.

Churches of the poor are spreading the liberating Gospel of Jesus Christ in almost every corner of the earth. The richness and freshness of their experience is an inspiration and blessing to churches with a centuries-old history. The centres of the missionary expansion of the Church are moving from the North to the South. *God is working through the poor of the earth to awaken the consciousness of humanity to his call for repentance, for justice and for love.*

6. Mission in and to Six Continents

37. *Everywhere the churches are in missionary situations.* Even in countries where the churches have been active for centuries we see life organized today without reference to Christian values, a growth of secularism understood as the absence of any final meaning. The churches have lost vital contact with the workers and the youth and many others.

This situation is so urgent that it commands priority attention of the ecumenical movement. The movement of migrants and political refugees brings the missionary frontier to the doorstep of every parish. *The Christian affirmations on the worldwide missionary responsibility of the Church will be credible if they are authenticated by a serious missionary engagement at home.*

As the world becomes smaller, it is possible even for Christians living far away to be aware of and inspired by faithful missionary engagement in a local situation. Of special importance today is the expression of solidarity among the churches crossing political frontiers and the symbolic actions of obedience of one part of the body of Christ that enhance the missionary work of other sectors of the Church. So, for example, while programmes related to the elimination of racism may be seen as problems for some churches, such programmes have become, for other churches, a sign of solidarity, an opportunity for witness and a test of Christian authenticity.

Every local congregation needs the awareness of its catholicity which comes from its participation in the mission of the Church of Jesus Christ in other parts of the world. Through its witnessing stance in its own situation, its prayers of intercession for churches in other parts of the world, and its sharing of persons and resources, it participates fully in the world mission of the Christian Church.

38. This concern for mission everywhere has been tested with the call for a moratorium, a halt—at least for a time—to sending and receiving missionaries and resources across national boundaries, in order to encourage the recovery and affirmation of the identity of every church, the concentration on mission in its own place and the freedom to reconsider traditional relations. The Lausanne Covenant noted that “the reduction of foreign missionaries and money in an evangelized country may sometimes be necessary to facilitate the national church's growth and self-reliance and to release resources for unevangelized areas.”¹⁸ Moratorium does not mean the end of the missionary vocation nor of the duty to provide resources for missionary work, but it does mean freedom to reconsider present engagements and to see whether a continuation of what we have been doing for so long is the right style of mission in our day.

Moratorium has to be understood *inside* a concern for world mission. *It is faithfulness of commitment to Christ in each national situation which makes missionary concern in other parts of the world authentic. There can never be a moratorium of mission, but it will always be possible, and sometimes necessary, to have a moratorium for the sake of better mission.*

18. Lausanne Covenant, No. 9.

39. The story of the churches from their earliest years is the story of faithfulness in their respective localities, but also the story of the carrying of the Gospel across national and continental boundaries, first from Jerusalem to Judaea and Samaria, then to Asia Minor, Africa and Europe, now to the ends of the earth. Christians today are the heirs of a long history of those who left their home countries and churches, apostles, monastics, pilgrims, missionaries, emigrants, to work in the name of Jesus Christ, serving and preaching where the Gospel had not yet been heard or received. With the European colonization of most of the world and later on with the expansion of the colonial and neo-colonial presence of the western powers, the churches which had their bases mainly in the West have expanded their missionary service to all comers of the earth.

Surely, many ambiguities have accompanied this development and are present even today, not least the sin of proselytism among other Christian confessions. Churches and missionary organizations are analysing the experience of these past centuries in order to correct their ways, precisely with the help of the new churches which have come into being in those countries. *The history of the Church, the missionary people of God, needs to continue. Each local parish, each Christian, must be challenged to assume responsibility in the total mission of the Church. There will always be need for those who have the calling and the gift to cross frontiers, to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to serve in his name.*

40. Out of this sense of being the whole Church in mission, we recognize the specific calling to individuals or communities to commit themselves full time to the service of the church, crossing cultural and national frontiers. *The churches should not allow this specialized calling of the few to be an alibi for the whole Church, but rather it should be a symbolic concentration of the missionary vocation of the whole Church.* Looking at the question of people in mission today, "We perceive a change in the direction of mission, arising from our understanding of the Christ who is the centre and who is always in movement towards the periphery. While not in any way denying the continuing significance and necessity of a mutuality between the churches in the northern and southern hemispheres, we believe that we can discern a development whereby mission in the eighties may increasingly take place within these zones. We feel there will be increasing traffic between the churches of Asia, Africa and Latin America among whose numbers both rich and poor are counted. This development, we expect, will take the form of ever stronger initiatives from the churches of the poor and oppressed at the peripheries. Similarly among the industrialized countries, a new reciprocity, particularly one stemming from the marginalized groups, may lead to sharing at the peripheries of the richer

societies. While resources may still flow from financially richer to poorer churches, and while it is not our intention to encourage isolationism, we feel that a benefit of this new reality could well be the loosening of the bond of domination and dependence that still so scandalously characterizes the relationship between many churches of the northern and southern hemispheres respectively."¹⁹

7. Witness among People of Living Faiths

41. Christians owe the message of God's salvation in Jesus Christ to every person and to every people. Christians make their witness in the context of neighbours who live by other religious convictions and ideological persuasions. *True witness follows Jesus Christ in respecting and affirming the uniqueness and freedom of others.* We confess as Christians that we have often looked for the worst in others and have passed negative judgement upon other religions. We hope as Christians to be learning to witness to our neighbours in a humble, repentant and joyful spirit.

42. *The Word is at work in every human life. In Jesus of Nazareth the Word became a human being. The wonder of his ministry of love persuades Christians to testify to people of every religious and non-religious persuasion of this decisive presence of God in Christ. In him is our salvation. Among Christians there are still differences of understanding as to how this salvation in Christ is available to people of diverse religious persuasions. But all agree that witness should be rendered to all.*

43. Such an attitude springs from the assurance that God is the creator of the whole universe and that he has not left himself without witness at any time or any place. *The Spirit of God is constantly at work in ways that pass human understanding and in places that to us are least expected. In entering into a relationship of dialogue with others, therefore, Christians seek to discern the unsearchable riches of God and the way he deals with humanity.* For Christians who come from cultures shaped by another faith, an even more intimate interior dialogue takes place as they seek to establish the connection in their lives between their cultural heritage and the deep convictions of their Christian faith.

44. Christians should use every opportunity to join hands with their neighbours, to work together to be communities of freedom, peace and mutual respect. In some places, state legislation hinders the freedom of conscience and the real exercise of religious freedom. Christian churches as well as communities of other faiths cannot be faithful to their vocation without the freedom and right to maintain their institutional form and confessional identity in a society and to transmit their faith from one generation

19. *Your Kingdom Come*, pp. 220-221.

to another. In those difficult situations, Christians should find a way, along with others, to enter into dialogue with the civil authorities in order to reach a common definition of religious freedom. With that freedom comes the responsibility to defend through common actions all human rights in those societies.

45. *Life with people of other faiths and ideologies is an encounter of commitments. Witness cannot be a one-way process, but of necessity is two-way: in it Christians become aware of some of the deepest convictions of their neighbours. It is also the time in which, within a spirit of openness and trust, Christians are able to bear authentic witness, giving an account of their commitment to the Christ, who calls all persons to himself.*

87. "Common Witness," Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and World Council of Churches, 1982

The Joint Working Group is the primary instrument for collaborative work between the Vatican and the WCC. This document, which draws on reports of actual experience in common witness, was sent to the churches in order to promote study and discussion. • Common Witness, Geneva, WCC, 1982, pp. 12, 14-20.

CHRISTIAN WITNESS—COMMON WITNESS

The Common Ground

15. The command of Jesus Christ and the power of his grace lead the Church to proclaim the Good News he has brought us; finally this Good News is Christ himself. *This Gospel message gives Christian communities the common ground for their proclamation.* They accept the content of the biblical witness and the Creeds of the early Church. Today they desire to reach beyond what separates them by stressing the essential and returning to the foundation of their faith, Jesus Christ (I Cor. 3:11). They recognize that baptism, as the effective sign of their unity, brings them into communion with Christ's followers and empowers them to confess him as Lord and Saviour. Therefore the Lord's gift of unity already exists among Christians and, although it is not yet realized perfectly, it is real and operative. This

unmerited gift requires that witness be borne in common as an act of gratitude and the witness in turn is a means of expressing and deepening unity. . . .

The Church

20. The Church received its commission from the Lord Jesus Christ himself, "You shall be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8). It takes upon itself the witness which the Father bore to his Son (cf. John 5:32) when, in front of those who put him to death, he raised him and made him Christ and Lord for the salvation of all (Acts 2:23, 24, 36). *The Christian witness receives its incarnation and force out of the calling of the People of God to be a pilgrim people giving witness to Christ our Lord in communion with the cloud of witnesses* (Heb 12:1).

21. Following the apostles (Acts 2:32) the Church today testifies to these saving acts of God in front of the world and proclaims that Jesus Christ is Saviour and Lord of all mankind and of all creation. Such is the object of the Christian witness. Through proclamation and bearing witness, Christians are making known the saving Lordship of Christ, so that the one in whom God wills to achieve this salvation may be "believed in the world" (I Tim. 3:16), so that people may confess "that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:11).

The Church as a whole is the primary subject of Christian witness. *As the Church is one body of many members, Christian witness is by its nature communitarian.* When one of the faithful acts in individual witness this is related to the witness of the whole Christian community. Even when the witness is given by Christians in separated churches it should be witness to the same Christ and necessarily has a communitarian aspect.

Characteristics of Christian Witness

22. Witness was a distinctive mark of the Church in the time of the apostles. In giving its witness today the Church continues to be faithful to this apostolic commission. Through the same Holy Spirit it shares their motivation and power. *As the body of Christ the Church manifests him in the world. Its nature is to give witness.*

23. Witness is what we are before God. It consists in the first place in being. It ought to be rooted in contemplation. *The Church is already giving witness then when it deepens its spiritual life and when it devises new styles of life which commend the Gospel in today's world.* In many parts of the world Christians are discovering this afresh by their experiences in small communities, but the need of renewal extends to all manifestations of the life of the Body.

Aware of the failings of those who belong to it, the Church seeks in its worship to be transformed into the likeness of Christ. He must be shown to the world in its members. For this the Church needs the nourishment it draws from prayer, the Word and the Sacraments. It depends on the continual renewal they provide for the authenticity and effectiveness of its witness.

24. Authentic witness is a channel of the divine love to all people. *That love expresses itself in discerning the ways in which witness can be given most tellingly in each circumstance of contact.* In some sense readiness for martyrdom is the norm of witness since it testifies to the orientation of a life which is itself a sign of a person's conviction and devotion to a cause, even to the point of dying for one's belief. *It is conviction incarnated in life which must make proclamation credible. The authenticity of witness is finally to be judged not by the listener's response, but before God.* From this point of view there is a gratuitousness about witness that is to be associated with the gratuitousness of God's grace in his dealings with humankind. It is in the life of the witness that the message of the Gospel has to be made present. The life of the witness is the valid exposition of the message. It is from this point that the necessary effort to make the Christian message speak to people and situations has to begin and no ready-made formula can be a substitute. There must always be a dialogue established between situations and people and the Church, for there is a necessary listening process in discovering effective means of witness. Since the medium through which the sign comes to others and communicates its meaning to them is important, the sign has to be given expression in terms of each society and culture.

25. *Witness seeks a response, but there is always an element of mystery and miracle about the way in which the witness the Spirit gives to Jesus comes home to the heart of a person. It is always something fresh, often totally surprising and unexpected.*

26. The witness of Christ has to be given and shaped by the community which lives in Christ and is animated by a spirit of love and freedom, confidence and joy. *Words alone cannot stress sufficiently that the love of God has come to us through Christ, that it has overcome sin and death, and that it lives on among us. It demands a comprehensive witness, credible and full of love, given both by the Christian and the Church in every part of life.* Without love such witness is only "a sounding gong or clanging cymbal" (I Cor. 13:1). The liberating action of Christ must mean that witness is given in freedom and with respect for the freedom of those to whom it is addressed.

27. Christian witness also must be given in humility. Its source is in the Father who, by the Spirit, raised Christ

from the dead and sends him visibly to humankind by means of those who are his witnesses. *It is therefore a commission from God, not something one takes upon oneself.* It requires the witness to listen before proclaiming the Good News and to cooperate with the unpredictable leading of the Spirit. It does not provide a blueprint that will guarantee success in all situations. Rather it is the task of a co-worker with God in the service of all peoples.

Effects of Witness

28. Witness moves from one unity to another—from that of the members of the Body of Christ in the one Spirit to the greater unity in which all things in heaven and earth will come together under the one Head who is Christ (Eph. 1:10). Essentially it is a work of reconciliation, of people with God, and with one another. To take part in Christian witness also deepens the unity that already exists among Christians. *Witness tends always to extend the fellowship of the Spirit, creating new community.* At the same time it is an essential help for Christians themselves. It promotes among them the conversion and renewal which they always need. It can strengthen their faith and open up new aspects of the truth of Christ. As such it is a fundamental part of the life of the community that is fully committed to Christ.

29. When witness is being given in a context of unbelief it often calls forth opposition. The Church has to be ready to pay the price of misunderstanding, frustration and suffering, even, on occasion, of martyrdom. From the beginning the reality of the Cross has been the inevitable context of Christian witness (II Cor. 4:8-12). That witness has to be made also before the principalities and powers of this age (Eph. 6:12; cf. Rom. 8:38-39). The experience of Christians in exile, prison and the arena in other times is often repeated today. *The Church has to bring its message of love and reconciliation to even the most difficult situations so it is not surprised when its witness has to be given even at the cost of life itself.*

Common Witness

30. When he prayed that all be one so the world might believe (John 17:21), Jesus made a clear connection between the unity of the Church and the acceptance of the Gospel. Unhappily Christians are still divided in their churches and the testimony they give to the Gospel is thus weakened. There are, however, even now many signs of the initial unity that already exists among all followers of Christ and indications that it is developing in important ways. *What we have in common, and the hope that is in us, enable us to be bold in proclaiming the Gospel and trustful*

that the world will receive it. Common witness is the essential calling of the Church and in an especial way it responds to the spirit of this ecumenical age in the Church's life. It expresses our actual unity and increases our service to God's Word, strengthening the churches both in proclaiming the Gospel and in seeking for the fulness of unity.

31. *Yet the tragedy of our divisions remains with us at the focal point of our testimony to Jesus: the Holy Eucharist.* It is urgent that all Christians intensify their prayer for the full realization of this unity and witness.

"This fellowship in prayer, nevertheless, sharpens the pain of the churches' division at the point of eucharistic fellowship which should be the most manifest witness of the one sacrifice of Christ for the whole world."

Situations of Common Witness

32. Common witness is called for in a great many different situations. The variety of groups and individuals taking part in some act of common witness should make it possible to have a more realistic awareness of the situation, to adapt to it in solidarity and to orient the witness concretely to it.

33. This does not at all mean diluting the truth of the Gospel to fit every situation. Rather those who hand it on and those who receive it must undergo change. Thus common witness should bring about the creative transformation of a given situation.

34. *Witness does not mean debating possibilities but brings people to face reality.* It calls forth reflection, discussion, decision. In everything those who witness should show they have Good News to proclaim. The Kingdom of God whose coming they have to proclaim in word and deed consists in "justice, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17).

In the World

35. In bearing this witness Christians are committing themselves to the service of others, for it is the Good News of God they are bringing (Acts 13:32, 33). *Through proclaiming the cross and resurrection of Christ they affirm that God wills the salvation of his people in all dimensions of their being, both eternal and earthly.*

36. The whole of creation groans and is in travail as it seeks adoption and redemption (Rom. 8:22). Salvation in Jesus Christ has cosmic dimensions. Christian witness is given not only to fulfil a missionary vocation but also to respond to the aspirations of the universe. Human needs and the challenge of a broken and unbelieving world

compel the churches to cooperate with God in using his gifts for the reconciliation of all peoples and things in Christ.

The contemporary thirst for meaning, for a spiritual base, for God, is also occasion for common witness by the full manifestation of Jesus Christ in prayer, worship and in daily life.

37. The search for Gospel values such as human dignity, justice, peace and fraternity invites participation by a common witness, which always points to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour of all. *This means Christian involvement in matters of social justice in the name of the poor and the oppressed. We must relearn the patristic lesson that the Church is the mouth and the voice of the oppressed in the presence of the powers that be.* Thus Christian witness will mean participation in the struggle for human rights, at all levels, in economic sharing and in liberation from social and political oppression. All are parts of the task required by obedience to the truth of God and its consequences.

38. In fact in the last decade there has been a most positive advance in a variety of common witness at all these levels of Christian life. A growing sensitivity to the manipulative attitudes and behaviour often fostered by contemporary cultures is forcing Christian churches and communities to a drastic reappraisal of their relation to the world in mission, and is bringing them together to witness to the gifts of truth and life bestowed in Christ, which are the source of their life and which provide access to salvation.

88. Anastasios of Albania, "Address of the Moderator," Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, San Antonio, 1989

The author, professor of the history of religions at the University of Athens at the time of this address, later became Archbishop of Tirana, primate of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church in Albania. The San Antonio meeting was the fourth world conference on mission and evangelism following the integration of the WCC and the International Missionary Council in 1961. • Your Will Be Done—Mission in Christ's Way: The San Antonio Report, Geneva, WCC, 1990, pp. 108-14.

1. "Thy will be done," as it is repeated by Christ himself in Gethsemane, helps us to overcome a great temptation: *the tendency for us to minimize the demands and cost of doing God's will in our personal life*. It is usually easier for us to rest in the general, in what concerns mostly others.

a) But the will of God, as it is revealed in Christ, is a single and indissoluble *whole* (" . . . teaching them to observe *all* that I have commanded you"). "Thy will be done" entire, not by halves. The various so-called corrections that have at times been made to make the gospel easier and the church more acceptable or, so to speak, more effective, do not strengthen but rob the gospel of its power. While waiting at a European airport a couple of years ago there came into my hands a leaflet in which, framed between other things, was written: "Blessed are those who are rich. Blessed are those who are handsome. Blessed are those who have power. Blessed are the smart. Blessed are the successful. For they will possess the earth." I thought to myself: How many times, even in our own communities, do we prefer, openly or secretly, these idols, this worldly topsy-turvy representation of the beatitudes, making them criteria of our way of life?

The name of the city in which this meeting of ours is taking place reminds us not only of San Antonio of Padua to which the toponomy refers but also of St Anthony the Great, one of the universal church's great personalities, who traced a model of perfect acceptance of God's will. This great hermit—in perfect obedience to "if you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me" (Matt. 19:21)—went out in an adventure of freedom and love, which led to the outpouring of a new breath of the Spirit in the church at a time when it was in danger of compromising with secular power and the spirit of the world.

In the midst of our many socio-political concerns we have to bear in mind and act on the understanding that "this is the will of God, your sanctification" (1 Thess. 4:3). Our *sanctification*, by following the divine will in all things, in our daily obligations, in our personal endeavours and in the midst of many and various difficulties and dilemmas. The simplistic anthropology that encourages a naive morality, by passing our existential tragedy by, does not help at all. Human existence is an abyss. "I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate . . . I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members" (Rom. 7:15-23). Many of us, in critical situations, while we easily say "thy will be done," in practice add: "not as thou wilt, but as I will." This overt or secret reversal of the divine will in our decisions is the main reason and cause of the failure of many Christian missions and initiatives. The

hard inner struggle for purification and sanctification is the premise and mystical power of the apostolate.

The carrying out of God's will in the world will always be assisted by *continuous repentance*, so that we may be conformed to the model of Christ and be made one with him. That is why in the Orthodox tradition monasteries have special importance, above all as centres of penitence. Everything that accompanies this struggle—worship, work, comforting the people, education, artistic creativity—follows, as a reflection of the spiritual purification, the transforming personal experience of repentance. The quest for new types of communities that will serve the contemporary apostolate must be closely bound up with the spiritual quest in the contemporary social reality for concrete forms of communities that will live out thoroughly, on the personal level, repentance and longing for the coming of the kingdom. The critical question for a mission in Christ's way is to what extent others can discern in our presence a ray of his presence.

b) Conformity to God's will does not mean servile submission or fatalistic expectation. Nor is it achieved by a simple, moral, outward obedience. Joyful acceptance of God's will is an expression of love for a new relationship in the Beloved; it is a restoration of humanity's lost freedom. It means our communion in the mystery of the love of the Holy Trinity, communion in freedom of love. Thus, we become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4). Conformity to God's will is in the end a sharing in what the Orthodox tradition calls "uncreated energies," by which we reach theosis, we become "good by grace."²⁰ The most blessed pages of Christian mission were written out of an excess of love for Christ, an identification with him.

c) The church continually seeks to renew this holy intoxication of love, especially by the sacrament of the holy eucharist—which remains the pre-eminently missionary event—everywhere on earth. In the divine liturgy the celebrant, as representative of the whole community, prays: "Send thy Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts here present." Not on the gifts only, but we beg that the Holy Spirit may be sent "upon us" also, so that we may be "moved by the Spirit." The whole prayer moves very clearly in a Trinitarian perspective. We beseech the Father to send the Spirit to change the precious gifts into Christ's body and blood, and in receiving holy communion we are united with him; we become "of one body" and "of one blood" with Christ, that we may bear the "fruit" of the Spirit, become "God's temple," receivers and transmitters of his blessed radiance.

20. Maximos the Confessor, "On various questions...", *P.G.*, Vol. 91, col. 1084AC, 1092C.

The enthusiasm for the *acquisition of the Holy Spirit*, which is of late much sought after in the West, has always been strong in the East, but in a sober Christological context and in a Trinitarian perspective. The church's experience is summed up in the well-known saying of St Seraphim: "The purpose of Christian life is the acquisition of the Holy Spirit." And the saint continues: "Prayer, fasting and almsgiving, and the other good works and virtues that are done for Christ, are simply, and only, means of acquiring God's Holy Spirit."²¹ This presence of the Holy Spirit has nothing at all to do with spiritual pride and self-satisfaction. It is at bottom connected with the continual exercise of penitence, with holy humility. "I tell you the truth," wrote a holy monk of Mount Athos, Starets Silouan, "I find nothing good in myself and I have committed many sins. But the grace of the Holy Spirit has blotted them out. And I know that to those who fight sin is afforded not only pardon but also the grace of the Holy Spirit, which gladdens the soul and bestows a sweet and profound peace."²²

2. The fact that the will of God refers to the whole world, the whole universe, *excludes any isolating of ourselves in an individual piety*, in a sort of *private Christianity*.

a) The will of God covers the whole human reality: it is accomplished in the whole of history. It is not possible for the Christian to remain indifferent to historical happenings in the world, when faith is grounded on two historical facts: the incarnation of the word and the second coming of Christ. The social, human event is the place in which the church unfolds. Every expression of human creativity, science, technology and the relationships of persons as individuals, peoples and various groupings are to be found among its concerns. We are living at a critical, historic juncture in which a new universal culture, the electronic culture, is taking shape. The natural sciences, especially bio-medicine, genetics, astronautics, are creating and posing new problems. Half of the earth's population is crushed into huge urban centres: contemporary agnosticism is eating away at the thought and behaviour of the city-dwellers. The passage from the "written" to the "electronic" word is opening up undreamed-of possibilities for the amassing of a whole universe of increased knowledge and creating a new human thinking. A new world is emerging. A new sort of human being is being formed. The church, the mystical body of "the one who is and was and is to come" has a pledge and a duty to the march of humanity in the future, the whole society in which it exists as "leaven," "sign" and "sacrament" of the kingdom that has come and is coming.

21. P.A. Botsis, *Philokalia ton Roson Neptikon* (Philocalia of the Russian Vigilants), Athens, 1983, p. 105.

22. Archimandrite Sophrony, *Starets Silouan, moine du Mont-Athos* (translated from Russian into French by the Hieromoine Symeon), Sisteron, 1973, p. 318.

What the church has, it has to radiate and offer for the sake of all the world.

But if one temptation is for us not to see the universal duty when we pray "thy will be done," the reverse is for us to be occupied only with universal themes, indifferent to concrete reality, to be too sensitive to certain situations and indifferent to others (to speak, for example, constantly about injustice in such-and-such a publicized region and be indifferent to injustice in Europe, as, for example, in Albania, where four hundred thousand Christians are oppressed, deprived constitutionally of every expression of faith, even of the elementary right to have a church).

In various corners of our planet, want, disease, oppression, injustice, the raw violence of arms, oppress millions of our fellow human beings. All of these are cells of the same body—the great body of humanity to which we belong. Their suffering is the suffering of Christ, who assumed the whole of humanity, and the suffering of the church, his mystical body. It is—must be—the suffering of us all.

The prophetic voice, both for the immediate and actual and worldwide, remains always the church's obligation, even if it annoys certain people who do not wish to touch any unjust establishment. In many situations, within and outside, the church is obliged today to speak in the way of the biblical protest: Woe to those who talk about justice but who in practice seek only their own right and their own privileges. Woe to those who rejoice, crying "peace, peace," but forge the fetters of the defenceless. Woe to the rich nations that continually celebrate freedom and love, but by their policies make the developing peoples poorer and less free. Woe to those who appear as God's lawyers and representatives, making a mockery—deliberately or unintentionally—of what is finest in humanity, the witness of Jesus Christ.

b) But still the gospel cannot remain the possession of only certain peoples who had the privilege of hearing it first. By putting on our lips the prayer "thy will be done," the Lord "bade each one of us who prays to take thought for the ecumene" (John Chrysostom).²³ God's will, as it was fulfilled and revealed in Christ, has to be made known in every corner of the earth, in every cranny of the world, in every expression of our contemporary many-centred civilization. A world missionary conference like our own cannot relegate to a footnote the fact that millions of our fellow men and women have not heard, even once in their lives, the Christian message, that hundreds of races still, after twenty centuries of Christian history, do not have the gospel in their mother tongue.

Distinctions between Christian and non-Christian nations are no longer absolutely valid in our days. In all

23. Chrysostom, *ibid.*, col. 280.

nations there is a need for re-evangelization in every generation. Every local church finds itself in mission in its actual geographical and cultural territory and context. But its horizons, outside the place in which it is active, must extend in the catholic church “from one end of the earth to the other.” Despite cultural differences, all of us face more or less the same basic human problems. All the local churches, expressing the life of the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic church,” are in a state of mutual interdependence and interchange, on both receiving and sending. The distinction between sending and receiving churches belongs to the past. All should, and can, both receive and send. In proportion to the gifts (charismata) that every local church possesses (personnel, knowledge, expertise, financial resources) it can contribute to the development of the worldwide mission “to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). It is time for every Christian to realize that mission is our own obligation and to take part in it looking to the whole of humankind. Just as there is no church without a worshipping life, so there cannot be a living church without missionary life.

c) Those outside the Christian faith, who still have no knowledge of the will of God in its fullness, do not cease to move in the mystical radiance of his glory. God’s will is diffused throughout the whole of history and throughout the whole world. Consequently it influences their own life, concerns them and embraces them. It is expressed in many ways—as divine providence, inspiration, guidance, etc. In recent times in the ecumenical movement we have been striving hard for the theological understanding of people of other faiths: and this difficult, but hopeful, dialogue very much deserves to be continued at this present conference.

Certainly for the church, God’s will, as it was lived out in its fullness by Christ, remains its essential heritage and contribution in the world. But respect for others will not be a so-called agreement on a common denominator that minimizes our convictions about Christ, but an injustice, if we are silent about the truth that constitutes the givenness of the church’s experience; it is another thing, the imposition by force, that is unacceptable and has always been anti-Christian. A withholding of the truth leads to a double betrayal, both of our own faith and of others’ right to know the whole truth.

Jesus Christ went about doing good among people of other faiths (let us recall the stories of the Canaanite woman and the centurion) admiring and praising their spontaneous faith and goodness. (“I say to You, not even in Israel have I found such faith” [Matt. 8:10].) He even used as a symbol of himself a representative of another religious community, the good “Samaritan.” His example remains determinative: beneficent service and sincere respect for

whatever has been preserved from that which was made “in the image of God.” Certainly in today’s circumstances our duty is becoming more clear and extensive: a journey together in whatever does not militate against God’s will, an understanding of the deepest religious insights that have developed in other civilizations by the assistance of the Spirit, a cooperation in the concrete applications of God’s will, such as justice, peace, freedom, love, both in the universal community and on the local level.

d) Not only the so-called spiritual but also the whole physical universe moves in the sphere of God’s will. Reverence for the animal and the vegetable kingdoms, the correct use of nature, concern for the conservation of the ecological balance, the fight to prevent nuclear catastrophe and to preserve the integrity of creation, have become more important in the list of immediate concerns for the churches. This is not a deviation, as asserted by some who see Christ as saving souls by choice and his church as a traditional religious private concern of certain people. The whole world, not only humankind but the entire universe, has been called to share in the restoration that was accomplished by the redeeming work of Christ. “We wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pet. 3:13). Christ, the Almighty and Logos of the Universe, remains the key to understanding the evolution of the world. All things will come to pass in him who is their head. The surprising design, “the mystery of his will,” which has been made known to us “according to his purpose,” is “a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him (*anakephaleosasthai ta panta en ô Christô*—according to another translation: ‘bring everything together under Christ, as a head’), things in heaven and things on earth” (Eph. 1:9-10). The correspondence with the phrase of the Lord’s prayer is obvious. The transforming of creation, as victory over the disfigurement that sin brought to the world, is to be found in the wider perspective and immediate concerns of Christian mission.

Through all the length and breadth of the earth millions of Christians of every race, class, culture and language repeat “thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” Sometimes painfully, faithfully and hopefully; sometimes mechanically and indifferently. But we seldom connect it intimately with the missionary obligation. The conjunction of the two phrases “thy will be done” and “mission in Christ’s way” gives a special dynamic to our conference. Understanding the missionary dimensions of this prayer will strengthen in the Christian world the conviction that mission is sharing in carrying out God’s will on earth. And, put it the other way round, that God’s will demands our own active participation, working with the Holy Trinity.

By sharing the life of the risen Christ, living the Father's will moved by the Holy Spirit, we have a decisive word and role in shaping the course of humankind. The Lord is at hand. The history of the world does not proceed in a vacuum. It is unfolding towards an end. There is a plan. God's will shall prevail on earth. The prayers of the saints will not remain unanswered! There will be a universal judgment by the Lord of love. At that last hour everything will have lost its importance and value, except for disinterested love. The last word belongs to Christ. The mystery of God's will reaches its culmination in the recapitulation of all things in him. We continue to struggle with fortitude. We celebrate the event that is coming. We enjoy a foretaste of that hour of the last things. Rejoicing in worship. With this vision. With this hope.

Lord, free us from our own will and incorporate us in your own. "They will be done."

89. Chung Hyun Kyung, "Come Holy Spirit—Renew the Whole Creation," Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Canberra, 1991

Few speeches in the history of the ecumenical movement have been more dramatic, controversial or widely debated than this address to the seventh assembly of the WCC in 1991. Chung Hyun Kyung was, at the time, professor of theology at Ewha Women's University in Seoul, South Korea. • Signs of the Spirit: Official Report. Seventh Assembly. World Council of Churches, ed. Michael Kinnamon, Geneva, WCC, and Grand Rapids, MI, Eerdmans, 1991, pp. 38-47.

Invocation

. . . With humble heart and body, let us listen to the cries of creation and the cries of the Spirit within it.

Come. The spirit of Hagar, Egyptian, black slave woman exploited and abandoned by Abraham and Sarah, the ancestors of our faith (Gen. 21:15-21).

Come. The spirit of Uriah, loyal soldier sent and killed in the battlefield by the great king David out of the king's greed for his wife, Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11:1 -27).

Come. The spirit of Jephthah's daughter, the victim of her father's faith, offered as a burnt offering to God because he had won the war (Judg. 11:29-40).

Come. The spirit of male babies killed by the soldiers of king Herod upon Jesus' birth.

Come. The spirit of Joan of Arc, and of the many other women burnt at the "witch trials" throughout the medieval era.

Come. The spirit of the people who died during the crusades.

Come. The spirit of indigenous people of the earth, victims of genocide during the time of colonialism and the period of the great Christian mission to the pagan world.

Come. The spirit of Jewish people killed in the gas chambers during the holocaust.

Come. The spirit of people killed in Hiroshima and Nagasaki by atomic bombs.

Come. The spirit of Korean women in the Japanese "prostitution army"²⁴ during the second world war, used and torn by violence-hungry soldiers.

Come. The spirit of Vietnamese people killed by napalm, Agent Orange, or hunger on the drifting boats.

Come. The spirit of Mahatma Gandhi, Steve Biko, Martin Luther King Jr, Malcolm X, Victor Jara, Oscar Romero and many unnamed women freedom fighters who died in the struggle for liberation of their people.

Come. The spirit of people killed in Bhopal and Chernobyl, and the spirit of jelly babies from the Pacific nuclear test zone.

Come. The spirit of people smashed by tanks in Kwangju, Tiananmen Square and Lithuania.

Come. The spirit of the Amazon rain forest now being murdered every day.

Come. The spirit of earth, air and water, raped, tortured and exploited by human greed for money.

Come. The spirit of soldiers, civilians and sea creatures now dying in the bloody war in the Gulf.

Come. The spirit of the Liberator, our brother Jesus, tortured and killed on the cross.

In the Land of the Spirit with These Spirits Full of *Han*

I come from Korea, the land of spirits full of *Han*. *Han* is anger. *Han* is resentment. *Han* is bitterness. *Han* is grief.

24. During the Second World War, Japan recruited poor, rural Korean women (by force) in the name of "army labour forces." Instead of working in the factories these women were forced to be official prostitutes for Japanese soldiers. Most of them died of venereal disease or were killed during the war. For more information on these women, see my article, "*Han-pu-ri*: Doing Theology from Korean Women's Perspective." *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 40. No. 1, January 1988.

Han is broken-heartedness and the raw energy for struggle for liberation. In my tradition people who were killed or died unjustly became wandering spirits, the *Han*-ridden spirits. They are all over the place seeking the chance to make the wrong right. Therefore the living people's responsibility is to listen to the voices of the *Han*-ridden spirits and to participate in the spirits' work of making right whatever is wrong. These *Han*-ridden spirits in our people's history have been agents through whom the Holy Spirit has spoken her compassion and wisdom for life. Without hearing the cries of these spirits we cannot hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. I hope the presence of all our ancestors' spirits here with us shall not make you uncomfortable. For us they are the icons of the Holy Spirit who became tangible and visible to us. Because of them we can feel, touch and taste the concrete bodily historical presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst. . . .

We pray to the Spirit asking her help desperately: "Come, Holy Spirit—Renew the Whole Creation."

But what do we mean by this prayer? "Oh God! We messed up again. Come and fix all our problems"? Are we saying "Come Holy Spirit, come and stop the Gulf war and repair the ecological catastrophe," or are we saying "O God, we know you are the strongest warrior, so powerful . . . we are sure your armament is stronger than Saddam or Bush"? If that is our prayer, I fear we may be returning to an infantile faith. Isn't this our temptation, to remain in our passivity, using prayer as an excuse not to struggle in solidarity with all forms of life? After many years of such infantile prayers, I know there is no magic solution to human sinfulness and for healing our wounds. I also know that I no longer believe in an omnipotent, macho, warrior God who rescues all good guys and punishes all bad guys. Rather, I rely on the compassionate God who weeps with us for life in the midst of the cruel destruction of life.

The spirit of this compassionate God has been always with us from the time of creation. God gave birth to us and the whole universe with her life-giving breath (*ruach*), the wind of life. This wind of life, this life-giving power of God is the spirit which enabled people to come out of Egypt, resurrected Christ from death and started the church as a liberative community. We also experience the life-giving Spirit of God in our people's struggle for liberation, their cry for life and the beauty and gift of nature. The Spirit of God has been teaching us through the "survival wisdom" of the poor, the screams of the *Han*-ridden spirits of our people and the blessings and curses of nature. Only when we can hear this cry for life and can see the signs of liberation are we able to recognize the Holy Spirit's activity, in the midst of suffering creation.

From the Spirit of Babel to the Spirit of Pentecost

However, what we see around us at this time are the signs of death. We feel suffocated by the wind of death. What makes us separated from this life-giving breath of God? I want to call it the unholy spirit of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9). It is a spirit of so-called upward mobility, acquisitiveness and division. The story of Babel is the story of human greed without limit. This tower of greed made all people divided. They talk to each other, but no longer understand each other. They have lost the ability to *feel with* each other, imprisoned by their own greed at the expense of others. Our brother Jesus once called this greedy acquisitiveness "mammon." He said: "No one can serve two masters . . . you cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24). Mammon, carrying great wealth on its back, exploits, breaks and kills people in order to possess more wealth. This madness for possession divides human communities and finally destroys our fragile earth. This is the evil spirit which produces a missile worth more than a million dollars, nuclear bombs and chemical weapons to keep its peace without justice.

This mammon which divides people is active not just in the Gulf but everywhere. It is in the division of north and south Korea; apartheid in South Africa; genocide of indigenous people in Australia, the Americas and many other parts of the world; devaluation of women and children, people of colour and differently-abled people; first-world dominated, ugly Uruguay Round talks and finally the eco-cide of our earth. This is the same evil spirit which crucified Jesus.

However, the spirit of mammon could not overcome the spirit of our compassionate God. God did not abandon us to despair. God did not allow us to indulge in self-pity as helpless victims. God called us to come out of our prison of despair, cynicism and oppression. God empowered us to choose life. When God's Spirit was upon the people on the day of Pentecost, God confronted their broken hearts and called them into discipleship. Their nightmare of witnessing Jesus' death turned into an apocalyptic vision of a new world. Mary's and Rachael's bitter weeping for their dead children turned into the foundation for building a new community for life. When the life-giving power of the Spirit poured onto the faithful, they saw the vision of a new world:

where their sons and daughters shall prophesy
and their young men shall see visions
and their old men shall dream dreams
and their women and men slaves shall prophesy
(Acts 2: 17-18).

The rush of wild wind and fire for life from God called them out from the culture of silence, violence and death, and called them into speech, the language of their own. They no longer need to communicate with the language of their colonizers, rulers and imperialists. They can hear the good news in their own native languages. The common language they lost at the greedy tower of Babel was restored in a radically new way at Pentecost. Now they can hear each other and understand one another, not with the mono-language of the Roman empire, but with the diversities of languages of their own. It was a language of liberation, connection and unification from below. The wild wind of God breaks down the Babel tower and all the divisions it produced within us, among us and around us. This wild wind of life calls us to be passionate lovers and workers for a new creation.

Call for *Metanoia*: Towards a "Political Economy of Life"

Then what should we do when the spirit calls us? The first thing we should do is repent. While I was preparing for this reflection in Korea, I had a chance to spend some time with Christian grassroots women activists in Korea. I asked them if there was anything they wanted me to say to the Christians from around the world gathered in Canberra with the theme "Come, Holy Spirit—Renew the Whole Creation." They told me: "Tell them they don't have to spend too much energy to call the Spirit because the Spirit is already here with us. Don't bother her by calling her all the time. She is busy working hard with us. The only problem is we do not have eyes to see and ears to hear the Spirit, as we are occupied with our greed. So tell them 'repent!'"²⁵ So, sisters and brothers, I give you a "not-so-pleasant" greeting from my sisters, "Repent!" Indeed repentance is the first step in any truthful prayer. What should we repent about? Many things, but first of all we should repent for our hidden love for mammon and our secret desire for the Babel tower. To prepare the way of the Spirit, we need to be set free from the spell of mammon by emptying ourselves. In Asia the practice of "voluntary poverty" has been the basis of religious life. When we become free from our own greed by practising "voluntary poverty" in every area of our life, we will achieve the moral power to fight against "forced poverty" in all its forms.

Genuine repentance, *metanoia*, also means a radical change of direction in our individual and communal life.

25. These words came from my discussion on the Holy Spirit with my sisters in the Korean Association of Christian Women for Democracy. I especially want to express my appreciation to Sohn Ewn Wha, Myung No Sun, Kho Ae Shin and Kim Jung Soo for their insights.

In order to feel the Holy Spirit, we have to turn ourselves to the direction of the wind of life, the direction the Holy Spirit blows. Which direction is she blowing? It is the direction leading to creating, liberating and sustaining life in its most concrete, tangible and mundane forms. The Holy Spirit empowers us to move in this direction in our struggle for wholeness. This is the Holy Spirit's "political economy of life."²⁶ This is the political economy not based on the power of domination by capital, weapon or manipulation. This political economy is based on the life-giving power of mutuality, interdependence and harmony. If the former is the "political economy of death," the latter is the "political economy of life."

In order to be an active agent for the Spirit's "political economy of life" I envision three most urgent changes we should actualize if we are to have a chance to survive on this dying planet.

The first is the change from *anthropocentrism* to *life-centrism*. One of the most crucial agendas for our generation is to learn how to live with the earth, promoting harmony, sustainability and diversity. Traditional Christian creation theology and Western thinking put the human, especially men, at the centre of the created world, and men have had the power to control and dominate the creation. Modern science and development models are based on this assumption. We should remember, however, that this kind of thinking is alien to many Asian people and the indigenous peoples of the world. For us the earth is the source of life and nature is "sacred, purposeful and full of meaning."²⁷ Human beings are a very small part of nature, not above it. For example, for Filipinos the earth is their mother. They call her *Ina*, which means "mother" in Tagalog. *Ina* is a great goddess from whom all life comes. As you respect your mother, you should respect the earth. Isn't it true also that in the Christian tradition we affirm that we all come from the earth? God made us from the dust of the earth.

If we compress the earth's whole history into twenty-four hours, "organic life would begin only at 5 p.m. . . . mammals would emerge at 11.30 p.m. . . . and from amongst them at only seconds before midnight, our species."²⁸ We are the late-comers on this earth. The earth is not dead. It is "alive" with creative energy. The earth is "Godbreathed," and a "God-infused" place.²⁹ Human beings have exploited and raped the earth for a long time, now is the time that

26 For the term "political economy of life" I am indebted to Korean minjung theologian Suh Kwang Sun.

27 Kwok Pui Lan, unpublished Bible study delivered at the world convocation on "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation" in Seoul, Korea, 8 March 1990.

28. Joanna Macy, *Thinking Like a Mountain*, p. 42.

29. Jay McDaniel, *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 42, No. 2, April 1990, p. 167.

nature and earth are beginning to take revenge on us. They do not give us clean water, air and food any longer since we have sinned against them so extensively.

In the theological world, liberation theologies express the yearning for human wholeness. They echo voices from many oppressed people such as the poor, black, women, indigenous, *dalit* people. They re-read the Bible and reinterpret Christian tradition and theology from their experience of oppression and liberation. This is perhaps the time we have to re-read the Bible from the perspective of birds, water, air, trees and mountains, the most wretched of the earth in our time. Learning to think like a mountain, changing our centre from human beings to all living beings, has become our “responsibility” in order to survive.

The second major change required is the change from the habit of *dualism* to the habit of *interconnection*. In many parts of the world the ways of human life are organized by the assumption of dualism. Our body and our spirit, our emotion and our mind, our world and God, immanence and transcendence, women and men, the black and the white, the poor and the rich, the endless list of division in polarity results in a “split culture,”³⁰ where the latter element of polarity is more valuable and important than the former one. Split culture breeds people of “split personality.” In this culture “we are divided against ourselves.”³¹ We forget that we all come from the same source of life, God, and all the webs of our lives are interconnected. “In the beginning” there was a relationship.³² God’s yearning for relationship with cosmos led to the creation of the whole universe. When God created the universe God liked it and felt it was beautiful. It was beautiful because it was in “right relationship,”³³ no exploitation, no division. It had its own integrity, all beings in the universe danced with the rhythm of God, not against it. However, when the dualistic habit came into the world in the name of science, philosophy and religion, we began to objectify “others” as separate from ourselves. In dualistic thinking others are the objects one can control as one likes. This is the basis of all military action. They shoot the enemy (people) and when the target (people) are destroyed they say they “feel bloody good.”³⁴ There is no balance, mutuality and interdependence in this

30. Susan Griffin, “Split Culture,” in Judith Plant ed., *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of Ecofeminism*, Philadelphia, New Society Publishers, 1989.

31. *Ibid.*, p.7.

32. See Dorothy Soelle, *To Work and To Love: A Theology of Creation*, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1984, for a creation theology based on mutual relationship between God and us.

33. See Carter Heyward, *Our Passion for Justice*, New York, Pilgrim, 1984, for her concept of justice as “right relationship.”

34. This is what a pilot of the allied forces said after bombing Iraq. I saw it in an Australian daily newspaper, 20 January, 1991.

objectification. There is also no ability to feel with others in this thinking. There is only a wall of separation between enemies.

In traditional North East Asian thinking we call life energy *ki*.³⁵ For us *ki* is the breath and wind of life. *Ki* thrives in the harmonious interconnections among sky, earth and people. When there is any division or separation, *ki* (life energy) cannot flow and this leads to the destruction and illness of all living beings. Therefore for us renewal means to break the wall of separation and division so that *ki* can breathe and flow in harmony. If we are to survive we must learn to live with not dividing dualism but integrating the interconnectedness of all beings.

The third change I envision for *metanoia* is change from the *culture of death* to the *culture of life*. What is happening right now in the Persian Gulf shows the best example of the “culture of death.” The way the conflict is solved is through killing the enemy. By eliminating the conflicting part they think they will achieve peace. Peace achieved by this kind of violence, however, will only lead the world into greater oppression. No cause can justify the innocent shedding of blood in a war. Who goes to the war and whose blood is shed, in any case? Mostly young people from poor families. Many of them are people of colour. Why do they go to war? For the economic and political interest of the few in power, who are mostly older people, and not to further their own interests.

War is the consequence of the patriarchal culture of “power-over.” In the patriarchal culture of hierarchy, winning for the dominant group’s interest is more important than saving life. Throughout human history, women have been crying over the death, in war, of their beloved brothers, husbands and sons. Women know that patriarchy means death. When their men shed blood, women shed tears. Their powerful tears have been the redemptive, life-giving energy for the tearless men’s history. Indeed weeping has been “the first prophetic action”³⁶ in human history. Only when we have an ability to *suffer with* others (*compassion*) can we transform the “culture of death” to the “culture of life.”

Korean church women declared that they would carry on the movement for “life-promoting culture.” They also work for the “year of jubilee” declared by the Korean National Council of Churches. The “year of jubilee” for us

35. For this understanding of *ki* I am indebted to Korean minjung theologian and New Testament scholar Ahn Byung Mu. I learned about the similar nature of *ki* and *ruach* from Dr Ahn’s lecture on “*ki* and the Holy Spirit” presented at the theological preparation meeting for the seventh assembly of the WCC, organized by the Korean National Council of Churches.

36. See Walter Brueggeman, *The Prophetic Imagination*, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1978.

is the year 1995 which is the fiftieth year of our division into north and south Korea. This division, brought about by the world power struggle between East and West, has been the source of death for Korean people. The truce line between the north and south suffocated our *ki* (life energy) and put us under the constant oppression of the national security law and the threat of war. In the jubilee year we want unification of our people. We want to recover our ability to feel with and to suffer with our North Korean sisters and brothers through our intertwining of “culture of life” and “jubilee” movements to bring about unification. The movement for justice, peace and a healthy ecology all over the world is a movement for life. Without justice, peace and the integrity of creation, there is no “culture of life.”

Break Down the Wall with Wisdom and Compassion

I want to close my reflection on the Holy Spirit by sharing with you my image of the Holy Spirit from my cultural background. This image embodies for me the three changes of direction I have described as necessary for *metanoia*: life-centrism, the habit of interconnection and the culture of life. The image does not come from my academic training as a systematic theologian but from my gut feeling, deep in my people’s collective unconsciousness that comes from thousands of years of spirituality.

For me the image of the Holy Spirit comes from the image of *Kwan In*. She is venerated as the goddess of compassion and wisdom by East Asian women’s popular religiosity. She is a *bodhisattva*, enlightened being. She can go into nirvana any time she wants to, but refuses to go into nirvana by herself. Her compassion for all suffering beings makes her stay in this world enabling other living beings to achieve enlightenment. Her compassionate wisdom heals all forms of life and empowers them to swim to the shore of nirvana. She waits and waits until the whole universe, people, trees, birds, mountains, air, water, become enlightened. They can then go to nirvana together where they can live collectively in eternal wisdom and compassion. Perhaps this might also be a feminine image of the Christ who is the first-born among us, one who goes before and brings others with her.

Dear sisters and brothers, with the energy of the Holy Spirit let us tear apart all walls of division and the “culture of death” which separate us. And let us participate in the Holy Spirit’s political economy of life fighting for our life on this earth in solidarity with all living beings, and building communities for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. Wild wind of the Holy Spirit, blow to us. Let us welcome her, letting ourselves go in her wild rhythm of life. Come Holy Spirit, Renew the Whole Creation. Amen!

90. Robert Schreiter, “Reconciliation as a New Paradigm of Mission,” Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, Athens, 2005

Robert Schreiter, a Catholic priest and member of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, is author of numerous books and articles on the theme of reconciliation. This address, delivered at the world mission conference in 2005, explores the process of reconciliation as a central theme of mission. • Come Holy Spirit, Heal and Reconcile! Report of the WCC Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, Athens, 2005, ed. Jacques Matthey, Geneva, WCC, 2008, pp. 213-19.

The Emergence of Reconciliation in the Discussion of Mission

There have been references and echoes of the theme of reconciliation in the theological discussion of mission throughout the previous century, but it is only in the last decade and a half that it has emerged as an important way of talking about Christian mission. David Bosch’s 1992 magisterial work, *Transforming Mission*, makes no mention of it. Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder’s recent book, *Constants in Context* published in 2004, on the other hand, has multiple references to reconciliation. What has happened?

It has been the experience of trying to come to terms with a violent past, the need to end hostility, and the long work of reconstructing broken societies that have pushed reconciliation forward into the attention of many people, especially those concerned with the work of the Church. The fact that many recent conferences on mission have been taking up this theme, and that it figures into the title and preparatory documents of this Conference, indicates how far we have come.

In this presentation, I would like to explore how reconciliation might be seen as a paradigm or model of mission. I begin with looking at how the idea of reconciliation might be seen as revealing to us the heart of the Gospel. Then I will look at the understanding of reconciliation today, both as a *process* for engaging in mission and as the *goal* of mission.

Reconciliation: Heart of Gospel

Although the word “reconciliation” does not occur as such in the Hebrew Scriptures, and only fourteen times in the New Testament, the Bible is replete with stories of reconciliation, from the stories of Esau and Jacob, and Joseph and his brothers, to Jesus’ parables, especially that of the Prodigal Son. These stories lay out for us the struggle that goes on in trying to achieve reconciliation. Many of them end before reconciliation is actually reached—something that mirrors much of our own experience.

It is the Apostle Paul, especially, that sets out for us the Christian understanding of reconciliation. For Paul, God is the author of reconciliation. About this he has no doubt. We but participate in what God is bringing about in our world. One can discern three processes of reconciliation in which God is engaged. The first is God’s reconciling a sinful humanity to God’s own self. This is set forth especially in Paul’s Letter to the Romans (5:1-11), where Paul describes the peace we now have with God, who has poured out love in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. We have been reconciled to God through the death of the Son, Jesus Christ. It is through Christ that we have now received reconciliation. This act of God reconciling us, rescuing us from our sin, is sometimes called *vertical reconciliation*. As such, it is the basis for all other forms of Christian reconciliation. It is also central to Paul’s own experience of Christ, having been converted from the persecution of the church to being made, “out of due time,” an apostle of Jesus Christ.

The second kind of reconciliation of which Paul speaks is brought about between individual human beings and groups in society. The paramount example of this reconciliation is between Jews and Gentiles. Here the description of how this reconciliation is effected through the blood of Christ is presented in Ephesians (2:12-20), the Gentiles, without hope or promise, are made alive together in Christ, who has broken down the wall of hostility that divided them, and made them fellow citizens in the household of God. This second kind of reconciliation is sometimes called *horizontal reconciliation*.

The third kind of reconciliation situates God’s work through Christ in the context of the whole of creation. In the hymns beginning the letters to the Ephesians and Colossians, God is seen as reconciling all things and all persons—whether in heaven or on earth—in Christ (Eph. 1:10), making peace to reign throughout all creation through the blood of Christ’s cross (Col. 1:20). This kind of reconciliation is sometimes called *cosmic reconciliation* and represents the fullness of God’s plan for creation, to be realized at the end of time.

Paul sees the church participating in the reconciling work of God through a ministry of reconciliation, captured succinctly in Paul’s presentation of this in 2 Corinthians (5: 17-20):

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All of this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

It is the vertical reconciliation that makes the horizontal and cosmic dimensions possible. It is within this framework of vertical, horizontal, and cosmic reconciliation that we are to see Christian mission. That mission is rooted in the *missio Dei*, the going forth of the Holy Trinity in the acts of creation, incarnation, redemption, and consummation. Through the Son, God has brought reconciliation to the world, overcoming sin, disobedience and alienation that we have wrought. Christ reunites us with God through his saving death, which God confirms in the resurrection and the revelation of transfigured life. The Holy Spirit empowers the church to participate in this ministry of the Son and the Spirit in reconciling the world. The church itself is in need of constant reconciliation, but becomes the vehicle for God’s saving grace to come to a broken and disheartened world. One might summarize this biblical understanding of reconciliation under five brief headings:

1. God is the author of all genuine reconciliation. We but participate in God’s reconciling work. We are, in Paul’s words, “ambassadors of Christ” (2 Cor. 5:20).

2. God’s first concern in the reconciliation process is about the healing of the victims. This grows out of two experiences: the God of the great prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures and the God of Jesus Christ cares especially about the poor and the oppressed. Second, so often the wrongdoers do not repent, and the healing of the victim cannot be held hostage by unrepentant wrongdoers.

3. In reconciliation, God makes of both victim and wrongdoer a “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17). This means two things. First of all, in profound wrongdoing it is impossible to go back to where we were before the wrongdoing took place; to do such would be to trivialize the gravity of what has been done. We can only go forward to a new

place. Second, God wants both the healing of the victim and the repentance of the wrongdoer. Neither should be annihilated; both should be brought to a new place, a new creation.

4. Christians find a way through their suffering by placing it in the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ. It is this pattern of our suffering in that of Christ that helps us escape its destructive power. It also engenders in us hope.

5. Reconciliation will only be complete when all things are brought together in Christ (Eph. 1:10). Until that time we experience only partial reconciliation, but live in hope.

The Ministry of Reconciliation as Process

How does the church participate in this reconciliation? What concrete forms does it take? Because of the wider interest in reconciliation in the world today—it is far from being only a Christian concern—the language of reconciliation is often unclear. At times it has been manipulated and distorted to serve other ends. As Christians we need to be as clear as we can about what we mean by reconciliation and how we go about the ministry of reconciliation.

Let me begin by saying that reconciliation is both a process and a goal. It is both an ongoing work in which we participate and a final point at which we hope to arrive. Let us first look at it as a process. I will focus here on the horizontal or social dimension of reconciliation. The church participates in the vertical dimension through its sacraments and in the cosmic dimension as well, both in its liturgy and its concern for all of creation. These too constitute part of reconciliation as a model of mission. But, because the thinking on the horizontal dimension is more recent and new to many, I will devote more time to it here.

Participation in the horizontal dimension of reconciliation is about participating in God's healing societies that have been wounded deeply and broken by oppression, injustice, discrimination, war and wanton destruction. This healing begins with *truth-telling*, the breaking of the codes of silence that hide wrongdoing against the poor and vulnerable members of society. Truth-telling also means overcoming and correcting the lies and distortions that bring unearned shame on the innocent and isolate people from one another so as to exercise hegemony over society. Truth-telling has to be a constant effort to tell the whole truth, both for victims and about wrongdoers. Truth-telling as a practice in this sense must encompass four things: a truth that resonates with my experience of events, in language I can understand, conforming to my understanding of truthfulness, and from someone I can trust.

For a Christian, truth-telling is more than relating facts in a credible manner. It involves also God, who is

the author of all truth. Truth in its Hebrew sense (*'emet*) is part of the nature of God: it is reliable, it is enduring, it is steadfast, and it is faithful. It is truth-telling at this deep, theological level that is the basis for healing a broken society. What that means on a practical level is that the church must endeavour to create safe, hospitable spaces where truth can be spoken and heard, where the silence can be broken, where pernicious lies can be undone and overcome.

With truth comes the *pursuit of justice*. To seek justice without efforts to establish truth runs the risk of engaging in vengeance instead of true justice. The struggle for justice (and it is a struggle, wrongdoing does not give up easily) is many faceted. It involves *punitive justice* that punishes wrongdoers in a lawful way to mark that a renewed society acknowledges the wrongdoing that has been done and will not tolerate it in the future. Second, it involves *restorative justice* which restores the dignity and the rights of the victim. Third, it requires *distributive justice*, since the unjust wresting away of the goods of the victim makes healing and the creation of a just society nearly impossible. Finally, it requires *structural justice*, that is, the restructuring of the institutions and processes of society so that just action becomes part of the rebuilt society. Reallocating resources, equity in human rights, guaranteed access to health, shelter, food, education and employment are all parts of creating a just society.

A third aspect of reconciliation as a process is the *rebuilding of relationships*. Without relations of equity and trust, a society quickly slides back into violence. Work on these relationships has to happen at many levels. For victims, it involves the *healing of memories* so that one does not remain beholden or hostage to the past. It is an overcoming of the toxin that memories of violence, oppression, and marginalization contain. It means *repentance and conversion* on the part of those who have done wrong, acknowledging the wrongdoing and taking the steps to approach the victim in order to apologize and make reparation.

It means making the difficult journey toward forgiveness. Here the process of rebuilding relationships is often short-circuited. Amnesty is given or impunity is bestowed to wrongdoers even before the victims are allowed to speak. A shroud of forgetfulness and oblivion is drawn over the past. Forgiveness is not about forgetting, but coming to remember in a different way—a way that removes the toxin from the experience for the victim and creates the space for repentance and apology by the wrongdoer. Forgiveness means remembering the past, but remembering it in a way that makes a different kind of future possible for both victim and the wrongdoer.

Reconciliation as Goal

Truth-telling, struggling for justice, working toward forgiveness: these are the three central dimensions of the social process of reconciliation. In all situations I know, they are never undertaken on a level playing field; the consequences of oppression, violence, and war are not predisposed to honesty, justice, and even good intentions in all parties. Nor are the processes, for the most part, orderly. And they never seem to be complete. In fact, we usually experience them as truncated, prematurely foreclosed, hijacked by the powerful. What are we to do?

This brings me to the other understanding of reconciliation: namely, reconciliation as goal. Talk of reconciliation often skips too easily from the end of overt violence to an imagined peace. It circumvents the messy and protracted process of truth-telling, seeking justice, working toward forgiveness. We expect that peace will blossom and flourish after long periods of war. We expect democracy to rise up, phoenix-like, from the ashes of dictatorship and authoritarian rule. But such is not the case. We can find ourselves acquiescing in half-measures, half-truths, compromised solutions.

It is important not to confuse reconciliation as process with reconciliation as goal. In order to stay in the process, we must fix our eyes on the goal. For Christians, it is God who is working reconciliation; we are but agents in the process, participating in what God is doing. God is our strength; God is our hope. It is God who is bringing this about. Here we experience the difference between optimism and hope. Optimism is what grows out of the confidence in our own resources and capacities. It comes out of us. The enormity of wrong and sin that we face in protracted war and oppression far exceeds what we are able to accomplish. Hope, on the other hand, comes from God. It is God drawing us forward, like he did Abraham and Sarah. We live in faith, the assurance of things hoped for (cf. Heb. 11:1). With our eyes fixed on God and God's promises, we can maintain the strength of heart, of mind, and of will to continue our participation in what God is doing for the world.

The Church: A Community of Memory and of Hope

So where does this place the church? Its participation in the *missio Dei*, understood here as God's reconciling the world to God's own self, is marked especially by two things. The ministry of reconciliation makes of the church, first of all, a community of memory and, second, a community of hope. Its mission, in word and deed, of the message of reconciliation makes possible what is perhaps for many the

most intense experience of God possible in our troubled, broken world.

The church is first of all a community of memory. It does not engage in the forgetfulness urged by the powerful upon the vulnerable and poor—to forget their sufferings, to erase their memories of what has been done to them, to act as though wrongdoing never happened. The church as a community of memory creates those safe spaces where memories can be spoken of out loud, and begin the difficult and long process of overcoming the rightful anger that, if left unacknowledged, can poison any possibilities for the future. In safe spaces, the trust that has been sundered, the dignity that has been denied and wrested away, has the chance of being reborn. A community of memory is concerned too about truthful memory, not the distorting lies that serve the interests of the wrongdoer at the cost of the victim. A community of memory keeps the focus of memory as it pursues justice in all its dimensions—punitive, restorative, distributive, structural. Not to pursue and struggle for justice makes the truth-telling sound false and the safe spaces created barren. A community of memory is concerned too with the future of memory, that is, the prospects of forgiveness and what lies beyond. The difficult ministry of memory, if it may be called that, is possible because it is grounded in the memory of the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ: the One who was without sin and was made sin for us, so that we might become the justice of God (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21).

Living in the memory of what Christ has gone through—suffering and death, yet not forgotten and indeed raised up by God—is the source of our hope. Hope allows us to keep the vision of a reconciled world alive, not in some facile utopian fashion, but grounded in the memory of what God has done in Jesus Christ. Paul captures this well in another passage in 2 Corinthians: “But we hold this treasure in clay vessels, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies” (2 Cor. 4:7-10).

Reconciliation belongs to God, not to us. Despite all we go through, we do not lose heart, since we carry the death of Jesus in our bodies, so that through us his life might be made visible. This is the vocation of the church, its calling to the ministry of reconciliation, its proclamation of the death and resurrection of Christ in the church's own body. If we so preach with our bodies, God's reconciling work can be made known to a broken world. Mission, as our Orthodox brothers and sisters have so helpfully

reminded us, is the liturgy after the liturgy. Our action is not just political action or action for justice (although it is also all of these). It is participation in something much larger than ourselves: the work of the Triune God in bringing about the healing of the world.

91. "The Cape Town Commitment," Part II, The Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization, Cape Town, 2010

This statement of commitment with regard to mission and evangelism stands in continuity with other texts from the Lausanne Movement: the Lausanne Covenant (1974) and the Manila Manifesto (1989). Taken together, they represent an "evangelical" alternative (though often a complementary one) to the statements on mission produced by the WCC. • <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/ctcommitment.html>

PREAMBLE

. . . The Realities of Change

Almost everything about the way we live, think and relate to one another is changing at an accelerating pace. For good or ill, we feel the impact of globalization, of the digital revolution, and of the changing balance of economic and political power in the world. Some things we face cause us grief and anxiety—global poverty, war, ethnic conflict, disease, the ecological crisis and climate change. But one great change in our world is a cause for rejoicing—and that is the growth of the global Church of Christ.

The fact that the Third Lausanne Congress has taken place in Africa is proof of this. At least two thirds of all the world's Christians now live in the continents of the global south and east. The composition of our Cape Town Congress reflected this enormous shift in world Christianity in the century since the Edinburgh Missionary Conference in 1910. We rejoice in the amazing growth of the Church in Africa, and we rejoice that our African sisters and brothers in Christ hosted this Congress. At the same time, we could not meet in South Africa without being mindful of the past years of suffering under apartheid. So we give thanks for the progress of the gospel and the sovereign righteousness

of God at work in recent history, while wrestling still with the ongoing legacy of evil and injustice. Such is the double witness and role of the Church in every place.

We must respond in Christian mission to the realities of our own generation. We must also learn from that mixture of wisdom and error, of achievement and failure, that we inherit from previous generations. We honour and lament the past, and we engage with the future, in the name of the God who holds all history in his hand.

Unchanged Realities

In a world which works to re-invent itself at an ever-accelerated pace, some things remain the same. These great truths provide the biblical rationale for our missional engagement.

- *Human beings are lost.* The underlying human predicament remains as the Bible describes it: we stand under the just judgment of God in our sin and rebellion, and without Christ we are without hope.
- *The gospel is good news.* The gospel is not a concept that needs fresh ideas, but a story that needs fresh telling. It is the unchanged story of what God has done to save the world, supremely in the historical events of the life, death, resurrection, and reign of Jesus Christ. In Christ there is hope.
- *The Church's mission goes on.* The mission of God continues to the ends of the earth and to the end of the world. The day will come when the kingdoms of the world will become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ and God will dwell with his redeemed humanity in the new creation. Until that day, the Church's participation in God's mission continues, in joyful urgency, and with fresh and exciting opportunities in every generation including our own.

The Passion of Our Love

This Statement is framed in the language of love. Love is the language of covenant. The biblical covenants, old and new, are the expression of God's redeeming love and grace reaching out to lost humanity and spoiled creation. They call for our love in return. Our love shows itself in trust, obedience and passionate commitment to our covenant Lord. *The Lausanne Covenant* defined evangelization as "*the whole Church taking the whole gospel to the whole world.*" That is still our passion. So we renew that covenant by affirming again:

- *Our love for the whole gospel*, as God's glorious good news in Christ, for every dimension of his creation, for it has all been ravaged by sin and evil;
- *Our love for the whole Church*, as God's people, redeemed by Christ from every nation on earth and every age of history, to share God's mission in this age and glorify him for ever in the age to come;
- *Our love for the whole world*, so far from God but so close to his heart, the world that God so loved that he gave his only Son for its salvation.

In the grip of that three-fold love, we commit ourselves afresh to *be* the whole Church, to *believe, obey, and share* the whole gospel, and to *go* to the whole world to make disciples of all nations.

FOR THE LORD WE LOVE: THE CAPE TOWN CONFESSION OF FAITH

. . .7. We Love God's World

*We share God's passion for his world, loving all that God has made, rejoicing in God's providence and justice throughout his creation, proclaiming the good news to all creation and all nations, and longing for the day when the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God as the waters cover the sea.*³⁷

A) *We love the world of God's creation.* This love is not mere sentimental affection for nature (which the Bible nowhere commands), still less is it pantheistic worship of nature (which the Bible expressly forbids). Rather it is the logical outworking of our love for God by caring for what belongs to him. "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it." The earth is the property of the God we claim to love and obey. We care for the earth, most simply, because it belongs to the one whom we call Lord.³⁸

The earth is created, sustained and redeemed by Christ.³⁹ We cannot claim to love God while abusing what belongs to Christ by right of creation, redemption and inheritance. We care for the earth and responsibly use its abundant resources, not according to the rationale of the secular world, but for the Lord's sake. If Jesus is Lord of all the earth, we cannot separate our relationship to Christ from how we act in relation to the earth. For to proclaim the gospel that says "Jesus is Lord" is to proclaim the gospel

that includes the earth, since Christ's Lordship is over all creation. Creation care is thus a gospel issue within the Lordship of Christ.

Such love for God's creation demands that we repent of our part in the destruction, waste and pollution of the earth's resources and our collusion in the toxic idolatry of consumerism. Instead, we commit ourselves to urgent and prophetic ecological responsibility. We support Christians whose particular missional calling is to environmental advocacy and action, as well as those committed to godly fulfilment of the mandate to provide for human welfare and needs by exercising responsible dominion and stewardship. The Bible declares God's redemptive purpose for *creation* itself. Integral mission means discerning, proclaiming, and living out, the biblical truth that the gospel is God's good news, through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, for individual persons, *and* for society, *and* for creation. All three are broken and suffering because of sin; all three are included in the redeeming love and mission of God; all three must be part of the comprehensive mission of God's people.

B) *We love the world of nations and cultures.* "From one man, God made all nations of humanity, to live on the whole face of the earth." Ethnic diversity is the gift of God in creation and will be preserved in the new creation, when it will be liberated from our fallen divisions and rivalry. Our love for all peoples reflects God's promise to bless all nations on earth and God's mission to create for himself a people drawn from every tribe, language, nation and people. We must love all that God has chosen to bless, which includes all cultures. Historically, Christian mission, though flawed by destructive failures, has been instrumental in protecting and preserving indigenous cultures and their languages. Godly love, however, also includes critical discernment, for all cultures show not only positive evidence of the image of God in human lives, but also the negative fingerprints of Satan and sin. We long to see the gospel embodied and embedded in all cultures, redeeming them from within so that they may display the glory of God and the radiant fullness of Christ. We look forward to the wealth, glory and splendour of all cultures being brought into the city of God—redeemed and purged of all sin, enriching the new creation.⁴⁰

Such love for all peoples demands that we reject the evils of racism and ethnocentrism, and treat every ethnic and cultural group with dignity and respect, on the grounds of their value to God in creation and redemption.⁴¹

37. Psalm 145:9, 13, 17; Psalm 104:27-30; Psalm 50:6; Mark 16:15; Colossians 1:23; Matthew 28:17-20; Habakkuk 2:14.

38. Psalm 24:1; Deuteronomy 10:14.

39. Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1:2-3.

40. Acts 17:26; Deuteronomy 32:8; Genesis 10:31-32; 12:3; Revelation 7:9-10; Revelation 21:24-27.

41. Acts 10:35; 14:17; 17:27.

Such love also demands that we seek to make the gospel known among every people and culture everywhere. No nation, Jew or Gentile, is exempt from the scope of the great commission. Evangelism is the outflow of hearts that are filled with the love of God for those who do not yet know him. We confess with shame that there are still very many peoples in the world who have never yet heard the message of God's love in Jesus Christ. We renew the commitment that has inspired The Lausanne Movement from its beginning, to use every means possible to reach all peoples with the gospel.

C) *We love the world's poor and suffering.* The Bible tells us that the Lord is loving toward all he has made, upholds the cause of the oppressed, loves the foreigner, feeds the hungry, sustains the fatherless and widow.⁴² The Bible also shows that God wills to do these things through human beings committed to such action. God holds responsible especially those who are appointed to political or judicial leadership in society,⁴³ but all God's people are commanded—by the law and prophets, Psalms and Wisdom, Jesus and Paul, James and John—to reflect the love and justice of God in practical love and justice for the needy.⁴⁴

Such love for the poor demands that we not only love mercy and deeds of compassion, but also that we do justice through exposing and opposing all that oppresses and exploits the poor. “We must not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist.”⁴⁵ We confess with shame that on this matter we fail to share God's passion, fail to embody God's love, fail to reflect God's character and fail to do God's will. We give ourselves afresh to the promotion of justice, including solidarity and advocacy on behalf of the marginalized and oppressed. We recognize such struggle against evil as a dimension of spiritual warfare that can only be waged through the victory of the cross and resurrection, in the power of the Holy Spirit, and with constant prayer.

D) *We love our neighbours as ourselves.* Jesus called his disciples to obey this commandment as the second greatest in the law, but then he radically deepened the demand (from the same chapter), “love the foreigner as yourself” into “love your enemies.”⁴⁶

42. Psalms 145:9, 13, 17; 147:7-9; Deuteronomy 10:17-18.

43. Genesis 18:19; Exodus 23:6-9; Deuteronomy 16:18-20; Job 29:7-17; Psalms 72:4, 12-14; 82; Proverbs 31:4-9; Jeremiah 22:1-3; Daniel 4:27.

44. Exodus 22:21-27; Leviticus 19:33-34; Deuteronomy 10:18-19; 15:7-11; Isaiah 1:16-17; 58:6-9; Amos 5:11-15, 21-24; Psalm 112; Job 31:13-23; Proverbs 14:31; 19:17; 29:7; Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 14:12-14; Galatians 2:10; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Romans 15:25-27; 1 Timothy 6:17-19; James 1:27; 2:14-17; 1 John 3:16-18.

45. *The Lausanne Covenant* Paragraph 5.

46. Leviticus 19:34; Matthew 5:43-4.

Such love for our neighbours demands that we respond to all people out of the heart of the gospel, in obedience to Christ's command and following Christ's example. This love for our neighbours embraces people of other faiths, and extends to those who hate us, slander and persecute us, and even kill us. Jesus taught us to respond to lies with truth, to those doing evil with acts of kindness, mercy and forgiveness, to violence and murder against his disciples with self-sacrifice, in order to draw people to him and to break the chain of evil. We emphatically reject the way of violence in the spread of the gospel, and renounce the temptation to retaliate with revenge against those who do us wrong. Such disobedience is incompatible with the example and teaching of Christ and the New Testament.⁴⁷ At the same time, our loving duty towards our suffering neighbours requires us to seek justice on their behalf through proper appeal to legal and state authorities who function as God's servants in punishing wrongdoers.⁴⁸

E) *The world we do not love.* The world of God's good creation has become the world of human and satanic rebellion against God. We are commanded *not* to love that world of sinful desire, greed, and human pride. We confess with sorrow that exactly those marks of worldliness so often disfigure our Christian presence and deny our gospel witness.⁴⁹

We commit ourselves afresh not to flirt with the fallen world and its transient passions, but to love the whole world as God loves it. So we love the world in holy longing for the redemption and renewal of all creation and all cultures in Christ, the ingathering of God's people from all nations to the ends of the earth, and the ending of all destruction, poverty, and enmity.

8. We Love the Gospel of God

As disciples of Jesus, we are gospel people. The core of our identity is our passion for the biblical good news of the saving work of God through Jesus Christ. We are united by our experience of the grace of God in the gospel and by our motivation to make that gospel of grace known to the ends of the earth by every possible means.

A) *We love the good news in a world of bad news.* The gospel addresses the dire effects of human sin, failure and need. Human beings rebelled against God, rejected God's authority and disobeyed God's Word. In this sinful state, we are alienated from God, from one another and from the created order. Sin deserves God's condemnation. Those

47. Matthew 5:38-39; Luke 6:27-29; 23:34; Romans 12:17-21; 1 Peter 3:18-23; 4:12-16.

48. Romans 13:4.

49. 1 John 2:15-17.

who refuse to repent and “do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ will be punished with eternal destruction and shut out from the presence of God.”⁵⁰ The effects of sin and the power of evil have corrupted every dimension of human personhood (spiritual, physical, intellectual and relational). They have permeated cultural, economic, social, political and religious life through all cultures and all generations of history. They have caused incalculable misery to the human race and damage to God’s creation. Against this bleak background, the biblical gospel is indeed very good news.

B) *We love the story the gospel tells.* The gospel announces as good news the historical events of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. As the son of David, the promised Messiah King, Jesus is the one through whom alone God established his kingdom and acted for the salvation of the world, enabling all nations on earth to be blessed, as he promised Abraham. Paul defines the gospel in stating that “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day, according to the scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter and then to the Twelve.” The gospel declares that, on the cross of Christ, God took upon himself, in the person of his Son and in our place, the judgment our sin deserves. In the same great saving act, completed, vindicated and declared through the resurrection, God won the decisive victory over Satan, death and all evil powers, liberated us from their power and fear, and ensured their eventual destruction. God accomplished the reconciliation of believers with himself and with one another across all boundaries and enmities. God also accomplished his purpose of the ultimate reconciliation of all creation, and in the bodily resurrection of Jesus has given us the first fruits of the new creation. “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.”⁵¹ How we love the gospel story!

C) *We love the assurance the gospel brings.* Solely through trusting in Christ alone, we are united with Christ through the Holy Spirit and are counted righteous in Christ before God. Being justified by faith we have peace with God and no longer face condemnation. We receive the forgiveness of our sins. We are born again into a living hope by sharing Christ’s risen life. We are adopted as fellow heirs with Christ. We become citizens of God’s covenant people, members of God’s family and the place of God’s dwelling. So by trusting in Christ, we have full assurance of salvation and eternal life, for our salvation ultimately depends, not on ourselves, but on the work of Christ and the promise of God. “Nothing in all creation will be able to separate

50. Genesis 3; 2 Thessalonians 1:9.
51. Mark 1:1, 14-15; Romans 1:1-4; Romans 4; 1 Corinthians 15:3-5; 1 Peter 2:24; Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14-15; Ephesians 2:14-18; Colossians 1:20; 2 Corinthians 5:19.

us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”⁵² How we love the gospel’s promise!

D) *We love the transformation the gospel produces.* The gospel is God’s life-transforming power at work in the world. “It is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.”⁵³ Faith alone is the means by which the blessings and assurance of the gospel are received. Saving faith however never remains alone, but necessarily shows itself in obedience. Christian obedience is “faith expressing itself through love.”⁵⁴ We are not saved *by* good works, but having been saved by grace alone we are “created in Christ Jesus *to do* good works.”⁵⁵ “Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”⁵⁶ Paul saw the ethical transformation that the gospel produces as the work of God’s grace—grace which achieved our salvation at Christ’s first coming, and grace that teaches us to live ethically in the light of his second coming.⁵⁷ For Paul, “obeying the gospel” meant both trusting in grace, and then being taught by grace.⁵⁸ Paul’s missional goal was to bring about “the obedience of faith” among all nations.⁵⁹ This strongly covenantal language recalls Abraham. Abraham believed God’s promise, which was credited to him as righteousness, and then obeyed God’s command in demonstration of his faith. “By faith Abraham . . . obeyed.”⁶⁰ Repentance and faith in Jesus Christ are the first acts of obedience the gospel calls for; ongoing obedience to God’s commands is the way of life that gospel faith enables, through the sanctifying Holy Spirit.⁶¹ Obedience is thus the living proof of saving faith and the living fruit of it. Obedience is also the test of our love for Jesus. “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me.”⁶² “We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.”⁶³ How we love the gospel’s power!

52. Romans 4; Philippians 3:1-11; Romans 5:1-2; 8:1-4; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:13-14; 1 Peter 1:3; Galatians 3:26-4:7; Ephesians 2:19-22; John 20:30-31; 1 John 5:12-13; Romans 8:31-39.

53. Romans 1:16.

54. Galatians 5:6.

55. Ephesians 2:10.

56. James 2:17.

57. Titus 2:11-14.

58. Romans 15:18-19; 16:19; 2 Corinthians 9:13.

59. Romans 1:5; 16:26.

60. Genesis 15:6; Galatians 6:6-9; Hebrews 11:8; Genesis 22:15-18; James 2:20-24.

61. Romans 8:4.

62. John 14:21.

63. 1 John 2:3.

9. We Love the People of God

The people of God are those from all ages and all nations whom God in Christ has loved, chosen, called, saved and sanctified as a people for his own possession, to share in the glory of Christ as citizens of the new creation. As those, then, whom God has loved from eternity to eternity and throughout all our turbulent and rebellious history, we are commanded to love one another. For “since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another,” and thereby “be imitators of God . . . and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us” Love for one another in the family of God is not merely a desirable option but an inescapable command. Such love is the first evidence of obedience to the gospel, the necessary expression of our submission to Christ’s Lordship, and a potent engine of world mission.⁶⁴

A) *Love calls for unity.* Jesus’ command that his disciples should love one another is linked to his prayer that they should be one. Both the command and the prayer are missional—“that the world may know you are my disciples,” and that “the world may know that you [the Father] sent me.”⁶⁵ A most powerfully convincing mark of the truth of the gospel is when Christian believers are united in love across the barriers of the world’s inveterate divisions—barriers of race, colour, gender, social class, economic privilege or political alignment. However, few things so destroy our testimony as when Christians mirror and amplify the very same divisions among themselves. We urgently seek a new global partnership within the body of Christ across all continents, rooted in profound mutual love, mutual submission, and dramatic economic sharing without paternalism or unhealthy dependency. And we seek this not only as a demonstration of our unity in the gospel, but also for the sake of the name of Christ and the mission of God in all the world.

B) *Love calls for honesty.* Love speaks truth with grace. No one loved God’s people more than the prophets of Israel and Jesus himself. Yet no one confronted them more honestly with the truth of their failure, idolatry and rebellion against their covenant Lord. And in doing so, they called God’s people to repent, so that they could be forgiven and restored to the service of God’s mission. The same voice of prophetic love must be heard today, for the same reason. Our love for the Church of God aches with grief over the ugliness among us that so disfigures the face of our dear Lord Jesus Christ and hides his beauty from the world—the world that so desperately needs to be drawn to him.

C) *Love calls for solidarity.* Loving one another includes especially caring for those who are persecuted and in prison

for their faith and witness. If one part of the body suffers, all parts suffer with it. We are all, like John, “companions in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus.”⁶⁶ We commit ourselves to share in the suffering of members of the body of Christ throughout the world, through information, prayer, advocacy, and other means of support. We see such sharing, however, not merely as an exercise of pity, but longing also to learn what the suffering Church can teach and give to those parts of Christ’s body that are not suffering in the same way. We are warned that the Church that feels itself at ease in its wealth and self-sufficiency may, like Laodicea, be the Church that Jesus sees as the most blind to its own poverty, and from which he himself feels a stranger outside the door.⁶⁷

Jesus calls all his disciples together to be one family among the nations, a reconciled fellowship in which all sinful barriers are broken down through his reconciling grace. This Church is a community of grace, obedience and love in the communion of the Holy Spirit, in which the glorious attributes of God and gracious characteristics of Christ are reflected and God’s multi-coloured wisdom is displayed. As the most vivid present expression of the kingdom of God, the Church is the community of the reconciled who no longer live for themselves, but for the Saviour who loved them and gave himself for them.

10. We Love the Mission of God

We are committed to world mission, because it is central to our understanding of God, the Bible, the Church, human history and the ultimate future. The whole Bible reveals the mission of God to bring all things in heaven and earth into unity under Christ, reconciling them through the blood of his cross. In fulfilling his mission, God will transform the creation broken by sin and evil into the new creation in which there is no more sin or curse. God will fulfil his promise to Abraham to bless all nations on the earth, through the gospel of Jesus, the Messiah, the seed of Abraham. God will transform the fractured world of nations that are scattered under the judgment of God into the new humanity that will be redeemed by the blood of Christ from every tribe, nation, people and language, and will be gathered to worship our God and Saviour. God will destroy the reign of death, corruption and violence when Christ returns to establish his eternal reign of life, justice and peace. Then God, Immanuel, will dwell with us, and the kingdom of the world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ and he shall reign for ever and ever.⁶⁸

66. Hebrews 13:1-3; 1 Corinthians 12:26; Revelation 1:9.

67. Revelation 3:17-20.

68. Ephesians 1:9-10; Colossians 1:20; Genesis 1-12; Revelation 21-22.

64. 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 1 John 4:11; Ephesians 5:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 4:9-10; John 13:35.

65. 29 John 13:34-35; 17:21.

A) *Our participation in God's mission.* God calls his people to share his mission. The Church from all nations stands in continuity through the Messiah Jesus with God's people in the Old Testament. With them we have been called through Abraham and commissioned to be a blessing and a light to the nations. With them, we are to be shaped and taught through the law and the prophets to be a community of holiness, compassion and justice in a world of sin and suffering. We have been redeemed through the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit to bear witness to what God has done in Christ. The Church exists to worship and glorify God for all eternity and to participate in the transforming mission of God within history. Our mission is wholly derived from God's mission, addresses the whole of God's creation, and is grounded at its centre in the redeeming victory of the cross. This is the people to whom we belong, whose faith we confess and whose mission we share.

B) *The integrity of our mission.* The source of all our mission is what God has done in Christ for the redemption of the whole world, as revealed in the Bible. Our evangelistic task is to make that good news known to all nations. The *context* of all our mission is the world in which we live, the world of sin, suffering, injustice, and creational disorder, into which God sends us to love and serve for Christ's sake. All our mission must therefore reflect the integration of evangelism and committed engagement in the world, both being ordered and driven by the whole biblical revelation of the gospel of God.

"Evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Saviour and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God. . . . The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his Church and responsible service in the world. . . . We affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and humankind, our love for our neighbour and our obedience to Jesus Christ. . . . The salvation we proclaim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities. Faith without works is dead."⁶⁹

"Integral mission is the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. It is not simply that evangelism and social involvement are to be done alongside each other. Rather, in integral mission our proclamation has social consequences as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life. And our social involvement has evangelistic consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ. If we ignore the world, we betray the Word of God which sends us out to serve the world. If we ignore the Word of God, we have nothing to bring to the world."⁷⁰

69. *The Lausanne Covenant*, Paragraphs 4 and 5.

70. *The Micah Declaration on Integral Mission*.

We commit ourselves to the integral and dynamic exercise of all dimensions of mission to which God calls his Church.

- *God commands us to make known to all nations the truth of God's revelation and the gospel of God's saving grace through Jesus Christ, calling all people to repentance, faith, baptism and obedient discipleship.*
- *God commands us to reflect his own character through compassionate care for the needy, and to demonstrate the values and the power of the kingdom of God in striving for justice and peace and in caring for God's creation.*

In response to God's boundless love for us in Christ, and out of our overflowing love for him, we rededicate ourselves, with the help of the Holy Spirit, fully to obey all that God commands, with self-denying humility, joy and courage. We renew this covenant with the Lord—the Lord we love because he first loved us.

FOR THE WORLD WE SERVE: THE CAPE TOWN CALL TO ACTION

C. Living the Love of Christ among People of Other Faiths

1. "Love your neighbour as yourself" includes persons of other faiths

In view of the affirmations made in *The Cape Town Confession of Faith* section 7 (d), we respond to our high calling as disciples of Jesus Christ to see people of other faiths as our neighbours in the biblical sense. They are human beings created in God's image, whom God loves and for whose sins Christ died. We strive not only to see them as neighbours, but to obey Christ's teaching by being neighbours to them. We are called to be gentle, but not naïve; to be discerning and not gullible; to be alert to whatever threats we may face, but not ruled by fear.

We are called to share good news in evangelism, but not to engage in unworthy proselytizing. *Evangelism*, which includes persuasive rational argument following the example of the Apostle Paul, is "to make an honest and open statement of the gospel which leaves the hearers entirely free to make up their own minds about it. We wish to be sensitive to those of other faiths, and we reject any approach that seeks to force conversion on them."⁷¹ *Proselytizing*, by contrast, is the attempt to compel others to become "one of us," to "accept our religion," or indeed to "join our denomination."

71. *The Manila Manifesto*, Section 12.

A) We commit ourselves to be scrupulously ethical in all our evangelism. Our witness is to be marked by “gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience.”⁷² We therefore reject any form of witness that is coercive, unethical, deceptive, or disrespectful.

B) In the name of the God of love, we repent of our failure to seek friendships with people of Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and other religious backgrounds. In the spirit of Jesus, we will take initiatives to show love, goodwill and hospitality to them.

C) In the name of the God of truth, we (i) refuse to promote lies and caricatures about other faiths, and (ii) denounce and resist the racist prejudice, hatred and fear incited in popular media and political rhetoric.

D) In the name of the God of peace, we reject the path of violence and revenge in all our dealings with people of other faiths, even when violently attacked.

E) We affirm the proper place for dialogue with people of other faiths, just as Paul engaged in debate with Jews and Gentiles in the synagogue and public arenas. As a legitimate part of our Christian mission, such dialogue combines confidence in the uniqueness of Christ and in the truth of the gospel with respectful listening to others.

2. *The love of Christ calls us to suffer and sometimes to die for the gospel*

Suffering may be necessary in our missionary engagement as witnesses to Christ, as it was for his apostles and the Old Testament prophets.⁷³ Being willing to suffer is an acid test for the genuineness of our mission. God can use suffering, persecution and martyrdom to advance his mission. “Martyrdom is a form of witness which Christ has promised especially to honour.”⁷⁴ Many Christians living in comfort and prosperity need to hear again the call of Christ to be willing to suffer for him. For many other believers live in the midst of such suffering as the cost of bearing witness to Jesus Christ in a hostile religious culture. They may have seen loved ones martyred, or endured torture or persecution because of their faithful obedience, yet continue to love those who have so harmed them.

A) We hear and remember with tears and prayer the testimonies of those who suffer for the gospel. We pray for grace and courage, along with them, to “love our enemies” as Christ commanded us. We pray that the gospel may bear fruit in places that are so hostile to its messengers. As we rightly grieve for those who suffer, we remember the infinite grief God feels over those who resist and reject his love,

72. 1 Peter 3:15-16. Compare Acts 19:37.

73. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10; 4:7-10.

74. *The Manila Manifesto*, Section 12.

his gospel and his servants. We long for them to repent and be forgiven and find the joy of being reconciled to God.

3. *Love in action embodies and commends the gospel of grace*
 “We are the aroma of Christ.”⁷⁵ Our calling is to live and serve among people of other faiths in a way that is so saturated with the fragrance of God’s grace that they smell Christ, that they come to taste and see that God is good. By such embodied love, we are to make the gospel attractive in every cultural and religious setting. When Christians love people of other faiths through lives of love and acts of service, they embody the transforming grace of God.

In cultures of “honour,” where shame and vengeance are allied with religious legalism, “grace” is an alien concept. In these contexts, God’s vulnerable, self-sacrificing love is not something to be debated; it is considered too foreign, even repulsive. Here, grace is an acquired taste, over a long time, in small doses, for those hungry enough to dare to taste it. The aroma of Christ gradually permeates all that his followers come into contact with.

A) We long for God to raise up more men and women of grace who will make long-term commitments to live, love and serve in tough places dominated by other religions, to bring the smell and taste of the grace of Jesus Christ into cultures where it is unwelcome and dangerous to do so. This takes patience and endurance, sometimes for a whole life-time, sometimes unto death.

4. *Love respects diversity of discipleship*

So called “insider movements” are to be found within several religions. These are groups of people who are now following Jesus as their God and Saviour. They meet together in small groups for fellowship, teaching, worship and prayer centred around Jesus and the Bible while continuing to live socially and culturally within their birth communities, including some elements of its religious observance. This is a complex phenomenon and there is much disagreement over how to respond to it. Some commend such movements. Others warn of the danger of syncretism. Syncretism, however, is a danger found among Christians everywhere as we express our faith within our own cultures. We should avoid the tendency, when we see God at work in unexpected or unfamiliar ways, either (i) hastily to classify it and promote it as a new mission strategy, or (ii) hastily to condemn it without sensitive contextual listening.

A) In the spirit of Barnabas who, on arrival in Antioch, “saw the evidence of the grace of God” and “was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord,”⁷⁶ we

75. 2 Corinthians 2:15.

76. Acts 11:20-24.

would appeal to all those who are concerned with this issue to:

1. Take as their primary guiding principle the apostolic decision and practice: "We should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God."⁷⁷
2. Exercise humility, patience and graciousness in recognizing the diversity of viewpoints, and conduct conversations without stridency and mutual condemnation.⁷⁸ . . .

D. Discerning the Will of Christ for World Evangelization

1. *Unreached and unengaged peoples*

The heart of God longs that *all* people should have access to the knowledge of God's love and of his saving work through Jesus Christ. We recognize with grief and shame that there are thousands of people groups around the world for whom such access has not yet been made available through Christian witness. These are peoples who are *unreached*, in the sense that there are no known believers and no churches among them. Many of these peoples are also *unengaged*, in the sense that we currently know of no churches or agencies that are even trying to share the gospel with them. Indeed, only a tiny percentage of the Church's resources (human and material) is being directed to the least-reached peoples. By definition these are peoples who will not invite us to come with the good news, since they know nothing about it. Yet their presence among us in our world 2,000 years after Jesus commanded us to make disciples of all nations, constitutes not only a rebuke to our disobedience, not only a form of spiritual injustice, but also a silent "Macedonian Call."

Let us rise up as the Church worldwide to meet this challenge, and:

A) Repent of our blindness to the continuing presence of so many unreached peoples in our world and our lack of urgency in sharing the gospel among them.

B) Renew our commitment to go to those who have not yet heard the gospel, to engage deeply with their language and culture, to live the gospel among them with incarnational love and sacrificial service, to communicate the light and truth of the Lord Jesus Christ in word and deed, awakening them through the Holy Spirit's power to the surprising grace of God.

C) Aim to eradicate Bible poverty in the world, for the Bible remains indispensable for evangelism. To do this we must:

1. Hasten the translation of the Bible into the languages of peoples who do not yet have any portion of God's Word in their mother tongue;
2. Make the message of the Bible widely available by oral means. (See also Oral cultures below.)

D) Aim to eradicate Bible ignorance in the Church, for the Bible remains indispensable for discipling believers into the likeness of Christ.

1. We long to see a fresh conviction, gripping all God's Church, of the central necessity of Bible teaching for the Church's growth in ministry, unity and maturity.⁷⁹ We rejoice in the gifting of all those whom Christ has given to the Church as pastor-teachers. We will make every effort to identify, encourage, train and support them in the preaching and teaching of God's Word. In doing so, however, we must reject the kind of clericalism that restricts the ministry of God's Word to a few paid professionals, or to formal preaching in church pulpits. Many men and women, who are clearly gifted in pastoring and teaching God's people, exercise their gifting informally or without official denominational structures, but with the manifest blessing of God's Spirit. They too need to be recognized, encouraged, and equipped to rightly handle the Word of God.
2. We must promote Bible literacy among the generation that now relates primarily to digital communication rather than books, by encouraging digital methods of studying the scriptures inductively with the depth of inquiry that at present requires paper, pens and pencils.

E) Let us keep evangelism at the centre of the fully-integrated scope of all our mission, inasmuch as the gospel itself is the source, content and authority of all biblically-valid mission. All we do should be both an embodiment and a declaration of the love and grace of God and his saving work through Jesus Christ. . . .

77. Acts 15:19.

78. Romans 14:1-3.

79. Ephesians 4:11-12.

92. "Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World," A Joint Statement from the World Council of Churches, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, and the World Evangelical Alliance, 2011

What makes this 2011 document so distinctive is that it was produced jointly by churches from such disparate theological traditions. It is intended to address practical issues associated with Christian witness to neighbors of other faiths. • <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/christian-identity-in-pluralistic-societies/christian-witness-in-a-multi-religious-world>

Preamble

Mission belongs to the very being of the church. Proclaiming the word of God and witnessing to the world is essential for every Christian. At the same time, it is necessary to do so according to gospel principles, with full respect and love for all human beings.

Aware of the tensions between people and communities of different religious convictions and the varied interpretations of Christian witness, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID), the World Council of Churches (WCC) and, at the invitation of the WCC, the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), met during a period of five years to reflect and produce this document to serve as a set of recommendations for conduct on Christian witness around the world. This document does not intend to be a theological statement on mission but to address practical issues associated with Christian witness in a multi-religious world.

The purpose of this document is to encourage churches, church councils and mission agencies to reflect on their current practices and to use the recommendations in this document to prepare, where appropriate, their own guidelines for their witness and mission among those of different religions and among those who do not profess any particular religion. It is hoped that Christians across the world will study this document in the light of their own practices in witnessing to their faith in Christ, both by word and deed.

A Basis for Christian Witness

1. For Christians it is a privilege and joy to give an accounting for the hope that is within them and to do so with gentleness and respect (cf. 1 Peter 3:15).

2. Jesus Christ is the supreme witness (cf. John 18:37). Christian witness is always a sharing in his witness, which takes the form of proclamation of the kingdom, service to neighbour and the total gift of self even if that act of giving leads to the cross. Just as the Father sent the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit, so believers are sent in mission to witness in word and action to the love of the triune God.

3. The example and teaching of Jesus Christ and of the early church must be the guides for Christian mission. For two millennia Christians have sought to follow Christ's way by sharing the good news of God's kingdom (cf. Luke 4:16-20).

4. Christian witness in a pluralistic world includes engaging in dialogue with people of different religions and cultures (cf. Acts 17:22-28).

5. In some contexts, living and proclaiming the gospel is difficult, hindered or even prohibited, yet Christians are commissioned by Christ to continue faithfully in solidarity with one another in their witness to him (cf. Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:44-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8).

6. If Christians engage in inappropriate methods of exercising mission by resorting to deception and coercive means, they betray the gospel and may cause suffering to others. Such departures call for repentance and remind us of our need for God's continuing grace (cf. Romans 3:23).

7. Christians affirm that while it is their responsibility to witness to Christ, conversion is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 16:7-9; Acts 10:44-47). They recognize that the Spirit blows where the Spirit wills in ways over which no human being has control (cf. John 3:8).

Principles

Christians are called to adhere to the following principles as they seek to fulfil Christ's commission in an appropriate manner, particularly within interreligious contexts:

1. *Acting in God's love.* Christians believe that God is the source of all love and, accordingly, in their witness they are called to live lives of love and to love their neighbour as themselves (cf. Matthew 22:34-40; John 14:15).

2. *Imitating Jesus Christ.* In all aspects of life, and especially in their witness, Christians are called to follow the example and teachings of Jesus Christ, sharing his love, giving glory and honour to God the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 20:21-23).

3. *Christian virtues.* Christians are called to conduct themselves with integrity, charity, compassion and humility, and to overcome all arrogance, condescension and disparagement (cf. Galatians 5:22).

4. *Acts of service and justice.* Christians are called to act justly and to love tenderly (cf. Micah 6:8). They are further called to serve others and in so doing to recognize Christ in the least of their sisters and brothers (cf. Matthew 25:45). Acts of service, such as providing education, health care, relief services and acts of justice and advocacy are an integral part of witnessing to the gospel. The exploitation of situations of poverty and need has no place in Christian outreach. Christians should denounce and refrain from offering all forms of allurements, including financial incentives and rewards, in their acts of service.

5. *Discernment in ministries of healing.* As an integral part of their witness to the gospel, Christians exercise ministries of healing. They are called to exercise discernment as they carry out these ministries, fully respecting human dignity and ensuring that the vulnerability of people and their need for healing are not exploited.

6. *Rejection of violence.* Christians are called to reject all forms of violence, even psychological or social, including the abuse of power in their witness. They also reject violence, unjust discrimination or repression by any religious or secular authority, including the violation or destruction of places of worship, sacred symbols or texts.

7. *Freedom of religion and belief.* Religious freedom including the right to publicly profess, practice, propagate and change one's religion flows from the very dignity of the human person which is grounded in the creation of all human beings in the image and likeness of God (cf. Genesis 1:26). Thus, all human beings have equal rights and responsibilities. Where any religion is instrumentalized for political ends, or where religious persecution occurs, Christians are called to engage in a prophetic witness denouncing such actions.

8. *Mutual respect and solidarity.* Christians are called to commit themselves to work with all people in mutual respect, promoting together justice, peace and the common good. Interreligious cooperation is an essential dimension of such commitment.

9. *Respect for all people.* Christians recognize that the gospel both challenges and enriches cultures. Even when the gospel challenges certain aspects of cultures, Christians are called to respect all people. Christians are also called to discern elements in their own cultures that are challenged by the gospel.

10. *Renouncing false witness.* Christians are to speak sincerely and respectfully; they are to listen in order to learn about and understand others' beliefs and practices,

and are encouraged to acknowledge and appreciate what is true and good in them. Any comment or critical approach should be made in a spirit of mutual respect, making sure not to bear false witness concerning other religions.

11. *Ensuring personal discernment.* Christians are to acknowledge that changing one's religion is a decisive step that must be accompanied by sufficient time for adequate reflection and preparation, through a process ensuring full personal freedom.

12. *Building interreligious relationships.* Christians should continue to build relationships of respect and trust with people of different religions so as to facilitate deeper mutual understanding, reconciliation and cooperation for the common good.

Recommendations

The Third Consultation organized by the World Council of Churches and the PCID of the Holy See in collaboration with World Evangelical Alliance with participation from the largest Christian families of faith (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Evangelical and Pentecostal), having acted in a spirit of ecumenical cooperation to prepare this document for consideration by churches, national and regional confessional bodies and mission organizations, and especially those working in interreligious contexts, recommends that these bodies:

1. *study* the issues set out in this document and where appropriate formulate guidelines for conduct regarding Christian witness applicable to their particular contexts. Where possible this should be done ecumenically, and in consultation with representatives of other religions.

2. *build* relationships of respect and trust with people of all religions, in particular at institutional levels between churches and other religious communities, engaging in on-going interreligious dialogue as part of their Christian commitment. In certain contexts, where years of tension and conflict have created deep suspicions and breaches of trust between and among communities, interreligious dialogue can provide new opportunities for resolving conflicts, restoring justice, healing of memories, reconciliation and peace-building.

3. *encourage* Christians to strengthen their own religious identity and faith while deepening their knowledge and understanding of different religions, and to do so also taking into account the perspectives of the adherents of those religions. Christians should avoid misrepresenting the beliefs and practices of people of different religions.

4. *cooperate* with other religious communities engaging in interreligious advocacy towards justice and the

common good and, wherever possible, standing together in solidarity with people who are in situations of conflict.

5. *call* on their governments to ensure that freedom of religion is properly and comprehensively respected, recognizing that in many countries religious institutions and persons are inhibited from exercising their mission.

6. *pray* for their neighbours and their well-being, recognizing that prayer is integral to who we are and what we do, as well as to Christ's mission.

93. "Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes," Tenth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Busan, 2013

This document, developed by the WCC's Commission on World Mission and Evangelism in the years between the Porto Alegre (2006) and Busan (2013) assemblies, is the second official World Council position statement on mission and evangelism—following the "Ecumenical Affirmation" of 1982. • <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/mission-and-evangelism/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes>

Together towards Life: Introducing the Theme

1. We believe in the Triune God who is the creator, redeemer, and sustainer of all life. God created the whole *oikoumene* in God's image and constantly works in the world to affirm and safeguard life. We believe in Jesus Christ, the Life of the world, the incarnation of God's love for the world (John 3:16).⁸⁰ Affirming life in all its fullness is Jesus Christ's ultimate concern and mission (John 10:10). We believe in God, the Holy Spirit, the Life-giver, who sustains and empowers life and renews the whole creation (Gen. 2:7; John 3:8). A denial of life is a rejection of the God of life. God invites us into the life-giving mission of the Triune God and empowers us to bear witness to the vision of abundant life for all in the new heaven and earth.

80. Unless otherwise indicated, Bible quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). Abbreviations used for other translations include KJV (Authorized/King James Version), NIV (New International Version), and REB (Revised English Bible).

How and where do we discern God's life-giving work that enables us to participate in God's mission today?

2. Mission begins in the heart of the Triune God and the love which binds together the Holy Trinity overflows to all humanity and creation. The missionary God who sent the Son to the world calls all God's people (John 20:21), and empowers them to be a community of hope. The church is commissioned to celebrate life, and to resist and transform all life-destroying forces, in the power of the Holy Spirit. How important it is to "receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22) to become living witnesses to the coming reign of God! From a renewed appreciation of the mission of the Spirit, how do we re-envision God's mission in a changing and diverse world today?

3. Life in the Holy Spirit is the essence of mission, the core of why we do what we do and how we live our lives. Spirituality gives the deepest meaning to our lives and motivates our actions. It is a sacred gift from the Creator, the energy for affirming and caring for life. This mission spirituality has a dynamic of transformation which, through the spiritual commitment of people, is capable of transforming the world in God's grace. How can we reclaim mission as a transformative spirituality which is life-affirming?

4. God did not send the Son for the salvation of humanity alone or give us a partial salvation. Rather the gospel is the good news for every part of creation and every aspect of our life and society. It is therefore vital to recognize God's mission in a cosmic sense and to affirm all life, the whole *oikoumene*, as being interconnected in God's web of life. As threats to the future of our planet are evident, what are their implications for our participation in God's mission?

5. The history of Christian mission has been characterized by conceptions of geographical expansion from a Christian centre to the "un-reached territories," to the ends of the earth. But today we are facing a radically changing ecclesial landscape described as "world Christianity" where the majority of Christians either are living or have their origins in the global South and East.⁸¹ Migration has become a worldwide, multi-directional phenomenon which is reshaping the Christian landscape. The emergence of strong Pentecostal and charismatic movements from different localities is one of the most noteworthy characteristics of world Christianity today. What are the insights for mission and evangelism—theologies, agendas and practices—of this "shift of the centre of gravity of Christianity"?

6. Mission has been understood as a movement taking place from the centre to the periphery, and from the

81. See Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross eds., *Atlas of Global Christianity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

privileged to the marginalized of society. Now people at the margins are claiming their key role as agents of mission and affirming mission as transformation. This reversal of roles in the envisioning of mission has strong biblical foundations because God chose the poor, the foolish, and the powerless (1 Cor. 1:18-31) to further God's mission of justice and peace so that life may flourish. If there is a shift of the mission concept from "mission *to* the margins" to "mission *from* the margins," what then is the distinctive contribution of the people from the margins? And why are their experiences and visions crucial for re-imagining mission and evangelism today?

7. We are living in a world in which faith in mammon threatens the credibility of the gospel. Market ideology is spreading the propaganda that the global market will save the world through unlimited growth. This myth is a threat not only to economic life but also to the spiritual life of people, and not only to humanity but also to the whole creation. How can we proclaim the good news and values of God's kingdom in the global market or win over the spirit of the market? What kind of missional action can the church take in the midst of economic and ecological injustice and crisis on a global scale?

8. All Christians, churches, and congregations are called to be vibrant messengers of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the good news of salvation. Evangelism is a confident but humble sharing of our faith and conviction with other people. Such sharing is a gift to others which announces the love, grace, and mercy of God in Christ. It is the inevitable fruit of genuine faith. Therefore, in each generation, the church must renew its commitment to evangelism as an essential part of the way we convey God's love to the world. How can we proclaim God's love and justice to a generation living in an individualized, secularized, and materialized world?

9. The church lives in multi-religious and multi-cultural contexts and new communication technology is also bringing the people of the world into a greater awareness of one another's identities and pursuits. Locally and globally, Christians are engaged with people of other religions and cultures in building societies of love, peace, and justice. Plurality is a challenge to the churches and serious commitment to interfaith dialogue and cross-cultural communication is therefore indispensable. What are the ecumenical convictions regarding common witnessing and practicing life-giving mission in a world of many religions and cultures?

10. The church is a gift of God to the world for its transformation towards the kingdom of God. Its mission is to bring new life and announce the loving presence of God in our world. We must participate in God's mission

in unity, overcoming the divisions and tensions that exist among us, so that the world may believe and all may be one (John 17:21). The church, as the communion of Christ's disciples, must become an inclusive community and exists to bring healing and reconciliation to the world. How can the church renew herself to be missional and move forward together towards life in its fullness?

11. This statement highlights some key developments in understanding the mission of the Holy Spirit within the mission of the Triune God (*missio Dei*) which have emerged through the work of CWME. It does so under four main headings:

Spirit of Mission: Breath of Life

Spirit of Liberation: Mission from the Margins

Spirit of Community: Church on the Move

Spirit of Pentecost: Good News for All

Reflection on such perspectives enables us to embrace dynamism, justice, diversity, and transformation as key concepts of mission in changing landscapes today. In response to the questions posed above, we conclude with ten affirmations for mission and evangelism today.

Spirit of Mission: Breath of Life

The Mission of the Spirit

12. God's Spirit—*ru'ach*—moved over the waters at the beginning (Gen. 1:2), being the source of life and the breath of humankind (Gen. 2:7). In the Hebrew Bible, the Spirit led the people of God—inspiring wisdom (Prov. 8), empowering prophecy (Is. 61:1), stirring life from dry bones (Ezek. 37), prompting dreams (Joel 2), and bringing renewal as the glory of the Lord in the temple (2 Chron. 7:1).

13. The same Spirit of God, which "swept over the face of the waters" in creation, descended on Mary (Luke 1:35) and brought forth Jesus. It was the Holy Spirit who empowered Jesus at his baptism (Mark 1:10) and commissioned him for his mission (Luke 4:14, 18). Jesus Christ, full of the Spirit of God, died on the cross. He gave up the spirit (John 19:30). In death, in the coldness of the tomb, by the power of the Holy Spirit he was raised to life, the firstborn from the dead (Rom. 8:11).

14. After his resurrection, Jesus Christ appeared to his community and sent his disciples in mission: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21-22). By the gift of the Holy Spirit, "the power from on high," they were formed into a new community of witness to hope in Christ (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8). In the Spirit of unity, the early church lived together and shared her goods among her members (Acts 2:44-45).

15. The universality of the Spirit's economy in creation and the particularity of the Spirit's work in redemption have to be understood together as the mission of the Spirit for the new heaven and earth, when God finally will be "all in all" (1 Cor. 15:24-28). The Holy Spirit works in the world often in mysterious and unknown ways beyond our imagination (Luke 1:34-35; John 3:8; Acts 2:16-21).

16. Biblical witness attests to a variety of understandings of the role of the Holy Spirit in mission. One perspective on the role of the Holy Spirit in mission emphasizes the Holy Spirit as fully dependent on Christ, as the Paraclete and the one who will come as Counselor and Advocate only after Christ has gone to the Father. The Holy Spirit is seen as the continuing presence of Christ, his agent to fulfill the task of mission. This understanding leads to a missiology focusing on sending out and going forth. Therefore, a pneumatological focus on Christian mission recognizes that mission is essentially christologically based and relates the work of the Holy Spirit to the salvation through Jesus Christ.

17. Another perspective emphasizes that the Holy Spirit is the "Spirit of Truth" that leads us to the "whole truth" (John 16:13) and blows wherever he/she wills (John 3:8), thus embracing the whole of the cosmos; it proclaims the Holy Spirit as the source of Christ and the church as the eschatological coming together (*synaxis*) of the people of God in God's kingdom. This second perspective posits that the faithful go forth in peace (in mission) after they have experienced in their eucharistic gathering the eschatological kingdom of God as a glimpse and foretaste of it. Mission as going forth is thus the outcome, rather than the origin of the church, and is called "liturgy after the Liturgy."⁸²

18. What is clear is that by the Spirit we participate in the mission of love that is at the heart of the life of the Trinity. This results in Christian witness which unceasingly proclaims the salvific power of God through Jesus Christ and constantly affirms God's dynamic involvement, through the Holy Spirit, in the whole created world. All who respond to the outpouring of the love of God are invited to join in with the Spirit in the mission of God.

Mission and the Flourishing of Creation

19. Mission is the overflow of the infinite love of the Triune God. God's mission begins with the act of creation. Creation's life and God's life are entwined. The mission of God's Spirit encompasses us all in an ever-giving act of grace. We are therefore called to move beyond a narrowly human-centred approach and to embrace forms of mission which express our reconciled relationship with all created

life. We hear the cry of the earth as we listen to the cries of the poor and we know that from its beginning the earth has cried out to God over humanity's injustice (Gen. 4:10).

20. Mission with creation at its heart is already a positive movement in our churches through campaigns for eco-justice and more sustainable lifestyles and the development of spiritualities that are respectful of the earth. However, we have sometimes forgotten that the whole of creation is included in the reconciled unity towards which we are all called (2 Cor. 5:18-19). We do not believe that the earth is to be discarded and only souls saved; both the earth and our bodies have to be transformed through the Spirit's grace. As the vision of Isaiah and John's revelation testify, heaven and earth will be made new (Is. 11:1-9; 25:6-10; 66:22; Rev. 21:1-4).

21. Our participation in mission, our being in creation, and our practice of the life of the Spirit need to be woven together, for they are mutually transformative. We ought not to seek the one without the others. If we do, we will lapse into an individualistic spirituality that leads us to believe falsely that we can belong to God without belonging to our neighbour, and we will fall into a spirituality that simply makes us feel good while other parts of creation hurt and yearn.

22. We need a new conversion (*metanoia*) in our mission which invites a new humility in regard to the mission of God's Spirit. We tend to understand and practice mission as something done by humanity to others. Instead, humans can participate in communion with all of creation in celebrating the work of the Creator. In many ways creation is in mission to humanity; for instance, the natural world has a power that can heal the human heart and body. The wisdom literature in the Bible affirms creation's praise of its Creator (Ps. 9:1-4; 66:1; 96:11-13; 98:4; 100:1; 150:6). The Creator's joy and wonder in creation is one of the sources of our spirituality (Job 38-39).

23. We want to affirm our spiritual connection with creation, yet the reality is that the earth is being polluted and exploited. Consumerism triggers not limitless growth but rather endless exploitation of the earth's resources. Human greed is contributing to global warming and other forms of climate change. If this trend continues and earth is fatally damaged, what can we imagine salvation to be? Humanity cannot be saved alone while the rest of the created world perishes. Eco-justice cannot be separated from salvation, and salvation cannot come without a new humility that respects the needs of all life on earth.

Spiritual Gifts and Discernment

24. The Holy Spirit gives gifts freely and impartially (1 Cor. 12:8-10; Rom. 12:6-8; Eph. 4:11) which are to be

82. Ibid.

shared for the building up of others (1 Cor. 12:7; 14:26) and the reconciliation of the whole creation (Rom. 8:19-23). One of the gifts of the Spirit is discernment of spirits (1 Cor. 12:10). We discern the Spirit of God wherever life in its fullness is affirmed and in all its dimensions, including liberation of the oppressed, healing and reconciliation of broken communities, and the restoration of creation. We also discern evil spirits wherever forces of death and destruction of life prevail.

25. The early Christians, like many today, experienced a world of many spirits. The New Testament witnesses to diverse spirits, including evil spirits, “ministering spirits” (i.e. angels, Heb. 1:14), “principalities” and “powers” (Eph. 6:12), the beast (Rev. 13:1-7), and other powers—both good and evil. The apostle Paul also testifies to some spiritual struggle (Eph. 6:10-18; 2 Cor. 10:4-6) and other apostolic writings contain injunctions to resist the devil (James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8). The churches are called to discern the work of the life-giving Spirit sent into the world and to join with the Holy Spirit in bringing about God’s reign of justice (Acts 1:6-8). When we have discerned the Holy Spirit’s presence, we are called to respond, recognizing that God’s Spirit is often subversive, leading us beyond boundaries and surprising us.

26. Our encounter with the Triune God is inward, personal, and communal but also directs us outward in missionary endeavour. The traditional symbols and titles for the Spirit (such as fire, light, dew, fountain, anointing, healing, melting, warming, solace, comfort, strength, rest, washing, shining) show that the Spirit is familiar with our lives and connected with all the aspects of relationship, life, and creation with which mission is concerned. We are led by the Spirit into various situations and moments, into meeting points with others, into spaces of encounter, and into critical locations of human struggle.

27. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of wisdom (Is. 11:3; Eph. 1:17) and guides us into all truth (John 16:13). The Spirit inspires human cultures and creativity, so it is part of our mission to acknowledge, respect, and cooperate with life-giving wisdoms in every culture and context. We regret that mission activity linked with colonization has often denigrated cultures and failed to recognize the wisdom of local people. Local wisdom and culture which are life-affirming are gifts from God’s Spirit. We lift up testimonies of peoples whose traditions have been scorned and mocked by theologians and scientists, yet whose wisdom offers us the vital and sometimes new orientation that can connect us again with the life of the Spirit in creation, which helps us to consider the ways in which God is revealed in creation.

28. The claim that the Spirit is with us is not for us to make, but for others to recognize in the life that we lead. The apostle Paul expresses this by encouraging the church to bear the fruits of the Spirit which entail love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, and self-control (Gal. 5:23). As we bear these fruits, we hope others will discern the love and power of the Spirit at work.

Transformative Spirituality

29. Authentic Christian witness is not only in what we do in mission but how we live out our mission. The church in mission can only be sustained by spiritualities deeply rooted in the Trinity’s communion of love. Spirituality gives our lives their deepest meaning. It stimulates, motivates and gives dynamism to life’s journey. It is energy for life in its fullness and calls for a commitment to resist all forces, powers, and systems which deny, destroy, and reduce life.

30. Mission spirituality is always transformative. Mission spirituality resists and seeks to transform all life-destroying values and systems wherever these are at work in our economies, our politics, and even our churches. “Our faithfulness to God and God’s free gift of life compels us to confront idolatrous assumptions, unjust systems, politics of domination and exploitation in our current world economic order. Economics and economic justice are always matters of faith as they touch the very core of God’s will for creation.”⁸³ Mission spirituality motivates us to serve God’s economy of life, not mammon, to share life at God’s table rather than satisfy individual greed, to pursue change toward a better world while challenging the self-interest of the powerful who desire to maintain the status quo.

31. Jesus has told us “You cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. 6:24, KJV). The policy of unlimited growth through the domination of the global free market is an ideology that claims to be without alternative, demanding an endless flow of sacrifices from the poor and from nature. “It makes the false promise that it can save the world through creation of wealth and prosperity, claiming sovereignty over life and demanding total allegiance, which amounts to idolatry.”⁸⁴ This is a global system of mammon that protects the unlimited growth of wealth of only the rich and powerful through endless exploitation. This tower of greed is threatening the whole household of God. The reign of God is in direct opposition to the empire of mammon.

83. See Ion Bria, *The Liturgy after the Liturgy: Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996). The term was originally coined by Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos and widely publicized by Ion Bria.

84. *Alternative Globalization Addressing Peoples and Earth (AGAPE): A Background Document* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005), 13.

32. Transformation can be understood in the light of the Paschal mystery: “If we have died with Christ, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him” (2 Tim. 2:11-12). In situations of oppression, discrimination, and hurt, the cross of Christ is the power of God for salvation (1 Cor. 1:18). Even in our time, some have paid with their lives for their Christian witness, reminding us all of the cost of discipleship. The Spirit gives Christians courage to live out their convictions, even in the face of persecution and martyrdom.

33. The cross calls for repentance in light of misuse of power and use of the wrong kind of power in mission and in the church. “Disturbed by the asymmetries and imbalances of power that divide and trouble us in church and world, we are called to repentance, to critical reflection on systems of power, and to accountable use of power structures.”⁸⁵ The Spirit empowers the powerless and challenges the powerful to empty themselves of their privileges for the sake of the disempowered.

34. To experience life in the Spirit is to taste life in its fullness. We are called to witness to a movement toward life, celebrating all that the Spirit continues to call into being, walking in solidarity in order to cross the rivers of despair and anxiety (Ps. 23, Is. 43:1-5). Mission provokes in us a renewed awareness that the Holy Spirit meets us and challenges us at all levels of life and brings newness and change to the places and times of our personal and collective journeys.

35. The Holy Spirit is present with us as companion, yet is never domesticated or “tame.” Among the surprises of the Spirit are the ways in which God works from locations which appear to be on the margins and through people who appear to be excluded.

Spirit of Liberation: Mission from the Margins

36. God’s purpose for the world is not to create another world, but to re-create what God has already created in love and wisdom. Jesus began his ministry by claiming that to be filled by the Spirit is to liberate the oppressed, to open eyes that are blind, and to announce the coming of God’s reign (Luke 4:16-18). He went about fulfilling this mission by opting to be with the marginalized people of his time, not out of paternalistic charity but because their situations testified to the sinfulness of the world and their yearnings for life pointed to God’s purposes.

37. Jesus Christ relates to and embraces those who are most marginalized in society, in order to confront and transform all that denies life. This includes cultures and systems which generate and sustain massive poverty, discrimination, and dehumanization, and which exploit or destroy

people and the earth. Mission from the margins calls for an understanding of the complexities of power dynamics, global systems and structures, and local contextual realities. Christian mission has at times been understood and practiced in ways which failed to recognize God’s alignment with those consistently pushed to the margins. Therefore, mission from the margins invites the church to re-imagine mission as a vocation from God’s Spirit who works for a world where the fullness of life is available for all.

Why Margins and Marginalization?

38. Mission from the margins seeks to counteract injustices in life, church, and mission. It seeks to be an alternative missional movement against the perception that mission can only be done by the powerful to the powerless, by the rich to the poor, or by the privileged to the marginalized. Such approaches can contribute to oppression and marginalization. Mission from the margins recognizes that being in the centre means having access to systems that lead to one’s rights, freedom, and individuality being affirmed and respected; living in the margins means exclusion from justice and dignity. Living on the margins, however, can provide its own lessons. People on the margins have agency, and can often see what, from the centre, is out of view. People on the margins, living in vulnerable positions, often know what exclusionary forces are threatening their survival and can best discern the urgency of their struggles; people in positions of privilege have much to learn from the daily struggles of people living in marginal conditions.

39. Marginalized people have God-given gifts that are under-utilized because of disempowerment and denial of access to opportunities and/or justice. Through struggles in and for life, marginalized people are reservoirs of the active hope, collective resistance, and perseverance that are needed to remain faithful to the promised reign of God.

40. Because the context of missional activity influences its scope and character, the social location of all engaged in mission work must be taken into account. Missiological reflections need to recognize the different value orientations that shape missional perspectives. The aim of mission is not simply to move people from the margins to centres of power but to confront those who remain the centre by keeping people on the margins. Instead, churches are called to *transform* power structures.

41. The dominant expressions of mission, in the past and today, have often been directed at people on the margins of societies. These have generally viewed those on the margins as recipients and not as active agents of missionary activity. Mission expressed in this way has too often been complicit with oppressive and life-denying systems. It has generally aligned with the privileges of the centre

85. Edinburgh 2010, *Common Call* (2010), §4.

and largely failed to challenge economic, social, cultural, and political systems which have marginalized some peoples. Mission from the centre is motivated by an attitude of paternalism and a superiority complex. Historically, this stance has equated Christianity with Western culture and resulted in adverse consequences, including the denial of the full personhood of the victims of such marginalization.

42. A major common concern of people from the margins is the failure of societies, cultures, civilizations, nations, and even churches to honour the dignity and worth of *all* persons. Injustice is at the roots of the inequalities that give rise to marginalization and oppression. God's desire for justice is inextricably linked to God's nature and sovereignty: "For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords . . . who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who also loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing" (Deut. 10:17-18). All missional activity must, therefore, safeguard the sacred worth of every human being and of the earth (see Is. 58).

Mission as Struggle and Resistance

43. The affirmation of God's mission (*missio Dei*) points to the belief in God as One who acts in history and in creation, in concrete realities of time and contexts, who seeks the fullness of life for the whole earth through justice, peace, and reconciliation. Participation in God's ongoing work of liberation and reconciliation by the Holy Spirit, therefore, includes discerning and unmasking the demons that exploit and enslave. For example, this involves deconstructing patriarchal ideologies, upholding the right to self-determination for Indigenous peoples, and challenging the social embeddedness of racism and casteism.

44. The church's hope is rooted in the promised fulfillment of the reign of God. It entails the restoration of right relationships between God and humanity and all of creation. Even though this vision speaks to an eschatological reality, it deeply energizes and informs our current participation in God's salvific work in this penultimate period.

45. Participation in God's mission follows the way of Jesus, who came to serve, not to be served (Mark 10:45); who tears down the mighty and powerful and exalts the lowly (Luke 1:46-55); and whose love is characterized by mutuality, reciprocity, and interdependence. It therefore requires a commitment to struggle against and resist the powers that obstruct the fullness of life that God wills for all, and a willingness to work with all people involved in movements and initiatives committed to the causes of justice, dignity, and life.

Mission Seeking Justice and Inclusivity

46. The good news of God's reign is about the promise of the actualization of a just and inclusive world. Inclusivity fosters just relationships in the community of humanity and creation, with mutual acknowledgement of persons and creation and mutual respect and sustenance of each one's sacred worth. It also facilitates each one's full participation in the life of the community. Baptism in Christ implies a lifelong commitment to give an account of this hope by overcoming the barriers in order to find a common identity under the sovereignty of God (Gal. 3:27-28). Therefore, discrimination of all types against any human beings is unacceptable in the sight of God.

47. Jesus promises that the last shall be first (Matt. 20:16). To the extent that the church practices radical hospitality to the estranged in society, it demonstrates commitment to embodying the values of the reign of God (Is. 58:6). To the extent that it denounces self-centredness as a way of life, it makes space for the reign of God to permeate human existence. To the extent that it renounces violence in its physical, psychological, and spiritual manifestations both in personal interactions and in economic, political, and social systems, it testifies to the reign of God at work in the world.

48. In reality, however, mission, money, and political power are strategic partners. Although our theological and missiological language talks a lot about the mission of the church being in solidarity with the poor, sometimes in practice it is much more concerned with being in the centres of power, eating with the rich, and lobbying for money to maintain ecclesial bureaucracy. This poses particular challenges to reflect on what is the good news for people who are privileged and powerful.

49. The church is called to make present God's holy and life-affirming plan for the world revealed in Jesus Christ. This means rejecting values and practices which lead to the destruction of community. Christians are called to acknowledge the sinful nature of all forms of discrimination and to transform unjust structures. This call places certain expectations on the church. The church must refuse to harbour oppressive forces within its ranks, acting instead as a counter-cultural community. The biblical mandate to the covenant community in both testaments is characterized by the dictum "It shall not be so among you" (Matt. 20:26, KJV).

Mission as Healing and Wholeness

50. Actions towards healing and wholeness of life of persons and communities are an important expression of mission. Healing was not only a central feature of Jesus' ministry but also a feature of his call to his followers to continue his

work (Matt. 10:1). Healing is also one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:9; Acts 3). The Spirit empowers the church for a life-nurturing mission, which includes prayer, pastoral care, and professional health care on the one hand and prophetic denunciation of the root causes of suffering, transformation of structures that dispense injustice, and pursuit of scientific research on the other.

51. Health is more than physical and/or mental well-being and healing is not primarily medical. This understanding of health coheres with the biblical-theological tradition of the church, which sees a human being as a multidimensional unity and the body, soul, and mind as interrelated and interdependent. It thus affirms the social, political, and ecological dimensions of personhood and wholeness. Health, in the sense of wholeness, is a condition related to God's promise for the end of time as well as a real possibility in the present.⁸⁶ Wholeness is not a static balance of harmony but rather involves living-in-community with God, people, and creation. Individualism and injustice are barriers to community building and therefore to wholeness. Discrimination on grounds of medical conditions or disability—including HIV and AIDS—is contrary to the teaching of Jesus Christ. When all the parts of our individual and corporate lives that have been left out are included, and wherever the neglected or marginalized are brought together in love such that wholeness is experienced, we may discern signs of God's reign on earth.

52. Societies have tended to see disability or illness as a manifestation of sin or a medical problem to be solved. The medical model has emphasized the correction or cure of what is assumed to be the "deficiency" in the individual. Many who are marginalized, however, do not see themselves as "deficient" or "sick." The Bible recounts many instances where Jesus healed people with various infirmities but, equally importantly, he restored people to their rightful places within the fabric of the community. Healing is more about the restoration of wholeness than about correcting something perceived as defective. To become whole, the parts that have become estranged need to be reclaimed. The fixation on cure is thus a perspective that must be overcome in order to promote the biblical focus. Mission should foster the full participation of people with disabilities and illness in the life of the church and society.

53. Christian medical mission aims at achieving health for all in the sense that all people around the globe will have access to quality health care. There are many ways in which churches can be, and are, involved in health and healing in a comprehensive sense. They create or support clinics and mission hospitals; they offer counseling services,

care groups, and health programmes; local churches can create groups to visit sick congregation members. Healing processes could include praying with and for the sick, confession and forgiveness, the laying on of hands, anointing with oil, and the use of charismatic spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12). But it must also be noted that inappropriate forms of Christian worship, including triumphalistic healing services in which the healer is glorified at the expense of God and false expectations are raised, can deeply harm people. This is not to deny God's miraculous intervention of healing in some cases.

54. As a community of imperfect people, and as part of a creation groaning in pain and longing for its liberation, the Christian community can be a sign of hope and an expression of the kingdom of God here on earth (Rom. 8:22-24). The Holy Spirit works for justice and healing in many ways and is pleased to indwell the particular community which is called to embody Christ's mission.

Spirit of Community: Church on the Move

God's Mission and the Life of the Church

55. The life of the church arises from the love of the Triune God. "God is love" (1 Jn. 4:8). Mission is a response to God's urging love shown in creation and redemption. "God's love invites us" (*Caritas Christi urget nos*). This communion (*koinonia*) opens our hearts and lives to our brothers and sisters in the same movement of sharing God's love (2 Cor. 5:18-21). Living in that love of God, the church is called to become good news for all. The Triune God's overflowing sharing of love is the source of all mission and evangelism.

56. God's love, manifest in the Holy Spirit, is an inspirational gift to all humanity "in all times and places"⁸⁷ and for all cultures and situations. The powerful presence of the Holy Spirit, revealed in Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Lord, initiates us into the fullness of life that is God's gift to each one of us. Through Christ in the Holy Spirit, God indwells the church, revealing God's purposes for the world and empowering and enabling its members to participate in the realization of those purposes.

57. The church in history has not always existed but, both theologically and empirically, came into being for the sake of mission. It is not possible to separate church and mission in terms of their origin or purpose. To fulfill God's missionary purpose is the church's aim. The relationship between church and mission is very intimate because the same Spirit of Christ who empowers the church in mission

86. *Healing and Wholeness: The Churches' Role in Health* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990), 6.

87. World Council of Churches, Commission on Faith and Order, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper No. 111 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1982), §19.

is also the life of the church. At the same time as he sent the church into the world, Jesus Christ breathed the Holy Spirit into the church (John 20:19-23). Therefore, the church exists by mission, just as fire exists by burning. If it does not engage in mission, it ceases to be church.

58. Starting with God's mission leads to an ecclesiological approach "from below." In this perspective it is not the church that has a mission but rather the mission that has a church. Mission is not a project of expanding churches but of the church embodying God's salvation in this world. Out of this follows a dynamic understanding of the apostolicity of the church: apostolicity is not only safeguarding the faith of the church through the ages but also participating in the apostolate. Thus the churches mainly and foremost need to be missionary churches.

God's Mission and the Church's Unity

59. Living out our faith in community is an important way of participating in mission. Through baptism, we become sisters and brothers belonging together in Christ (Heb. 10:25). The church is called to be an inclusive community that welcomes all. Through word and deed and in its very being, the church foretastes and witnesses to the vision of the coming reign of God. The church is the coming together of the faithful and their *going forth* in peace.

60. Practically as well as theologically, mission and unity belong together. In this regard, the integration in 1961 of the International Missionary Council (IMC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) was a significant step. This historical experience encourages us to believe that mission and church can come together. This aim, however, is not yet fully accomplished. We have to continue this journey in our century with fresh attempts so that the church becomes truly missionary.

61. The churches realize today that in many respects they are still not adequate embodiments of God's mission. Sometimes a sense of separation between mission and church still prevails. The lack of full and real unity in mission still harms the authenticity and credibility of the fulfillment of God's mission in this world. Our Lord prayed "that they may all be one . . . so that the world may believe" (John 17:21). Thus mission and unity are intertwined. Consequently there is a need to open up our reflections on church and unity to an even wider understanding of unity: the unity of humanity and even the cosmic unity of the whole of God's creation.

62. The highly competitive environment of the free market economy has unfortunately influenced some churches and para-church movements to seek to be "winners" over others. This can even lead to the adoption of aggressive tactics to persuade Christians who already

belong to a church to change their denominational allegiance. Seeking numerical growth at all costs is incompatible with the respect for others required of Christian disciples. Jesus became our Christ not through power or money but through his self-emptying (*kenosis*) and death on the cross. This humble understanding of mission does not merely shape our methods but is the very nature and essence of our faith in Christ. The church is a servant in God's mission and not the master. The missionary church glorifies God in self-emptying love.

63. The Christian communities in their diversity are called to identify and practice ways of common witness in a spirit of partnership and cooperation, including through mutually respectful and responsible forms of evangelism. Common witness is what the "churches, even while separated, bear together, especially through joint efforts, by manifesting whatever divine gifts of truth and life they already share and experience in common."⁸⁸

64. The missionary nature of the church also means that there must be a way that churches and para-church structures can be more closely related. The integration of the IMC and the WCC brought about a new framework for consideration of church unity and mission. While discussions of unity have been very concerned with structural questions, mission agencies can represent flexibility and subsidiarity in mission. While para-church movements can find accountability and direction through ecclesial mooring, para-church structures can help churches not to forget their dynamic apostolic character.

65. The Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME), the direct heir of Edinburgh 1910's initiatives on cooperation and unity, provides a structure for churches and mission agencies to seek ways of expressing and strengthening unity in mission. Being an integral part of the WCC, the CWME has been able to encounter new understandings of mission and unity from Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Protestant, Evangelical, Pentecostal, and Indigenous churches from all over the globe. In particular, the context of the WCC has facilitated close working relationships with the Roman Catholic Church. A growing intensity of collaboration with Evangelicals, especially with the Lausanne Movement for World Evangelization and the World Evangelical Alliance, has also abundantly contributed to the enrichment of ecumenical theological reflection on mission in unity. Together we share a common concern that the whole church should witness to the whole gospel in the whole world.⁸⁹

88. Thomas F. Best and Günther Gassmann, eds., *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia: Official Report of the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order, Santiago de Compostela 1993*, Faith and Order Paper no. 166 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1994), 254.

89. See "The Whole Church Taking the Whole Gospel to the

66. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of unity, unites people and churches too, to celebrate unity in diversity both proactively and constructively. The Spirit provides both the dynamic context and the resources needed for people to explore differences in a safe, positive and nurturing environment in order to grow into an inclusive and mutually responsible community.

God Empowers the Church in Mission

67. Through Christ in the Holy Spirit, God indwells the church, empowering and energizing its members. Thus mission becomes for Christians an urgent inner compulsion (1 Cor. 9:16) and even a test and criterion for authentic life in Christ, rooted in the profound demands of Christ's love, to invite others to share in the fullness of life Jesus came to bring. Participating in God's mission, therefore, should be natural for all Christians and all churches, not only for particular individuals or specialized groups.⁹⁰

68. What makes the Christian message of God's abundant love for humanity and all creation credible is our ability to speak with one voice, where possible, and to give common witness and an account of the hope that is in us (1 Pet. 3:15). The churches have therefore produced a rich array of common declarations, some of them resulting in uniting or united churches, and of dialogues, seeking to restore the unity of all Christians in one living organism of healing and reconciliation. A rediscovery of the work of the Holy Spirit in healing and reconciliation, which is at the heart of today's mission theology, has significant ecumenical implications.⁹¹

69. While acknowledging the great importance of "visible" unity among churches, nonetheless unity need not be sought only at the level of organizational structures. From a mission perspective, it is important to discern what helps the cause of God's mission. In other words, unity in mission is the basis for the visible unity of the churches; this also has implications for the order of the church. Attempts to achieve unity must be in concert with the biblical call to seek justice. Our call to do justice may sometimes involve breaking false unities that silence and oppress. Genuine unity always entails inclusivity and respect for others.

70. Today's context of large-scale worldwide migration challenges the churches' commitment to unity in very practical ways. We are told: "Do not forget to entertain

strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it." (Heb. 13:2, NIV). Churches can be a place of refuge for migrant communities; they can also be intentional focal points for intercultural engagement.⁹² The churches are called to be one to serve God's mission beyond ethnic and cultural boundaries and ought to create multi-cultural ministry and mission as a concrete expression of common witness in diversity. This may entail advocating justice in regard to migration policies and resistance to xenophobia and racism. Women, children, and undocumented workers are often the most vulnerable among migrants in all contexts. But women are also often at the cutting edge of new migrant ministries.

71. God's hospitality calls us to move beyond binary notions of culturally dominant groups as hosts and migrant and minority peoples as guests. Instead, in God's hospitality, God is host and we are all invited by the Spirit to participate with humility and mutuality in God's mission.

Local Congregations: New Initiatives

72. While cherishing the unity of the Spirit in the one Church, it is also important to honour the ways in which each local congregation is led by the Spirit to respond to its own contextual realities. Today's changed world calls for local congregations to take new initiatives. For example, in the secularizing global North, new forms of contextual mission such as "new monasticism," "emerging church," and "fresh expressions," have redefined and revitalized churches. Exploring contextual ways of being church can be particularly relevant to young people. Some churches in the global North now meet in pubs, coffee houses, or converted movie theatres. Engaging with church life online is an attractive option for young people thinking in a non-linear, visual, and experiential way.

73. Like the early church in the Book of Acts, local congregations have the privilege of forming a community marked by the presence of the risen Christ. For many people, acceptance or refusal to become members of the church is linked to their positive or negative experience with a local congregation, which can be either a stumbling block or an agent of transformation.⁹³ Therefore it is vital that local congregations are constantly renewed and inspired by the Spirit of mission. Local congregations are frontiers and primary agents of mission.

74. Worship and the sacraments play a crucial role in the formation of transformative spirituality and mission.

Whole World: Reflections of the Lausanne Theology Working Group" (2010).

90. "Mission and Evangelism in Unity," CWME Study Document (2000), §13.

91. See "Mission as Ministry of Reconciliation," in *You Are the Light of the World: Statements on Mission by the World Council of Churches 1980-2005*, ed. Jacques Matthey (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005), 90-162.

92. Report of WCC Consultation on Mission and Ecclesiology of the Migrant Churches, Utrecht, the Netherlands, 16-21 November 2010," *International Review of Mission*, 100.1 392 (April 2011): 104-107.

93. Christopher Duraisingh, ed., *Called to One Hope: The Gospel in Diverse Cultures* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998), 54.

Reading the Bible contextually is also a primary resource in enabling local congregations to be messengers and witnesses to God's justice and love. Liturgy in the sanctuary only has full integrity when we live out God's mission in our communities in our daily life. Local congregations are therefore impelled to step out of their comfort zones and cross boundaries for the sake of the mission of God.

75. More than ever before, local congregations today can play a key role in emphasizing the crossing of cultural and racial boundaries and affirming cultural difference as a gift of the Spirit. Rather than being perceived as a problem, migration can be seen as offering new possibilities for churches to re-discover themselves afresh. It inspires opportunities for the creation of intercultural and multi-cultural churches at local level. All churches can create space for different cultural communities to come together and embrace exciting opportunities for contextual expressions of intercultural mission in our time.

76. Local congregations can also, as never before, develop global connections. Many inspirational and transformative linkages are being formed between churches that are geographically far apart and located in very different contexts. These offer innovative possibilities but are not without pitfalls. The increasingly popular short-term "mission trips" can help to build partnerships between churches in different parts of the world but in some cases place an intolerable burden on poor local churches or disregard the existing churches altogether. While there is some danger and caution around such trips, these exposure opportunities in diverse cultural and socio-economic contexts can also lead to long-term change when the travelers return to their home community. The challenge is to find ways of exercising spiritual gifts which build up the whole church in every part (1 Cor. 12-14).

77. Advocacy for justice is no longer the sole prerogative of national assemblies and central offices but a form of witness which calls for the engagement of local churches. For example, the WCC Decade to Overcome Violence (2001-2011) concluded with a plea in the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation that "churches must help in identifying the everyday choices that can abuse and promote human rights, gender justice, climate justice, unity and peace."⁹⁴ Local churches' grounding in everyday life gives them both legitimacy and motivation in the struggle for justice and peace.

78. The church in every geo-political and socio-economic context is called to service (*diakonia*)—to live out the faith and hope of the community of God's people, witnessing to what God has done in Jesus Christ. Though service the church participates in God's mission, following the

way of its Servant Lord. The church is called to be a diaconal community manifesting the power of service over the power of domination, enabling and nurturing possibilities for life, and witnessing to God's transforming grace through acts of service that hold forth the promise of God's reign.⁹⁵

79. As the church discovers more deeply its identity as a missionary community, its outward-looking character finds expression in evangelism.

Spirit of Pentecost: Good News for All

The Call to Evangelize

80. Witness (*martyria*) takes concrete form in evangelism—the communication of the whole gospel to the whole of humanity in the whole world.⁹⁶ Its goal is the salvation of the world and the glory of the Triune God. Evangelism is mission activity which makes explicit and unambiguous the centrality of the incarnation, suffering, and resurrection of Jesus Christ without setting limits to the saving grace of God. It seeks to share this good news with all who have not yet heard it and invites them to an experience of life in Christ.

81. "Evangelism is the outflow of hearts that are filled with the love of God for those who do not yet know him."⁹⁷ At Pentecost, the disciples could not but declare the mighty works of God (Acts 2:4; 4:20). Evangelism, while not excluding the different dimensions of mission, focuses on explicit and intentional articulation of the gospel, including "the invitation to personal conversion to a new life in Christ and to discipleship."⁹⁸ While the Holy Spirit calls some to be evangelists (Eph. 4:11), we all are called to give an account of the hope that is in us (1 Pet. 3:15). Not only individuals but also the whole church together is called to evangelize (Mark 16:15; 1 Pet. 2:9).

82. Today's world is marked by excessive assertion of religious identities and persuasions that seem to break and brutalize in the name of God rather than heal and nurture communities. In such a context, it is important to recognize that proselytism is not a legitimate way of practicing evangelism.⁹⁹ The Holy Spirit chooses to work in partnership with people's preaching and demonstration of

94. "Glory to God and Peace on Earth: The Message of the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation," WCC, Kingston, Jamaica, 17-25 May 2011, 2.

95. "Diakonia in the Twenty First Century: Theological Perspectives," WCC Conference on Theology of *Diakonia* in the 21st Century, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 2-6 June 2012, 2.

96. *Minutes and Reports of the Fourth Meeting of the Central Committee*, WCC, Rolle, Switzerland, 1951, 66.

97. The Lausanne Movement, *The Cape Town Commitment*, 2010, Part I, 7(b).

98. See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Doctrinal Note on Some Aspects of Evangelization, No. 12, 2007, 489-504

99. WCC Central Committee, *Towards Common Witness: A Call to Adopt Responsible Relationships in Mission and to Renounce Proselytism* (1977).

the good news (see Rom. 10:14-15; 2 Cor. 4:2-6), but it is only God's Spirit who creates new life and brings about rebirth (John 3:5-8; 1 Thess. 1:4-6). We acknowledge that evangelism at times has been distorted and lost its credibility because some Christians have forced "conversions" by violent means or the abuse of power. In some contexts, however, accusations of forced conversions are motivated by the desire of dominant groups to keep the marginalized living with oppressed identities and in dehumanizing conditions.

83. Evangelism is sharing one's faith and conviction with other people and inviting them to discipleship, whether or not they adhere to other religious traditions. Such sharing is to take place with both confidence and humility and as an expression of our professed love for our world. If we claim to love God and to love our fellow human beings but fail to share the good news with them urgently and consistently, we deceive ourselves as to the integrity of our love for either God or people. There is no greater gift we can offer to our fellow human beings than to share and or introduce them to the love, grace, and mercy of God in Christ.

84. Evangelism leads to repentance, faith, and baptism. Hearing the truth in the face of sin and evil demands a response—positive or negative (John 4:28-29; cf. Mark 10:22). It provokes conversion, involving a change of attitudes, priorities, and goals. It results in salvation of the lost, healing of the sick, and the liberation of the oppressed and the whole creation.

85. "Evangelism," while not excluding the different dimensions of mission, focuses on explicit and intentional articulation of the gospel, including "the invitation to personal conversion to a new life in Christ and to discipleship."¹⁰⁰ In different churches, there are differing understandings of how the Spirit calls us to evangelize in our contexts. For some, evangelism is primarily about leading people to personal conversion through Jesus Christ; for others, evangelism is about being in solidarity and offering Christian witness through presence with oppressed peoples; others again look on evangelism as one component of God's mission. Different Christian traditions denote aspects of mission and evangelism in different ways; however, we can still affirm that the Spirit calls us all towards an understanding of evangelism which is grounded in the life of the local church where worship

100. It is important to note that not all churches understand evangelism as expressed in the above. The Roman Catholic Church refers to "evangelization" as the *missio ad gentes* [mission to the peoples] directed to those who do not know Christ. In a wider sense, it is used to describe ordinary pastoral work, while the phrase "new evangelization" designates pastoral outreach to those who no longer practise the Christian faith. See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Doctrinal Note on Some Aspects of Evangelization.

(*leiturgia*) is inextricably linked to witness (*martyria*), service (*diakonia*), and fellowship (*koinonia*).

Evangelism in Christ's Way

86. Evangelism is sharing the good news both in word and action. Evangelizing through verbal proclamation or preaching of the gospel (*kerygma*) is profoundly biblical. However, if our words are not consistent with our actions, our evangelism is inauthentic. The combination of verbal declaration and visible action bears witness to God's revelation in Jesus Christ and of his purposes. Evangelism is closely related to unity: the love for one another is a demonstration of the gospel we proclaim (John 13:34-35) while disunity is an embarrassment to the gospel (1 Cor. 1).

87. There are historical and contemporary examples of faithful, humble service by Christians, working in their own local contexts, with whom the Spirit has partnered to bring about fullness of life. Also, many Christians who lived and worked as missionaries far away from their own cultural contexts did so with humility, mutuality, and respect; God's Spirit also stirred in those communities to bring about transformation.

88. Regrettably, sometimes evangelism has been practiced in ways which betray rather than incarnate the gospel. Whenever this occurs, repentance is in order. Mission in Christ's way involves affirming the dignity and rights of others. We are called to serve others as Christ did (cf. Mark 10:45; Matt. 25:45), without exploitation or any form of allurements.¹⁰¹ In such individualized contexts, it may be possible to confuse evangelism with buying and selling a "product," where we decide what aspects Christian life we want to take on. Instead, the Spirit rejects the idea that Jesus' good news for all can be consumed under capitalist terms, and the Spirit calls us to conversion and transformation at a personal level, which leads us to the proclamation of the fullness of life for all.

89. Authentic evangelism is grounded in humility and respect for all and flourishes in the context of dialogue. It promotes the message of the gospel, of healing and reconciliation, in word and deed. "There is no evangelism without solidarity; there is no Christian solidarity that does not involve sharing the message of God's coming reign."¹⁰² Evangelism, therefore, inspires the building of inter-personal and community relationships. Such authentic relationships are often best nourished in local

101. World Council of Churches, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, and World Evangelical Alliance, *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct* (2100).

102. The San Antonio Report, 26; CWME, *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation* (1982), §34; Duraisingh, *Called to One Hope*, 38.

faith communities and based in local cultural contexts. Christian witness is as much by our presence as by our words. In situations where the public testimony to one's faith is not possible without risking one's life, simply living the gospel may be a powerful alternative.

90. Aware of tensions between people and communities of different religious convictions and varied interpretations of Christian witness, authentic evangelism must always be guided by life-affirming values, as stated in the joint statement on "Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct":

- a. Rejection of all forms of violence, discrimination and repression by religious and secular authority, including the abuse of power—psychological or social.
- b. Affirming the freedom of religion to practice and profess faith without any fear of reprisal and or intimidation. Mutual respect and solidarity which promote justice, peace and the common good of all.
- c. Respect for all people and human cultures, while also discerning the elements in our own cultures, such as patriarchy, racism, casteism, etc., that need to be challenged by the gospel.
- d. Renunciation of false witness and listening in order to understand in mutual respect.
- e. Ensuring freedom for ongoing discernment by persons and communities as part of decision-making.
- f. Building relationships with believers of other faiths or no faith to facilitate deeper mutual understanding, reconciliation and cooperation for the common good.¹⁰³

91. We live in a world strongly influenced by individualism, secularism, and materialism and by other ideologies that challenge the values of the kingdom of God. Although the gospel is ultimately good news for all, it is bad news for the forces which promote falsehood, injustice, and oppression. To that extent, evangelism is also a prophetic vocation which involves speaking truth to power in hope and in love (Acts 26:25; Col. 1:5; Eph. 4:15). The gospel is liberative and transformative. Its proclamation must involve transformation of societies with a view to creating just and inclusive communities.

92. Standing against evil or injustice and being prophetic can some- times be met with suppression and violence, and thus consequently lead to suffering, persecution,

103. See *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World*.

and even death. Authentic evangelism involves being vulnerable, following the example of Christ by carrying the cross and emptying oneself (Phil. 2:5-11). Just as the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church under Roman persecution, today the pursuit of justice and righteousness makes a powerful witness to Christ. Jesus linked such self-denial with the call to follow him and with eternal salvation (Mark 8:34-38).

Evangelism, Interfaith Dialogue and Christian Presence

93. In the plurality and complexity of today's world, we encounter people of many different faiths, ideologies, and convictions. We believe that the Spirit of Life brings joy and fullness of life. God's Spirit, therefore, can be found in all cultures that affirm life. The Holy Spirit works in mysterious ways and we do not fully understand the workings of the Spirit in other faith traditions. We acknowledge that there is inherent value and wisdom in diverse life-giving spiritualities. Therefore, authentic mission makes the "other" a partner in, not an "object" of mission.

94. Dialogue is a way of affirming our common life and goals in terms of the affirmation of life and the integrity of creation. Dialogue at the religious level is possible only if we begin with the expectation of meeting God who has preceded us and has been present with people within their own contexts.¹⁰⁴ God is there before we come (Acts 17) and our task is not to bring God along, but to witness to the God who is already there. Dialogue provides for an honest encounter where each party brings to the table all that they are in an open, patient and respectful manner.

95. Evangelism and dialogue are distinct but interrelated. Although Christians hope and pray that all people may come to living knowledge of the Triune God, evangelism is not the purpose of dialogue. However, since dialogue is also "a mutual encounter of commitments," sharing the good news of Jesus Christ has a legitimate place in it. Furthermore, authentic evangelism takes place in the context of the dialogue of life and action and in "the spirit of dialogue"—"an attitude of respect and friendship."¹⁰⁵ Evangelism entails not only proclamation of our deepest convictions, but also listening to others and being challenged and enriched by others (Acts 10).

96. Particularly important is dialogue between people of different faiths, not only in multi-religious contexts but equally where there is a large majority of a particular faith. It is necessary to protect rights of minority groups

104. See WCC, *Baar Statement: Theological Perspectives on Plurality* (1990).

105. Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, *Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflection and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ* (1991), §9.

and religious freedom and to enable all to contribute to the common good. Religious freedom should be upheld because it flows from the dignity of the human person, grounded in the creation of all human beings in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26). Followers of all religions and beliefs have equal rights and responsibilities.¹⁰⁶

Evangelism and Cultures

97. The gospel takes root in different contexts through engagement with specific cultural, political, and religious realities. Respect for people and their cultural and symbolic life-worlds are necessary if the gospel is to take root in those different realities. In this way it must begin with engagement and dialogue with the wider context in order to discern how Christ is already present and where God's Spirit is already at work.

98. The connection of evangelism with colonial powers in the history of mission has led to the presupposition that Western forms of Christianity are the standards by which others' adherence to the gospel should be judged. Evangelism by those who enjoy economic power or cultural hegemony risks distorting the gospel. Therefore, they must seek the partnership of the poor, the dispossessed, and minorities and be shaped by their theological resources and visions.

99. The enforcement of uniformity discredits the uniqueness of each individual created in the image and likeness of God. Whereas Babel attempted to enforce uniformity, the preaching of the disciples on the day of Pentecost resulted in a unity in which personal particularities and community identities were not lost but respected—they heard the good news in their own languages.

100. Jesus calls us out of the narrow concerns of our own kingdom, our own liberation, and our own independence (Acts 1:6) by unveiling to us a larger vision and empowering us by the Holy Spirit to go “to the ends of the earth” as witnesses in each context of time and space to God's justice, freedom, and peace. Our calling is to point all to Jesus, rather than to ourselves or our institutions, looking out for the interests of others rather than our own (see Phil. 2:3-4). We cannot capture the complexities of the scriptures through one dominant cultural perspective. A plurality of cultures is a gift of the Spirit to deepen our understanding of our faith and one another. As such, intercultural communities of faith, where diverse cultural communities worship together, is one way in which cultures can engage one another authentically and where culture can enrich gospel. At the same time, the gospel critiques notions of cultural superiority. Therefore, “the gospel, to

be fruitful, needs to be both true to itself and incarnated or rooted in the culture of a people. . . . We need constantly to seek the insight of the Holy Spirit in helping us to better discern where the gospel challenges, endorses or transforms a particular culture¹⁰⁷ for the sake of life.

Feast of Life: Concluding Affirmations

101. We are the servants of the Triune God, who has given us the mission of proclaiming the good news to all humanity and creation, especially the oppressed and the suffering people who are longing for fullness of life. Mission—as a common witness to Christ—is an invitation to the “feast in the kingdom of God” (Luke 14:15). The mission of the church is to prepare the banquet and to invite all people to the feast of life. The feast is a celebration of creation and fruitfulness overflowing from the love of God, the source of life in abundance. It is a sign of the liberation and reconciliation of the whole creation which is the goal of mission. With a renewed appreciation of the mission of God's Spirit, we offer the following affirmations in response to the question posed at the beginning of this document.

102. *We affirm that the purpose of God's mission is fullness of life (John 10:10) and that this is the criterion for discernment in mission.* Therefore, we are called to discern the Spirit of God wherever there is life in its fullness, particularly in terms of the liberation of the oppressed peoples, the healing and reconciliation of broken communities, and the restoration of the whole creation. We are challenged to appreciate the life-affirming spirits present in different cultures and to be in solidarity with all those who are involved in the mission of affirming and preserving life. We also discern and confront evil spirits wherever forces of death and negation of life are experienced.

103. *We affirm that mission begins with God's act of creation and continues in recreation, by the enlivening power of the Holy Spirit.* The Holy Spirit, poured out in tongues of fire at Pentecost, fills our hearts and makes us into Christ's church. The Spirit which was in Christ Jesus inspires us to a self-emptying and cross-bearing life-style and accompanies God's people as we seek to bear witness to the love of God in word and deed. The Spirit of truth leads into all truth and empowers us to defy the demonic powers and speak the truth in love. As a redeemed community we share with others the waters of life and look for the Spirit of unity to heal, reconcile, and renew the whole creation.

104. *We affirm that spirituality is the source of energy for mission and that mission in the Spirit is transformative.* Thus we seek a re-orienting of our perspective between

106. See *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World*.

107. *Called to One Hope*, 21-22, 24.

mission, spirituality, and creation. Mission spirituality that flows from liturgy and worship reconnects us with one another and with the wider creation. We understand that our participation in mission, our existence in creation, and our practice of the life of the Spirit are woven together, for they are mutually transformative. Mission that begins with creation invites us to celebrate life in all its dimensions as God's gift.

105. *We affirm that the mission of God's Spirit is to renew the whole creation.* "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it" (Ps. 24:1, NIV). The God of life protects, loves, and cares for nature. Humanity is not the master of the earth but is responsible to care for the integrity of creation. Excessive greed and unlimited consumption which lead to continuous destruction of nature must end. God's love does not proclaim a human salvation separate from the renewal of the whole creation. We are called to participate in God's mission beyond our human-centred goals. God's mission is to all life and we have to both acknowledge it and serve it in new ways of mission. We pray for repentance and forgiveness, but we also call for action now. Mission has creation at its heart.

106. *We affirm that today mission movements are emerging from the global South and East which are multi-directional and many-faceted.* The shifting centre of gravity of Christianity to the global South and East challenges us to explore missiological expressions that are rooted in these contexts, culture, and spiritualities. We need to develop further mutuality and partnership and affirm interdependence within mission and the ecumenical movement. Our mission practice should show solidarity with suffering peoples and harmony with nature.

Evangelism is done in self-emptying humility, with respect towards others and in dialogue with people of different cultures and faiths. It should, in this landscape, also involve confronting structures and cultures of oppression and dehumanization that are in contradiction to the values of God's reign.

107. *We affirm that marginalized people are agents of mission and exercise a prophetic role which emphasizes that fullness of life is for all.* The marginalized in society are the main partners in God's mission. Marginalized, oppressed, and suffering people have a special gift to distinguish what news is good for them and what news is bad for their endangered life. In order to commit ourselves to God's life-giving mission, we have to listen to the voices from the margins to hear what is life-affirming and what is life-destroying. We must turn our direction of mission to the actions that the marginalized are taking. Justice, solidarity, and inclusivity are key expressions of mission from the margins.

108. *We affirm that the economy of God is based on values of love and justice for all and that transformative mission resists idolatry in the free-market economy.* Economic globalization has effectively supplanted the God of Life with mammon, the god of free-market capitalism that claims the power to save the world through the accumulation of undue wealth and prosperity. Mission in this context needs to be counter-cultural, offering alternatives to such idolatrous visions because mission belongs to the God of Life, justice, and peace and not to this false god who brings misery and suffering to people and nature. Mission, then, is to denounce the economy of greed and to participate in and practice the divine economy of love, sharing, and justice.

109. *We affirm that the gospel of Jesus Christ is good news in all ages and places and should be proclaimed in the Spirit of love and humility.* We affirm the centrality of the incarnation, the cross, and the resurrection in our message and also in the way we do evangelism. Therefore, evangelism always points to Jesus and the kingdom of God rather than to institutions and it belongs to the very being of the church. The prophetic voice of the church should not be silent in times that demand this voice be heard. The church is called to renew its methods of evangelism to communicate the good news with persuasion, inspiration, and conviction.

110. *We affirm that dialogue and cooperation for life are integral to mission and evangelism.* Authentic evangelism is done with respect for freedom of religion and belief, for all human beings as images of God. Proselytism by violent means, economic incentive, or abuse of power is contrary to the message of the gospel. In doing evangelism it is important to build relations of respect and trust between people of different faiths. We value each and every human culture and recognize that the gospel is not possessed by any group but is for every people. We understand that our task is not to bring God along but to witness to the God who is already there (Acts 17:23-28). Joining in with the Spirit, we are enabled to cross cultural and religious barriers to work together towards life.

111. *We affirm that God moves and empowers the church in mission.* The church as the people of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit is dynamic and changing as it continues the mission of God. This leads to a variety of forms of common witness, reflecting the diversity of world Christianity. Thus the churches need to be on the move, journeying together in mission, continuing in the mission of the apostles. Practically, this means that church and mission should be united and that different ecclesial and missional bodies need to work together for the sake of life.

112. The Triune God invites the whole creation to the Feast of Life, through Jesus Christ who came “that they may have life, and may have it in all its fullness” (John 10:10, REB), through the Holy Spirit who affirms the vision of the reign of God, “Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth!” (Is. 65:17, KJV). We commit ourselves together in humility and hope to the mission of God, who recreates all and reconciles all. And we pray, “God of Life, lead us into justice and peace!”

CHAPTER SIX

Dialogue with People of Other Faiths: Toward Better Understanding of Our Neighbours

Introduction

The question of how Christians should relate to persons of other religions has been present from the beginning of the modern ecumenical movement, though the answers given have shifted with the theological climate. The 1910 Edinburgh mission conference dealt with other faiths primarily in terms of the church's evangelistic task. By contrast, the 1928 meeting of the International Missionary Conference (IMC) in Jerusalem (see statement below) was primarily concerned that Christians join hands with other "believers" against the threat of secularism, as symbolized by the Russian revolution.

*The theological tide, however, was again turning. In preparation for the next gathering of the IMC (Tambaram, 1938), the Dutch missiologist, Hendrik Kraemer, was asked to produce a study on the biblical and theological basis of Christianity's attitude toward other religions. His book *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (see excerpt below) stressed the uniqueness of God's revelation in Jesus Christ and led the conference "to call men out from [non-Christian religions] to the feet of Christ. . . because we believe that in him alone is the full salvation which man needs." Interfaith relations were basically understood as preparation for evangelism—a position that prevailed in ecumenical discussions, despite various voices in opposition, for the next generation.*

The concept of dialogue emerged as a way of speaking about interfaith relations at the WCC's third assembly (New Delhi, 1961), which was also the first Council assembly to be held in Asia, home to many of the world's religions. The influential address to that assembly by the Indian Christian theologian, Paul Devanandan, is included in this chapter.

*A more cooperative, dialogical attitude was also evident in the groundbreaking statement of Vatican II, commonly referred to by its Latin name, *Nostra Aetate* (see below). Declaring that "the Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions," this text, coming from the largest Christian church, opened the way for other Christians to think in positive terms about adherents of non-Christian religions. By 1971, the WCC central committee was ready to create a new "sub-unit" on *Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies*. Two speeches delivered at that crucial meeting of the Central Committee, one by the Middle Eastern Orthodox bishop and scholar, Georges Khodr, and the other by Indian Protestant scholar, Stanley Samartha (who was the sub-unit's first director), are also included below.*

Behind this new focus on dialogue was a conviction that other faiths should not be judged in the abstract, on the basis of doctrinal principle, but should be experienced through living encounter. But what does such dialogue actually entail? How does it relate to mission and evangelism? How does dialogue avoid the dangers of syncretism? These questions have been addressed by the WCC since 1971, especially in the Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies (1979) and the statements on “Religious Plurality: Theological Perspectives and Affirmations” (1990) and “Religious Plurality and Christian Self-Understanding” (2006)—all of which are included below. The most succinct description of the tension between affirming the uniqueness and finality of Christ and affirming the possibility of salvation beyond the boundaries of Christianity is found in the report from the 1989 Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, which is also included in this chapter.

This is not to say, however, that even now the WCC or the ecumenical movement is of one mind on the subject. Opposition to interfaith dialogue within the movement was particularly strong at the WCC’s Nairobi assembly (1975), where various speakers argued that dialogue can be a kind of spiritual compromise that undermines mission. The Lausanne Covenant (see Chapter V) forcefully expresses this point of view.

In recent years, ecumenical conversations have focused considerable attention on how interfaith relations affect our own identity as Christians, and on the biblical theme of hospitality to the stranger, through which both host and guest may be changed. These notions are clearly presented in the final two entries in this chapter.

The term “ecumenism” generally refers to intra-Christian dialogue and activity; but interfaith dialogue has proven to belong on the ecumenical agenda for several reasons:

- *The ecumenical movement is properly concerned with “the whole inhabited earth,” including those parts of the human family that adhere to other religions.*
- *Interfaith dialogue is something that the churches properly do together. It makes little sense to talk about dialogue between, for example, Buddhists and Methodists or Muslims and Presbyterians.*
- *The question of the place of other religions in God’s plan of salvation is still today a topic of great controversy, even division, within the churches.*
- *Inter-religious relationships have become important to peacemaking efforts throughout the world—a reminder that interfaith relations extend far beyond formal dialogues.*

I want, finally, to stress that the documents in this chapter were written by Christians. They are statements about interfaith dialogue, not the results of it.

94. "The Call to the World," Meeting of the International Missionary Council, Jerusalem, 1928

Jerusalem 1928 was the first major conference of the International Missionary Council (IMC) following its formation in 1921. • The Christian Life and Message in Relation to Non-Christian Systems: Report of the Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council, London, Oxford UP, 1928, pp. 490-92.

To non-Christians also we make our call. We rejoice to think that just because in Jesus Christ the light that lighteth every man shone forth in its full splendour, we find rays of that same light where He is unknown or even is rejected. We welcome every noble quality in non-Christian persons or systems as further proof that the Father, who sent His Son into the world, has nowhere left Himself without witness.

Thus, merely to give illustration, and making no attempt to estimate the spiritual value of other religions to their adherents, we recognize as part of the one Truth that sense of the Majesty of God and the consequent reverence in worship, which are conspicuous in Islam; the deep sympathy for the world's sorrow and unselfish search for the way of escape, which are at the heart of Buddhism; the desire for contact with ultimate reality conceived as spiritual, which is prominent in Hinduism; the belief in a moral order of the universe and consequent insistence on moral conduct, which are inculcated by Confucianism; the disinterested pursuit of truth and of human welfare which are often found in those who stand for secular civilization but do not accept Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

Especially we make our call to the Jewish people, whose Scriptures have become our own, and "of whom is Christ as concerning the flesh," that with open heart they turn to that Lord in whom is fulfilled the hope of their nation, its prophetic message and its zeal for holiness. And we call upon our fellow Christians in all lands to show to Jews that loving-kindness that has too seldom been shown towards them.

We call on the followers of non-Christian religions to join with us in the study of Jesus Christ as He stands before us in the Scriptures, His place in the life of the world, and His power to satisfy the human heart; to hold fast to faith in the unseen and eternal in face of the growing materialism

of the world; to co-operate with us against all the evils of secularism; to respect freedom of conscience so that men may confess Christ without separation from home and friends; and to discern that all the good of which men have conceived is fulfilled and secured in Christ. Christianity is not a western religion, nor is it yet effectively accepted by the western world as a whole. Christ belongs to the peoples of Africa and Asia as much as to the European or American. We call all men to equal fellowship in Him. But to come to Him is always self-surrender. We must not come in the pride of national heritage or religious tradition; he who would enter the Kingdom of God must become as a little child, though in that Kingdom are all the treasures of man's aspirations, consecrated and harmonized. Just because Christ is the self-disclosure of the One God, all human aspirations are towards Him, and yet of no human tradition is He merely the continuation. He is the desire of all nations; but He is always more, and other, than they had desired before they learnt of Him.

But we would insist that when the Gospel of the Love of God comes home with power to the human heart, it speaks to each man, not as Moslem or as Buddhist, or as an adherent of any system, but just as man. And while we rightly study other religions in order to approach men wisely, yet at the last we speak as men to men, inviting them to share with us the pardon and the life that we have found in Christ.

95. Hendrik Kraemer, from *The Christian Message to the Non-Christian World*, 1938

The background and enormous impact of this book are discussed in the introduction to this chapter. Kraemer worked with the Dutch Bible Society in Indonesia before becoming the first director of the WCC's Ecumenical Institute (Bossey) in 1948. His Theology of the Laity (1958) is also an ecumenical classic. • The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World, written at the request of the IMC, New York, Harper, 1938, pp. 105-10.

A few centuries ago the attitude all over the world was to assume, as a matter of course, the unquestionable and unquestioned superiority and validity of one's own religion. The increasing contact which the different civilizations and religions have with each other, and the accompanying rise and development of the scientific study and comparison of religions, has radically changed this atmosphere and has made this attitude impossible. By painstaking research, by efforts to get an insight into the historical and psychological development of the different religions, we have today a knowledge of these religions more accurate and extensive than ever before. Amazing similarities and not less amazing dissimilarities in them have come to the light, and the result has been that the religious uncertainty and lack of a sense of direction, already flowing from other sources, have enormously increased. The question, What is truth in religion? is more urgent and more obscure than ever. This question is particularly urgent for Christianity, because it claims as its source and basis a divine revelation which at the same time is claimed to be the standard of reference for all truth and all religion. "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). "There is no salvation by anyone else, nor even a second Name under heaven appointed, for us men and our salvation" (Acts 4:12). This question of truth is particularly urgent for the missionary cause, because missions inevitably must lose their vital impetus if this conviction becomes thin or turns out to be invalid, or is held with an uneasy conscience and a confused intellect. The psychological, cultural, social and moral value of Christianity may be rich and impressive; yea, it may even be still richer than can be demonstrated by historical research and clear reasoning, but this argument carries us only to the point that Christianity is an extraordinarily valuable asset of historic human life, and in all probability will continue in the future to be so. From the standpoint of human history and culture this is highly important, but it ignores entirely the claim for truth which is the core of all real religious life and especially of Christianity, the religion of God's sole incarnation in Jesus Christ.

The argument of value does not coincide in any way whatever with that of truth. The non-Christian religions can just as well as Christianity show up an impressive record of psychological, cultural and other values, and it is wholly dependent on one's fundamental axioms of life whether one considers these non-Christian achievements of higher value for mankind than the Christian. The weakness of the value-argument in relation to the problem of ultimate and authoritative truth is still more patent if one remembers that from the standpoint of relative cultural value fictions and even lies have been extraordinarily

valuable and successful. Today we are taught unforgettable lessons on this score. Learned, ingenious, enthusiastic apologies for Christianity or religion, which shun the problem of truth because of its difficulty and satisfy themselves with important secondary motivations, are bred in ambiguity. A pragmatist position means ultimate skepticism or agnosticism and involves the surrender of the problem of truth. At the end the problem of truth stares us always sternly in the face, because man's deepest and noblest instincts refuse to extinguish the mark of his divine origin, namely, his thirst for and want of imperishable truth. The subjectively motivated superiority of religious truths, experiences and values can never substantiate the claim for truth or justify and keep alive a missionary movement. The only possible basis is the faith that God has revealed the Way and the Life and the Truth in Jesus Christ and wills this to be known through all the world. A missionary movement and obligation so founded is alone able to remain unshaken and undiscouraged, even when it is without visible result as, for example, is so largely true in the case of Islam.

And how are we to justify this faith? The only valid answer, which is at the same time according to the character and nature of faith, is that it will become justified in the end when God will fulfil His purpose. For "Faith is a well-grounded assurance of that for which we hope, and a conviction of the reality of things which we do not see" (Heb. 6:1). To demand a rational argument for faith is to make reason, that is, man, the standard of reference for faith, and ends in a vicious circle. Ultimate convictions never rest on a universally lucid and rational argument, in any philosophy and in any religion, and they never will. To adhere to a certain view of life and of the world has always meant a choice and a decision; not a rational step in the sense of being universally demonstrable as a mathematical truth. Religion and philosophy deal with different things from mathematics and physical science. They deal with man and his desires, his passions and aspirations; or—to put it more adequately—loving, hating, coveting, aspiring man tries to deal with himself in religion and philosophy, and this involves every moment ethical and religious choices and decisions. The Christian's ultimate ground of faith is: "The Spirit bears witness along with our own spirits that we are children of God" (Rom. 8:16); and he can die for that.

It has to be emphatically stated that the science of comparative religion, which brought and brings this confusion and anxiety, has exercised in many respects a highly salutary influence on religious life and our notions of it. Many fruits of the great humanistic movements of the last few centuries have made for a noble quest for truth, and for the liberation and widening of the human mind. So the science of comparative religion has effected in many

directions a beneficent purification of religious insight. This remains true notwithstanding the many misguided notions and aberrations that it naturally entertained as being an occupation of human beings. In God's Hand it has become a means to unveil the stupendous richness of the religious life of mankind, in the good sense of the word as well as in the bad; to foster a spirit of openness and honesty towards this alien religious life; to undermine the unchristian intellectualistic and narrow-minded arrogance towards these other religions; to open the eyes to the often all-too-human element in Christianity in its historical development and reality, often as degrading as the baser elements in the other religions; to make aware of the petrification of faith and church-life into which the Christian Church slips as easily as other religions fall short of their original stimuli. Who-soever has learnt, with the aid of the science of comparative religion, to look honestly in the face the empirical reality of Christianity—I am not now speaking about the Christian revelation and its reality—and of the other religions, and has understood that Christianity as an historical religious body is thoroughly human, that is, a combination of sublime and abject and tolerable elements, will feel deeply that to speak glibly of the superiority of Christianity is offensive. Of course, there are many traits in which Christianity in its historical manifestation is superior to other religions; but of other traits the same can be said in regard to the non-Christian religions. The truly remarkable thing about Christianity as an historic and empirical reality, which differentiates it from all other religions, is rather that radical self-criticism is one of its chief characteristics, because the revelation in Christ to which it testifies erects the absolute superiority of God's holy Will and judgment over all life, historical Christianity included.

The feeling of superiority is essentially a cultural, and not at all a religious, product; and decidedly not a Christian one. A feeling of superiority can only thrive on a definite consciousness of achievement. The famous student of religions, Troeltsch, who declined the Christian claim of representing the ultimate, exclusive truth as revealed in Jesus Christ, yet who nevertheless maintained a so-called relative absoluteness for Christianity, was virtually giving expression to his innate feeling of Western cultural achievement. There is no reason why a Hindu or a Chinese, being nurtured in this particular atmosphere, should not claim, after a comparative survey of the culture and religions of the world, the same relative absoluteness with regard to his religion.

In the light of the Christian revelation, however, it is impossible and unnatural to think in terms of achievement, whether ethical or religious; for the heart of the Gospel is that we live by divine grace and forgiveness, and that

God has made Jesus Christ for us “wisdom from God,” “righteousness,” “sanctification” and “redemption” in order that “he who boasts, let his boast be in the Lord” (I Cor. 1:30, 31) and not in any achievement of his own. Speaking strictly as a Christian, the feeling of superiority is the denial of what God meant and did through the Gospel. That in Christianity and in the mission field the superiority-feeling has so many victims indicates the intellectualist distortion of the Gospel into which pious Christians can lapse, by forgetting that to be a Christian means always and in all circumstances to be a forgiven sinner and never the *beatus possidens* of ready-made truth. In one of the preparatory papers for the Oxford Conference, Niebuhr makes the acute observation, which is pertinent to this attitude: “The final symbol of the perennial character of human sin is in the fact that the theologies, which preach humility and contrition, can nevertheless be vehicles of human pride.”

96. Paul Devanandan, “Called to Witness,” Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, New Delhi, 1961

This presentation to the WCC assembly in New Delhi (1961) by a leading Indian theologian was pivotal for the ecumenical understanding of inter-faith relations. Devanandan was director of the well-known Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society in Bangalore. • The Ecumenical Review, vol. 5, no. 14, 1961/2, pp. 154-63.

. . . Witness in a World of Other Faiths

Such words as “encounter,” “confrontation,” and “approach” do not fully express the understanding concern which is increasingly characteristic of Christian witness in our day in the surging new life manifest in other religions, especially in Asian lands. What is implied is an earnest desire to cross over the traditionally accepted boundaries of beliefs and practices which divide the fraternity of those who sincerely seek to understand and fulfil God's will for the world of men. There can be sociological and psychological explanations for this phenomenon of the renaissance of other religions. But if religious faith is to be regarded also in terms of response it would be difficult for the Christian to deny that these deep, inner stirrings of the human spirit are in response to the creative activity of the Holy

Spirit. At best, we only confess our inability to understand God's ways with us men; at worst, we must blame ourselves for our blindness in refusing to believe that God is equally concerned in the redemption of people other than us, who may not wholly agree with our understanding of God's being and his purpose for the world of his making.

Our ignorance of our religious environment does not insulate us from its influence; nor does our indifference to it exclude us from its claims. The living faith of contemporary non-Christian religions makes a bold bid in our generation to give form and content not only to the distinctive patterns of our national cultures, but also to the total fabric of world-culture. These religions now claim to have universal validity and missionary purpose. It is our task as Asian and African Christians to seek to interpret to our fellow Christians elsewhere the new affirmations and present claims of this pervasive religious renaissance, so that together we may gain a clearer vision of the nature of Christian mission and give meaningful content to Christian witness.

There is also the responsibility of explaining to our non-Christian kinsfolk just what our Christian standing ground is, especially in terms of the new religious categories that are gaining currency in contemporary non-Christian religious life and thought. For the fact remains that, apart from the misapprehensions entertained by many of them concerning the motives and methods of our evangelistic enterprise, they labour under grievous misunderstanding of the nature and content of the Christian Gospel. As D. T. Niles has pointed out, "The whole discussion about the relation of Christianity and other religions has been vitiated by the fact that we have been talking not so much about what happens when the Christian Gospel is proclaimed to adherents of other religions as about what happens when we who are of Christian faith study other religions." What is more, to quote Niles again, "The Christian witness does not grasp the true inwardness of his work where he does not see that God is previous to him in the life of the person whom he is seeking to win for the Gospel, and also previous to him in whatever area of life he is seeking to make the Gospel effective."

Communication from Faith to Faith

Communicating the Gospel is not to be confused with any endeavour to transmit a body of urgent information considered to be useful, or to impart a set of conclusions based on convincing arguments, from one person to another. That would be of the nature of a "communication about" a thing or an event. Indeed, in Christian witness there is a "communication about" what God has done and is

doing for men in Christ, but that is only as a means to an end. Our supreme purpose is that such "communication about" may eventually result in restoring "communication between" God and man, and among men in the deeper levels of the spirit. In his remarkable essay on this subject, [Hendrik] Kraemer maintains that while communication has been, and is being, restored between God and man in Jesus Christ, man still continues in a state beyond reach of communication with God, and with fellow men.

While we need to give serious thought to this breakdown of communication in our modern world through disintegration of community and secularization of society, we may not forget that among men of faith who are adherents of renascent religions, as well as those who profess no faith at all, there exists a common universe of discourse based on spontaneous reactions to the totality of life. We are all involved in a common social crisis, tied together by a community of interests; our common humanity serves as a common denominator; and on the frontiers of renascent faiths, doctrinal barriers no longer foreclose religious commerce. The outburst of newness of life in the resurgent non-Christian religions is due to increasing traffic across the border. For one thing, many Christian truths, abstracted from their original context, are found as unspoken presuppositions in what we may call the conceptual framework of non-Christian religious practice. Contemporary non-Christian doctrinal affirmations and religious categories are thus invested with a new meaning—content with which we are still unfamiliar. This calls for no mere study of the scriptural foundations of the historic religions in their classical expression, but for a sympathetic understanding of their present claims as dynamic faiths expressed in the lives of people.

Effective communication of the Gospel to the non-Christian man of faith depends on the effective use made of the religious vocabulary with which he is familiar, and of the cultural pattern of life in which he finds self-expression and community being. In our task of missionary preaching we have yet to take the dominant philosophical and religious concepts of the non-Christian faiths and make them into instruments of interpretation of the Gospel. This is undoubtedly a difficult process involving the denuding of their original connotation and a reclothing of them with the new meaning inherent in the Gospel. If God's redemptive activity in Jesus Christ is a fact with which we should reckon in every human situation, it is not so much by total destruction that he manifests his power but by radical renewal of what we cherish as valuable. That is why the Gospel we proclaim is the Good News of the Resurrection, the hope of the New Creation.

Not to Destroy but to Fulfil

A world renewed in Christ, the New Creation, is the sum and substance of the message of the Christian witness, and it is the high calling of the fellowship of the Christian Church to be the earnest of this new creation. It is at this point that we come up against the central issue raised by renascent non-Christian religions: Is the preaching of the Gospel directed to the total annihilation of all other religions than Christianity? Will religions as religions, and nations as nations, continue characteristically to separate in the fulness of time when God would “gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him” (Eph. 1:10)? In the final gathering-up of all that is of this world and of the next, in the resurrection-life, we will not be able to distinguish the New from the Old. It is not for us to indicate what will be preserved, and in what manner, for we cannot tell how God will bring his purpose for mankind and his world to a conclusion. But in so far as we identify ourselves with the will of God as revealed in Christ we can be certain that we shall be working along the line of that purpose and not against it.

Christian faith distinguishes between the Gospel proclamation of the fulfilment of God’s promise of the kingdom, and the hope in fulfilment of religious faith, wherever it is found, that all sincere human striving to reach out to God will indeed find favour with him. Fulfilment in the second sense would mean progressive realization of a more or less continuous creative process in history which can be traced back to the past, discernible in the present, and finally completed in the future. But fulfilment in the former case would mean that, because the final end is so totally assured, the end is in reality a present fact. In salvation-history, to the discerning eye of faith, it is the eternal future that is fulfilled in the contemporary present, not the past perfected in the future. It is in this sense Our Lord declared that he had come not to destroy but to fulfil.

This is the scandal in the foolishness of Christian witness to the historical and particular as revealing the timeless and universal, which we may not be able to substantiate in terms of reasoning but can only commend from faith to faith for “no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost” (I Cor. 12, 3). This is not a mere matter of propagandizing others, or of seeking to dominate their thinking by overwhelming pressure, whether of political power, social prestige or economic allurements. It is rather a question of obedience to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It is bearing witness to the faithfulness of God which a man has encountered in Christ, demanding of him in turn a corresponding fidelity to God. And that demand is a call which enlightens and rouses to action; it carries with it mission,

besides which there can be no other mission. “Ye are my witnesses!” “Go ye into all the world!” “And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all the nations; and then shall the end come” (Matt. 24, 14).

97. “Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions” (*Nostra Aetate*), Second Vatican Council, 1965

This text from Vatican II has had widespread influence on Christian relations with other faiths. It is particularly noteworthy for its repudiation of the charge of deicide against the Jews and for its affirmation of God’s continuing love for the Jewish people. • Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents, ed. Austin Flannery, rev. ed., Northport, NY, Costello, 1988, pp. 738-42.

1. In this age of ours, when men are drawing more closely together and the bonds of friendship between different peoples are being strengthened, the Church examines with greater care the relation which she has to non-Christian religions. Ever aware of her duty to foster unity and charity among individuals, and even among nations, she reflects at the outset on what men have in common and what tends to promote fellowship among them.

All men form but one community. This is so because all stem from the one stock which God created to people the entire earth (cf. Acts 17:26), and also because all share a common destiny, namely God. His providence, evident goodness, and saving designs extend to all men (cf. Wis. 8:1; Acts 14: 17; Rom. 2:6-7; 1 Tim. 2:4) against the day when the elect are gathered together in the holy city which is illumined by the glory of God, and in whose splendor all peoples will walk (cf. Apoc. 21:23ff.).

Men look to their different religions for an answer to the unsolved riddles of human existence. The problems that weigh heavily on the hearts of men are the same today as in the ages past. What is man? What is the meaning and purpose of life? What is upright behavior, and what is sinful? Where does suffering originate, and what end does it serve? How can genuine happiness be found? What

happens at death? What is judgment? What reward follows death? And finally, what is the ultimate mystery, beyond human explanation, which embraces our entire existence, from which we take our origin and towards which we tend?

2. Throughout history even to the present day, there is found among different peoples a certain awareness of a hidden power, which lies behind the course of nature and the events of human life. At times there is present even a recognition of a supreme being, or still more of a Father. This awareness and recognition results in a way of life that is imbued with a deep religious sense. The religions which are found in more advanced civilizations endeavor by way of well-defined concepts and exact language to answer these questions. Thus, in Hinduism men explore the divine mystery and express it both in the limitless riches of myth and the accurately defined insights of philosophy. They seek release from the trials of the present life by ascetical practices, profound meditation and recourse to God in confidence and love. Buddhism in its various forms testifies to the essential inadequacy of this changing world. It proposes a way of life by which men can, with confidence and trust, attain a state of perfect liberation and reach supreme illumination either through their own efforts or by the aid of divine help. So, too, other religions which are found throughout the world attempt in their own ways to calm the hearts of men by outlining a program of life covering doctrine, moral precepts and sacred rites.

The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. She has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which, although differing in many ways from her own teaching, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men. Yet she proclaims and is in duty bound to proclaim without fail, Christ who is the way, the truth and the life (Jn. 14:6). In him, in whom God reconciled all things to himself (2 Cor. 5:18-19), men find the fullness of their religious life.

The Church, therefore, urges her sons to enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with members of other religions. Let Christians, while witnessing to their own faith and way of life, acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians, also their social life and culture.

3. The Church has also a high regard for the Muslims. They worship God, who is one, living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth,¹ who has also spoken to men. They strive to submit themselves

1. Cf St. Gregory VII, Letter XXI to Anziri (Nacir), King of Mauritania (Pl. 148, col. 450ff.)

without reserve to the hidden decrees of God, just as Abraham submitted himself to God's plan, to whose faith Muslims eagerly link their own. Although not acknowledging him as God, they venerate Jesus as a prophet, his virgin Mother they also honor, and even at times devoutly invoke. Further, they await the day of judgment and the reward of God following the resurrection of the dead. For this reason they highly esteem an upright life and worship God, especially by way of prayer, alms-deeds and fasting.

Over the centuries many quarrels and dissensions have arisen between Christians and Muslims. The sacred Council now pleads with all to forget the past, and urges that a sincere effort be made to achieve mutual understanding; for the benefit of all men, let them together preserve and promote peace, liberty, social justice and moral values.

4. Sounding the depths of the mystery which is the Church, this sacred Council remembers the spiritual ties which link the people of the New Covenant to the stock of Abraham.

The Church of Christ acknowledges that in God's plan of salvation the beginning of her faith and election is to be found in the patriarchs, Moses and the prophets. She professes that all Christ's faithful, who as men of faith are sons of Abraham (cf. Gal. 3:7), are included in the same patriarch's call and that the salvation of the Church is mystically prefigured in the exodus of God's chosen people from the land of bondage. On this account the Church cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament by way of that people with whom God in his inexpressible mercy established the ancient covenant. Nor can she forget that she draws nourishment from that good olive tree onto which the wild olive branches of the Gentiles have been grafted (cf. Rom. 11:17-24). The Church believes that Christ who is our peace has through his cross reconciled Jews and Gentiles and made them one in himself (cf. Eph. 2:14-16).

Likewise, the Church keeps ever before her mind the words of the apostle Paul about his kinsmen: "they are Israelites, and to them belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race according to the flesh, is the Christ" (Rom. 9:4-5), the son of the virgin Mary. She is mindful, moreover, that the apostles, the pillars on which the Church stands, are of Jewish descent, as are many of those early disciples who proclaimed the Gospel of Christ to the world.

As holy Scripture testifies, Jerusalem did not recognize God's moment when it came (cf. Lk. 19:42). Jews for the most part did not accept the Gospel: on the contrary, many opposed the spreading of it (cf. Rom. 11:28). Even so, the apostle Paul maintains that the Jews remain very dear to God, for the sake of the patriarchs, since God does not take

back the gifts he bestowed or the choice he made.² Together with the prophets and that same apostle, the Church awaits the day, known to God alone, when all peoples will call on God with one voice and “serve him shoulder to shoulder” (Soph. 3:9; cf. Is. 66:23; Ps. 65:4; Rom. 11:11-32).

Since Christians and Jews have such a common spiritual heritage, this sacred Council wishes to encourage and further mutual understanding and appreciation. This can be obtained, especially, by way of biblical and theological enquiry and through friendly discussions.

Even though the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ (cf. John 19:6), neither all Jews indiscriminately at that time, nor Jews today, can be charged with the crimes committed during his passion. It is true that the Church is the new people of God, yet the Jews should not be spoken of as rejected or accursed as if this followed from holy Scripture. Consequently, all must take care, lest in catechizing or in preaching the Word of God, they teach anything which is not in accord with the truth of the Gospel message or the spirit of Christ.

Indeed, the Church reproves every form of persecution against whomsoever it may be directed. Remembering, then, her common heritage with the Jews and moved not by any political consideration, but solely by the religious motivation of Christian charity, she deplores all hatreds, persecutions, displays of antisemitism leveled at any time or from any source against the Jews.

The Church always held and continues to hold that Christ out of infinite love freely underwent suffering and death because of the sins of all men, so that all might attain salvation. It is the duty of the Church, therefore, in her preaching to proclaim the cross of Christ as the sign of God’s universal love and the source of all grace.

5. We cannot truly pray to God the Father of all if we treat any people in other than brotherly fashion, for all men are created in God’s image. Man’s relation to God the Father and man’s relation to his fellow-men are so dependent on each other that the Scripture says “he who does not love, does not know God” (1 Jn. 4:8).

There is no basis, therefore, either in theory or in practice for any discrimination between individual and individual, or between people and people arising either from human dignity or from the rights which flow from it.

Therefore, the Church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against people or any harassment of them on the basis of their race, color, condition in life or religion. Accordingly, following the footsteps of

the holy apostles Peter and Paul, the sacred Council earnestly begs the Christian faithful to “conduct themselves well among the Gentiles” (1 Pet. 2:12) and if possible, as far as depends on them, to be at peace with all men (cf. Rom. 12:18) and in that way to be true sons of the Father who is in heaven (cf. Mt. 5:45).

98. Georges Khodr, “Christianity in a Pluralistic World: The Economy of the Holy Spirit,” World Council of Churches Central Committee, 1971

Metropolitan Georges Khodr (Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch and All the East), a frequent participant in ecumenical conferences, is metropolitan of the archdiocese of Byblos and Botris (Mt. Lebanon). This paper, like the following one by Stanley Samartha, was delivered at the meeting that established the WCC unit on interfaith dialogue. • The Ecumenical Review, vol. 23, no. 2, 1971, pp. 118-19, 123-28.

The end of the First World War brought with it a keener sense of the unity of the world. Since the end of the Second World War we have experienced a process of planetization to which the heterogeneous nature of religious creeds is a major obstacle. The increasing need for unity makes dialogue imperative if we wish to avoid a *de facto* syncretism of resurgent religions all claiming universality. In face of this resurgence of religions and a plurality which shows no signs of yielding to the Gospel, the question arises as to whether Christianity is so inherently exclusive of other religions as has generally been proclaimed up to now.

The question is of importance not only for the Christian mission but also for world peace. But this is not primarily a practical problem. It is the nature of the truth itself which is at stake here. The spiritual life we live is one thing if Christ’s truth is confined within the bounds of the historical Church; it is quite a different thing if it is unrestricted and scattered throughout the world. In practice and in content, love is one thing if Christianity is exclusive and a very different thing if it is inclusive. As we see it, the problem is not simply a theological problem. It embraces the phenomenology of the religions, their comparative study,

2. Cf. Rom. 11:28-29; cf. Dogm. Con st. *Lumen Gentium* (AAS 57, 1965, 20).

their psychology and their sociology. These other disciplines undermine a certain legalistic dogmatism which has long prevailed in Christian countries and which was based on ignorance of other religions on the part of professional theologians. Above all it is the authenticity of the spiritual life of non-Christians which raises the whole problem of Christ's presence in them. It is therefore quite nonsensical for theologians to pronounce judgement on the relationship of Christianity to the other religions if they are unable to integrate the extra-Christian data creatively and critically into their theological reflections. Theology has to be a continual two-way commerce between the biblical revelation and life, if it is to avoid sterility. Moreover, if obedience to the Master means following Him wherever we find traces of His presence, we have an obligation to investigate the authentic spiritual life of non-Christians. This raises the question of Christ's presence outside Christian history. The strikingly evangelical quality of many non-Christians obliges us, moreover, to develop an ecclesiology and a missiology in which the Holy Spirit necessarily occupies a supreme place. . . .

It comes down to this: contemporary theology must go beyond the notion of "salvation history" in order to rediscover the meaning of the *oikonomia*. The economy of Christ cannot be reduced to its historical manifestation but indicates the fact that we are made participants in the very life of God Himself. Hence the reference to eternity and to the work of the Holy Spirit. The very notion of economy is a notion of mystery. To say mystery is to point to the strength that is breathing in the event. It also points to the freedom of God who in His work of providence and redemption is not tied down to any event. The Church is the instrument of the mystery of the salvation of the nations. It is the sign of God's love for all men. It is not over against the world, separate from it; it is part of the world. The Church is the very breath of life for humanity, the image of the humanity to come, in virtue of the light it has received. It is the life of mankind itself, even if mankind does not realize this. It is, in Origen's words, the "cosmos of the cosmos." If, as Origen also says, the Son remains "the cosmos of the Church," then clearly the Church's function is, by means of the mystery of which it is the sign, to read all the other signs which God has placed in the various times in human history. Within the religions, its task is to reveal to the world of the religions the God who is hidden within it, in anticipation of the final concrete unfolding and manifestation of the Mystery.

This *oikonomia* is not new. It starts with creation as the manifestation of God's *kenosis*. The cosmos carries the mark of God just as Jacob did after wrestling with the Angel. In that world prior to the Law, God makes a

covenant with Noah. This is the starting point of dialogue with all mankind, which continues the first dialogue of creation itself. We are confronted there with a cosmic covenant which continues independently of the Abrahamic covenant. Within this covenant live the peoples who have not known the Word addressed to the father of the faithful. Scripture tells us that angels watch over them. Speaking of these angels of the nations, Origen tells us that it was they who brought the shepherds the news of Christ's birth and in doing so completed their mission. Yes, indeed, but in this sense, that Christ himself fulfils this Noachic covenant by giving it a salvation content and significance, having himself become the true covenant between God and the cosmos. The messianic prototype is already foretold in the Old Testament figure who is his "shadow cast before."

With Abraham's call, the election of the nations of the earth becomes clearer. In him they are already the object of this election. Abraham accomplishes the first exodus by departing from his own country. The second exodus will be accomplished by the people of Israel wandering through the wilderness to Canaan down to the day when Jesus is nailed to the cross like an outsider, a foreigner. In this second exodus, Israel lives figuratively the mystery of the *oikonomia*. Israel, saved from the waters on its way to the promised land, represents saved humanity. It is as such the image of the Church saved through Christ. The election is particular but from it the economy of the mystery is deployed for the whole of humanity. Israel is saved as the type and representative of the whole of mankind. It is furthermore manifest in the Old Testament that the saving events are the antitypes of the saving event of the exodus. The Hebrews saw here, not so much a linear sequence of saving events as rather a prototypical fact imitated in other facts, the sole continuity being God's fidelity to Himself. Israel as the scene of the revelation of the Word and as a people constituted by obedience to the Word is indissolubly linked with all other peoples who have received God's visitation "at sundry times and in diverse manners" and to whose fathers and prophets, considered by the church fathers as the saints and just men of Gentile peoples, God spoke. What matters here is that the histories of Abraham, of Moses and of David, were rich with the divine presence. The sequence of the facts is of little importance. The Old Testament authors, like Matthew in his genealogy, were concerned only with spiritually significant facts which were relevant to the messianic hope or the messianic reality.

This significant relationship to Christ is also applicable outside Israel inasmuch as the other nations have had their own types of the reality of Christ, whether in the form of persons or teachings. It is of little importance whether the religion in question was historical in character or not. It is

of little importance whether it considers itself incompatible with the Gospel. Christ is hidden everywhere in the mystery of his lowliness. Any reading of religions is a reading of Christ. It is Christ alone who is received as light when grace visits a Brahmin, a Buddhist or a Muhammadan reading his own scriptures. Every martyr for the truth, every man persecuted for what he believes to be right, dies in communion with Christ. The mystics of Islamic countries with their witness to suffering love lived the authentic Johannine *agape*. For if the tree is known by its fruits, there is no shadow of doubt that the poor and humble folk who live for and yearn for God in all nations already receive the peace which the Lord gives to all whom He loves (Lk. 2:14).

This work of salvation outside Israel “according to the flesh” and outside the historical Church is the result of the resurrection which fills everything with the fulness of Christ. The coming of Christ, in whom “all things are held together” (Col. 1:17) has led the whole of mankind to its true existence and brings about spiritual renewals, economies which can take charge of human souls until He comes. The Church’s mediatorial role remains unimpaired. But the freedom of God is such that He can raise up prophets outside the sociological confines of the New Israel just as He raised them up outside the confines of Old Israel. But these callings to prophecy and wisdom outside the sanctuary possess a secret bond with the power of the Risen One and in no way conflict with the uniqueness of Christ’s economy. The plenitude of Christ may be veiled in history by human sin. Men may fail to see the Church as the bearer of the power and glory of its Lord. What is visible is very often far from a pointer to the kingdom of God. But God can, if He pleases, send witnesses to those who have not been able to see the uplifting manifestation of Christ in the face which we have made bloody with our sins or in the seamless robe which we have torn by our divisions. Through these witnesses God can release a power far greater than the extra-biblical messages would themselves lead us to expect. True plenitude, however, is lived in the second advent. The economy of salvation achieves its full reality as the End, as the ultimate meaning of all things. The economy of Christ is unintelligible without the economy of the Spirit.

“God says, ‘This will happen in the last days; I will pour out upon everyone a portion of my spirit’” (Acts 2:17). This must be taken to mean a Pentecost which is universal from the very first. In fact we also read in the *Acts of the Apostles* that “the gift of the Holy Spirit” had been “poured out even on Gentiles” (10:45). The Spirit is present everywhere and fills everything by virtue of an economy distinct from that of the Son. Irenaeus calls the

Word and the Spirit the “two hands of the Father.” This means that we must affirm not only their hypostatic independence but also that the advent of the Holy Spirit in the world is not subordinated to the Son, is not simply a function of the Word. “Pentecost,” says Lossky, “is not a ‘continuation’ of the Incarnation, it is its sequel, its consequence: . . . creation has become capable of receiving the Holy Spirit” (Vladimir Lossky, *Théologie mystique de l’Eglise d’Orient*, Aubier, Paris, 1944, p. 156). Between the two economies there is a reciprocity and a mutual service. The Spirit is another Paraclete. It is He who fashions Christ within us. And, since Pentecost, it is He who makes Christ present. It is He who makes Christ an inner reality here and now; as Irenaeus finely says: “Where the Spirit is, there also is the Church” (*Adv. Haer.* III, 24, P.G. v.7, col. 966c). The Spirit operates and applies His energies in accordance with His own economy and we could, from this angle, regard the non-Christian religions as points where His inspiration is at work.

All who are visited by the Spirit are the people of God. The Church represents the first-fruits of the whole of mankind called to salvation. “In Christ all will be brought to life” (I Cor. 15:22) because of this communion which is the Church. At the present moment the Church is the sacrament of this future unity, the unity of both “those whom the Church will have baptized and those whom the Church’s bridegroom will have baptized,” to use Nicholas Cabasilas’s wonderful expression. And when now we communicate in the Body of Christ, we are united with all those whom the Lord embraces with His life-giving love. They are all within the eucharistic cup, awaiting the time of the Parousia when they will constitute the unique and glorious body of the Saviour and when all the signs will disappear before “the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Rev. 22:3).

If we accept the bases of this theology, how are we to define the Christian mission and the concrete approach of a Christian community to a non-Christian community?

1. The Christian who knows that, within God’s plan, the great religions constitute training schools of the Divine mercy will have an attitude of profound peace and gentle patience. There will be an obedience to this plan being carried out by the Holy Spirit, an expectant hope of the Lord’s coming, a longing to eat the eternal Paschal meal, and a secret form of communion with all men in the economy of the Mystery whereby we are being gradually led towards the final consummation, the recapitulation of all things in Christ.

2. There is a universal religious community which, if we are able to lay hold of what it offers, will enrich our Christian

experience. What matters here is not so much that we should grasp the historical, literal, objective meaning of non-Christian scriptures, but that we should read these scriptures in the light of Christ. For just as the letter without the Holy Spirit can hide revelation from us in the case of the Old Testament Scriptures, Christ being the only key to them, so is it possible for us to approach other religions and their scriptures either in a purely critical frame of mind and as objective students of history and sociology, or else in order to discern the truth in them according to the breath of the Holy Spirit.

3. Within the context of these religions, certain gifted individuals penetrate beyond the signs of their own faiths just as the spiritual life goes beyond the Law, even though legalism does prevail in some cases. What we have to do is to penetrate beyond the symbols and historical forms and discover the profound intention of religious men and to relate their apprehension of divinity to the object of our Christian hope. This means that we must use the apophatic method in speaking of God not only, among Christians, in the knowledge that all concepts of God are idols, but apply this method also to our ways of talking about God as He appears through the scriptures of the non-Christian religions. When we seek to understand the adherent of another religion, we should not be concerned to arrive at a descriptive account of him as an example of his particular faith, but we must rather treat him as someone who has something to teach us and something to manifest to us of God.

4. Communion is the *conditio sine qua non* of communication. This is why no dealings are possible from the Christian side without a conversion which banishes all confessional pride and all feelings of cultural or historical superiority. Such humility requires the Christ-like way of self-fulfilment through the other. A Christian community purified by the fire of the Spirit, holy unto God, poor for the sake of God, can in the weakness of the Gospel, take the risk of both giving and receiving with equal simplicity. It must accept the challenge as a brotherly admonition and be able to recognize, even in the guise of unbelief, a courageous rejection of lies which Christians have been long unwilling or unable to denounce.

5. With this attitude, communication will be possible. The presentation of Christ will be based on his self-humiliation, on his historical reality and his words. It is not so much a question of adding men to the Church. They will come in of their own accord once they begin to feel at home in it as in the Father's house. The supreme task is to identify all

the Christic values in other religions, to show them Christ as the bond which unites them and his love as their fulfilment. True mission laughs at missionary activity. Our task is simply to follow the tracks of Christ perceptible in the shadows of other religions.

Night after night on my bed
I have sought my true love;
I have sought him but not found him,
I have called him but he has not answered.
I said, "I will rise and go the rounds of the city,
through the streets and the squares, seeking my
true love." . . .
The watchmen, going the rounds of the city, met me,
and I asked,
"Have you seen my true love?" (*Song of Songs* 3:1-3)

The task of the witness in a non-Christian context will be to name him whom others have already recognized as the Beloved. Once they have become the friends of the Bridegroom it will be easy to name him. The entire missionary activity of the Church will be directed towards awakening the Christ who sleeps in the night of the religions. It is the Lord Himself who alone knows whether men will be able to celebrate an authentically glorious Paschal meal together before the coming of the heavenly Jerusalem. But we already know that the beauty of Christ shining in our faces is the promise of our final reconciliation.

99. Stanley Samartha, "Dialogue as a Continuing Christian Concern," World Council of Churches Central Committee, 1971

No one deserves more credit for making interfaith dialogue a crucial item on the ecumenical agenda than Stanley Samartha, who served as the first director of the WCC's unit on dialogue (1971-80).
• *Courage for Dialogue, Geneva, WCC, 1981, pp. 8-14.*

Dialogue is part of the living relationship between people of different faiths and ideologies as they share in the life of the community. Christians in different countries of the world

are already engaged in dialogue with their neighbours. Factors in contemporary historical situations in which Christians find themselves and the theological imperatives of the Christian faith itself make it necessary that this concern for dialogue be continued. Therefore, one of the essential tasks before us is to acknowledge this fact, consider its possibilities and problems, and draw out its implications for the life and witness of the church in a pluralistic world.

What is the extent of our involvement in such encounters? What is the theological demand of the Christian faith that makes it part of our Christian obedience as we live with persons of other faiths? What are the inner resources that sustain us, the criteria which judge our efforts and the limitations beyond which dialogue ceases to be faithful dialogue? These are a few questions to which some attention should be given here.

I

The Christian interest in other religions is, of course, not new. The early church seriously grappled with issues raised by its encounters with the religions, philosophies, and cultures of the Graeco-Roman world. In recent history the well known Missionary Conferences—Edinburgh 1910, Jerusalem 1928, Tambaram 1938—took serious note of other religions.³ The New Delhi Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1961 referred to “dialogue as a form of evangelism which is often effective today.”⁴ The Uppsala Assembly of the WCC in 1968 pointed out that “the meeting with men of other faiths or of no faith must lead to dialogue. A Christian’s dialogue with another implies neither a denial of the uniqueness of Christ, nor any loss of his own commitment to Christ, but rather that a genuinely Christian approach to others must be human, personal, relevant and humble.”⁵ We must also recognize the Declaration of the Second Vatican Council on “The Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions.”⁶

With regard to more recent meetings, at least three points may be made. First, there is an increasing participation by our Roman Catholic brethren. At Kandy in 1967, at Ajaltoun and Zurich in 1970, Roman Catholics were present, not just as observers but as active participants, bringing in their scholarship, experience, and insights from

3. See W.H.T. Gairdner, *Edinburgh 1910: An Account and Interpretation of the World Missionary Conference* (London, 1910), especially Ch. VII, pp. 68ff., and Ch.X, pp. 134ff., 417ff.; *The Authority of Faith: Papers and Findings of the Madras Meeting* (International Missionary Council, 1939), esp. Vol. 1, pp. 169ff.

4. *New Delhi Report* (London: SCM Press, 1961), Section III, p. 84.

5. *The Uppsala Report* (Geneva: WCC, 1968), p. 29.

6. *Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Guild Press, 1966), pp. 660ff.

different parts of the world. There are, of course, underlying differences of theological approach, but the fact that Roman Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants, together as Christians, could meet people of other faiths is itself important.

Second, in contrast to some of the earlier debates, which moved almost exclusively in Western structures of thought and procedure, not always sensitive to or illumined by insights of Christians from other situations, in recent years, people from other parts of the world, particularly Asia and Africa, with different cultural heritages and with actual experience of dialogues, have made stronger and more persistent contributions. In the period of world missionary conferences, their contributions were more or less interesting footnotes to what was largely a Western debate about other religions. Today, they are chapters in the growing ecumenical book. My point is not that dialogues are more important in Asia or Africa than in the West, but that the issues raised by dialogue are not limited to particular cultural contexts, but have larger ecumenical dimensions.

Third, a fact of perhaps even greater significance is the actual participation by persons of other faiths in dialogues initiated by Christians. It is no longer just talk by Christians among themselves *about* dialogue, but the Christian involvement in dialogue *with* them, discussion of issues in their presence and with their active participation. This does not, of course, preclude theological reflection by Christians themselves, but it is more informed by the experience of actual dialogue. . . .

II

Two observations are necessary to put examples of recent dialogues in a wider perspective. First, there is the question of ideologies, particularly of Marxism. There has also been a series of dialogues between Christians and Marxists. It is important to note, however, that ideologies like Marxism cut across the boundaries of traditional religions, challenging their assumptions, questioning their structures, demanding that they be more concerned with this world and human life. It would be unwise to form a “religious alliance” against ideologies in order to save and perpetuate traditional religious institutions, but the questions Marxism raises must be faced within the context of communities where people of different faiths and ideologies seek to live together and look for resources to build their common life.

Second, the impression should not be given that all dialogues are intellectual discourses on talking about religious matters. There have also been meetings where no papers were read, tired vocal chords were exercised to the minimum, and serious efforts were made to break through

the structures of language, concepts, and debate. Even within "structured" dialogues, people have tried to open themselves up to the symbols of religious life and practice, particularly to music, art, devotion, meditation, and the controlled use of silence. But verbal communication is also an essential part of dialogue for sharing in theological ideas, religious experience, and practical concerns, without which it is difficult to build up a community of discourse and common involvement. . . .

People of other faiths have their own approaches to dialogue. Some tend to enter into it on the basis of common human concerns which they feel need urgent cooperative attention. Others participate in it on the assumption of an acknowledged "religious" dimension in life which, according to them, needs to be given priority. Still others feel uneasy about the consequences of secularization and are deeply worried about the effects of technology on inner life, and so they enter into dialogue in search of "spiritual" resources to guide and shape the quality of human life. Whatever the differences of basis and approach to dialogue on the part of Christians and people of other faiths, answers to some of the vexed questions must be sought in the experience of dialogue itself, not by remaining outside it. Therefore, dialogue should take place in freedom. Without the freedom to be committed to one's own faith and to be open to that of another to witness, to change, and to be changed, genuine dialogue would be impossible.

A further point that emerges out of the experience of dialogue which must not be forgotten is the element of the sinful and the demonic present in all human encounters. No dialogue can ever be automatically successful. A concrete example can be given from India. Generally speaking, it is easy to have dialogue with Hindus, but twice in one year plans for a meeting between Hindus and Christians in a university town in North India, which is also a famous pilgrim centre, had to be cancelled. Politely declining the Christian invitation, the Hindu friend wrote to his Christian *bhai* (brother):

Do not think that I am against dialogue. . . . On the contrary, I am fully convinced that dialogue is an essential part of human life, and therefore of religious life itself. . . . Yet, to be frank with you, there is something which makes me uneasy in the way in which you Christians are now trying so eagerly to enter into official and formal dialogue with us. Have you already forgotten that what you call "inter-faith dialogue" is quite a new feature in your understanding and practice of Christianity? Until a few years ago, and often still today, your relations with us were confined, either to merely the social plane, or to preaching in order to

convert us to your *dharma*. . . . For all matters concerning *dharma* you were deadly against us, violently or stealthily according to cases. It was plain to see from your preaching to old Christians or prospective converts, or from your, at best, condescending attitude towards us in your pamphlets and magazines. And the pity was that your attacks and derogatory remarks were founded in sheer ignorance of what we really are, or what we believe and worship. The main obstacles to real dialogue are, on the one hand, a feeling of superiority and, on the other, the fear of losing one's identity.

These are strong words indeed, but they do indicate how fear and distrust can ruin the conditions for genuine dialogue and why openness and love are absolutely essential in our relationships. Some people of other faiths suspect that dialogue is simply a new and subtle Christian tool for mission that is being forged in the post-colonial era. On the other hand, there are some Christians who fear that dialogue with persons of other faiths is a betrayal of mission and disobedience to the command to proclaim the gospel.

How do we express our obedience to Christ in truth and love, taking into account both these fears? The fear of losing one's identity is experienced not only by Christians, but also by people of other faiths. How do we bring together identity and community in these situations? These questions cannot be discussed in a purely academic way. It is in the living context of continuing dialogue that the meaning of identity should be sought. As Bishop James Matthews remarks: "An unseemly anxiety to preserve our heritage is to lose it and, at the same time, to attempt to limit God; but a willingness finally to risk even the loss of our heritage in the service of God and man is to find it. When there is a readiness to risk all, God may be trusted to be faithful in giving all back again in a renewed and enlarged perspective."⁷

These matters lead us to the basic question to which we referred at the beginning: the imperative in the Christian faith itself that constrains us to enter into dialogue. W. A. Visser 't Hooft has rightly remarked, "The pluralistic world throws us all back on the primary source of our faith and forces us to take a new look at the world around us. Thus pluralism can provide a real opportunity for a new united witness of the whole Church of Christ in and to the whole world."⁸

7. *A Church Truly Catholic* (New York, 1969), p. 160.

8. "Pluralism—Temptation or Opportunity?," in *The Ecumenical Review*, XVIII, No. 2 (Apr. 1966), p. 149.

III

The fundamental question, then, is why we as Christians are in dialogue with persons of other faiths at all. It is not enough merely to describe our recent engagements or to give pragmatic reasons for our involvement in the common human concerns of contemporary history. These are of course important and provide the context for our obedience. Our concern in dialogue itself, however, should not be determined by intermittent responses to the changing pressures of the world, but rather in obedience to the Lord and in accordance with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. "A pilgrim people must maintain their differentia as pilgrims," wrote D.T. Niles, "but they must belong to the society among whom their journey is set." Dialogue is one of the crucial areas of relationships between Christians and people of other faiths today, where sustained theological reflection must continue not in the isolation of academic discussions, but in the midst of our life together in the community where all are pilgrims on the high roads of modern life.

There are at least three theological reasons why dialogue is and ought to be a continuing Christian concern. First, God in Jesus Christ has himself entered into relationship with persons of all faiths and all ages, offering the good news of salvation. The incarnation is God's dialogue with humanity. To be in dialogue is, therefore, to be part of God's continuing work among us and our fellow human beings. Second, the offer of a true community inherent in the gospel through forgiveness, reconciliation, and a new creation, and of which the church is a sign and a symbol, inevitably leads to dialogue. The freedom and love Christ offers constrain us to be in fellowship with strangers so that all may become fellow citizens in the household of God. Third, there is the promise of Jesus Christ that the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth. Since truth in the biblical understanding is not propositional but relational, and is to be sought not in the isolation of lonely meditation but in living, personal confrontation between God and man, and people and people, dialogue becomes one of the means of the quest for truth. And, because Christians cannot claim to have a monopoly of truth, we need to meet persons of other faiths and ideologies as part of our trust in and obedience to the promise of Christ. . . .

It is Christology, not "comparative religion," that is the basis of our concern. Our primary interest is not in "inter-religious conferences"; it is to be with Christ in his continuing work among people of all faiths and ideologies. Christ draws us out of our isolation into closer relationship with all. In his name people have gone to the ends of the earth as humble participants in his continuing redeeming activity in history. He releases us from all kinds of bondage,

9. *Upon the Earth* (London: Lutterworth, 1962), p. 79.

including bondage to the safety of the group sharing the same faith, in order to enter into full and free relationship with others. Faith in Jesus Christ involves a way of life that demands obedience and a view of life that influences our understanding of God, our neighbours, and the world of nature and history of which we are an inextricable part. Christian participation in dialogue is therefore part of the concrete living out of the view of life and the way of life that stem from faith in Jesus Christ. "It is *because* of faith in God through Jesus Christ and *because* of our belief in the reality of Creation, the offer of Redemption, and the love of God shown in the Incarnation that we seek a positive relationship with men of other faiths."¹⁰ . . .

At this hour of history when the destinies of all people everywhere—not only of Christians—are being drawn together as never before, and when, because of the massive power of impersonal forces, the need to recognize the ultimate source of human personal being and community life is so urgent, dialogue offers a helpful opportunity to renew that truly religious quest which Christians believe to be fulfilled by God in Jesus Christ.

Therefore, Christians cannot and should not at this juncture withdraw from dialogue; on the contrary, there is every reason to extend and deepen it. However, it is only through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who may lead us into areas as yet strange and unfamiliar to us, and through obedience to Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Lord—which may mean joining traffic across borders beyond which we have not ventured so far—that continuing Christian dialogue can remain truly *faithful* dialogue.

100. "Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies," World Council of Churches Sub-unit on Dialogue, 1979

These "Guidelines"—first developed at a WCC consultation in Chiang Mai, Thailand—are arguably the most significant formulation of the theology and process of interfaith dialogue yet produced through ecumenical discussion. • Guidelines on Dialogue With People of Living Faiths and Ideologies, Geneva, WCC, 1979, pp. 9-12, 14-21.

10. *International Review of Mission*, LIX, No. 236 (Oct. 1970), 384.

ON DIALOGUE

C. Reasons for Dialogue

. . . 17. No more than “community” can “dialogue” be precisely defined. Rather it has to be described, experienced and developed as a life-style. As human beings we have learned to speak; we talk, chatter, give and receive information, have discussions—all this is not yet dialogue. Now and then it happens that out of our talking and our relationships arises a deeper encounter, an opening up, in more than intellectual terms, of each to the concerns of the other. This is experienced by families and friends, and by those who share the same faiths, or ideology; but we are particularly concerned with the dialogue which reaches across differences of faith, ideology and culture, even where the partners in dialogue do not agree on important central aspects of human life. Dialogue can be recognized as a welcome way of obedience to the commandment of the Decalogue: “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.” Dialogue helps us not to disfigure the image of our neighbours of different faiths and ideologies. It has been the experience of many Christians that this dialogue is indeed possible on the basis of a mutual trust and a respect for the integrity of each participant’s identity.

18. Dialogue, therefore, is a fundamental part of Christian service within community. In dialogue Christians actively respond to the command to “love God and your neighbour as yourself.” As an expression of love engagement in dialogue testifies to the love experienced in Christ. It is a joyful affirmation of life against chaos, and a participation with all who are allies of life in seeking the provisional goals of a better human community. Thus “dialogue in community” is not a secret weapon in the armoury of an aggressive Christian militancy. Rather it is a means of living our faith in Christ in service of community with one’s neighbours.

19. In this sense dialogue has a distinctive and rightful place within Christian life, in a manner directly comparable to other forms of service. But “distinctive” does not mean totally different or separate. In dialogue Christians seek “to speak the truth in a spirit of love,” not naively “to be tossed to and fro, and be carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Eph. 4:14-15). In giving their witness they recognize that in most circumstances today the spirit of dialogue is necessary. For this reason we do not see dialogue and the giving of witness as standing in any contradiction to one another. Indeed, as Christians enter dialogue with their commitment to Jesus Christ, time and again the relationship of dialogue gives opportunity for authentic witness. Thus, to the member churches of the WCC we

feel able with integrity to commend the way of dialogue as one in which Jesus Christ can be confessed in the world today; at the same time we feel able with integrity to assure our partners in dialogue that we come not as manipulators but as genuine fellow-pilgrims, to speak with them of what we believe God to have done in Jesus Christ who has gone before us, but whom we seek to meet anew in dialogue.

D. The Theological Significance of People of Other Faiths and Ideologies

20. Christians engaged in faithful “dialogue in community” with people of other faiths and ideologies cannot avoid asking themselves penetrating questions about the place of these people in the activity of God in history. They ask these questions not in theory, but in terms of what God may be doing in the lives of hundreds of millions of men and women who live in and seek community together with Christians, but along different ways. So dialogue should proceed in terms of people of other faiths and ideologies rather than of theoretical, impersonal systems. This is not to deny the importance of religious traditions and their inter-relationships, but it is vital to examine how faiths and ideologies have given direction to the daily living of individuals and groups and actually affect dialogue on both sides.

21. Approaching the theological questions in this spirit Christians should proceed. . .

- with repentance, because they know how easily they misconstrue God’s revelation in Jesus Christ, betraying it in their actions and posturing as the owners of God’s truth rather than, as in fact they are, the undeserving recipients of grace;
- with humility, because they so often perceive in people of other faiths and ideologies a spirituality, dedication, compassion and a wisdom which should forbid them making judgements about others as though from a position of superiority; in particular they should avoid using ideas such as “anonymous Christians,” “the Christian presence,” “the unknown Christ,” in ways not intended by those who proposed them for theological purposes or in ways prejudicial to the self-understanding of Christians and others;
- with joy, because it is not themselves they preach; it is Jesus Christ, perceived by many people of living faiths and ideologies as prophet, holy one, teacher, example; but confessed by Christians as Lord and Saviour, Himself the faithful witness and the coming one (Rev. 1:5-7);

- with integrity, because they do not enter into dialogue with others except in this penitent and humble joyfulness in the Lord Jesus Christ, making clear to others their own experience and witness, even as they seek to hear from others their expressions of deepest conviction and insight. All these would mean an openness and exposure, the capacity to be wounded which we see in the example of our Lord Jesus Christ and which we sum up in the word vulnerability. . . .

E. Syncretism

24. In dialogue Christians are called to be adventurous, and they must be ready to take risks; but also to be watchful and wide awake for God. Is syncretism a danger for which Christians must be alert?

25. There is a positive need for a genuine “translation” of the Christian message in every time and place. This need is recognized as soon as the Bible translators begin their work in a particular language and have to weigh the cultural and philosophical overtones and undertones of its words. But there is also a wider “translation” of the message by expressing it in artistic, dramatic, liturgical and above all in relational terms which are appropriate to convey the authenticity of the message in ways authentically indigenous, often through the theologically tested use of the symbols and concepts of a particular community.

26. Despite attempts to rescue the word “syncretism” it now conveys, after its previous uses in Christian debate, a negative evaluation. This is clearly the case if it means, as the Nairobi Assembly used the word, “conscious or unconscious human attempts to create a new religion composed of elements taken from different religions.” In this sense syncretism is also rejected by the dialogue partners, although there may be some who in their alienation are seeking help from many sources and do not regard syncretism negatively.

27. The word “syncretism” is, however, more widely used than at Nairobi and particularly to warn against two other dangers.

The first danger is that, in attempting to “translate” the Christian message for a cultural setting or in approach to faiths and ideologies with which Christians are in dialogue partnership, they may go too far and compromise the authenticity of Christian faith and life. They have the Bible to guide them but there is always risk in seeking to express the Gospel in a new setting: for instance, the early Christian struggle against heresy in the debate with Gnosticism; or the compromising of the Gospel in the so-called “civil religions” of the West. It is salutary to examine such examples lest it be supposed that syncretism is a risk endemic only in certain continents.

A second danger is that of interpreting a living faith not in its own terms but in terms of another faith or ideology. This is illegitimate on the principles of both scholarship and dialogue. In this way Christianity may be “syncretized” by seeing it as only a variant of some other approach to God, or another faith may be wrongly “syncretized” by seeing it only as partial understanding of what Christians believe that they know in full. There is a particular need for further study of the way in which this kind of syncretism can take place between a faith and an ideology.

28. Both these are real dangers and there will be differences of judgement among Christians and between churches as to when these dangers are threatening, or have actually overtaken particular Christian enterprises. Despite the recognized dangers Christians should welcome and gladly engage in the venture of exploratory faith. The particular risks of syncretism in the modern world should not lead Christians to refrain from dialogue, but are an additional reason for engaging in dialogue so that the issues may be clarified.

29. Within the ecumenical movement the practice of dialogue and the giving of witness have sometimes evoked mutual suspicion. God is very patient with the Church, giving it space and time for discovery of His way and its riches (cf. II Pet. 3:9). There is need within the ecumenical fellowship to give one another space and time—space and time, for instance, in India or Ghana to explore the richness of the Gospel in a setting very different from that of “Hellenized” Europe; space and time, for instance, in Korea to develop the present striking evangelistic work of the churches; space and time, for instance, in Europe to adjust to a new situation in which secularity is now being changed by new religious interest not expressed in traditional terms. The diversity of dialogue itself must be recognized in its particular content and in its relation to specific context.

GUIDELINES RECOMMENDED TO THE CHURCHES FOR STUDY AND ACTION

. . . It is Christian faith in the Triune God—Creator of all humankind, Redeemer in Jesus Christ, revealing and renewing Spirit—which calls us Christians to human relationship with our many neighbours. Such relationship includes dialogue: witnessing to our deepest convictions and listening to those of our neighbours. It is Christian faith which sets us free to be open to the faiths of others, to risk, to trust and to be vulnerable. In dialogue, conviction and openness are held in balance.

In a world in which Christians have many neighbours, dialogue is not only an activity of meetings and

conferences, it is also a way of living out Christian faith in relationship and commitment to those neighbours with whom Christians share towns, cities, nations, and the earth as a whole. Dialogue is a style of living in relationship with neighbours. This in no way replaces or limits our Christian obligation to witness, as partners enter into dialogue with their respective commitments.

These guidelines are offered to member churches of the WCC and to individual congregations in awareness of the great diversity of situations in which they find themselves. The neighbours with whom Christians enter into relationship in dialogue may be partners in common social, economic and political crises and quests; companions in scholarly work or intellectual and spiritual exploration; or, literally, the people next door. In some places, Christians and the church as an institution are in positions of power and influence, and their neighbours are without power. In other places it is the Christians who are the powerless. There are also situations of tension and conflict where dialogue may not be possible or opportunities very limited. In many places people of different living faiths interact not only with each other, but also with people of various ideologies, though sometimes it is difficult to make a clear-cut distinction between religions and ideologies, for there are religious dimensions of ideologies and ideological dimensions of religions, Christianity included. The emergence of new religious groups in many countries has brought new dimensions and tensions to inter-religious relationships. With all this diversity in mind, the following guidelines are commended to member churches for their consideration and discussion, testing and evaluation, and for their elaboration in each specific situation.

Learning and Understanding in Dialogue

1. *Churches should seek ways in which Christian communities can enter into dialogue with their neighbours of different faiths and ideologies.* They should also discover ways of responding to similar initiatives by their neighbours in the community.

2. *Dialogues should normally be planned together.* When planned together with partners of other living faiths or ideological convictions they may well focus on particular issues: theological or religious, political or social.

3. *Partners in dialogue should take stock of the religious, cultural and ideological diversity of their local situation.* Only by being alert both to the particular areas of tension and discrimination and to the particular opportunities for conversation and cooperation in their own context will Christians and their neighbours be able to create the conditions for dialogue. They should be especially alert to

infringements of the basic human rights of religious, cultural or ideological minority groups.

4. *Partners in dialogue should be free to "define themselves."* One of the functions of dialogue is to allow participants to describe and witness to their faith in their own terms. This is of primary importance since self-serving descriptions of other peoples' faith are one of the roots of prejudice, stereotyping, and condescension. Listening carefully to the neighbours' self-understanding enables Christians better to obey the commandment not to bear false witness against their neighbours, whether those neighbours be of long established religious, cultural or ideological traditions or members of new religious groups. It should be recognized by partners in dialogue that any religion or ideology claiming universality, apart from having an understanding of itself, will also have its own interpretations of other religions and ideologies as part of its own self-understanding. Dialogue gives an opportunity for a mutual questioning of the understanding partners have about themselves and others. It is out of a reciprocal willingness to listen and learn that significant dialogue grows.

5. *Dialogue should generate educational efforts in the community.* In many cases Christians, utilizing the experience of dialogue, must take the initiative in education in order to restore the distorted image of the neighbours that may already exist in their communities and to advance Christian understanding of people of other living faiths and ideologies.

Even in those situations where Christians do not live in close contact with people of the various religious, cultural and ideological traditions, they should take seriously the responsibility to study and to learn about these other traditions. . . .

Sharing and Living Together in Dialogue

6. *Dialogue is most vital when its participants actually share their lives together.* It is in existing communities where families meet as neighbours and children play together that spontaneous dialogue develops. Where people of different faiths and ideologies share common activities, intellectual interests, and spiritual quests, dialogue can be related to the whole of life and can become a style of living-in-relationship. The person who asks a neighbour of another faith to explain the meaning of a custom or festival has actually taken the first step in dialogue.

Of course, dialogue between long-term neighbours may be frustrated by deeply engrained suspicions, and men and women will have to reckon not only with the communities they seek but also with the barriers between their present communities.

7. *Dialogue should be pursued by sharing in common enterprises in community.* Common activities and experiences are the most fruitful setting for dialogue on issues of faith, ideology and action. It is in the search for a just community of humankind that Christians and their neighbours will be able to help each other break out of cultural, educational, political, and social isolation in order to realize a more participatory society. It may well be that in particular settings such common enterprises will generate interreligious committees or organizations to facilitate this kind of dialogue-in-action.

8. *Partners in dialogue should be aware of their ideological commitments.* Dialogue should help to reveal and to understand the ideological components of religions in particular situations. When Christians find themselves in communities with neighbours of other living faiths they may have common or diverse ideological convictions.

In such situations partners need to be sensitive to both religious and ideological dimensions of the ongoing dialogue. Where Christians find themselves in communities with people of secular ideological convictions, the dialogue will at least expose shared contributions in a common search for the provisional goals of a better human community. Here dialogue may begin as a kind of “internal dialogue” seeking to bring to explicit reflection and discussion issues in the encounter of the Gospel both with ideological factors in various communities where Christians find themselves, and with the ideological assumptions of Christians themselves.

9. *Partners in dialogue should be aware of cultural loyalties.* Dialogue and sensitivity to neighbours need to be developed in the area of relating Christian faith to cultures. This applies especially to those places where traditional and popular culture has been unduly despised and rejected by the churches. A culture should not be romanticized or made into a false absolute, but it may often challenge and enrich the expression of the Christian faith. After careful interpretation and discrimination local cultures may make meaningful contributions in symbols and liturgy, social structures, relations, patterns of healing, art, architecture and music, dance and drama, poetry and literature.

10. *Dialogue will raise the question of sharing in celebrations, rituals, worship and meditation.* Human communities draw together, express, and renew themselves in ritual and worship, and dialogue presumes an attitude of respect for the ritual expressions of the neighbours' community. Dialogue at times includes extending and accepting invitations to visit each other as guests and observers in family and community rituals, ceremonies, and festivals. Such occasions provide excellent opportunities to enhance the mutual understanding of neighbours.

Working together in common projects and activities or visiting in homes and at festivals will eventually raise the very difficult and important question of fuller sharing in common prayer, worship or meditation. This is one of the areas of dialogue which is most controversial and most in need of further exploration.

Whether or not any such activities are undertaken, dialogue partners will want to face squarely the issues raised, sensitive to one another's integrity and fully realizing the assumptions and implications of what is done or not done.

Planning for Dialogue

11. *Dialogue should be planned and undertaken ecumenically, wherever possible.* Member churches should move forward in planning for dialogue in cooperation with one another. This may well mean that regional and local councils of churches will have a separate commission on dialogue. . . .

To enter into dialogue requires an opening of the mind and heart to others. It is an undertaking which requires risk as well as a deep sense of vocation. It is impossible without sensitivity to the richly varied life of humankind. This opening, this risk, the vocation, this sensitivity are at the heart of the ecumenical movement and in the deepest currents of the life of the churches.

101. “Witness among People of Other Living Faiths,” Report of Section I, Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, San Antonio, 1989

The 1989 Conference on World Mission and Evangelism is known for the attempt of its participants to hold in tension aspects of mission that are often seen to be at odds. The principle set forth in this reading (the first line of paragraph 26) is sometimes cited as an ecumenical consensus on interfaith relations.

• The San Antonio Report: Your Will Be Done, Mission in Christ's Way, ed. Frederick R. Wilson, Geneva, WCC, 1990, pp. 31-33.

24. *True witness follows Jesus Christ in respecting and affirming the uniqueness and freedom of others. . . . Such an attitude*

springs from the assurance that God is the creator of the whole universe and that he has not left himself without a witness at any time or any place. The Spirit of God is constantly at work in ways that pass human understanding. In entering into a relationship of dialogue with others, Christians seek to discern the unsearchable riches of God and the way he deals with humanity (Mission and Evangelism—An Ecumenical Affirmation [ME], 41, 43).

The proclamation of the gospel includes an invitation to recognize and accept in a personal decision the saving lordship of Christ. It is the announcement of a personal encounter, mediated by the Holy Spirit, with the living Christ, receiving his forgiveness and making a personal acceptance of the call to discipleship and a life of service (ME, 10).

Christians owe the message of God's salvation in Jesus Christ to every person and to every people. . . . The wonder of [Jesus'] ministry of love persuades Christians to testify to people of every religious and non-religious persuasion of this decisive presence of God in Christ. In him is our salvation (ME, 41, 42).

25. In reaffirming the “evangelistic mandate” of the ecumenical movement, we would like to emphasize that we may never claim to have a full understanding of God’s truth: we are only the recipients of God’s grace. Our ministry of witness among people of other faiths presupposes our *presence* with them, *sensitivity* to their deepest faith commitments and experiences, *willingness* to be their servants for Christ’s sake, *affirmation* of what God has done and is doing among them, and *love* for them. Since God’s mystery in Christ surpasses our understanding and since our knowledge of God’s saving power is imperfect, we Christians are called to be *witnesses* to others, not judges of them. We also affirm that it is possible to be non-aggressive and missionary at the same time—that it is, in fact, the only way of being truly missionary.

26. We cannot point to any other way of salvation than Jesus Christ; at the same time we cannot set limits to the saving power of God. At times the debate about salvation focuses itself only on the fate of the individual’s soul in the hereafter, whereas the will of God is life in its fullness even here and now. We therefore state: (a) that our witness to others concerning salvation in Christ springs from the fact that we have encountered him as our Lord and Saviour and are hence urged to share this with others; and (b) that in calling people to faith in Christ, we are not only offering personal salvation but also calling them to follow Jesus in the service of God’s reign.

27. We have paid attention to the complex debate about the relationship between *witness* and *dialogue*. We recognize that both witness and dialogue presuppose two-way relationships. We affirm that witness does not preclude

dialogue but invites it, and that dialogue does not preclude witness but extends and deepens it.

28. Dialogue has its own place and integrity and is neither opposed to nor incompatible with witness or proclamation. We do not water down our own commitment if we engage in dialogue; as a matter of fact, dialogue between people of different faiths is spurious unless it proceeds from the acceptance and expression of faith commitment. Indeed, life with people of other faiths and ideologies is by its very nature an encounter of commitments (ME 45). In dialogue we are invited to listen in openness to the possibility that the God we know in Jesus Christ may encounter us also in the lives of our neighbours of other faiths. On the other hand, we also see that the mutual sharing with people of other faiths in the efforts for justice, peace and service to the environment engages us in dialogue—the dialogue of life. We wish to commend that, in recognition that all humankind is responsible before God and the human family.

29. In affirming the dialogical nature of our witness, we are constrained by grace to affirm that “salvation is offered to the whole creation through Jesus Christ” (Tambaram II). “Our mission to witness to Jesus Christ can never be given up” (Melbourne, p.188). We are well aware that these convictions and the ministry of witness stand in tension with what we have affirmed about God being present in and at work in people of other faiths; we appreciate this tension, and do not attempt to resolve it.

30. We affirm our unequivocal endorsement of the principle and practice of religious freedom. We are aware that many people are discriminated against, harassed and even persecuted for their faith, often when they have converted from one faith to another; we deplore this and every manifestation of religious or ideological fanaticism. We commend to our Christian communities all those who suffer for their faith, whatever their religious persuasion may be.

102. "Religious Plurality: Theological Perspectives and Affirmations," World Council of Churches Sub-unit on Dialogue, 1990

The following text is the culmination of a four-year study process, undertaken by the interfaith dialogue department ("sub-unit") of the WCC, entitled "My Neighbour's Faith and Mine." The conference that produced it included Orthodox, Protestant and Roman Catholic participants. • Current Dialogue, newsletter of the WCC Sub-unit on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths, January 1991, pp. 48-51.

II. A Theological Understanding of Religious Plurality

Our theological understanding of religious plurality begins with our faith in the one God who created all things, the living God, present and active in all creation from the beginning. The Bible testifies to God as God of all nations and peoples, whose love and compassion includes all humankind. We see in the Covenant with Noah a covenant with all creation. We see His wisdom and justice extending to the ends of the earth as He guides the nations through their traditions of wisdom and understanding. God's glory penetrates the whole of creation.

People have at all times and in all places responded to the presence and activity of God among them, and have given their witness to their encounters with the Living God. In this testimony they speak both of seeking and of having found salvation, or wholeness, or enlightenment, or divine guidance, or rest, or liberation.

We therefore take this witness with the utmost seriousness and acknowledge that among all the nations and peoples there has always been the saving presence of God. Though as Christians our testimony is always to the salvation we have experienced through Christ, we at the same time "cannot set limits to the saving power of God" (CWME, San Antonio 1989). Our own ministry of witness among our neighbours of other faiths must presuppose an "affirmation of what God has done and is doing among them" (CWME, San Antonio 1989).

We see the plurality of religious traditions as both the result of the manifold ways in which God has related to peoples and nations as well as a manifestation of the richness and diversity of humankind. We affirm that God has been present in their seeking and finding, that where

there is truth and wisdom in their teachings, and love and holiness in their living, this like any wisdom, insight, knowledge, understanding, love and holiness that is found among us is the gift of the Holy Spirit. We also affirm that God is with them as they struggle, along with us, for justice and liberation.

This conviction that God as creator of all is present and active in the plurality of religions makes it inconceivable to us that God's saving activity could be confined to any one continent, cultural type, or group of peoples. A refusal to take seriously the many and diverse religious testimonies to be found among the nations and peoples of the whole world amounts to disowning the biblical testimony to God as creator of all things and father of humankind. "The Spirit of God is at work in ways that pass human understanding and in places that to us are least expected. In entering into dialogue with others, therefore, Christians seek to discern the unsearchable riches of Christ and the way God deals with humanity" (CWME Statement, *Mission and Evangelism*).

It is our Christian faith in God which challenges us to take seriously the whole realm of religious plurality. We see this not so much as an obstacle to be overcome, but rather as an opportunity for deepening our encounter with God and with our neighbours as we await the fulfilment when "God will be all in all" (1 Cor. 1:5-18). Seeking to develop new and greater understandings of "the wisdom, love and power which God has given to men [and women] of other faiths" (New Delhi Report, 1961), we must affirm our "openness to the possibility that the God we know in Jesus Christ may encounter us also in the lives of our neighbours of other faiths" (CWME Report, San Antonio 1989, para. 29). The one God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ has not left Himself without witness, anywhere (Acts 14: 17).

Any affirmation of the positive qualities of wisdom, love, compassion, and spiritual insight in the world's religious traditions must also speak with honesty and with sadness of the human wickedness and folly that is also present in all religious communities. We must recognize the ways in which religion has functioned too often to support systems of oppression and exclusion. Any adequate theology of religions must deal with human wickedness and sin, with disobedience to spiritual insight and failure to live in accordance with the highest ideals. Therefore we are continually challenged by the Spirit to discern the wisdom and purposes of God.

III. Christology and Religious Plurality

Because we have seen and experienced goodness, truth and holiness among followers of other paths and ways than that

of Jesus Christ, we are forced to confront with total seriousness the question raised in the *Guidelines on Dialogue* (1979) concerning the universal creative and redemptive activity of God towards all humankind and the particular redemptive activity of God in the history of Israel and in the person and work of Jesus Christ (para. 23). We find ourselves recognizing a need to move beyond a theology which confines salvation to the explicit personal commitment to Jesus Christ.

We affirm that in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, the entire human family has been united to God in an irrevocable bond and covenant. The saving presence of God's activity in all creation and human history comes to its focal point in the event of Christ.

In Jesus's words and action, in His proclamation, in His ministry of healing and service, God was establishing His reign on earth, a sovereign rule whose presence and power cannot be limited to any one community or culture. The attitudes of Jesus as He reached out to those beyond the house of Israel testify to this universal reign. He spoke with the woman of Samaria, affirming all who would worship God in Spirit and truth (Jn. 4:7-24). He marveled at the faith of a centurion, acknowledging that He had not found such faith in all Israel (Matt. 8:5-11). For the sake of a Syro-Phoenician woman, and in response to her faith, He performed a miracle of healing (Matt. 15:21-28).

But while it appears that the saving power of the reign of God made present in Jesus during His earthly ministry was in some sense limited (cf. Matt. 10:23), through the event of His death and resurrection, the paschal mystery itself, these limits were transcended. The cross and the resurrection disclose for us the universal dimension of the saving mystery of God.

This saving mystery is mediated and expressed in many and various ways as God's plan unfolds toward its fulfilment. It may be available to those outside the fold of Christ (Jn. 10:16) in ways we cannot understand, as they live faithful and truthful lives in their concrete circumstances and in the framework of the religious traditions which guide and inspire them. The Christ event is for us the clearest expression of the salvific will of God in all human history (I Tim. 2:4).

IV. The Holy Spirit and Religious Plurality

We have been especially concerned in this Consultation with the person and work of the Holy Spirit, who moved and still moves over the face of the earth to create, nurture, challenge, renew and sustain. We have learned again to see the activity of the Spirit as beyond our definitions, descriptions and limitations, as "the wind blows where it wills"

(Jn. 3:8). We have marveled at the "economy" of the Spirit in all the world, and are full of hope and expectancy. We see the freedom of the Spirit moving in ways which we cannot predict, we see the nurturing power of the Spirit bringing order out of chaos and renewing the face of the earth, and the "energies" of the Spirit working within and inspiring human beings in their universal longing for and seeking after truth, peace and justice. Everything which belongs to "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" is properly to be recognized and acknowledged as the fruit of the activity of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23, cf. Rom. 14:17).

We are clear, therefore, that a positive answer must be given to the question raised in the *Guidelines on Dialogue* (1979): "Is it right and helpful to understand the work of God outside the Church in terms of the Holy Spirit?" (para. 23). We affirm unequivocally that God the Holy Spirit has been at work in the life and traditions of peoples of living faiths.

Further we affirm that it is within the realm of the Spirit that we may be able to interpret the truth and goodness of other religions and distinguish the "things that differ," so that our "love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment" (Phil. 1:9-10).

We also affirm that the Holy Spirit, the Interpreter of Christ and of our own Scriptures (Jn. 14:26) will lead us to understand afresh the deposit of the faith already given to us, and into fresh and unexpected discovery of new wisdom and insight, as we learn more from our neighbours of other faiths.

V. Interreligious Dialogue: A Theological Perspective

Our recognition of the mystery of salvation in men and women of other religious traditions shapes the concrete attitudes with which we Christians must approach them in interreligious dialogue.

We need to respect their religious convictions, different as these may be from our own, and to admire the things which God has accomplished and continues to accomplish in them through the Spirit. Interreligious dialogue is therefore a "two-way street." Christians must enter into it in a spirit of openness, prepared to receive from others, while on their part, they give witness of their own faith. Authentic dialogue opens both partners to a deeper conversion to the God who speaks to each through the other. Through the witness of others, we Christians can truly discover facets of the divine mystery which we have not yet seen or responded to. The practice of dialogue will thus result in the deepening of our own life of faith. We believe

that walking together with people of other living faiths will bring us to a fuller understanding and experience of truth.

We feel called to allow the practice of interreligious dialogue to transform the way in which we do theology. We need to move towards a dialogical theology in which the praxis of dialogue together with that of human liberation, will constitute a true *locus theologicus*, i.e. both a source and basis for theological work. The challenge of religious plurality and the praxis of dialogue are part of the context in which we must search for fresh understandings, new questions, and better expressions of our Christian faith and commitment.

103. Wesley Ariarajah, "Wider Ecumenism: A Threat or a Promise?" in *The Ecumenical Review*, 1998

Wesley Ariarajah, a Methodist theologian from Sri Lanka, has held several prominent leadership positions in the WCC, including director of its unit on interfaith dialogue. • The Ecumenical Review, vol. 50, no. 3, 1998, pp. 321-29.

... The Daring Commitment

Many of us who speak often, even glibly, about "wider ecumenism," "macro-ecumenism" or new ecumenism" are unaware or not sufficiently conscious of the passion, courage, commitment and daring that went into the challenge placed before the churches to enter into an ecumenical commitment and to strive towards visible unity. Fifty years after the founding of the WCC, many of us were not party to the excitement, expectation, hope and sense of fulfilment that accompanied the formation of the Council in 1948.

The excitement can be understood only if we recognize the context in which it was born. As the late Lesslie Newbigin said, "The WCC was born in the death-throes of 'Christendom'. . . Christians were slaughtering each other in bloody wars. They had failed to address the monstrous evils of their own societies. They were fragmented and unable to speak and act together."¹¹

Since the early divisions of the church, and especially since the Reformation, the churches had contributed

to much of the fragmentation, division and conflict in Europe. The Eastern, Roman Catholic and Protestant churches were so far from each other that they might as well have been three different religious traditions in confrontation with each other. During the first half of the 20th century, the growing conflicts between nations and the rise of fascism and Nazism threatened to throw the world into chaos. Not only were the churches in no position to help in this perilous confrontation, but they were also in danger of being sucked into enemy camps. Davis McCaughey notes what the churches had in common as they moved into the 20th century:

They were all surrounded by an alien, often antagonistic and uncomprehending world. It was a world which by 1925 already had the scars of World War I upon it. It was also a world in which there were signs of those totalitarian regimes which were to claim men and women's total allegiance. Moreover, it was a world in which technical advances could be seen to be ambiguous, because these put into human hands liberating and destructive power on a scale previously unknown.¹²

Therefore, for those who pioneered the ecumenical vision and gave shape to it, among whom Willem Visser 't Hooft was one of the foremost, the search for the visible unity of the church was not, as some tend to think today, a narrow concern focused on the internal life of the church. In Europe at that time, the search for the unity of the church was more than just a sign of the coming unity of humankind. These pioneers were looking for an effective instrument to bring people together across many divisions that plagued the human family, for proof that, despite everything that divided humankind, there was a solidarity in what God has done in Christ that would hold them together. More importantly, it was intended that churches, working, speaking and acting together would claim the credibility and the capacity to confront the powers of evil and speak the word of healing to nations in turmoil.

It would therefore be a gross misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the early ecumenical vision to hold that it was not concerned with the *oikoumene* in the full sense of the word. The leaders had no doubt in their minds that the churches were being called to be a reconciling, healing and relevant presence in the world. They were convinced that the faith of the church, the mission of the church, the life of the church in society and the healing of the nations were all part and parcel of God's one mission

11. Lesslie Newbigin, "A Missionary's Dream," *The Ecumenical Review*, vol. 42, no. 1, Jan. 1991, p. 4.

12. Davis McCaughey, "Redeem the Time Because the Days are Evil," in Denise C. Sullivan, ed. *Living Ecumenism: Christian Unity for a New Millennium*, Melbourne, Joint Board for Christian Education, 1995, p. 23.

in the world. Hence the heritage of the WCC as both a fellowship of churches and the coming together of streams like Faith and Order, Life and Work, the International Missionary Council and the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs. . . .

The ecumenical movement as it was conceived at that time involved the coming together of two important commitments: the hope of rediscovering and celebrating the unity that the church had as the body of Christ, and the call to be God's faithful agents in the process of transformation, renewal and restoration of the whole *oikoumene* of which the church was a part. So awesome was the task facing the churches vis-a-vis the world that D.T. Niles, who preached the opening sermon at the inaugural [WCC] assembly in Amsterdam, chose for his text the words of Moses when he was being pressed by God into a task of similar magnitude: "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?" (Ex. 3:11). . . .

[But, having affirmed my appreciation for the wisdom of the original vision, I now take my "respectful leave" of it.]

New Vocal Partners in the Discussion

The CUV document refers directly to the theme of this essay:

More recently, a growing number of voices from the churches, especially in Asia, but also in Latin America, have spoken of the need for a "wider ecumenism" or "macro-ecumenism"—an understanding which would open the ecumenical movement to other religions and cultural traditions beyond the Christian community (para. 2.6).

Drawing on his visits to these parts of the world, Konrad Raiser raises the same issue in the form of a series of helpful questions:

Can the churches and those responsible for ecumenical organizations agree on a sufficiently firm common base for the understanding of ecumenism? Does ecumenism in the proper sense relate only to the search for the communion among the Christian churches, or should it be opened up to relations with other religious communities—as is frequently advocated in Asia? Should the ecumenical movement reach beyond the churches to make alliances with other groups in civil society? What is the proper relationship between the commitment to church unity and to social justice? Are common witness and evangelism more important than church unity?¹³

13. Konrad Raiser, *To Be the Church: Challenges and Hopes for a New Millennium*, Geneva, WCC, 1997, p. 15.

Raiser believes that what is at stake in these questions is "the oneness and coherence of the ecumenical movement," and therefore, "even if no common response is possible at present, we need some guidelines to give us a common sense and purpose in the midst of our differences of understanding."

The CUV document says that "these ambiguities surrounding the understanding of 'ecumenical' create a real danger of introducing competitive divisions into the ecumenical movement." It goes on to raise several questions in relation to the concept of a "wider ecumenism": .

What is the meaning and purpose of this movement? Who are its subjects? What are its goals and methods or forms of action? What is the source of the dynamic which warrants speaking of the "ecumenical movement" beyond its institutional manifestations in the WCC and elsewhere? (Para. 2.7). . . .

Why a "New Ecumenism"?

It is not without significance that the "church-oriented" ecumenical movement originated in Europe and North America, while the pressure for a "new ecumenism" comes from Asia and elsewhere. The difficulty for Visser 't Hooft and most (though not all) of those who conceive of the ecumenical movement primarily as a movement of the churches is that they have lived in parts of the world that had been "Christianized" over many centuries. While they had faced the challenge of Islam, and always had to contend with the threat of secularism and abuse of religion, in the final analysis the church and the society were by and large co-extensive.

There have always been groups within the church, as indeed among all religions, that were more faithful to the truth of their faith and would challenge the church and the nation to righteousness and peace. Those were, however, internal conversations. The pressing problem for the Christians in Europe was their own divisions and the terrible consequences they have had on society. Faced with the decay of Christendom and the devastating series of wars in which the European nations were engulfed, "ecumenism" could only have meant what it came to mean at that time.

There were no doubt some churches from other parts of the world active in the movement, and several of their leaders played crucial roles in it. But the Asian nations were just receiving independence after long periods of foreign rule, and the churches in Asia were at this stage still "branches" of the churches in Europe.

But soon these churches, which were tiny minorities in an ocean of humankind who lived by other faiths, began to feel the need to re-examine some of their assumptions and to re-conceive some of the theological bases on which

Christians related to society. Initial efforts took the form of extending the prevalent theological ideas to meet the context of a religiously plural society. D.T. Niles, for example, developed the concept of the “previousness of Christ” to argue that the risen Christ was already present and active in the transformations that were taking place in the Asian societies. According to this view, Christian mission is to encounter and proclaim the Christ already at work among one’s neighbours. A series of thinkers in India (known as the “Rethinking Group”) began to develop indigenous theologies that attempted to make sense of the Christian faith in the context of other religions. M.M. Thomas went so far as to advocate a “Christ-centred secular fellowship,” so that Christians might find a common theological basis to struggle together with others for justice and peace.

In recent decades there has been more radical questioning of some of the basic assumptions that lie behind the Christian theology that arose out of the Mediterranean-European culture, and the bases of the ecumenical movement that arose from it. Moreover there has been a radical reassessment of the church’s theology of religions. New perspectives have emerged on God’s relationship to peoples of other faith traditions. The ministry of interfaith dialogue has enabled us to see neighbours of other faiths not as objects of conversion but as fellow pilgrims who have stories to share about their life with God and God’s life with them.¹⁴

At the global level, there is an increasing recognition that the world’s problems are not Christian problems requiring Christian answers, but human problems that must be addressed together by all human beings. We know today that whether it is the issue of justice, peace, human rights or the destruction of the environment, we need to work across boundaries of religions, nations and cultures. There are calls for global movements and for a “global ethic” that would govern our life together.

So the issue of “how ecumenical ‘ecumenical’ should be” is no longer a question of semantics or inclusion; it is a theological question. It has to do with a reassessment of our understanding of God, of the scope of God’s saving work, and of the agents of God’s mission. Such reflections necessarily affect our present understandings of the mystery of the incarnation and the being and meaning of the church as the body of Christ.

In terms of our present discussion, it also raises fundamental questions about our understanding of what is “ecumenical” and who constitute the “ecumenical movement.”

Those Christians who live in contexts where the society is made up mainly of people who profess other faiths or live by other ideologies, and whose life and death issues are intimately related to their neighbours, refuse to believe that God’s reconciling and redeeming work in these societies is put on hold until the churches are able to overcome divisions that are part of another age and culture.

The call for a “wider ecumenism,” therefore, is a call to discernment. It is an attempt to make more sense than before of the conviction we hold that the Spirit of God is active in the world. It is an attempt to give more meaning than before to our belief that “the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell in it.”

Unfortunately many apply the traditional “either/or” thinking also to the call for “wider ecumenism.” They fear that the wider ecumenism would end the need for a “Christian ecumenism” or would at least undermine its urgency and necessity. This need not be the case. There is still an urgent need to make visible the unity we have in Christ. Christians still need to find ways to speak, act and engage together to fulfill their “common calling” to be in witness and service to the world. There still needs to be an ecumenical body in which the churches can engage one another in mutual learning, correction and solidarity.

But the meaning of the word “ecumenical” and the movement that carries its name will be poorer if it does not rise above its captivity to the problems of 20th-century Europe and to a global vision that is still rooted in the North Atlantic understanding of the church and its mission.

14. For an extended treatment of the challenge of interfaith dialogue to ecumenism see my essay “The Impact of Interfaith Dialogue on the Ecumenical Movement,” in John D’Arcy May, ed. *Pluralism and the Religions: The Theological and Political Dimensions*, London, Cassel, 1998, pp. 7-21.

104. Rowan Williams, "Christian Identity and Religious Plurality," Ninth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Porto Alegre, 2006

At the time of this presentation, Rowan Williams was Archbishop of Canterbury, head of the worldwide Anglican communion. A noted theologian, he gave his address at the WCC's ninth assembly in 2006. • God, in Your Grace: Official Report of the Ninth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Geneva, WCC, 2007, pp. 179-89.

If someone says to you "Identify yourself!" you will probably answer first by giving your name—then perhaps describing the work you do, the place you come from, the relations in which you stand. In many cultures, you would give the name of your parents or your extended family. To speak about "identity," then, is to speak about how we establish our place in the language and the world of those around us: names are there to be used, to be spoken to us, not just by us; work is how we join in the human process of transforming our environment; and who we are becomes clear to those around when we put ourselves in a map of relationships. Before we start thinking about what is essential to Christian identity in the abstract, it may help us just for a moment to stay with this element of simply putting ourselves on the map.

So in these terms how do we as Christians answer the challenge to identify ourselves? We carry the name of Christ. We are the people who are known for their loyalty to, their affiliation with, the historical person who was given the title of "anointed monarch" by his followers—Jesus, the Jew of Nazareth. Every time we say "Christian," we take for granted a story and a place in history, the story and place of those people with whom God made an alliance in the distant past, the people whom he called so that in their life together he might show his glory. We are already in the realm of work and relations. We are involved with that history of God's covenant.

As those who are loyal to an "anointed monarch" in the Jewish tradition, our lives are supposed to be living testimony to the faithfulness of God to his commitments. There is no way of spelling out our identity that does not get us involved in this story and this context. Explaining the very word "Christ" means explaining what it is to be

a people who exist because God has promised to be with them and whom God has commanded to show what he is like.

And to say that we are now under the authority of an anointed monarch whose life on earth was two millennia ago is also to say at once something about that "monarch." His life and presence are not just a matter of record, of narrative. There are groups that identify themselves by their founders—Lutherans, Marxists—but the name Christians use of themselves is not like that because of what the title "Christ" means. We do not look back to a founder; we look now, around, within, for a presence that has authority over our lives and is active today. And so we already imply the ways in which we shall be thinking theologically, doctrinally, about the story of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

But as we go further, the identity we are sketching becomes fuller still. What does the anointed king tell us to do, and how does he give us power to do it? We are to reveal, like the Jewish people, that the God whose authority the king holds is a God of justice impartial, universal, and a God who is free to forgive offenses. But we are also to show who God is by the words our king tells us to address to God. We are to call him "Father," to speak in intimate and bold words. Our identity is not just about relations with other human beings and our labours to shape those relationships according to justice and mercy. It is about our relation to God, and the "work" of expressing that relation in our words and acts. In Greek, the word *leitourgeia* first meant work for the sake of the public good, before it came to mean the public service of God. Christian identity is "liturgical" in both senses, the work of a people, a community, showing God to each other and to the world around them, in daily action and in worship. Our "liturgy" is both the adoration of God for God's own sake and the service of a world distorted by pride and greed. It is expressed not only in passion for the human family, especially in the middle of poverty and violence, but in passion for the whole material world, which continues to suffer the violence involved in sustaining the comfort of a prosperous human minority at the cost of our common resources.

"Identify yourself!" says the world to the Christian; and the Christian says (as the martyrs of the first centuries said), "We are the servants of a monarch, the monarch of a nation set free by God's special action to show his love and strength in their life together, a monarch whose authority belongs to the present and the future as much as the past. We are witnesses to the consistency of a God who cannot be turned aside from his purpose by any created power, or by any failure or betrayal on our part. We are more than servants or witnesses, because we are enabled to speak as

if we were, like our king, free to be intimate with God; God has stepped across the distance between ourselves and heaven, and has brought us close to him. When we speak directly to God, we speak in a voice God himself has given us to use.”

So, as Christians spell out, bit by bit, what is the meaning of the name they use of themselves, they put themselves on the map of human history. Before they start analyzing the doctrines that are necessary for this identity to be talked about and communicated abstractly, they speak of themselves as belonging in this story and this set of possibilities. Creed and structure flow from this. And it can be put most forcefully, even shockingly, if we say that Christians identify themselves not only as servants of the anointed king but as Christ. Their place in the world is his place. By allowing themselves to be caught up into his witness and doing what his authority makes possible for them, in work and worship, they stand where he stands. The Christian Scriptures say that believers bear the name of Christ, that this name is written on their foreheads, that their life together is a material “body” for the anointed king on earth.

Christian identity is to belong in a place that Jesus defines for us. By living in that place, we come in some degree to share his identity, to bear his name and to be in the same relationships he has with God and with the world. Forget “Christianity” for a moment—Christianity as a system of ideas competing with others in the market; concentrate on the place in the world that is the place of Jesus the anointed, and what it is that becomes possible in that place.

There is a difference between seeing the world as basically a territory where systems compete, where groups with different allegiances live at each other’s expense, where rivalry is inescapable, and seeing the world as a territory where being in a particular place makes it possible for you to see, to say and to do certain things that aren’t possible elsewhere. The claim of Christian belief is not first and foremost that it offers the only accurate system of thought, as against all other competitors; it is that, by standing in the place of Christ, it is possible to live in such intimacy with God that no fear or failure can ever break God’s commitment to us, and to live in such a degree of mutual gift and understanding that no human conflict or division need bring us to uncontrollable violence and mutual damage. From here, you can see what you need to see to be at peace with God and with God’s creation; and also what you need to be at peace with yourself, acknowledging your need of mercy and re-creation.

This perspective assumes from the beginning that we live in a world of plural perspectives, and that there is no

“view from nowhere,” as philosophers sometimes express the claim to absolute knowledge. To be a Christian is not to lay claim to absolute knowledge, but to lay claim to the perspective that will transform our most deeply rooted hurts and fears and so change the world at the most important level. It is a perspective that depends on being where Jesus is, under his authority, sharing the “breath” of his life, seeing what he sees—God as Abba, Father, a God completely committed to the people in whose life he seeks to reproduce his own life.

In what sense is this an exclusive claim? In one way, it can be nothing except exclusive. There is no Christian identity that does not begin from this place. Try to reconstruct the “identity” from principles, ideals or whatever, and you end up with something that is very different from the scriptural account of being “in Christ.” And because being in Christ is bound up with one and only one particular history—that of Jewish faith and of the man from Nazareth—it is simply not clear what it would mean to say that this perspective could in principle be gained by any person anywhere with any sort of commitments. Yet in another sense exclusivism is impossible here, certainly the exclusivism of a system of ideas and conclusions that someone claims to be final and absolute. The place of Jesus is open to all who want to see what Christians see and to become what Christians are becoming. And no Christian believer has in his or her possession some kind of map of where exactly the boundaries of that place are to be fixed, or a key to lock others out or in.

In the nature of the case, the Christian does not see what can be seen from other perspectives. He or she would be foolish to say that nothing can be seen or that every other perspective distorts everything so badly that there can be no real truth told. If I say that only in this place are hurts fully healed, sins forgiven, adoption into God’s intimate presence promised, that assumes that adoption and forgiveness are to be desired above all other things. Not every perspective has that at the centre. What I want to say about those other views is not that they are in error but that they leave out what matters most in human struggle; yet I know that this will never be obvious to those others, and we can only come together, we can only introduce others into our perspective, in the light of the kind of shared labour and shared hope that brings into central focus what I believe to be most significant for humanity. And meanwhile that sharing will also tell me that there may be things—perhaps of less ultimate importance, yet enormously significant—that my perspective has not taught me to see or to value.

What does this mean for the actual, on-the-ground experience of living alongside the plurality of religious communities—and non-religious ones too—that we cannot

escape or ignore in our world? I believe that our emphasis should not be on possessing a system in which all questions are answered, but precisely on witness to the place and the identity that we have been invited to live in. We are to show what we see, to reproduce the life of God as it has been delivered to us by the anointed. And it seems from what we have already been saying that at the heart of this witness must be faithful commitment. Christian identity is a faithful identity, an identity marked by consistently being with both God and God's world. We must be faithful to God, in prayer and liturgy, we must simply stand again and again where Jesus is, saying, "Abba." When Christians pray the eucharistic prayer, they take the place of Jesus, both as he prays to the Father and as he offers welcome to the world at his table. The eucharist is the celebration of the God who keeps promises and whose hospitality is always to be trusted. But this already tells us that we have to be committed to those around us, whatever their perspective. Their need, their hope, their search for healing at the depth of their humanity is something with which we must, as we say in English, "keep faith." That is to say, we must be there to accompany this searching, asking critical questions with those of other faiths, sometimes asking critical questions of them also. As we seek transformation together, it may be by God's gift that others may find their way to see what we see and to know what is possible for us.

But what of their own beliefs, their own "places"? Sometimes when we look at our neighbours of other traditions, it can be as if we see in their eyes a reflection of what we see; they do not have the words we have, but something is deeply recognizable. The language of "anonymous Christianity" is now not much in fashion—and it had all kinds of problems about it. Yet who that has been involved in dialogue with other faiths has not had the sense of an echo, a reflection, of the kind of life Christians seek to live? St Paul says that God did not leave himself without witnesses in the ages before the Messiah; in those places where that name is not named, God may yet give himself to be seen. Because we do not live there, we cannot easily analyze let alone control how this may be. And to acknowledge this is not at all to say that what happens in the history of Israel and Jesus is relative, one way among others. This, we say, is the path to forgiveness and adoption. But when others appear to have arrived at a place where forgiveness and adoption are sensed and valued, even when these things are not directly spoken of in the language of another faith's mainstream reflection, are we to say that God has not found a path for himself?

And when we face radically different notions, strange and complex accounts of a perspective not our own, our questions must be not "How do we convict them of error?"

How do we win the competition of ideas?" but, "What do they actually see? and Can what they see be a part of the world that I see?" These are questions that can be answered only by faithfulness—that is, by staying with the other. Our calling to faithfulness, remember, is an aspect of our own identity and integrity. To work patiently alongside people of other faiths is not an option invented by modern liberals who seek to relativize the radical singleness of Jesus Christ and what was made possible through him. It is a necessary part of being where he is; it is a dimension of "liturgy," staying before the presence of God and the presence of God's creation (human and non-human) in prayer and love. If we are truly learning how to be in that relation with God and the world in which Jesus of Nazareth stood, we shall not turn away from those who see from another place. And any claim or belief that we see more or more deeply is always rightly going to be tested in those encounters where we find ourselves working for a vision of human flourishing and justice in the company of those who do not start where we have started.

But the call to faithfulness has some more precise implications as well. In a situation where Christians are historically a majority, faithfulness to the other means solidarity with them, the imperative of defending them and standing with them in times of harassment or violence. In a majority Christian culture, the Christian may find himself or herself assisting the non-Christian community or communities to find a public voice. In the UK, this has been a matter largely of developing interfaith forums, working with other communities over issues around migration and asylum and common concerns about international justice, about poverty or environmental degradation, arguing that other faiths should have a share in the partnership between the state and the Church in education and, not least, continuing to build alliances against anti-Semitism. The pattern is not dissimilar elsewhere in Europe. There is a proper element of Christian self-examination involved here as Christians recognize the extent to which their societies have not been hospitable or just to the other.

However, the question also arises of what faithfulness means in a majority non-Christian culture; and this is less straightforward. For a variety of reasons, some based on fact and some on fantasy, many non-Christian majorities regard Christian presence as a threat, or at least as the sign of a particular geopolitical agenda (linked with the USA or the West in general)—despite the long history of Christian minorities in so many such contexts. One of the most problematic effects of recent international developments has been precisely to associate Christians in the Middle East or Pakistan, for example, with an alien and aggressive policy in the eyes of an easily manipulated majority.

The suffering of Christian minorities as a result of this is something which all our churches and the whole of this Assembly need constantly to keep in focus.

Yet what is remarkable is the courage with which Christians continue—in Egypt, in Pakistan, in the Balkans, even in Iraq—to seek ways of continuing to work alongside non-Christian neighbours. This is not the climate of “dialogue” as it happens in the West or in the comfortable setting of international conferences; it is the painful making and re-making of trust in a deeply unsafe and complex environment. Only relatively rarely in such settings have Christians responded with counter-aggression or by absolute withdrawal. They continue to ask how they and those of other commitments can be citizens together. It is in this sort of context, I would say, that we most clearly see what it means to carry the cost of faithfulness, to occupy the place of Jesus and so to bear the stresses and sometimes the horrors or rejection and still to speak of sharing and hospitality. Here we see what it is to model a new humanity; and there is enough to suggest that such modeling can be contagious, can open up new possibilities for a whole culture. And this is not simply a question of patience in suffering. It also lays on Christians the task of speaking to those aspects of a non-Christian culture which are deeply problematic—where the environment is one in which human dignity, the status of women, the rule of law and similar priorities are not honoured as they should be. To witness in these things may lay Christians open to further attack or marginalization, yet it remains part of that identity which we all seek to hold with integrity. Once again, where this happens, all of us need to find ways of making our solidarity real with believers in minority situations.

The question of Christian identity in a world of plural perspectives and convictions cannot be answered in clichés about the tolerant co-existence of different opinions. It is rather that the nature of our conviction as Christian puts us irrevocably in a certain place, which is both promising and deeply risky, the place where we are called to show utter commitment to the God who is revealed in Jesus and to all those to whom his invitation is addressed. Our very identity obliges us to active faithfulness of this double kind. We are not called to win competitions or arguments in favour of our “product” in some religious marketplace. If we are, in the words of Olivier Clément, to take our dialogue beyond the encounter of ideologies, we have to be ready to witness, in life and word, to what is made possible by being in the place of Jesus the anointed—“our reasons for living, for loving less badly and dying less badly” (Clément, *Anachroniques*, p.307). “Identify yourself!” And we do so by giving prayerful thanks for our place and by living faithfully where God in Jesus has brought us to be, so that

the world may see what is the depth and cost of God’s own fidelity to the world he has made.

105. “Religious Plurality and Christian Self-Understanding,” Commissions of the World Council of Churches, 2006

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“The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world and those who live in it.” (Ps. 24:1)

“For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering; for my name is great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts.” (Mal. 1:11)

“Then Peter began to speak to them: I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.” (Acts 10:34-35)

1. What do the experiences of the psalmist, the prophet, and Peter mean for us today? What does it mean to affirm our faith in Jesus Christ joyfully, and yet seek to discern God’s presence and activity in the world? How do we understand such affirmations in a religiously plural world?

I. The Challenge of Plurality

2. Today Christians in almost all parts of the world live in religiously plural societies. Persistent plurality and its impact on their daily lives are forcing them to seek new and adequate ways of understanding and relating to peoples of other religious traditions. The rise of religious extremism

and militancy in many situations has accentuated the importance of interreligious relations. Religious identities, loyalties, and sentiments have become important components in so many international and inter-ethnic conflicts that some say that the “politics of ideology,” which played a crucial role in the twentieth century, has been replaced in our day by the “politics of identity.”

3. All religious communities are being reshaped by new encounters and relationships. Globalization of political, economic and even religious life brings new pressures on communities that have been in geographical or social isolation. There is greater awareness of the interdependence of human life, and of the need to collaborate across religious barriers in dealing with the pressing problems of the world. All religious traditions, therefore, are challenged to contribute to the emergence of a global community that would live in mutual respect and peace. At stake is the credibility of religious traditions as forces that can bring justice, peace and healing to a broken world.

4. Most religious traditions, however, have their own history of compromise with political power and privilege and of complicity in violence that has marred human history. Christianity, for instance, has been, on the one hand, a force that brought the message of God’s unconditional love for and acceptance of all people. On the other hand, its history, sadly, is also marked by persecutions, crusades, insensitivity to indigenous cultures and complicity with imperial and colonial designs. In fact, such ambiguity and compromise with power and privilege is part of the history of all religious traditions, cautioning us against a romantic attitude towards them. Further, most religious traditions exhibit enormous internal diversity attended by painful divisions and disputes.

5. Today these internal disputes have to be seen in the light of the need to promote mutual understanding and peace among the religions. Given the context of increased polarization of communities, the prevalent climate of fear and the culture of violence that has gripped our world, the mission of bringing healing and wholeness to the fractured human community is the greatest challenge that faces the religious traditions in our day.

The Changing Context of the Christian Faith

6. The global religious situation is also in flux. In some parts of the Western world, the institutional expressions of Christianity are in decline. New forms of religious commitment emerge as people increasingly separate personal faith from institutional belonging. The search for authentic spirituality in the context of a secular way of life presents new challenges to the churches. Further, peoples of other traditions, like Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs etc.,

who have increasingly moved into these areas, as minorities, often experience the need to be in dialogue with the majority community. This challenges Christians to be able to articulate their faith in ways that are meaningful both to them and their neighbours; dialogue presupposes both faith commitment and the capacity to articulate it in word and deed.

7. At the same time, Christianity, especially in its evangelical and Pentecostal manifestations, is growing rapidly in some regions of the world. In some of the other regions, Christianity is undergoing radical changes as Christians embrace new and vibrant forms of church life and enter into new relationships with indigenous cultures. While Christianity appears to be on the decline in some parts of the world, it has become a dynamic force in others.

8. These changes require us to be more attentive than before to our relationship with other religious communities. They challenge us to acknowledge “others” in their differences, to welcome strangers even if their “strangeness” sometimes threatens us, and to seek reconciliation even with those who have declared themselves our enemies. In other words, we are being challenged to develop a spiritual climate and a theological approach that contribute to creative and positive relationships among the religious traditions of the world.

9. The cultural and doctrinal differences among religious traditions, however, have always made interreligious dialogue difficult. This is now aggravated by the tensions and animosities generated by global conflicts and mutual suspicions and fears. Further, the impression that Christians have turned to dialogue as a new tool for their mission, and the controversies over “conversion” and “religious freedom,” have not abated. Therefore dialogue, reconciliation and peace-building across the religious divides have become urgent, yet they are never achieved through isolated events or programmes. They involve a long and difficult process sustained by faith, courage and hope.

The Pastoral and Faith Dimensions of the Question

10. There is a pastoral need to equip Christians to live in a religiously plural world. Many Christians seek ways to be committed to their own faith and yet to be open to the others. Some use spiritual disciplines from other religious traditions to deepen their Christian faith and prayer life. Still others find in other religious traditions an additional spiritual home and speak of the possibility of “double belonging.” Many Christians ask for guidance to deal with interfaith marriages, the call to pray with others, and the need to deal with militancy and extremism. Others seek for guidance as they work together with neighbours of other religious traditions on issues of justice and peace. Religious

plurality and its implications now affect our day-to-day lives.

11. As Christians we seek to build a new relationship with other religious traditions because we believe it to be intrinsic to the gospel message and inherent to our mission as co-workers with God in healing the world. Therefore the mystery of God's relationship to all God's people, and the many ways in which peoples have responded to this mystery, invite us to explore more fully the reality of other religious traditions and our own identity as Christians in a religiously plural world.

II. Religious Traditions as Spiritual Journeys

The Christian journey

12. It is common to speak of religious traditions being "spiritual journeys." Christianity's spiritual journey has enriched and shaped its development into a religious tradition. It emerged initially in a predominantly Jewish-Hellenistic culture. Christians have had the experience of being "strangers," and of being persecuted minorities struggling to define themselves in the midst of dominant religious and cultural forces. And as Christianity grew into a world religion, it has become internally diversified, transformed by the many cultures with which it came into contact.

13. In the East, the Orthodox churches have throughout their history been involved in a complex process of cultural engagement and discernment, maintaining and transmitting the Orthodox faith through integration of select cultural aspects over the centuries. On the other hand, the Orthodox churches have also struggled to resist the temptation towards syncretism. In the West, having become the religious tradition of a powerful empire, Christianity has at times been a persecuting majority. It also became the "host" culture, shaping European civilization in many positive ways. At the same time, it has had a troubled history in its relationship with Judaism, Islam and indigenous traditions.

14. The Reformation transformed the face of Western Christianity, introducing Protestantism with its proliferation of confessions and denominations, while the Enlightenment brought about a cultural revolution with the emergence of modernity, secularization, individualism, and the separation of church and state. Missionary expansions into Asia, Africa, Latin America and other parts of the world raised questions about the indigenization and inculturation of the gospel. The encounter between the rich spiritual heritage of the Asian religions and the African Traditional Religions resulted in the emergence of theological traditions based on the cultural and religious heritages of these regions. The rise of charismatic and Pentecostal

churches in all parts of the world has added yet a new dimension to Christianity.

15. In short, the "spiritual journey" of Christianity has made it a very complex worldwide religious tradition. As Christianity seeks to live among cultures, religions and philosophic traditions and attempts to respond to the present and future challenges, it will continue to be transformed. It is in this context, of a Christianity that has been and is changing, that we need a theological response to plurality.

Religions, Identities and Cultures

16. Other religious traditions have also lived through similar challenges in their development. There is no one expression of Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism etc. As these religions journeyed out of their lands of origin, they too have been shaped by the encounters with the cultures they moved into, transforming and being transformed by them. Most of the major religious traditions today have had the experience of being cultural "hosts" to other religious traditions, and of being "hosted" by cultures shaped by religious traditions other than their own. This means that the identities of religious communities and of individuals within them are never static, but fluid and dynamic. No religion is totally unaffected by its interaction with other religious traditions. Increasingly it has become rather misleading even to talk of "religions" as such, and of "Judaism," "Christianity," "Islam," "Hinduism," "Buddhism" etc., as if they were static, undifferentiated wholes.

17. These realities raise several spiritual and theological issues. What is the relationship between "religion" and "culture"? What is the nature of the influence they have on one another? What theological sense can we make of religious plurality? What resources within our own tradition can help us deal with these questions? We have the rich heritage of the modern ecumenical movement's struggle with these questions to help us in our exploration. . . .

IV. Towards a Theology of Religions

26. What would a theology of religions look like today? Many theologies of religions have been proposed. The many streams of thinking within the scriptures make our task challenging. While recognizing the diversity of the scriptural witness, we choose the theme of "hospitality" as a hermeneutical key and an entry point for our discussion.

Celebrating the Hospitality of a Gracious God

27. Our theological understanding of religious plurality begins with our faith in the one God who created all things, the living God present and active in all creation from the beginning. The Bible testifies to God as God of all nations and peoples, whose love and compassion includes all humankind. We see in the covenant with Noah a covenant with all creation that has never been broken. We see God's wisdom and justice extending to the ends of the earth, as God guides the nations through their traditions of wisdom and understanding. God's glory penetrates the whole of creation. The Hebrew Bible witnesses to the universal saving presence of God throughout human history through the Word or Wisdom and the Spirit.

28. In the New Testament, the incarnation of the Word of God is spoken of by St. Paul in terms of hospitality and of a life turned toward the "other." Paul proclaims, in doxological language, that "though he [Christ] was in the form of God he did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:6-8). The self-emptying of Christ, and his readiness to assume our humanity, is at the heart of the confession of our faith. The mystery of the incarnation is God's deepest identification with our human condition, showing the unconditional grace of God that accepted humankind in its otherness and estrangement. Paul's hymn moves on to celebrate the risen Christ: "Therefore God has highly exalted him, and given him the name that is above every name" (Phil. 2:9). This has led Christians to confess Jesus Christ as the one in whom the entire human family has been united to God in an irrevocable bond and covenant.

29. This grace of God shown in Jesus Christ calls us to an attitude of hospitality in our relationship to others. Paul prefaces the hymn by saying, "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). Our hospitality involves self-emptying, and in receiving others in unconditional love we participate in the pattern of God's redeeming love. Indeed our hospitality is not limited to those in our own community; the gospel commands us to love even our enemies and to call for blessings upon them (Matt. 5:43-48; Rom. 12:14). As Christians, therefore, we need to search for the right balance between our identity in Christ and our openness to others in kenotic love that comes out of that very identity.

30. In his public ministry, Jesus not only healed people who were part of his own tradition but also responded to the great faith of the Canaanite woman and the Roman centurion (Matt. 15:21-28; 8:5-11). Jesus chose a "stranger,"

the Samaritan, to demonstrate the fulfilling of the commandment to love one's neighbour through compassion and hospitality. Since the gospels present Jesus' encounter with those of other faiths as incidental, and not as part of his main ministry, these stories do not provide us with the necessary information to draw clear conclusions regarding any theology of religions. But they do present Jesus as one whose hospitality extended to all who were in need of love and acceptance. Matthew's narrative of Jesus' parable of the last judgment goes further to identify openness to the victims of society, hospitality to strangers and acceptance of the other as unexpected ways of being in communion with the risen Christ (Matt. 25:31-46).

31. It is significant that while Jesus extended hospitality to those at the margins of society he himself had to face rejection and was often in need of hospitality. Jesus' acceptance of the peoples at the margins, as well as his own experience of rejection, has provided the inspiration for those who show solidarity in our day with the poor, the despised and the rejected. Thus the biblical understanding of hospitality goes well beyond the popular notion of extending help and showing generosity toward others. The Bible speaks of hospitality primarily as a radical openness to others based on the affirmation of the dignity of all. We draw our inspiration both from Jesus' example and his command that we love our neighbours.

32. The Holy Spirit helps us to live out Christ's openness to others. The person of the Holy Spirit moved and still moves over the face of the earth to create, nurture and sustain, to challenge, renew and transform. We confess that the activity of the Spirit passes beyond our definitions, descriptions, and limitations in the manner of the wind that "blows where it wills" (John 3:8). Our hope and expectancy are rooted in our belief that the "economy" of the Spirit relates to the whole creation. We discern the Spirit of God moving in ways that we cannot predict. We see the nurturing power of the Holy Spirit working within, inspiring human beings in their universal longing for, and seeking after, truth, peace and justice (Rom. 8:18-27). "Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control," wherever they are found, are the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23, cf. Rom. 14:17).

33. We believe that this encompassing work of the Holy Spirit is also present in the life and traditions of peoples of living faith. People have at all times and in all places responded to the presence and activity of God among them, and have given their witness to their encounters with the living God. In this testimony they speak both of seeking and of having found wholeness, or enlightenment, or divine guidance, or rest, or liberation. This is the context in which we as Christians testify to the salvation we

have experienced through Christ. This ministry of witness among our neighbours of other faiths must presuppose an “affirmation of what God has done and is doing among them” (CWME San Antonio 1989).

34. We see the plurality of religious traditions as both the result of the manifold ways in which God has related to peoples and nations as well as a manifestation of the richness and diversity of human response to God’s gracious gifts. It is our Christian faith in God which challenges us to take seriously the whole realm of religious plurality, always using the gift of discernment. Seeking to develop new and greater understandings of “the wisdom, love and power which God has given to men [and women] of other faiths” (New Delhi Report, 1961), we must affirm our “openness to the possibility that the God we know in Jesus Christ may encounter us also in the lives of our neighbours of other faiths” (CWME San Antonio 1989). We also believe that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, will lead us to understand anew the deposit of the faith already given to us, and into fresh and unforeseen insight into the divine mystery, as we learn more from our neighbours of other faiths.

35. Thus, it is our faith in the Trinitarian God, God who is diversity in unity, God who creates, brings wholeness and nurtures and nourishes all life, which helps us in our hospitality of openness to all. We have been the recipients of God’s generous hospitality of love. We cannot do otherwise.

V. The Call to Hospitality

36. How should Christians respond in light of the generosity and graciousness of God? “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it” (Heb. 13:2). In today’s context the “stranger” includes not only the people unknown to us, the poor and the exploited, but also those who are ethnically, culturally and religiously “others” to us. The word “stranger” in the scriptures does not intend to objectify the “other” but recognizes that there are people who are indeed “strangers” to us in their culture, religion, race and other kinds of diversities that are part of the human community. Our willingness to accept others in their “otherness” is the hallmark of true hospitality. Through our openness to the “other” we may encounter God in new ways. Hospitality, thus, is both the fulfilment of the commandment to “love our neighbours as ourselves” and an opportunity to discover God anew.

37. Hospitality also pertains to how we treat each other within the Christian family; sometimes we are as much strangers to each other as we are to those outside

our community. Because of the changing world context, especially increased mobility and population movements, sometimes we are the “hosts” to others, and at other times we become the “guests” receiving the hospitality of others; sometimes we receive “strangers” and at other times we become the “strangers” in the midst of others. Indeed we may need to move to an understanding of hospitality as “mutual openness” that transcends the distinctions of “hosts” and “guests.”

38. Hospitality is not just an easy or simple way of relating to others. It is often not only an opportunity but also a risk. In situations of political or religious tension acts of hospitality may require great courage, especially when extended to those who deeply disagree with us or even consider us as their enemy. Further, dialogue is very difficult when there are inequalities between parties, distorted power relations or hidden agendas. One may also at times feel obliged to question the deeply held beliefs of the very people whom one has offered hospitality to or received hospitality from, and to have one’s own beliefs be challenged in return.

The Power of Mutual Transformation

39. Christians have not only learned to co-exist with people of other religious traditions, but have also been transformed by their encounters. We have discovered unknown aspects of God’s presence in the world, and uncovered neglected elements of our own Christian traditions. We have also become more conscious of the many passages of the Bible that call us to be more responsive to others.

40. Practical hospitality and a welcoming attitude to strangers create the space for mutual transformation and even reconciliation. Such reciprocity is exemplified in the story of the meeting between Abraham, the father of faith, and Melchizedek, the non-Israelite king of Salem (Gen. 14). Abraham received the blessing of Melchizedek, who is described as a priest of “God Most High.” The story suggests that through this encounter Abraham’s understanding of the nature of the deity who had led him and his family from Ur and Harran was renewed and expanded.

41. Mutual transformation is also seen in Luke’s narrative of the encounter between Peter and Cornelius in the Acts of the Apostles. The Holy Spirit accomplished a transformation in Peter’s self-understanding through his vision and subsequent interaction with Cornelius. This led him to confess that, “God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him” (Acts 10: 34-35). In this case, Cornelius the “stranger” becomes an instrument of Peter’s transformation, even as Peter becomes an instrument of transformation of Cornelius and his household. While this story is not

primarily about interfaith relations, it sheds light on how God can lead us beyond the confines of our self-understanding in encounter with others.

42. So one can draw consequences from these examples, and from such rich experiences in daily life, for a vision of mutual hospitality among peoples of different religious traditions. From the Christian perspective, this has much to do with our ministry of reconciliation. It presupposes both our witness to the “other” about God in Christ and our openness to allow God to speak to us through the “other.” Mission, when understood in this light, has no room for triumphalism; it contributes to removing the causes for religious animosity and the violence that often goes with it. Hospitality requires Christians to accept others as created in the image of God, knowing that God may talk to us through others to teach and transform us, even as God may use us to transform others.

43. The biblical narrative and experiences in the ecumenical ministry show that such mutual transformation is at the heart of authentic Christian witness. Openness to the “other” can change the “other,” even as it can change us. It may give others new perspectives on Christianity and on the gospel; it may also enable them to understand their own faith from new perspectives. Such openness, and the transformation that comes from it, can in turn enrich our lives in surprising ways.

VI. Salvation Belongs to God

44. The religious traditions of humankind, in their great diversity, are “journeys” or “pilgrimages” towards human fulfilment in search for the truth about our existence. Even though we may be “strangers” to each other, there are moments in which our paths intersect that call for “religious hospitality.” Both our personal experiences today and historical moments in the past witness to the fact that such hospitality is possible and does take place in small ways.

45. Extending such hospitality is dependent on a theology that is hospitable to the “other.” Our reflections on the nature of the biblical witness to God, what we believe God to have done in Christ, and the work of the Spirit show that at the heart of the Christian faith lies an attitude of hospitality that embraces the “other” in their otherness. It is this spirit that needs to inspire the theology of religions in a world that needs healing and reconciliation. And it is this spirit that may also bring about our solidarity with all who, irrespective of their religious beliefs, have been pushed to the margins of society.

46. We need to acknowledge that human limitations and limitations of language make it impossible for any community to have exhausted the mystery of the salvation

God offers to humankind. All our theological reflections in the last analysis are limited by our own experience and cannot hope to deal with the scope of God’s work of mending the world.

47. It is this humility that enables us to say that salvation belongs to God, God only. We do not possess salvation; we participate in it. We do not offer salvation; we witness to it. We do not decide who would be saved; we leave it to the providence of God. For our own salvation is an everlasting “hospitality” that God has extended to us. It is God who is the “host” of salvation. And yet, in the eschatological vision of the new heaven and the new earth, we also have the powerful symbol of God becoming both a “host” and a “guest” among us: “See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples. . . .” (Rev. 21:3).

CHAPTER SEVEN

Learning and Prayer: Toward a Community of Formation and Spirituality

Introduction

The story of the ecumenical movement is often depicted as a river formed by the confluence of three streams: Faith and Order (Chapters II and III in this anthology), Life and Work (Chapter IV), and Mission and Evangelism (Chapters V and VI). The first two joined to form the World Council of Churches in 1948, and the third became part of the WCC in 1961.

History shows, however, that there is a fourth stream. Modern ecumenism has its roots in the 19th century when Christians began to work together across previously-impermeable confessional boundaries; and no telling of this history would be complete without significant reference to the Sunday School Movement. Beginning in 1889, leaders of this movement met in periodic world conventions, major ecumenical events in their day, leading to the formation of the World Council of Christian Education (WCCE) in 1947—a recognition that the educational agenda of the church was now far wider than just Sunday schools.

One year earlier, the WCC-in-process-of-formation had inaugurated an Ecumenical Institute, at Chateau de Bossey near Geneva, devoted to ecumenical learning, especially in its early years, among laity. And this recognition of education as a central ecumenical theme was further institutionalized when the WCCE was integrated into the WCC in 1971. Education equips Christians to look beyond parochial interests and—at least, potentially—brings churches together in the common task of transmitting the gospel from generation to generation.

Speeches and reports from the World Sunday School Association and the WCCE, unlike those from the other three “streams,” do not show a clear focus on the unity of the church. Thus, I have decided to pick up this part of the story after 1971. Included in the first half of the chapter are essays by two leaders in the field of “ecumenical learning”—including the famous liberation-oriented educator, Paulo Freire, who was for a time a staff member of the WCC—as well as reports indicating prominent motifs in ecumenical formation and theological education.

Prayer and worship is not so much a stream of the movement as its animating core. Readers of the anthology will have already heard this from Pope John Paul II (see Chapter I) who uses the words of Vatican II to argue that “change of heart and holiness of life, along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians, should be regarded as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement”—a

claim that is expanded in this chapter in the excerpt from Cardinal Kasper. The WCC's second assembly put it this way: "The measure of our concern for unity is the degree to which we pray for it. We cannot expect God to give us unity unless we prepare ourselves to receive this gift by costly and purifying prayer."

Movements for promoting ecumenical prayer include the World Day of Prayer, begun by U.S. women in 1887, the Fellowship of the Least Coin, begun by Asian women in 1956, and the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which grew out of initiatives taken by two Catholic priests, Paul Watson in the United States and Paul Couturier in France. Excerpts from Abbé Couturier's "ecumenical testament" are included in this chapter.

The earliest books of ecumenical prayer and worship emerged from the Student Christian Movement (SCM). Suzanne de Diétrich (see Chapter I) collected and edited the liturgies and prayers that became the two volumes of Venite Adoremus, published in the 1930s by the SCM. A more recent initiative is an ecumenical prayer cycle, In God's Hands: Common Prayer for the World, published by the WCC. The theological basis for such mutual intercession is outlined by Lukas Vischer in an essay included below.

Ecumenical convergence on the theology and practice of corporate worship has a more complex history. Until the 1950s, worship was regarded in Faith and Order circles as the place where Christian disunity is most sharply revealed, and was dealt with, therefore, only by comparing different practices. The Faith and Order conferences in Lund (1952) and Montreal (1963) took steps toward more substantive agreement, and excerpts from both reports are included below. The following three decades saw real advance in the experience of worship in multi-confessional and cross-cultural settings, and in the theology of sacraments (most notably, the Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry text found in Chapter III); but Faith and Order did not return explicitly to the topic of "koinonia in worship" until the 1990s (see the article by Crawford and Best).

No chapter on worship and prayer in the ecumenical movement would be complete without reference to Taizé, the monastic community of Protestants and Catholics, which, since its founding by Brother Roger Schütz in 1940, has sought to be a "parable of communion" among divided Christians. The spirituality of Taizé, like that of the Iona community in Scotland has profoundly influenced the development of ecumenism.

The two parts of this chapter are intimately linked in that both remind us that renewal is a vital ecumenical concern. Education and prayer, ecumenical leaders have contended, are two of the channels through which God renews the church, opening it to deeper unity and more faithful witness.

106. Paulo Freire, "Education, Liberation, and the Church," in *Study Encounter*, 1973

*Paulo Freire is best known for his highly-influential book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. He served as a special consultant to the WCC Office of Education from 1970 to 1980. • Study Encounter, vol. ix, no. 1, 1973, pp. 1-10.*

Education for Liberation

. . . Education for liberation does not merely free students from blackboards just to offer them projectors.¹ On the contrary, it is concerned, as a social praxis, with helping to free human beings from the oppression which strangles them in their objective reality. It is therefore political education, just as political as the education which claims to be neutral, although actually serving the power elite. It is thus a form of education which can only be put into practice systematically when society is radically transformed. Only the "innocent" could possibly think that the power elite would encourage a type of education which denounces them even more clearly than do all the contradictions of their power structures.² Such naiveness also reveals a dangerous underestimation of the capacity and audacity of the elite. Truly liberating education can only be put into practice outside the ordinary system, and even then with great cautiousness, by those who overcome their naiveness and commit themselves to authentic liberation.

A growing number of Christians in Latin America are discovering these things and finding themselves forced to take sides: either to change their naiveness into shrewdness and consciously align themselves with the ideology of domination or else to join forces with the oppressed and in full identification with them seek true liberation. We have already stated that, if they renounce their uncritical adherence to the dominant classes, their new apprenticeship with the people presents a challenge; in meeting this challenge they encounter risks formerly unknown.

During what we are calling their "new apprenticeship," many Christians soon realize that previously when they had engaged in purely palliative action—whether social or religious (for example, fervent support of maxims such as "The family that prays together stays together")—they

were praised for their Christian virtues. They now begin to realize, however, that the family that prays together also needs a house, free employment,³ bread, clothing, health and education for their children, that they need to express themselves and their world by creating and recreating it, that their bodies, souls and dignity must be respected if they are to stay together in more than suffering and misery. When they begin to see all this, they find their very faith being called into question by those who wish to have even more political, economic and ecclesiastical power for the re-shaping of the consciousness of others.

As their new apprenticeship begins to show them more clearly the dramatic situation in which the people live and leads them to undertake action which is less "help oriented," they come to be seen as "diabolic."⁴ They are denounced as serving an international demonic force which threatens "Western Christian civilization," a civilization which, in reality, has very little that is Christian about it.

Thus they discover through praxis that their "innocent" period was not in the least impartial. But at this point many are afraid; they lose the courage to face the existential risk of historical commitment. They return to their idealistic illusions, but now as members of the "shrewd" camp.

But they need to be able to justify their return. So they claim that the masses, who are "uneducated and incapable," must be protected from losing their faith in God, which is "so beautiful, so sweet, and so edifying"; they must be protected from the "subversive evil of the false Christians who praise the Chinese Cultural Revolution and admire the Cuban Revolution." They sign up for the "defense of the faith," when what they are really defending is their own class interests, to which that faith is subordinated.

They must then insist on the "neutrality" of the Church, whose fundamental task, they say, is to reconcile the irreconcilable through maximum social stability. Thus they castrate the prophetic dimension of the Church, whose witness becomes one of fear—fear of change, fear that an unjust world will be radically transformed, fear of getting lost in an uncertain future. However, a Church that refuses historical involvement is nevertheless involved in history. In fact, those who preach that the Church is outside history contradict themselves in practice, because they automatically place themselves at the side of those who refuse to allow the oppressed classes to be. Afraid of this uncertainty,

3. Concerning free employment as a necessary condition for human liberty, see *Fifteen Bishops Speak for the Third World*, Mexico, CIDOC, 1967, Dec. 67/35, pp. 1-11.

4. Dom Helder Camara, the prophetic Archbishop of Olinda and Recife (Brazil), is today considered as one of these terrible "demons." It's always the same. The necrophiles can never stand the presence of a biophile . . .

1. Paulo Freire, "Cultural Action, An Introduction," in *Conscientization for Liberation*, Washington, CICOP, 1971

2. See Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York, Herder and Herder, 1970; and London, Penguin, 1972).

and anxious to avoid the risk of a future which must always be constructed and not just received, the Church badly loses its way. It can no longer test itself, either through the denunciation of the unjust world, or the annunciation of a more just world to be built by the historical-social praxis of the oppressed. In this situation, the Church can be no more utopian, prophetic or filled with hope than are the ruling classes to which it is allied. Deprived of its prophetic vision, it takes the road of formalism in bureaucratic rites where hope, detached from the future, becomes only an alienated and alienating abstraction. Instead of stimulating the pilgrim, it invites him to stand still. Basically, it is a Church which forbids itself the Easter which it preaches. It is a Church which is “freezing to death,” unable to respond to the aspirations of a troubled, utopic and biophile youth to whom one can no longer speak a medieval language, and who are not interested in discussing the sex of angels, for they are challenged by the drama of their history. Most of these young people are well aware that the basic problem of Latin America is not the “laziness” of the people, or their “inferiority,” or their lack of education. It is imperialism. And they know that this imperialism is neither abstraction nor slogan but tangible reality, an invading, destroying presence. Until this basic contradiction is overcome, Latin America cannot develop. It can only modernize.⁵ For without liberation, there can be no real development of dependent societies. . . .

The Role of the Churches

In trying, now, to analyze more deeply the role of the Latin American churches, especially their educational role, we must return to some of the points made above; first of all, to the fact that they cannot be politically neutral. They cannot avoid making a choice, and therefore we in turn cannot discuss the Church’s role abstractly or metaphysically. Their choice will condition their whole approach to education—its concept, objectives, methods, processes and all its auxiliary effects.

This conditioning affects the theological training of the leadership of the militant church, as well as the education dispensed by the church. Even theological education and reflection are touched.

5. “From the beginning of modern times, hopes for something new from God have emigrated from the Church and have been invested in revolution and rapid social change. It was most often reaction and conservatism that remained in the Church. Thus the Christian Church became ‘religious.’ That is, she cultivated and apotheosized tradition. Her authority was sanctioned by what had been in force always and everywhere from the earliest times.” (Jürgen Moltmann, *Religion, Revolution and the Future*, New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1969, pp. 5-6.)

In a class society, the power elite necessarily determine what education will be, and therefore its objectives. The objectives will certainly not be opposed to their interests. As we have already said, it would be supremely naive to imagine that the elite would in any way promote or accept an education which stimulated the oppressed to discover the *raison d’être* of the social structure. The most that could be expected is that the elite might permit talk of such education, and occasional experiments which could be immediately suppressed should the status quo be threatened.

Thus the Episcopal Conference of Latin America (CELAM) can talk about “liberating education” in nearly all its official documents; as long as it is not put into practice, nothing serious will happen to it. At any rate, we should not be surprised (though this is not based on actual knowledge) if one day CELAM is severely restricted by the power elite, through the anti-prophetic church of which we spoke. This church, which is “freezing to death” in the warm bosom of the bourgeoisie, can certainly not tolerate any ideas, even if only verbal, which the elite consider “diabolic.”

Our task in considering the role of the Latin American churches in education would be simplified if we could count on coherence between Church and Gospel. In that case, it would be sufficient to look at the dependent condition of Latin American society (with the exception of Cuba and up to a point Chile) and set up a strategy of action for the churches. The reality, however, is different, and we cannot think in a vacuum.

It is not possible to speak objectively of the educational role of the Latin American churches as being unified and coherent. On the contrary, their roles differ, sometimes opposing each other, according to the political line, whether evident, hidden, or disguised, which the different churches are living out in history. The traditionalist church, first of all, is still intensely colonialist. It is a missionary church, in the worst sense of the word—a necrophilic winner of souls, hence its taste for masochistic emphasis on sin, hell-fire and eternal damnation. The mundane, dichotomized from the transcendental, is the “filth” in which humans have to pay for their sins. The more they suffer, the more they purify themselves, finally reaching heaven and eternal rest. Work is not, for them, the action of men and women on the world, transforming and re-creating, but rather the price that must be paid for being human.

In this traditionalist line, whether it be Protestant or Catholic, we find what the Swiss sociologist Christian Lalive calls the “haven of the masses.”⁶ This view of the world, of life, satisfies the fatalistic and frightened

6. See his *Haven of the Masses: A Study of the Pentecostal Movement in Chile*, London, Lutterworth Press, 1969.

consciousness of the oppressed at a certain moment of their historical experience. They find in it a kind of healing for their existential fatigue. So it is that the more the masses are drowned in their culture of silence, with all the violence that this implies on the part of the oppressors, the more the masses tend to take refuge in churches which offer that sort of “ministry.”⁷ Submerged in this culture of silence, where the only voice to be heard is that of the ruling classes, they see this church as a sort of womb in which they can hide from an aggressive society. In despising this world as a world of sin, vice and impurity, they are in one sense taking their “revenge” on their oppressors, its owners. It is as if they were saying to the bosses: “You are powerful—but the world over which your power holds sway—is an evil one and we reject it.” Forbidden as a subordinate social class to have their say, they fool themselves that the prayers for salvation they voice in their “haven” are a genuine form of “speaking out.”

However, none of this resolves the real problems of the oppressed. Their catharsis actually alienates them further, for it directs their anger against the world and not against the social system which is ruining the world. So, seeing the world itself as the antagonist, they attempt the impossible: to renounce the world’s mediation in their pilgrimage. By doing so, they hope to reach transcendence without passing by way of the mundane; they want meta-history without experiencing history; they want salvation without knowing liberation. The pain of domination leads them to accept this historical anaesthesia in the hope that it will strengthen them to fight sin and the devil—leaving untouched all the while the real causes of their oppression. They cannot see, beyond their present situation, the “untested feasibility,” the future as a liberation project which they must create for themselves.

This traditional type of church is usually found in backward, “closed” societies, mostly agricultural, which depend upon the export of raw materials and have only a minimal internal market; here the culture of silence is fundamental. Like the archaic social structures, the traditionalist church remains unchanged throughout the modernization of these societies. The force of such traditionalist religion⁸ is seen even in the urban centres which are being transformed under the impact of industrialization. Only a qualitative change in the consciousness of the people can overcome the need to see the church as the “haven of the masses.” And as we have seen, this qualitative change does

not happen automatically, mechanically or “inside” the consciousness.

Furthermore, technological modernization does not necessarily make people more capable of critical analysis, because it too is not neutral. It is dependent on the ideology that commands it.

For all these reasons and for many more that would take too long to analyze, the traditionalist line is unquestionably allied to the ruling classes, whether or not it is aware of this. The role that these churches can (and do) play in the field of education is conditioned then by their view of the world, of religion, and of human beings and their “destiny.” Their idea of education and its application cannot help being paralyzing, alienating and alienated. Only those who hold this perspective naively—rather than shrewdly—will be able to escape from their trap through praxis, by entering into a totally different commitment to the dominated classes and so becoming truly prophetic.

The Modernizing Church

... The traditionalist churches alienate the oppressed social classes by encouraging them to view the world as evil. The modernizing churches alienate them in a different way: by defending the reforms that maintain the status quo. By reducing such expressions as “humanism” and “humanization” to abstract categories, the modern churches empty them of any real meaning. Such phrases become mere slogans whose only contribution is to serve the reactionary forces. In truth, there is no humanization without liberation as there is no liberation without a revolutionary transformation of the class society, for in the class society all humanization is impossible. Liberation becomes concrete only when society is changed, not when its structures are simply modernized.

In so far as the modernizing churches busy themselves with no more than peripheral changes and plead the case of neo-capitalistic measures, they will have their audience only among the “naive” or the “shrewd.” The young people who are neither naive nor shrewd but are challenged by the drama of Latin America cannot accept the invitation of the modernizing churches which support conservative and reformist positions. Not only do they refuse the invitation: it provokes them into assuming attitudes which are not always valid, such as the objectivist position discussed elsewhere in this article.

The churches’ conservative position, rejected by these young people, does not contradict their “modernism,” for the modernization of which we are talking is eminently conservative, since it reforms so as to preserve the status quo. Hence the churches give the impression of “moving”

7. A sociological analysis of this fact in Latin America is essential, but it is important that the starting point of such research be social class structures and not the religious phenomenon itself.

8. See Muniz de Souza, Beatriz: *A Experiencia da Salvacao: Pentecostals em Sao Paulo*, Silo Paulo, Duas Cidades, 1969.

while actually they are standing still. They create the illusion of marching on while really stabilizing themselves. They die because they refuse to die.

This is the kind of church which would still say to Christ today, "Why leave, Master, if everything here is so beautiful, so good?" Their language conceals rather than reveals. It speaks of "the poor" or of "the underprivileged" rather than "the oppressed." While it sees the alienations of the ruling class and dominated class on the same level, it ignores the antagonism between them, the result of the system that created them. But, if the system alienates both groups, it alienates each in a different way. The rulers are alienated to the degree that, sacrificing their *being* for a false *having*, they are drugged with power and so stop *being*; the dominated, prevented to a certain degree from *having*, finish with so little power that *being* is impossible. Turning work into merchandise, the system creates those who buy it and those who sell it. The error of the naive and the shrewdness of the shrewd is seen in their affirmation that such a contradiction is a purely moral question.

The ruling classes, as is the logic of the class system, prohibit the dominated class from *being*. In this process the ruling class itself ceases to be. The system itself keeps them from rising above the contradiction, from any movement which would end their alienation as well as that of those they dominate. The dominated alone are called to fulfill this task in history. The ruling class, as such, cannot carry it out. What they can do—within their historical limits—is to reform and to modernize the system according to the new demands which the system allows them to perceive, thus in effect maintaining that which results in the alienation of all.

Under the conditions in which the modernizing churches act, their concepts of education, its objectives, its application, all must form a coherent unity within their general political position. That is why, even though they speak of liberating education, they are conditioned by their vision of liberation as an individual activity which should take place through a change of consciousness and not through the social and historical praxis of human beings. So they end up by putting the accent on methods which can be considered neutral. Liberating education for the modernizing church is finally reduced to liberating the students from blackboards, static classes and textbook curricula, and offering them projectors and other audio-visual accessories, more dynamic classes and a new technico-professional teaching.

The Prophetic Church

Finally, another kind of church has been taking shape in Latin America, though it is not often visible as a coherent totality. It is a church as old as Christianity itself, without being traditional; as new as Christianity, without being modernizing. It is the prophetic church. Opposed and attacked by both traditionalist and modernizing churches, as well as by the elite of the power structures, this utopian, prophetic and hope-filled movement rejects do-goodism and palliative reforms in order to commit itself to the dominated social classes and to radical social change.

In contrast with the churches considered above, it rejects all static forms of thought. It accepts becoming, in order to *be*. Because it thinks critically this prophetic church cannot think of itself as neutral. Nor does it try to hide its choice. Therefore it does not separate worldliness from transcendence or salvation from liberation. It knows that what finally counts is not the "I am" or the "I know"; the "I free myself" or the "I save myself"; nor even the "I teach you," "I free you," or "I save you," but the "we are," "we know," "we save ourselves."

This prophetic line can only be understood as an expression of the dramatic and challenging situation of Latin America. It emerges when the contradictions in Latin American society become apparent. It is at this moment, too, that revolution is seen as the means of liberation for the oppressed people, and the military coup as the reactionary counter-move.

Latin America's "prophetic" Christians may disagree among themselves, especially at the point of "action," but they are the ones who have renounced their innocence in order to join the oppressed classes, and who remain faithful to their commitment. Protestant or Catholic—from the point of view of this prophetic position the division is of no importance—clergy or lay, they have all had to travel a hard route of experience from their idealistic visions toward a dialectical vision of reality. They have learned, not only as a result of their praxis with the people, but also from the courageous example of many young people. They now see that reality, a process and not a static fact, is full of contradictions, and that social conflicts are not metaphysical categories but rather historical expressions of the confrontation of these contradictions. Any attempt, therefore, to solve conflict without touching the contradictions which have generated it only stifles the conflict and at the same time strengthens the ruling class.

The prophetic position demands a critical analysis of the social structures in which the conflict takes place. This means that it demands of its followers a knowledge of socio-political science, since this science cannot be neutral; this demands an ideological choice.

Such prophetic perspective does not represent an escape into a world of unattainable dreams. It demands a scientific knowledge of the world as it really is. For to denounce the present reality and announce its radical transformation into another reality capable of giving birth to new men and women, implies gaining through praxis a new knowledge of reality. The dominated classes must take part in this denunciation and annunciation. It cannot be done if they are left out of the picture. The prophetic position is not *petit bourgeois*. It is well aware that authentic action demands a permanent process which only reaches its maximal point when the dominated class, through praxis, also becomes prophetic, utopian and full of hope—in other words, revolutionary. A society in a state of permanent revolution cannot manage without a permanent prophetic vision. Without it, society stagnates and is no longer revolutionary.⁹

In the same way, no church can be really prophetic if it remains the “haven of the masses” or the agent of modernization and conservation. The prophetic church is no home for the oppressed, alienating them further by empty denunciations. On the contrary, it invites them to a new Exodus. Nor is the prophetic church one which chooses modernization and thereby does no more than stagnate. Christ was no conservative. The prophetic church, like Him, must move forward constantly, forever dying and forever being reborn. In order to be, it must always be in a state of *becoming*. The prophetic church must also accept an existence which is in dramatic tension between past and future, staying and going, speaking the Word and keeping silence, being and not being. There is no prophecy without risk.

This prophetic attitude, which emerges in the praxis of numerous Christians in the challenging historical situation of Latin America, is accompanied by a rich and very necessary theological reflection. The theology of so-called development gives way to the theology of liberation—a prophetic, utopian theology, full of hope. Little does it matter that this theology is not yet well systematized. Its content arises from the hopeless situation of dependent, exploited, invaded societies. It is stimulated by the need to rise above the contradictions which explain and produce that dependence. Since it is prophetic, this theology of liberation cannot attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable.

At this moment in history, theology cannot spend its time discussing “secularization” (which in the end is the modern form of “sacralization”¹⁰) or try to entertain us

with the “Death of God” discussion which in many ways reveals an a-critical tendency of complete adaptation by the “unidimensionalized and depoliticized man of the affluent societies” as Hugo Assmann says in an excellent book published recently.¹¹

To digress a moment from our specific subject, we should add here that this prophetic attitude towards the world and history is by no means exclusive to Latin America or other areas of the Third World. It is not an exotic attitude peculiar to “underdevelopment”—firstly because the original Christian position is itself prophetic, at whatever point in time and place. Only the particular content of its witness will vary, according to the precise historical circumstances. Moreover, the concept of the Third World is ideological and political, not geographic. The so-called “First World” has within it and against it its own “Third World.” And the Third World has its First World, represented by the ideology of domination and the power of the ruling classes. The Third World is in the last analysis the world of silence, of oppression, of dependence, of exploitation, of the violence exercised by the ruling classes on the oppressed.

Europeans and North Americans, with their technological societies, have no need to go to Latin America in order to become prophetic. They need only go to the outskirts of their big cities, without “naivete” or “shrewdness,” and there they will find sufficient stimulus to do some fresh thinking for themselves. They will find themselves confronted with various expressions of the Third World. They can begin to understand the concern which gives rise to the prophetic position in Latin America.

Thus it is clear that the educational role of the prophetic church in Latin America must be totally different from that of the other churches we have discussed. Education must be an instrument of transforming action, as a political praxis at the service of permanent human liberation. This, let us repeat, does not happen only in the consciousness of people, but presupposes a radical change of structures, in which process consciousness will itself be transformed.

From the prophetic point of view, it makes little difference in what specific area education happens, it will always be an effort to clarify the concrete context in which the teacher-students and student-teachers are educated and are united by their presence in action. It will always be a demythologizing praxis. . . .

9. A prophetic vision need not be the result of a religious position.

10. There are no societies more “sacral” than those which are bourgeois. They react viciously to the slightest attempt to disrupt patterns which they consider universal, eternal and perfect.

11. *Opresion-Liberacion: Desafio a los Cristianos*, Montevideo, Tierra Nueva, 1971.

107. "Learning in Community," Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Vancouver, 1983

The Vancouver Assembly in 1983 was the first WCC assembly to give focused attention to the issue of education in church and in society. • Gathered for Life: Official Report of the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, ed. David Gill, Geneva, WCC, 1983, pp. 93-102.

I. Introduction

1. We have come from different backgrounds with a variety of experiences, hopes and frustrations in learning. We were prepared to learn from each other to find out how the Church may become a learning community. Therefore, we tried to understand ourselves as partners in a learning community and have had the following experiences of learning during our discussions.

2. We discovered various hindrances on the way to becoming a learning community, such as:

- language limitations which hindered full communication among us;
- different and even conflicting cultural, social and economic backgrounds which made it difficult to encounter each other in a trusting way;
- different theological approaches that sometimes led to misunderstandings and conflicts;
- under time pressure, we discovered painfully that learning in community requires much time, patience, and readiness to listen to one another.

3. At the same time we became convinced not only by our issue group experience, but also in the whole Assembly process that:

- through the willingness to assist one another, we can overcome language barriers;
- through the readiness to share frankly our differing positions, concepts and experiences, we can create openness for trust, and thus learn from one another;

- the fellowship among churches is both a challenge and an enrichment, and is therefore an indispensable prerequisite for learning in community.

4. Both the painful and the positive experiences have answered to a large extent our initial question: "Which kind of community do we seek?" They also helped us to discover and reflect on future goals of learning in community—like the following:

- to help each other to believe in Jesus Christ as the source of life and to grow in faith as Christian persons;
- to discover together that God has given us *one world*;
- to participate in the struggle for global justice and peace;
- to participate in communities of prophetic witness;
- to relate our local struggles to global perspectives.

5. This is the overarching vision we see for the future of the ecumenical movement as a fellowship of learning. It was discussed and expressed in our Issue Group in six major sections: family education, liturgical education, congregational education, formal education, theological education and development education. In each and all of these areas the phrase "learning in community" implies for Christians that it is both a personal and communal process, that both method and message are important, that full participation of all affected is crucial, that in various ways all participants are both teachers and learners, that an important goal of learning is the creation of a richer and more inclusive human community, and that community of whatever size does not just happen but must be struggled for in the power of the Holy Spirit and according to the criteria of the Gospel image of the kingdom.

II. Six Aspects of the Issue

Family education

6. Family education is considered as a process through which the church enables members of a home to take the responsibility to live according to their faith in Church and society. Family education is an essential part of congregational education. On the one hand we must clearly see that following Christ means transcending the confines of one's own family. On the other hand sisterhood and brotherhood in a local congregation or in the Church as a whole can be experienced as life in the family of God. Family, local congregations, and the whole Church inter-relate. The congregation acts as extended family to the home-based

family and the community acts as the extended family to the congregation in an inter-relationship expressing the “oikoumene.”

In some respects, family education may be considered as a special instrument in the Church’s ministry with families. But there is also a learning through families: families can show how Christians should live and how the Church’s ministry as a whole should be fulfilled. Therefore, instead of speaking of the education of the family, it is more appropriate to speak of learning in community with the family.

7. Our traditional image of family, however, no longer corresponds to the reality of family in some segments of today’s society. The fundamental responsibility of the Church is clear and not controversial, namely to support the complete family consisting of parents, united in marriage and faithful to each other, learning together with their children. At the same time the Church must recognize the social reality of other forms of family life, e.g. singleparent families, one-parent families, and separated families. It also needs to examine new concepts of “mothering,” “fathering,” personal relationships and parenting.

8. Christian education in the parish should be family-oriented and also oriented towards learning between the generations and different groups. In view of the increasing separation from each other of seniors, adults, men, women, youth, children and disabled, intergenerational learning activities in the Church should contribute to stronger family unity. In all places, but especially where there is major adult illiteracy, church programmes of family education should incorporate drama, art, crafts, audio-visuals, etc.

Liturgical education

9. It is through liturgy that the worshipping community expresses itself. Liturgy carries in itself the dimension of learning in community. Liturgical learning includes the following elements:

- the experience of God’s presence within the worshipping community;
- the revelation of Christ as a living reality transmitted through the proclamation of God’s word and received in the sacraments; and
- our response to God in repentance, offering, thanksgiving, praise and remembrance.

10. All of this is fulfilled in communion with God and expressed in a specific order and language. Such language

is not merely verbal but includes non-verbal expressions—signs, symbols, drama, rites and gestures.

11. The purpose of the liturgical life is:

- to rediscover and actualize the ongoing heritage of the Church as a Christian community which lives by the grace and under the judgment of God;
- to bring as an offering our present experience into the corporate life of the Church, offering it up to God on behalf of all; and
- to carry from the liturgy our common experience and vision of God into a life of service and witness in the world.

Congregational learning

12. The following elements of learning help persons to grow into community, into a congregation of God’s people:

- liturgical education as the spiritual centre of congregational learning;
- family education as the foundation for Christian life and growth;
- formal education as the necessary opportunity for reflection on religious experience throughout life.

13. From a theological perspective, we understand the congregation to be:

- based on the gospel of Jesus Christ with a deepening commitment to the demands of the kingdom and open to the liberating power of the Holy Spirit;
- grounded in tradition and sustained by worship, open to be renewed and transformed through active commitment in the world;
- engaged in living the faith, interpreting the gospel in new and different contexts, mutually supportive and open to the world, as sign and instrument of new forms of human relationships;
- a coming together of persons who are constantly being built up into the body of Christ;
- rooted in solidarity with the least of God’s children, ready to stand by their side, seeking to enable the participation of all: women and men, old and young, poor and rich, persons with disabilities, and those whose voice is not heard; and

- ready to deal with conflicts openly and to see them as an opportunity for learning in community.

14. Within such a community, congregational learning becomes ecumenical learning. It enables a unified Church to become an instrument for God's caring work in the world, i.e. to make the whole inhabited earth habitable for all creation.

Formal education

15. The churches, each in its own local situation, need to develop strategies for witnessing in the field of formal education, that is, in structured programmes of general education, whether of church or state.

16. In most of our schools the educational programmes and learning objectives are oriented to the progress of the individual within a framework of competition. Educational institutions sometimes divide rather than build up communities. But the task of schools is not to impose prejudices, a narrow vision or artificial divisions, but rather to develop global understanding. The churches should support communal learning and foster the attitude of sharing.

17. We need to make special provision for those who suffer from any kind of handicap or disadvantage, to ensure that they have equitable access to educational opportunities. Usually the school system of a nation has to serve national interests. But this does not always mean that the schools serve the people. In some parts of the world they are an instrument of the ruling social class. The churches should contribute to a school system that is administered and supported by all sections of the people and thus becomes a true public institution. Within such schools, teachers, students, and parents should jointly strive to grow into a community.

18. Education should combine a concern for persons, a concern for truth, and a concern for skills. A system of education which neglects any one of these is defective. Today churches have a special responsibility to see that concerns for justice, peace and ecological survival feature in the curriculum. In all educational institutions, the ethical implications of the issues of natural sciences and technological advance should be highlighted, if possible within theological perspectives, so that those who will bear responsibility in the respective fields will be able to orient their work towards the purpose of a just, peaceful and meaningful human life.

19. While recognizing that the existence of church-related schools is itself a Christian witness, we believe that the churches need to give attention to nurturing the Christian presence in secular institutions as well. This means that priority should be given to teacher training, development of curricula, and, where possible, the training of school chaplains.

Theological education

20. Theological education is a process of learning which belongs to the whole people of God. It is more than the development of ministerial skills or the gaining of theological knowledge by individuals. Theological education involves the transformation of concepts and people for faithful leadership. In this context, theology is understood as a reflection on faith in God as human response to the given truth. This reflection includes issues of life-style and decisionmaking, equipping people for action in society, as well as the relationship with God and persons.

21. Theology and theological education are always to be understood in the cultural, social, spiritual, political and other contextual realities of society. Theological education therefore is called to address the particular problems and opportunities of local and regional community, against a background of wider global awareness.

22. In addition, theological education must deal with the relationships between action and reflection, experience and tradition, the personal and the corporate, the local and the global. Theological learning includes spiritual development and ecumenical understanding, towards the goal of a new human community. However, there is a need for fresh curricula and appropriate criteria for the evaluation of learners, which should be consistent with wider and fuller participation in human community (*oikoumene*).

Development education

23. Development education has to be an essential dimension in all programmes and activities of the churches and the WCC. It varies in content, shape and methods according to the cultural and economic context of the developed or developing regions of the world. In its substance, however, it must everywhere enable the churches to take the side of the poor. The growing poverty in both North and South makes this undertaking more urgent today than at the time since the Council's Development Education Programme was first started.

24. Significant activities in the field of development education point towards new models of learning through

the whole of the community, through participation and especially by sharing in the struggles of those who suffer from the injustices within our societies. Such injustices often prevent many children, youth and adults from receiving any education. Churches should help provide ways of informal education and training besides the formal educational institutions. Development education opens the door for our credible witness to Jesus Christ as the life of the world. Development education must find ways to engage the peoples of North and South, and East and West, in fruitful interchange.

25. As an international and ecumenical group, however, we discovered that the term development education sometimes creates misunderstandings and inhibits communication and collaboration. The churches as well as the WCC, therefore, may wish to consider a change of name from “development education” to “education for justice and peace.”

108. Werner Simpfendörfer, “Five Suggestions for Ecumenical Learning,” 1984

At the time of this essay, Simpfendörfer was general secretary of the Ecumenical Association of Academies and Laity Centres in Europe. Lay academies, as they are known, have been an important tool for promoting ecumenical study. • The Ecumenical Review, vol. 36, no. 1, 1984, pp. 58-60.

1. Ecumenical learning is a process in which people discover that God in Christ has given us not a first, a second, or a third world, but *one world*. He has promised this *one world* a common future. To discover, unveil and put into practice this common future is the task of ecumenical learning. Such learning is a process of discovery. It involves the departure from my father’s house, an exodus from my homeland, taking the risk of unexpected brotherhood and sisterhood. Such faith journeys of discovery cannot be prescribed by any authority, prefabricated in curricula or brought about through papers or documents. They have to come about in communities and groups which choose, define and determine themselves goals, methods, instruments, and speed of their common learning. The unforeseen, and even chaos, are normal factors in this journey

because the *one world* looks different from different angles. Ecumenical learning is also always linked with acts of transgression, because borders which normally exist and are respected by the so-called normal people are being crossed.

2. Ecumenical learning happens where we participate in the painful struggle of Christ for his *one world*. According to the letter to the Hebrews *he learned what he suffered*, and there is no other way for us to learn ecumenically than through participation in the struggle of people to become people. Ecumenical learning, therefore, cannot take place apart from that struggle, in academic ivory towers, in isolated suburban churches, in degree-oriented school systems or inward-looking retreat centres. It is first and foremost a call to follow the footsteps of the suffering Christ, involving ourselves in the struggle against those principalities and powers which distort lives, destroy creation and rob people of the fullness of life. For us in the West this means above all conversion from the misuse of power to sharing and solidarity within the *one world*. It means taking up the fight against the forces that are bent on dividing the *one world* into a first, second, and third world. It means to open ourselves to the challenge of changing our life-style, individually and corporately, an act which necessarily will bring us into conflict with the ruling powers who want us to be system-integrated consumers.

3. Ecumenical learning happens when we *link local experience with global concerns*. Local ecumenical experiences in community are needed before papers, documents and teaching can help us to understand and reflect. The risk of local ecumenical action has to be taken which relates my local conflict with global perspectives before relevant reflection can determine the further course. That is why I believe that the WCC must give up its heavy paper orientation in favour of a covenant with a human face. The primary task for the next years seems to me the development and deepening of the ecumenical team visits. This face-to-face, people-to-people, congregation-to-congregation encounter must not stop on the personal or analytical level, but must move into the common discovery of our common loyalty to Christ and what follows from that in the area of sharing and joint action. The basic educational effect of these encounters is that we begin to see the world and ourselves with the eyes of others and can constantly relate our prayers and our actions to the common commitment to Christ’s *one world*.

4. Ecumenical learning requires *biblically inspired groups or communities for prophetic witness*. It is not an end in itself, but should lead to local witness with a global perspective. This requires groups and communities that are holistic in their composition and in their concerns. By their comprehensive composition they should be able to

see connection and convergence of issues, e.g. between justice, peace and creation, or between hunger, affluence and the arms race. Moreover, such groups will have to learn to handle conflicts in a creative way and to take differences in outlook or practice seriously. This takes time and patience. Ecumenical learning is a process over the long haul. It involves staying together through conflicts, respecting minorities and trying to come to common decisions.

Whether or not such groups or communities are “the church” will be decided by the faithfulness of their prophetic witness and their capacity to read the signs of the times and to speak up accordingly. For me the peace movement in various countries and parts of the world is a living example of that type of prophetic community. Women’s movements or ecological movements are of a similar quality.

5. Ecumenical learning requires a *worldwide network of centres designed to foster primary ecumenical experience*. In most parts of the world such centres exist already. In order for these centres to function effectively three conditions must be met:

- there must be Christians of all ages, regardless of sex, belief and position, who are willing to take the risk and leap over the wall of narrowness and prejudice;
- there must be staff persons who are prepared and trained to allow ecumenical groups share their experiences, establish linkages, appreciate different concepts of the church, yet celebrating the one world;
- there must be churches and church leaders who are willing for their members to be involved in genuine ecumenical experiences, and who do not fear their critical outlook towards the institutional church.

May a thousand “Bossey Institutes” blossom for the long haul towards the *one* world in which peace and justice prevail as fruits of ecumenical learning!

109. “Ecumenical Formation,” Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, 1993

The Joint Working Group is the official consultative forum of the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church. It has produced studies on such topics as “Common Witness and Proselytism” (see Chapter V) and “The Church: Local and Universal,” as well as “Ecumenical Formation.” • “Ecumenical Formation: Ecumenical Reflections and Suggestions: a study document of the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches,” n.p., 1993, pp. 6-10.

II. Ecumenical Formation: What Is Meant by It?

9. That for long periods we have been disobedient to the ecumenical imperative is a reminder that the spirit of ecumenism needs nurturing. Ecumenical formation is an ongoing process of learning within the various local churches and world communions, aimed at informing and guiding people in the movement which—inspired by the Holy Spirit—seeks the visible unity of Christians.

This pilgrimage towards unity enables mutual sharing and mutual critique through which we grow. Such an approach to unity thus involves at once rootedness in Christ and in one’s tradition, while endeavouring to discover and participate in the richness of other Christian and human traditions.

A process of exploration

10. Such a response to the ecumenical imperative demands patient, humble and persistent exploration, together with people of other traditions, of the pain of our situation of separation, taking us to both the depths of our divisions and the heights of our already existing unity in the Triune God, and of the unity we hope to attain. Thus ecumenical formation is also a process of education by which we seek to orient ourselves towards God, all Christians and indeed all human beings in a spirit of renewed faithfulness to our Christian mission.

A process of learning

11. As a process of learning, ecumenical formation is concerned with engaging the experience, knowledge, skills,

talents and the religious memory of the Christian community for mutual enrichment and reconciliation. The process may be initiated through formal courses on the history and main issues of ecumenism as well as be integrated into the curriculum at every level of the education in which the church is involved. Ecumenical formation is meant to help set the tone and perspective of every instruction and, therefore, may demand a change in the orientation of our educational institutions, systems and curricula.

12. The language of formation and learning refers to some degree to a body of knowledge to be absorbed. That is important; but formation and learning require a certain bold openness to living ecumenically as well. In 1952 the fourth Faith and Order conference took place in Lund, Sweden. The statement that came from it may be read as a representative text: "A faith in the one church of Christ which is not implemented by acts of obedience is dead. There are truths about the nature of God and his church which will remain forever closed to us unless we act together in obedience to the unity which is already ours. We would, therefore, earnestly request our churches to consider whether they are doing all they ought to do to manifest the oneness of the people of God. Should not our churches ask themselves whether they are showing sufficient eagerness to enter into conversation with other churches and whether they should not act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately? . . . Obedience to God demands also that the churches seek unity in their mission to the world."

A process for all

13. Thus in pursuit of the goal of Christian unity, ecumenical formation takes place not only in formal educational programmes but also in the daily life of the church and people. While the formation of the whole people of God is desired, indeed is a necessity, we also insist on the strategic importance of giving priority to the ecumenical formation of those who have special responsibility for ministry and leadership in the churches. To that extent, theologians, pastors, and others who bear responsibility in the church, have both a particular need and responsibility for ecumenical formation.

14. The ecumenical formation of those with particular responsibility for forming and animating future church leaders could involve the study of ecumenical history and documents resulting from the ongoing bilateral and multilateral dialogues. In addition, ecumenical gatherings and organizations, particularly of scholars, can provide a useful climate for it. Exchange visits among seminary students in the course of their training may also help this process of

deepening the appreciation of other traditions as well as their own.

An expression of ecumenical spirituality

15. It follows from the ecumenical imperative that the process of formation in ecumenism has to be undergirded by, and should indeed be an expression of, ecumenical spirituality. It is spiritual in the sense that it should be open to the prayer of Jesus for unity and to the promptings of the Holy Spirit who reconciles and binds all Christians together. It is spiritual in yet another sense of leading to repentance for the past disobedience to the ecumenical imperative, which disobedience was manifested as contentiousness and hostility among Christians at every level. Having ecumenical spirituality in common prayer and other forms as the underpinning of ecumenical formation invites all to conversion and change of heart which is the very soul of the work for restoring unity.

Furthermore, it is spiritual in the sense of seeking a renewed life-style which is characterized by sacrificial love, compassion, patience with one another and tolerance. The search for such life-style may include exposing students to the spiritual texts, prayers and songs of other churches with the goal and hope that such familiarity will contribute towards effecting change of heart and attitude towards others, which itself is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Such efforts will help deepen mutual trust, making it possible to learn together the positive aspects of each other's tradition, and thus live constructively with the awareness of the reality and pain of divisions.

16. Ecumenical formation is part of the process of building community in the one household of God which must be built on trust, centred on Jesus Christ the Lord and Saviour. This demands a spirituality of trust which, among other things, helps to overcome the fear to be exposed to different traditions, for the sake of Christ.

III. Ecumenical Formation: How to Realize It?

Pedagogy built on communion

17. The renewed emphasis on understanding the church as communion, like the image of the church as the body of Christ, implies differentiation within the one body which has nevertheless been created for unity. Thus the very dynamic of ecumenism is relational in character. We respond in faith and hope to God who relates to us first. God relates to us in love, commanding us to love one another (Mark 12:29-31). This response ought to be "wholehearted." Therefore, in order to help Christians to respond wholeheartedly to the ecumenical imperative, we must seek ways to relate the prayer of Jesus (John 17:20-24)

to all our hearts and minds, to the affective as well as to the cognitive dimensions in them. Christians must be helped to understand that to love Jesus necessarily means to love everything Jesus prayed, lived, died and was raised for, namely “to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad” (John 11:52), the unity of his disciples as an effective sign of the unity of all peoples.

18. The *koinonia* or communion as the basic understanding of the church demands attempting to develop common ecumenical perspectives on ecclesiology. Unity is not uniformity but a communion of rich diversity. Therefore, it is necessary to explore with others the limits of legitimate diversity. In this regard special cognizance must also be taken of the religious and socio-cultural context in which the process of ecumenical formation takes place. Where there is a predominant majority church, ecumenical sensitivity is all the more required.

Going out to each and every one

19. The effectiveness of Christian unity in the midst of a broken world ultimately depends on the work of God’s Spirit who wishes each one of us to participate. God speaks to us today the words which were addressed to Adam and Eve, “where are you” (Gen. 3:9), as also the words to Cain, “where is your brother . . . ?” (Gen. 4:9). All Christians should become aware, and make each other aware, of who and where their sisters and brothers are and where they stand in regard to them, whether near or far (Eph. 2:17). They should be helped to go out to meet them, to get involved with them. Involvement and participation in the whole ecumenical formation process is crucial.

20. In a Christian response to God and the ecumenical imperative which comes from God, there is no such thing as “the few for the many.” The response to the prayer of Jesus must be the response of each and every one. Therefore, the growth into an ecumenical mind and heart is essential for each and for all, and the introduction of, and care for, ecumenical formation are absolutely necessary at every level of the church community, church life, action and activities; at all educational levels (schools, colleges, universities; theological schools, seminaries, religious/monastic communities, pastoral and lay formation centres; Sunday liturgies, homilies and catechesis).

Commitment to learning in community

21. While ecumenical formation must be an essential feature in every curriculum in theological training, care must be taken that it does not become something intended for individuals only. There must be commitment of learning in community. This has several components: (a) learning about, from and with others of different traditions; (b)

praying for Christian unity, and wherever and whenever possible, together, as well as praying for one another; (c) offering common Christian witness by acting together; and (d) struggling together with the pain of our divisions. In this regard the participation of different institutions for theological education in common programmes of formation is to be encouraged. Working ecumenically in joint projects becomes another important aspect of ecumenical formation. The reason for such joint action must always be related to the search for Christian unity.

22. Seeking a renewed commitment for ecumenical formation does not imply to gloss over existing differences and to deny the specific profiles of our respective ecclesial traditions. But it may involve a common re-reading of our histories and especially of those events that led to divisions among Christians. It is not enough to regret that our histories have been tainted through the polemics of the past; ecumenical formation must endeavour to eliminate polemic and to further mutual understanding, reconciliation and the healing of memories. No longer shall we be strangers to one another but members of the one household of God (Eph. 2:19).

Open to other religions

23. In this world, people are also divided along religious lines. Thus ecumenical formation must also address the matter of religious plurality and secularism, and inform about inter-religious dialogue which aims at deeper mutual understanding in the search for world community. It must be clear however that inter-religious dialogue—with other world religions such as Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc.—has goals that are specifically different from the goals of ecumenical dialogue among Christians. In giving serious attention to this important activity, Christians must carefully distinguish it from ecumenical dialogue.

24. That spirit of tolerance and dialogue must get to the pews and market places where people feel the strains of the different heritages which encounter each other. The faith that God is the Creator and Sustainer of all also requires Christians to do everything in their power to promote the cause of freedom, human rights, justice and peace everywhere, and thus actively to contribute to a renewed movement towards human solidarity in obedience to God’s will.

Using the instruments of communication

25. In today’s search for unity there is a relatively new factor which must be taken seriously—the scientific technological advances, particularly the communications revolution. The world has become a global village in which peoples, cultures and religions, and Christian denominations which

were once far off are now next door one to another. The sense of the “other” is being pressed on us and we need to relate to one another for mutual survival and peace. Thus the possibilities of mass communication can be an asset for communicating the ecumenical spirit.

The media can be an extremely important resource for ecumenical formation, and the many possibilities which they offer to promote the ecumenical formation process should be made use of. However, the world of the media has its own logic and values; it is not an unambivalent resource. Critical caution must, therefore, be exercised in availing ourselves of the media for the ecumenical task.

Conclusion: Ecumenical formation and common witness

26. Ecumenism is not an option for the churches. In obedience to Christ and for the sake of the world the churches are called to be an effective sign of God’s presence and compassion before all the nations. For the churches to come divided to a broken world is to undermine their credibility when they claim to have a ministry of universal unity and reconciliation. The ecumenical imperative must be heard and responded to everywhere. This response necessarily requires ecumenical formation which will help the people of God to render a common witness to all humankind by pointing to the vision of the new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21:1).

110. “Ecumenical Formation in Theological Education in the 21st Century: Ten Key Convictions,” World Council of Churches Programme on Ecumenical Theological Education, 2008.

This text, billed as a Magna Carta of ecumenical formation in theological education, was developed by the WCC as part of the fiftieth anniversary celebration of the Council’s Programme on Theological Education. • Ministerial Formation, 110, April 2008, pp. 82-88.

1. Ecumenism as an Urgent Need in Theological Education

The basis of the WCC affirms: “The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” In the constitution of WCC the concern for ecumenical theological education therefore receives a high priority: It is defined as one of the primary purposes and functions of the WCC to “nurture the growth of an ecumenical consciousness through processes of education and a vision of life in community rooted in each particular cultural context” (WCC constitution, par. III). The ecumenical movement from its very beginning and even before the founding of the WCC in 1948 had a profound impact on the understanding of Christian education in general and ministerial formation for future ministers and priests in particular. If the ecumenical movement as a whole is about strengthening common witness and promoting new forms of the visible unity between churches of different denominational and confessional traditions, then the scandal of churches remaining in disunity and using distorted images of sister churches in one’s own educational materials and publications needs to be overcome with foremost priority in the area of theological education and ministerial formation. The strengthening and pursuit of church unity in theological education is a Gospel imperative for any church joining in the affirmation of the church as being “one, holy, catholic and apostolic” in its essence (The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed [381]).

The emergence of interdenominational or non-denominational institutions of theological education in the 50’s and 60’s, which was intentionally supported by the Theological Education Fund (TEF) of the IMC, as well as the introduction of distinct courses and curriculum models on ecumenism and the ecumenical movement was a consequence of this ecclesiological insight. The emphasis on interdenominational cooperation in theological education as well as the development of proper teaching materials on ecumenism remains an indispensable and in many places still lacking component of the theological education of pastors and ministers. There is no future for the ecumenical movement as a whole if there is no commitment to ecumenical formation processes in formal and non-formal theological education programmes of WCC member churches. If theological education fails to be guided by an ecumenical vision of a church renewed in mission and service to the whole of humankind, there will be a serious shortage in terms of a new generation of Christian leaders, pastors and theological teachers carrying on the ecumenical

vision and commitment into the 21st century and a widening gap and estrangement between the majority clergy and ever fewer experts on the ecumenical movement and ecumenical theological discourse which can already be observed in a number of member churches.

2. Contextualization of Theological Education

Ecumenical formation in theological education is guided by the vision of the church truly united and serving the renewal of the human community. Therefore, ecumenical formation reaches beyond the realm of issues of inner church unity in addressing fundamental questions of the human family and the survival of the whole earth. Being inspired by the ecumenical vision of God as the owner of the whole earth (*oikumene*) as well as the eschatological vision of a new heaven and a new earth, theological education in ecumenical understanding will always try to respond to the pressing needs of social contexts and to be related to issues of human survival both in global and in local environments. Relating theological education to the realities of particular social and cultural contexts—liberating theological education from any captivity of certain social milieus, cultural one-sidedness and spiritual blindness to religious values existing in certain indigenous traditions—has been a major emphasis of the WCC in the programme on theological education (PTE) since the 60's. [This programme is now called Ecumenical Theological Education or ETE.] The demand for contextualization of theological education in terms of opening its agenda to the realities and challenges of different church contexts, cultural identities and living situations, both in the global South as well as in churches in the West facing consequences of globalization and pluralization of life-styles and religious orientations in their own midst, remains an ongoing task for theological education worldwide. Some of the areas in which contextualization of curriculum designs were most prominent and successful for ETE in recent past was the development of HIV/AIDS curriculum and doing theology from disability perspective.

3. Theological Education for the Whole People of God

Ecumenical formation in theological education, since the rediscovery of the importance of the laity and their missionary role in church and society (Evanston Assembly 1954), is also guided by the rediscovery of the comprehensive character of the ministry of the whole people of God, to which all are called who have received baptism. Ministerial formation in the ecumenical debate on theological education since the 70's has been understood as a particular

expression and a specific part of the more comprehensive task of equipping the whole people of God for the multiple forms of ministries of and in the Christian community. New forms of lay theological formation, non-residential forms of theological education both for lay people as well as for future ministers, have been a fundamental contribution to broadening theological education for the whole people of God which is an essential demand for a holistic and participatory understanding of the mission of the church as a body of Christ. What has changed theological education most dramatically in the past decades is also the growing participation of women in teaching, research and theological networking in many regions of the world. Feminist and womanist theological networks, the deepening of feminist hermeneutics as well as the promotion of women in leadership positions of theological teaching and research is an indispensable part of ecumenical formation in theological education today. How to support women in theological education and theological research and how to maintain a proper balance between lay formation programmes and ministerial formation programmes (and to secure sufficient interaction between both) remain two major concerns in the work towards theological education for the whole people of God. Talking about theological education for the whole people of God in recent years also involves inventing and strengthening new models of academic ecumenical theological training for migrants and churches with migration background (for instance African churches in Europe), since often established systems of theological education cannot easily adapt to their needs.

4. Interfaith Dialogue in Theological Education

Ecumenical formation in theological education is guided by a vision of sharing and mutual discoveries reaching beyond the realm of Christianity to the human community in the whole inhabited earth (*oikumene*), and taking into account the challenges of Christians living in close neighbourhoods and experiencing mutual sharing and solidarity with people of other faith traditions in many church contexts. Thus interfaith encounter and learning about what can be affirmed in common action for peace, justice and human dignity with people of other living faith traditions is an integral component of ecumenical formation which is not endangering one's own Christian identity but rather deepening it in processes of communication and sharing with people of different faiths. With the recent Letter of some 140 Muslim Leaders ("A Common Word between Us and You") to Leaders of Christian Churches around the world at the feast of Eid al-Fitr al-Mubarak 2007, which marks the end of Ramadan, and the answer from WCC,

this whole dimension again becomes an urgent priority for institutions of theological education.

5. Spiritual Formation in Theological Education

Very often ecumenical formation processes have been described as having a profound spiritual basis and character referring back to the very biblical understanding of the church as learning community. “Learning in the Bible is a process by which people relate to God and God’s way of truth, righteousness and peace, that they may in obedience practice that way in relation to each other and extending to the nations. . . . Learning does not simply mean acquiring knowledge or skills, or being intellectually equipped, or just memorizing some catechism of faith. Rather it means so entering with our whole being and with all the people into a relationship with God through God’s self-revelation, that our horizons are widened and our wills are strengthened to be right with God and with one another in word and deed” (Philip Potter, Vancouver Assembly, 1983). If ecumenical formation is about becoming open and responsive to the will of God in the whole of our own existence, ecumenical formation is not just a cheap way of adding some additional pieces of information to the theological curriculum, but involves a certain aspect of deep and spiritual conversion and metanoia in the understanding of both one’s own Christian existence as well as one’s own confessional identity. It is a conversion from denominational self-centredness and cultural captivities to the realities of God’s mission in the whole of the inhabited earth. “Having ecumenical spirituality in common prayer and other forms as the underpinning of ecumenical formation invites all to conversion and change of heart which is the very soul of the work for restoring unity” (“Ecumenical Formation,” a study document of the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC, 1993).

6. Ecumenical Formation as Informed Participation in the Ecumenical Movement

There is a certain methodological principle at work in the understanding of ecumenical formation which is due to the appropriation and integration of much of the didactical and catechetical revolutions and fundamental paradigm changes occurring in the “pedagogy of the oppressed,” methods of conscientization and the methods of learning by involvement in common action which have come up strongly in the ecumenical debate of learning during the 70’s and 80’s. Already in the first statement of the WCC in 1957 on ecumenical education, the emphasis was put on concrete practical involvement as a priority of proper

ecumenical learning: “Ecumenical education can no longer be limited to the history of attempts to reunite churches or the growth of ecumenical organizations. Ecumenical education essentially means fostering understanding of, commitment to and informed participation in this whole ecumenical process” (Central Committee, 1957). Ecumenical formation is not possible without a didactical and pedagogical approach which fosters practical involvement in local, regional and global projects of ecumenical cooperation and human struggles for dignity, reconciliation and social justice. What in certain areas is referred to as “globalization in theological education” (though this term is not without ambivalence) can be understood in terms of equipping future ministers, church workers and lay people for informed and theologically-reflective participation in the global ecumenical movement by deepening their formation in intercultural theology, ecumenical biblical hermeneutics, interreligious dialogue, history of ecumenism, ecumenical missiology and ecumenical social ethics, while at the same time remaining faithful to their own contextual demands for relating the Gospel to a given culture and situation.

7. Major Goals and Principles of Ecumenical Formation

From these six fundamental dimensions of ecumenical formation stem several key principles for ecumenical learning, spelled out in the 1989 WCC document, “Alive Together—A Practical Guide to Ecumenical Learning”:

- a) Ecumenical learning enables people, while remaining rooted in one tradition of the church, to become open and responsive to the richness and perspectives of other churches, so that they may become more active in seeking unity, openness and collaboration between churches.
- b) Ecumenical learning enables people of one country, language, ethnic group, class or political and economic system, to become sensitive and responsive to those of other countries, ethnic groups, political and economic situations, so that they may become active participants in action for a more just world.
- c) Ecumenical learning is what happens when diverse persons, rooted in their own faith traditions and complex experiences of culture, gender, nationality, race, class etc. become open and responsive to the richness of perspectives in the struggle of others, together seeking to know God and to be faithful to God’s intention for them in their world.

d) Ecumenical learning is a process by which

- diverse groups and individuals
- well rooted in their own faith, traditions, cultures and contexts,
- are enabled to risk honest encounters with one another before God,
- as they study and struggle together in community,
- with personally relevant issues,
- in the light of the Scriptures, the traditions of their faith, worship and global realities,
- resulting in communal action in faithfulness to God's intention for the unity of the church and humankind, and for justice, peace and integrity of creation.

Or, to recall a formulation which was used during the Vancouver Assembly in 1983: Ecumenical learning, both in theological education as well as in Christian education as whole, is characterized by the following essential marks:

- a) it *transcends barriers* of origin and biography, individual as well as community limitations, because it responds to the exhortation of the word of God and the far-reaching horizons of God's promise;
- b) it is *action-oriented*, not satisfied with information but seeking to enable Christians to act in order to learn, to be right with God and with one another, in word and deed;
- c) it is *done in community*, in which people are asked to establish relationships with one another and also with those who are far away and with what is unfamiliar;
- d) it means *learning together*, detecting the global in the local, the unfamiliar in the context of one's own environment, in order to become aware of one's own limited horizons and implications;
- e) it is *inter-cultural*, promoting the encounter of different cultures, traditions and forms of life because only a widening of perspectives will bring about experiences of the riches in creation in nature, in history and culture;
- f) it is a *total process*, social and religious learning are not separated from each other but constitute a unity.

8. Theological Competence Redefined for an Ecumenical Age of Global Christianity

This can be summarized: theological education of the church as a whole cannot be complete without unfolding itself and being directed towards equipping a future generation of both ordained and non-ordained partakers of the manifold ministries of the church with

- a) a *pastoral competence* which is about enabling and building up individuals as well as Christian communities so as to become living witnesses of the life-giving power of the Gospel and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in word, liturgy and sacrament;
- b) a *competence of leadership* which empowers rather than controls the manifold gifts of a given Christian community and helps to enable, equip and discern these gifts and charismata for the benefit of both the upbuilding the local congregation (*oikodome*) as well as peace and justice for the whole of the human community;
- c) a *theological competence* which is about the ability to give a voice to the spiritual experiences of a Christian community, interpreting both biblical and church tradition in ways meaningful to contemporaries and to relate the faith insights of a local community to the treasures and challenges of the church universal and the contemporary discourse in culture and society;
- d) a *missionary competence* which is about the ability to discern and to give shape to the demands and promises of the Gospel in relation to the missionary and evangelizing vocation of the church and the longing for healing and wholeness, peace and reconciliation in the human community;
- e) an *ecumenical competence* which while including the other dimensions emphasizes particularly that no church can be the church for itself alone and each church is becoming truly the church in the full sense of the word if and so far it is related to the fellowship of Christian churches truly united both locally and globally in prayer, witness and service. This means that theological education is taking seriously the basic nature of both the catholicity and apostolicity, oneness and holiness of the church universal.

In essence, what is at stake therefore in ecumenical formation in theological education today is nothing less than rediscovering and adjusting to the truly global and ecumenical nature of the church, existing within the manifold forms of global Christianity which has become a new reality only after the gradual shift of centre of gravity from the North to the South and meanwhile presents itself as a multi-centered global Christianity of the South or the “two-thirds-world.” For most of the past centuries of the history of Christianity, theological reflection, interpretation of Christian tradition and the perception of cultures and living conditions in the “peripheries” was heavily influenced and carried out from the viewpoint of one or several dominating centres of global Christianity (Jerusalem in the first century, Rome up to the fourth century and much beyond, Western Christianity over against Eastern Christianity in the Middle Ages, North Atlantic Christianity over against Christianity in the South for some 200-300 years during colonial expansion and domination). While dominance and cultural and economic ethnocentrism are still continuing with regard to American and/or Western culture and life-styles at many levels in theology and theological education, global Christianity of the South for the last 30 years or so (comp. the role of the Bangkok world mission conference in the ecumenical debate on mission 1974) has entered into a stage in which a truly multi-centered understanding of Christianity has emerged and an unprecedented genuine plurality of Christian of interpretations has been developed and is promoted. Ecumenical formation (or globalization in theological education) is the unfinished theological and didactical process by which churches worldwide are aligning and opening up themselves to the realities of a truly multi-centered and multi-faceted global Christianity in the 21st century thereby challenging any attitude, hidden prejudices or overt practices of cultural, theological and interpretative domination by any assumed majority culture within global Christianity. This means that ecumenical formation is about reappropriating the ecumenical nature of the church as confessed in the creed (one, holy, catholic and apostolic) though under new and unprecedented historical conditions.

9. New Challenges for Ecumenical Formation in the Beginning of the 21st Century

In the beginning of the 21st century we find ourselves in a new historical situation where we both need a fresh articulation of the ecumenical vision (which has lost some of its momentum and support in the local levels) as well as a significant and relevant new commitment for ecumenical education and formation in the member churches of WCC as a whole if the ecumenical movement is to remain a vital

force of renewal and conversion in global Christianity. The new situation is particularly marked by the fact that the rapid globalization of markets, media and technologies has given rise to counter-reactions in terms of different forms of growing fundamentalism affirming exclusive and closed national, ethnic, cultural and religious identities. These factors of increased fragmentation and fundamentalist trends in the midst of globalization oblige us to renew and rethink our commitment to ecumenical formation as an urgent necessity and priority for safeguarding the continuation of the ecumenical movement and ecumenical witness as a whole. To promote an ecumenical orientation in theological education is the only possible option to maintain an “alternative and ecumenically responsible vision of globalization” over against growing trends towards either withdrawing Christian faith from public responsibility and dialogue altogether (privatization), or turn to denominational provincialism and ecclesial self-centredness (confessionalization) or to seek refuge in religious fundamentalism (simplification) within the Christian family or in relation to other religions. Thus ecumenical formation is not only a “constitutive mark of the church being the church” (Vancouver 1983) but also an essential priority of new urgency at the beginning of the 21st century.

10. Costly Ecumenical Learning: Suggestions for Practical Implementation in Theological Education

There is no cheap way of adding ecumenical formation into existing schemes of theological education and curriculum plans. Rather, introducing ecumenical formation has a certain price as it can entail a reordering of priorities in theological education in terms of both contents, methods and working principles applied; but the costly way of integrating ecumenical formation is rewarded by a profound process of truly broadening and deepening theological education:

- a) powerful and dominant cultures as well as theological perceptions are called to give up their sense of control, allow for more inclusivity and processes of reorientation by minority cultures and theological perceptions which contribute to the holistic character of the body of Christ truly united;
- b) majority denominational traditions of a certain region are challenged to include proper presentations and truly participation of Christian minority traditions within their own context as well as from other contexts in their theological curriculum and theological teaching materials (handbooks);

- c) theological education institutions of one context and denominational background are challenged to develop long-term partnership and exchange programmes with theological education institutions from a different context and church background;
- d) students are challenged to learn at least one language different from their own native language and the dominant language of their context to be immersed and introduced into the challenges and dynamics of proper intercultural communication (for instance with immigrant cultures in their context);
- e) crossing cultural and denominational boundaries for a certain period within a certain period of one's own theological education programme becomes an obligatory component of any programme of theological education;
- f) participating in ecumenical stewardship and ecumenical sharing of financial resources for theological education worldwide in the context of grave and persistent inequalities in terms of financial means for theological education becomes a structural component for each theological colleges/faculty/university (either by giving scholarships to a college in another context or extending ecumenical journal subscriptions for other colleges, providing placements for international students and lectures in one's own college);
- g) ecumenism, intercultural theology and ecumenical missiology are both necessary dimensions and horizons within the classical five disciplines of theological science as well as deserve and demand for a distinct place and realm of study and research in the composition of theological faculties;
- h) individualism, voluntarism and one-sided denominationalism in college life are challenged by the deliberate introduction of ecumenical elements into the regular worship life of any given college (e.g. intercessions for other churches; statements of faith from other traditions; music and hymns from global Christianity);
- i) mutuality and reciprocity are supported in the partnership relations between colleges/faculties in one context to colleges/faculties of another context (in order to avoid one-sided dependency, one-directional giving mentalities; lack of respect and mutuality in processes of sharing between contexts of inequality);
- j) churches are challenged to strengthen their sense of responsibility and ownership for institutions of theological education as a vital source for their own renewal by accompanying theological education institutions properly, making provisions in church budgets for relevant and appropriate financial support for institutions of theological education, creating scholarship endowment funds particularly for Master and PhD programmes and embarking on proper regional development plans for the future of theological education.
- k) support and enhancement of bilateral and multi-lateral initiatives for the recognition and accreditation of institutions of theological education in the global South in other countries (both in the South as well as in the North) is an urgent task for mutual cooperation between associations of theological schools in WOCATI and beyond.

111. Paul Couturier, "Prayer and Christian Unity," 1944

Couturier, a French Roman Catholic priest, not only gave new energy to the week of prayer for Christian unity, he also founded the Groupe des Dombes, which brings together French Catholics and Protestants for common study and prayer. The following is taken from the fullest statement of his ecumenical theology. • Geoffrey Curtis, Paul Couturier and Unity in Christ, London, SCM, 1964, pp. 329-31, 339-42, 346-48, 351.

The prayer of Christ in St John 17, prototype of every prayer for Unity

"True prayer is a struggle with God, in which we are victorious through the victory of God" (Kierkegaard). And God wills this struggle. He wishes to give us a share in his work. He who is in us permits us through him to triumph over him. That is why the prayer of Christ after the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday, in which he asks his Father for the Unity of his Church, must find its echo in sorrow and constant supplication in the heart of every Christian. For what follower of Christ could refuse to see in his prayer for Unity the prototype of all prayer for Unity? It would be as blasphemous (the word is no exaggeration) to try to find another approach to prayer for Unity as to look for a

model for prayer in general other than that he left us, the "Our Father."

Letting Christ pray in us to his Father for Unity

St. Paul teaches us that no one can say the name of "Jesus" except by the Spirit of God. To say the name of "Jesus" is to express a prayer, a soaring, a lifting-up of the soul towards the Father, for the true utterance of this Name is an act, a "yes," human and poor, a poor "yes" from our human misery, for we are sinners!, but a "yes" which breaks forth from our human dignity, for we are free, sons of his Love. We are his living images! This "yes" can echo far within the unexplored regions of our spiritual being. It may be partial, or almost complete, without ever being able to reach true completeness. The more we implore God to strip us of ourselves, the more we enter into the divine surrender—"He that loses his life shall save it"—and the more able we become to hear Christ praying in us by his Spirit.

An ineffable change takes place by which our prayer is stripped to be re clothed in his prayer. In the attentive silence of our listening soul, our attachment to him is affirmed with our whole will, not only in our words, feeling and desires. The more we find ourselves in him, in whom we truly live, or he in us, in whom he truly lives, the more effectual does our prayer become, since it is he who prays in us, free from our burden of self. Such a state of mind is the work of God, gift of the divine generosity: it is a pearl of great price, bought at the royal price of renunciation. It sets us at the antipodes of inert passivity of the spirit; and vocal prayer, either private or public, will be permeated by this attitude, provided that it can be surrounded by deep silence, and have a certain deliberation of utterance.

An expression of this attitude, given as one example among many other possible ones

"Lord, under the intolerable weight of distress caused by the separations between Christians, my heart fails. I have confidence in thee, O Christ, who has overcome the world. It is the property of love to produce a blind confidence in the beloved. My confidence in thee is boundless, and rightly so, since thou art almighty.

"For my soul to draw near to thee, O God, it were better that she should walk unknowing rather than knowing, exchanging what is comprehensible and variable for the unvarying and incomprehensible which is thyself. My confidence in thee, O Christ, throws me into thy heart where I find thy prayer: 'Father, that they may be one, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me, Father, that they may be made perfect in one.' My sinner's prayer is thy prayer to thyself, and it is in thy prayer alone that I find peace. Then how will Unity come about? What obstacles

are to be overcome? It is thy work: my faith can only bid me pray with thee and in thee, that thy Unity may come, the unity which thou hast not ceased to desire, which thou dost continue to prepare, which thou wouldst have brought about long ago, if everyone—everyone, including myself—had been as crystal between that in the creation which wishes, through the Christian, to ascend to thee, and that which, by the same channel, desires to come down from thee to the world."

This is a simple and loyal way of prayer. It is a meeting-place where, by virtue of charity, the prayers for unity of all true sons of love, all true Christians, even though separated, may flow together into the heart of Christ. This manner of prayer does not, of course, erase, weaken or obscure in any way the many differences of doctrine which characterize our separations. Each one is fully conscious of this and recognizes it: thus each remains true to himself and sincere towards others. But this kind of prayer, with a great sweep of wings, rises above all differences, and makes it possible for us all to rest together in the heart of Christ. . . .

"No one has the right to pray that a Christian Church may be overthrown and that his own Church may reign supreme" (a true observation by Dr. Rosendal of Sweden)

We cannot but condemn the attitude of mind which can only see work for Unity as a military operation, to be described in military terms of conquest, victory, triumph, struggle, lines of defense, as though they were waging a war. Schism, persecution, tolerance, and indifference—all these are stages in the history of Christian Unity which are now in the past, in spite of some sad, but happily spasmodic, modern persecutions among Christians; we are now in an age of mutual respect, of understanding, and of brotherhood founded on our basic Unity; we have come, to sum up in a single phrase, to the era of "spiritual emulation." The question of good companionship, of what the English call fellowship, between the members of different religious families, seems to be a most important issue in our present civilization, in the new world which is taking shape in the half-light in which we live (J. Maritain, *Who is my neighbour?*). That is why any form of prayer which bears a resemblance to the fulminations of the sons of Zebedee is to be condemned and, we should like to think, banished forever from every Christian heart. "Lord, may lightning strike those who do not hurry to rejoin us in our Faith, since they will not listen to us and be converted. Lord, already thy justice scatters them, ruin is upon their house. Show them all the might of thine arm! Among the ruins of their own church they will at last discover the way of truth; then they will come and join us, and Unity will have arrived." Such a prayer cannot be from above. It is Satan,

or Satan's likeness in us, which inspires it. It is Satan alone who destroys; he is turned in upon himself, and can see no good outside himself. This prayer is blasphemy against the work of God among our non-Catholic Christian brethren; and the blasphemer in this case forgets a psychological law which cannot be broken: for every persecution, at any time and in any place, in making martyrs, creates new believers to take their places; and in trying to stifle the faith of the faithful, produces among them, whatever their allegiance may be, concentration and reactions which will preserve it.

Spiritual realism

Should not all Christians endeavour to have the same relationships with and consideration for each other, in the intimacy of their personal prayer, as those which exist between them in the Soul of Christ praying to the Father that all his own should be made perfect in unity? Now, in the Soul of Christ his redeemed do not overpower each other; they are all one in the reconciling power of his Redemption, his Peace, his Joy and his Prayer. They are not opposed to each other; they are intimately united by his thought and his love in the one and only fruit of his Redemption. Let us enter then into the union of his Prayer, letting him freely pray in us. We shall then all dwell in the bountiful realism of the simple and pure Christ-bearing life (*vie "Christifique"*).

Spiritual realism in the Communion of Saints

Since all who are baptized, either by water or by desire—a great multitude, both of professing Christians and of pagans, seekers of the unknown God through what is positive in their dim beliefs and strange rituals, true Christians, though they did not know it—since all the baptized have in them the Life of Christ, they must be described both corporately and as individuals in the light of the wonderful relationship which St Paul describes in I Corinthians chapter 12. Into my poor prayer, then, runs like lifeblood the prayer of others: their aspirations towards penitence, albeit unexpressed, their faults in need of reparation, the cries of frustration which guilty souls lift to Christ even through their very crimes, misplaced endeavours after happiness, seeing that within their souls the throne of the Living Christ stands empty, and no voice speaks more loudly than a void—absence crying for a presence; the excellent thanksgiving of those who have perceived and known that their lives are full of the mercy of God; the sweet joy of souls at peace—the whole inner life of all men.

Let every Christian be aware of this great flood of prayer, which drives into his own heart to find utterance of that "Yes" which will let it unfurl like a breaking wave before the very throne of the Divine Majesty. By this "Yes"

to whatever degree realized I imprint with the seal of my own personal life this flood which has come from the most distant depth of the heart of the human race. I do this at the very moment at which I cast it, or rather Christ casts it on my behalf, before the Father. In exchange my prayer enters into the prayer of all other men. And if the beloved brother who launches my prayer towards the Holy Trinity lives more intensely the life of the Holy Trinity than I, then through him, even though he may be unknown to me, my poor prayer will make a more rapid flight to the Eternal and have greater efficacy in the presence of God.

At the altar of the Holy Sacrifice, at which I celebrate the Holy Mysteries, there is present on its way Godward, finding completion there if needs be—so my Catholic faith affirms—every sacrificial element in what my Christian brethren have retained of the eucharistic agape of the first Maundy Thursday. At the Choir Office, at the breviary prayed alone, in silent prayer, my Protestant, Anglican or Orthodox brothers pray with me and in me in my prayer. And likewise I am present and have my part in the loyal and sincere prayer which is lifted up to God through the splendours of the Divine Liturgy and Offices of the convinced Orthodox. I am present and have my part in the public prayers of Anglicans, those lovely Canticles, Mattins and Evensong, which have never since the sixteenth century ceased to rise to God in every English Cathedral—those masterpieces of the faith of our medieval ancestors—and in the private prayers of fervent Anglicans, and still more in the service of Holy Communion. I am present and have my part in the worship, the prayers, measured and full of faith, and in the profound hymns of Protestantism, and particularly in the fervent commemoration of the Last Supper held by my Protestant brothers.

O God, how can I be unaware that pleasing you depends on the generosity of my reply "Yes" to your known will, following the example of the Virgin of Nazareth, who remains the Gospel model of all human acquiescence to the divine will: "Be it unto me according to thy Word." You allow it to be so; every creature must seek you from its own place on earth, wherever that may be. "Thou that lightenest every man that cometh into the world," O Word of God become Christ! We are all, every one, advancing towards the Truth which is yourself, for ever pursued, as we all are, by your love, by your Spirit. We set out upon this journey, always without ceasing. We never arrive. "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended but . . . forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth towards those things which are before, I press on towards the mark" (Phil. 3.13). He is the Way by which we go, the Truth to which we make our way—on and on, the range is infinite—the Life in which we dwell here below,

through the darkness of faith, despite our sin, provided we repent of it; later—yet always soon—in “the father’s bosom”—the home where there is no more sin, and where the Spirit walks or rather runs, from glory to glory. . . .

An undeniable fact

Prayer, the fundamental cosmic force of creation, is found in its completeness in Christ as he prayed for Unity. In that prayer he expressed before his Father his own desire, since Christian Unity is part of his Father’s divine plan; his prayer is the expression of his will for his baptized. What has once existed in the mind of Christ exists eternally, for through his mind it becomes part of his person, part of the eternal Word. Christ continues to pray for Unity until the end of time, in the love of the Spirit, the Lamb before the Father’s throne. But he desires us to share this prayer with him, for all Christians share his Life. Indeed, he has so willed it that he cannot bring about Christian Unity without us, just as he cannot save us without our co-operation. Each of us can take to himself the words of St. Paul, “I make up . . . in my prayer in him for Unity what is lacking in his prayer.”

God has created us free, in his own image, making us “free sons in his own Son,” and receiving us again into himself by his love; and he could not encroach upon this marvelous gift of freedom without to some extent destroying our personality; far from doing this, he has raised us by the Infinity of the Person of his Anointed One.

Honour and responsibility, thanksgiving and guilt, humility and contrition, such are the two aspects of the human spirit. To hold in our hands the responsibility for Christian Unity—though not for the unity of the Church—to hold such great responsibility that if we were to neglect it, God in his justice would find terrible ways to make us fulfil our role—such is our Christian destiny, as glorious as it is terrifying. But let us take courage; God is love, and he is still our Father. The circumstances make us recognize all these truths amid the darkness and uncertainty of these days. “The more we lack on earth the more we shall discover that better thing which the world can give us—the Cross” (Charles de Foucauld, *Ecrits spirituels*, p. 267).

The annual revival of the Universal Prayer of Christians for the Unity of Christians

As the days pass, this Universal Prayer of Christ in Christian souls, as he prays to his Father for their Unity, will enter and penetrate the whole Christian body; God alone will hear the ceaseless secret whisper in souls, fraternities, and cloisters. But threatened even in the monasteries by routine and by the buzz of manifold occupations, this half-articulate melody of prayer would stand a great risk of

being interrupted and silenced by indifference and forgetfulness. To be effectual and to bring about the *parousia*, the promised glory of the “Day of the Lord,” this music must enlarge and swell till it becomes the immense, unanimous cry of the whole people of Christ. Only then will Christ’s prayer be granted by his Father; for only then will full expression be given to the prayer of the whole Christ, the Risen Christ dwelling in all loyal and sincere souls, true sons of the Father.

But this can only come about if all Christians, even though separated, pray this prayer, so that it pulses and throbs in unison, over and over again—prayed independently here on earth, but convergent in God. For at least one period each year there must be great and visible intercession on the part of all the children of Israel, a true “revival” of supplication, a living resurgence of the unceasing melody. There are other factors, too, which make it necessary that this prayer should be visible, recurring and simultaneous.

For all Christians share to some extent the responsibility for the fragmentation of Christendom, by which God is offended before all men, and men are justly scandalized. There must therefore be a common, visible and simultaneous act of reparation, as far as such a thing is possible, before God and men, and before creation both visible and invisible; for creation has a mysterious but real relationship with all Christians, vitally bound as they are to Christ, and it is therefore weakened in its Christ-furthering task by the burdensome weight of Christian disunity. The fact that the prayer is prayed by all simultaneously has the advantage that the spiritual forces of reparation and intercession are not merely added together but multiplied. It is because the strands are entwined that “a threefold chord is not quickly broken.” It is because the disciples are together (and in our case they will be so as far as possible) that Christ is in the midst of them. In the face of the ugliness of their separations, this simultaneity will allow Christians at last to present to their non-Christian brothers, and to all waiting creation, the moving and visible beauty of the Unity of their spiritual efforts, the prelude and measure of Christian unity, transcending any purely human strivings for concord. . . .

To understand, we must therefore dwell in God

The more we dwell in God the more his Life will live in us; that is to say, the more we love him and obey him, the more transparent in him and through him we shall become to each other. Our words will spring forth from regions ever closer, as our souls draw near to each other in him.

Now there is nothing which will open for us the door to divine Life more than prayer. It is impossible for

Christians to understand each other unless they pray. The more they pray, the more they will understand each other, because the same Thought will become more comprehensible to all, the same Word which "lighteneth every man that cometh into the world."

General conclusion

If we were to examine every single difficulty which must be overcome so that progress towards Christian Unity may be made, we should always come to the same conclusion: The problem of Christian Unity is for everyone a problem of the orientation of the inner life, for unless it is orientated, even in secret, towards Christian Unity, how can Christians face this burning question? Unless it succeeds in gripping, even torturing the Christian conscience, what hope is there of its resolution?

112. "Ways of Worship," Third World Conference on Faith and Order, Lund, 1952

The third in the series of Faith and Order conferences, held in 1952, was the first to devote such attention to the question of worship. It reflects a recognition that disagreements regarding worship can be as divisive as differences over doctrine. • The Third World Conference on Faith and Order, ed. Oliver S. Tomkins, London, SCM, 1953, pp. 39-47.

IV. Ways of Worship

Preamble

The decision of the Edinburgh Conference to appoint a Theological Commission on Ways of Worship has proved to be an important step forward in the process of mutual understanding necessary to progress in Christian unity. The work of the Commission has strengthened the conviction that Worship, no less than Faith and Order, is essential to the being of the Church. It has also made it clear that disunity is as manifest in the differing ways of worship as in disagreements concerning doctrines and institutions. Indeed it is at this point that disunity becomes explicit and the sense of separation most acute.

Following on the work of the Commission, we attempt here to assess the measure of existing agreement and disagreement as to the meaning and practice of Worship; to

consider the bearing of this on the unity of the Church; and to suggest practical measures for the increase of mutual understanding.

Agreements

(1) We worship one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Triune God, by whose Spirit all true worship is inspired and unto whom all Christian worship is offered.

(2) God Himself creates the faith by which we respond to Him in worship, by encountering us and speaking to us (Cf. Gal. 2:20). By this we mean that at the moment of Christ's encounter with men, they are free to respond; but in the light of this response they understand that they could not have been seeking God had He not already found them, and that the faith by which they responded was itself God's gift to them.

(3) God's encounter with us, and the response to Him in worship, involves the whole man (Cf. Matt. 22:37-40). It is made in worship, in witness, and in Christian obedience and service.

(4) The response as expressed in Worship involves adoration, confession, hearing the Word of God, intercession, invocation, oblation, praise, supplication and thanksgiving.

(5) Word and Sacrament are both the gifts of God. In the reading and the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments, God offers us His grace, imparts saving knowledge of Himself and draws us into communion with Himself.

The members of the Society of Friends testify to the same experience through corporate silent worship and lay ministry arising therein.

(6) All worship is by and within the family of God's people, alike in heaven and on earth. Even in private prayer, the Christian is always praying with the Church as a member of the communion of saints. The worship of the congregation is both the basis of all private prayer and devotion, and a powerful and essential Christian witness to the world.

Unsolved Problems

We have attempted here to open the way for further discussion and explanation rather than to make a list of traditional oppositions which could only frustrate ecumenical progress. The statement does not propose an unreal harmonization of differences which are firmly and sincerely held. Positive suggestions for furthering useful and frank discussion are offered on the basis of the actual views held by the member Churches. Conversation on the various differences in the doctrine and practice of worship has strengthened the conviction that, as Christians, we ought

not to admit that any subject is intractable or that any obstacle is insuperable. Of this hope, our meetings have given evidence.

No written report can do justice to the real depth of mutual understanding achieved and enjoyed in the course of our discussions. Moreover, in spite of the profound differences between us in the matter of ways of worship, we were all agreed that the issues raised take us right to the heart of the Church's witness, and must always be discussed in the context of her continuing mission. However we view the Church's worship, we are unanimous that its setting is the Church's mission to the world.

(1) Differences of opinion as to the relation of Word and Sacrament have led to varying stresses upon the importance of preaching and the sacraments. This should never be more than a matter of emphasis. God's redeeming activity takes place in the worship which He has established in His Church. The unity of worship ought to be stressed if we are to have it in its fullness.

(2) We all agree that worship concerns the whole of life. Yet, we give different emphases to the place in worship of things we can touch and see. For some, many earthly elements when blessed may have a quasi-sacramental use; for others, only the elements which the Lord has appointed ought to play a distinctive role in worship. Therefore the use of material things must be carefully studied in the light of our agreement that Christian worship takes place as the Triune God makes Himself known to His people in Word and Sacrament. Through the Holy Spirit God comes to His people redeeming not only them, but also in some sense, the whole creation.

(3) The precise classification of all forms of worship as *liturgical* and *non-liturgical* is difficult. Indeed the term "liturgical" must be understood as having a wider meaning than is implied in this distinction. Most forms of worship are in a sense liturgical. The real difficulty is between Churches having a set liturgy and those allowing more freedom to the individual minister.

Our conversations have revealed that there is a place and value for both. On the one hand the fixed form helps to maintain and hand on the heritage of belief and devotion. On the other hand there are times when much greater freedom is both desired and desirable. Furthermore it is the task of the Church to use liturgical prayer as a means of disciplining the private prayer of the individual, and enlarging the scope of his intercession; while the private prayer of the individual, in its turn, quickens the liturgical life and purges it from the taint of formalism.

In both, of course, it is all, in the end, the work of the Holy Spirit.

(4) Worship is always the worship of the whole people of God, the whole Church. The leadership of this worship can on some occasions be entrusted to any member. Yet most of our Churches believe that our Lord has called forth in His Church a stated ministry. To this ministry alone the leadership of certain acts of worship is restricted. This raises for us the question of the basis of this restriction. For some of us this restriction rests upon the belief that the Church by the guidance of the Holy Spirit calls some of its members to this or that function. For others it is based upon the belief that the Holy Spirit gives to some members of the Church the appropriate grace of holy order. Again, some Churches emphasize the ministerial priesthood as definitely distinct from the priesthood of all believers.

We recognize that questions regarding the character of the ministry, priestly and prophetic, continue to be grave obstacles to unity. Behind them lie fundamental problems concerning the nature of grace and the person and work of Christ. These questions must be faced fully and frankly. Fruitful discussion here may well render less intractable the differences in defining the meaning of apostolic ministry and validity.

(5) Whatever may be our various opinions on the nature and efficacy of ritual acts, we are all agreed that *Deus non alligatur sacramentis*, and that (in the words of the Gospel) "the wind bloweth where it listeth . . . so is everyone that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). We record in thankfulness that we have reached in our discussions a measure of understanding, which none of us could ever have anticipated, on the problem of the sacrificial element in Holy Communion. The mystery of the love of God, which we celebrate at the Lord's Table, surpasses human expression. But in our attempts to describe that mystery we have the warrant of Holy Scripture for using sacrificial language. "Behold the Lamb of God . . ."

Our Lord Jesus Christ in all His life on earth and chiefly in His death and resurrection has overcome the powers of darkness. In His one perfect and sufficient sacrifice on Calvary He offered perfect obedience to the Father in atonement for the sin of the whole world. This was an act of expiation made once and for all and is unrepeatable. In His risen and ascended life He ever makes intercession for us.

Our response in worship, then, is the praise, prayer, thanksgiving and offering of ourselves in faith and obedience made to the Father in the name of Jesus Christ. We make the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. It is at this point that our greatest difficulties arise as we seek to express just how our worship on earth is related to the eternal intercession of Christ in heaven. We all agree that there is

an element of mystery here which can scarcely be expressed (Rom. 8:26).

Some of us believe that in the Lord's Supper, where they enter into communion with the crucified and risen Lord, they only offer a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving and obedient service as a response in faith to the benefits the Lord gives us. Others would like to insist, however, that in the Holy Eucharist the Lord Jesus Christ as our Great High Priest unites the oblation made by His body, the Church, with His own sacrifice, and so takes up her own adoration into the *Sanctus* of the company of heaven. Between these two views there are others to which a brief reference may not do full justice.

It is felt, however, that a deeper understanding of the meaning of "unites" in the above paragraph, particularly in the light of Biblical eschatology, might help to resolve real divergence and misunderstanding at this point. (N.B.—There are those among us who regret that the discussion of the Eucharist has concentrated on this sacrificial aspect. In their opinion the main issue is the real bodily presence of the crucified and risen Lord and our receiving of His body and blood.)

(6) We are agreed in believing in the Communion of Saints as the fellowship of the whole company of believers on earth and in heaven. In its worship, the Church on earth joins in prayer and praise with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven. While all agree in accepting the communion of saints in this sense there is grave difference of interpretation. Some only use the word "saints" to mean the whole Christian body in general. Others also use it in a special sense to denote the blessed saints in heaven.

Most people are ready to sing hymns of thanksgiving for the saints, thanking God for His victory in the lives of His people. Some would go further and venerate the saints in heaven to the extent of celebrating their feasts; still others would seek their intercession believing that they can help us who are still engaged in the earthly warfare. For many of those who venerate the saints, the Blessed Virgin Mary has a unique place. It is obvious that the status of the Blessed Virgin in Christian worship is a matter on which there is deep divergence.

We must recognize that for some this aspect of worship is an expression of love flowing through Christ's mystical body. Others believe that such usages would be contrary to their understanding of the whole of the Christian faith, and they neither know nor desire any intercessor other than their Saviour.

It is therefore clear that these issues can be discussed properly only in the context of the doctrine of grace and of the work of Christ and of the Holy Spirit.

Another divergence of view emerges in connection with the practice of prayers for the departed. Some hold that the departed require the help of our prayers, and that we are in charity bound to pray for them that the work of God begun in them may be brought to perfection. Others hold that in committing their beloved dead to the care of the God who gave His only Son to be the Saviour of sinners they may find joy and comfort in His love.

This matter also is one which demands most thorough theological work touching as it does the heart of redeeming grace.

Non-Theological Factors

Thus far this chapter has been concerned largely with the theology which underlies the agreements and disagreements in ways of worship. In considering our differences, however, we have been constrained to ask whether they spring, wholly or in part, from social, cultural and other factors. In what follows we offer suggestions towards a new line of approach which may help the Churches to see that many of the differences in ways of worship are not bound up, as has been thought, with irreconcilable dogmatic differences, but may co-exist in one Church.

The Churches on earth are *in via*, and therefore involved at every level in the tensions and conflicts of history. This involvement shows itself in their traditions of worship. Even the most cursory survey of these "ways of worship" reveals the large part played by many sorts of non-theological factors.

In this statement we intend to concentrate on two of these, the *social* and *psychological*. At certain very important points these overlap as cause-factors making for the estrangement of Christian bodies. For instance, there is the crucial factor of language which operates both psychologically and socially. Round the expressions in a language there tends to gather a whole fabric of associations which are lost in translation, but which colour the use of the expressions in prayer and worship. Moreover, habits of worship differ from country to country. We have all heard of worshippers who complain that they cannot abide the "foreign ways" of the people of such and such a land at prayer. The style of behaviour seems to get in the way of the stranger's devotion. Here too we have an overlap of psychological and social factors.

It would be a great mistake to suppose that such intimacy of relation between faith and cultural tradition is a bad thing. On the contrary it often makes for health and vivacity of spiritual tradition. But because human beings are sinners, we have to reckon with the possibility of profound corruption here. A particular Church may unconsciously, in liturgical forms, take for granted social and

political institutions which have received drastic criticism at once in theory and practice. For instance, certain clauses of the Anglican Litany belong to a quite different ordering of society from that of Great Britain today. A stranger must be puzzled, even antagonized by such archaism. In a divided Christendom such phenomena can easily create the impression that reconciliation between Churches involves the acceptance of what belongs to the accidents of their worldly history rather than to the vital substance of their faith. This is particularly serious when members of Christian Churches "have done one another wrong" in conflicts which were social and political as well as religious in origin. What is needed here is a certain theological ruthlessness, combined with the realization that, in the providence of God, what now seems to divide at this level can be so transformed as to enrich the experience of the whole people of God. For it is in His will that His Church has been placed in the world and in the midst of secular history. "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world: but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one."

It must be emphasized, however, that these political and social factors operate not merely to postpone reunion, but frequently contribute to hinder evangelism and to damage the internal life of individual Churches. Thus within the same Church there are often great differences of idiom between congregations recruited from different social classes. While there are perhaps signs of improvement discernible, one cannot neglect the many unhappy examples within Churches of discrimination practiced on grounds of class, economic level, politics and race. When these are continued to the present or actually introduced *de novo*, existing divisions are not only hardened, but Churches are split on occasion into additional fragments.

Archaism of devotional habit also prevents the development of the sort of liturgical forms suitable to the age in which we live. For instance, we do well to question what the view of nature implicit in the canticle *Benedicite* conveys to men equipped with skill to effect the colossal transformations of natural forces which are a commonplace of our day. It is not only the cause of Christian unity that compels us to rigorous and painful self-scrutiny at these points: it is the cause of evangelism itself that demands we sit in judgment on our forms of worship. Christian worship must indeed not be subordinated to the fluctuating requirements of human nature; it has its background in God's initiative and His revelation. But its gracious content must be presented in a manner congruent with the actualities of our common life.

The study of social factors in their impact upon our ways of worship is in its infancy. Its prosecution is a commanding duty of the Ecumenical Movement. When we

pass to the *psychological* side of our statement we come to a field in which we are at present perhaps even more amateurs. At least, however, we must note the importance as a force of division of the attraction felt by some and the repulsion felt by others, when an elaborate ritual is used which seems designed to evoke a sense of mystery. There are many both learned and simple who find their imaginations stimulated by such symbolism; others mistrust what seems to them to savour of trickery and an assault on their emotions. Here the puritan and not seldom the man of science are at one in their reactions; both show a single-minded repudiation of what seems to them obscure, unreal and artificial. Their challenge is an important one and it cannot be dismissed as simply philistine. There is need for a thorough exploration of the concept of mystery in its bearing on worship, an exploration at once theological, metaphysical and psychological. This exploration would, of course, have to consider not only the way in which craving for mystery is met in elaborate liturgical worship, but also the way in which it is met in the charismatic forms characteristic of Pentecostals and others, whose life can easily be ignored by the theologically sophisticated. It remains sadly true that among Christians the willingness to submit their devotional preferences to any kind of psychological scrutiny is rare; until it is more common, we are not perhaps likely to advance far in liberating ourselves from the dominion of what can be merely a matter of personal choice or chance inheritance. Until we have attempted this it is open to question how far we stand under the sovereignty of faith and are ready to meet the demands made upon us in this age.

113. Roger Schütz, "Keep Yourself in God's Presence so That Unity May Come," from *Unity: Man's Tomorrow*, 1962

Brother Roger was the founder of Taizé, an ecumenical monastic community and pilgrimage site, near Cluny (France), devoted to the work of reconciliation. He was the author of numerous works dealing with spirituality and Christian unity. • *Unity: Man's Tomorrow, London, Faith Press, 1962, pp. 85-88.*

How can each man, at each moment, respond personally to the ecumenical vocation? By feeding the flame which has been enkindled for unity all over the world; by keeping himself in God's presence with this intention. Alone or in prayer together; on his knees, standing, sitting—it makes no difference! We know that unity is the supernatural work of God and all our activity is not worth anything except in so far as it continues this prayer and makes it real.

To keep ourselves in God's presence is not beyond our strength, does not exceed our human capacity. We can do this even if we are not conscious of any feeling of God's presence, and even in times of loss of fervour, remembering that the objective presence of God does not depend on our awareness of it.

Some people, having gone along this way a long time, will one day perhaps make a new step forward and make an offering of their life to God for the sake of unity.

* * *

At this point a great hope is dawning: ecumenical encounters on a small or great scale are multiplying. A new awareness of unity is coming to pass and is inspiring large assemblies. As proof of this there are the examples of the preparation for the Pan Orthodox Synod at Rhodes and the great assembly of the World Council at New Delhi.

Within Catholicism, the announcement of the coming Vatican Council has opened up new avenues which will not be closed again. As this council proceeds, will things happen which will have consequences for unity? Of one thing we can be sure—that the Lord of the Church answers the prayers of his people. It is for us to implore the Holy Spirit to speak to the fathers of the council.

It may break forth suddenly—an event which will shine forth on Christians like lightning. And if the event which God brings to pass should happen in the heart of the institution without being visible to bodily eyes, it will not on that account be any the less real.

An attitude which consists in waiting for nothing so as not to deceive or be deceived does not spring from faith—in the ecumenical realm our vocation would then be snuffed out.

Let us be glad for the fact that Catholics are beginning to open up towards ecumenism by the very fact of the preparation for this Council. It is incumbent on non-Roman Christians to tend this flame by their prayer as they live out the pain of division in the depth of a life hidden with Christ.

* * *

After a long separation we are convinced that God is visiting us at this time and pouring out on us his gifts. He is asking us more than ever to keep ourselves in his presence, to give him thanks for his “today” and to refuse henceforth to look back on the history of our divisions.

Keeping ourselves in God's presence means letting God penetrate us without our knowing how; it means to agree to his changing our own viewpoint little by little, and giving us the same viewpoint as Christ from which to look at our separated brother, and even at the brother who belongs to the same confession as ourselves. For in so far as we are not looking at our neighbour, and all the more our brother in the faith, with the eyes of Christ, we are condemned to understanding nothing of those we meet.

We are all in the same lump—more than we realize. We are well aware of this at the present time as we meet the same resistance to that for which we stand. And this resistance is offered by a world which, while it is unable to believe, seems to have a better insight than we have into the identity of that which inspires us.

Why should we Christians try to emphasize what divides us? Let us also remember that any argument which comes from pent up bitterness is not the slightest use. Only generous attempts to understand the behaviour of separated brothers can give us the right to emphasize differences between us.

Moreover, it is strange to find how often, on one side and on the other, there is a resemblance, deep down, between certain negative reactions as there is between certain great and high aspirations. The depth psychology of one and the other is marked with the same stamp.

Does not Protestantism itself by its history and origin exist only as a reaction to Catholicism, because of it and in relation to it, in such a way that it cannot radically distinguish itself from it without denying itself at its roots. Whether we wish it or not we are all part of the same lump and that in itself is why we can hope.

This is why today, inspired by an awareness of the Church, and the quest for the visible unity of all Christians—Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans and Protestants—there are some Christians who, seeing one member of the body suffer, wish to suffer with him—and rather than running away for fear of being contaminated wish for nothing else than to be present to the Church as they wish to be present to the world. In this spirit when they meet Christians in difficulty in another confession than their own, they wish to be active witnesses to unity and hence what they do is to bring them comfort, to help them, to re-establish them gently in the place where they are as they would themselves wish to be. For if today I am standing up, tomorrow I may fall. Who then will come to pick me up?

114. "Worship and the Oneness of Christ's Church," Report of Section IV, Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order, Montreal, 1963

This report, and the subsequent decision to put worship on the agenda of the next WCC assembly (1968), "were the peak points of ecumenical interest in the question of the nature of worship" (T. Berger).

• The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order: The Report from Montreal, 1963, eds P.C. Rodger and Lukas Vischer, New York, Association Press, 1964, pp. 70-71, 76.

. . . 108. Although it is not possible to enumerate the various dimensions of Christian worship which we have discussed and on which we have found ourselves in fundamental agreement, we do wish to register the following convictions:

a) In Christian worship, God comes to us in Christ through the Holy Spirit, sustains us through his grace, establishes us in fellowship with him and with one another, and empowers us for his service in the world. In worship, we come to God in Christ, the True Worshipper, who by his incarnation, servanthood, obedience unto death, resurrection and ascension, has made us participants in the worship which he offers. In him, truly God, we have access to the Father; in him, truly Man, we are restored to our true nature as worshippers of God. Christian worship is, therefore, a service to God the Father by men redeemed by his Son, who are continually finding new life in the power of the Holy Spirit.

b) Christian worship, as a participation in Christ's own self-offering, is an act formative of Christian community—an act, moreover, which is conducted within the context of the whole Church, and which represents the one, catholic Church. Ecclesiastical division among the churches, personal estrangement, and social division based upon class, race or nation contradict true worship, because they represent a failure fully to carry out the common ministry of reconciliation to which we are all called in Christ.

c) Christian worship in the form of preaching is based upon the commandment of Jesus Christ and his promise that he himself will be present with the hearers, working in them by his word. In the whole of Christendom, concern about liturgy directly involves preaching based upon the

Holy Scriptures. Accordingly the task of the preacher is to proclaim the prophetic and apostolic word, as set forth in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and to interpret this word of God's judgement and mercy in the contemporary situation.

d) It is our participation in the worship of Christ's people through word and sacrament that makes possible our ministry in various kinds of worship in smaller groups and in individual devotion. The people of God, exercising this discipline of daily prayer and devotion, whether as individuals, families, or groups within the congregation, strengthens the worship of the whole congregation. Thus the public worship of the congregation and the private worship of individuals, families or groups are mutually dependent as necessary parts of the total ministry of Christ's people.

e) Christian worship is the act by which the Church recognizes its identification with the whole creation and offers it to God in service. At the same time, it is an act in which all presumed self-sufficiency of this world is brought to an end, and all things are made new.

f) Christian worship, set forth in Baptism and celebrated in the Eucharist, is grounded and centred in the historical ministry of Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection, and his exalted and continuing ministry. Such worship always includes the gathering of Christ's people, the preaching of the word of God, participation in Christ's self-offering and intercession for all men, and thanksgiving with joy.

g) Christian worship is at once remembrance, communion and expectation. It points beyond the present moment to the tasks of Christian witness which lie before us, as we join in Christ's ministry to the world, and as we look to the consummation of God's kingdom; for this side of that kingdom all our doings in the Church are but partial anticipation of the glory which is to come. . . .

127. We find ourselves in strong agreement that the message of the Gospel must be enacted in a form, and proclaimed in an idiom, comprehensible by those to whom it is addressed. This enactment may be through the timely preaching of the word, through liturgy and rite, or through the "living sacrifice" of Christian lives. Worship need not be unduly restricted to set forms or structures. When a man has a living faith in God, he should be encouraged to express it in spontaneous praise and thanksgiving.

128. Just as faith finds its own ways of expression in worship, so the Church's mission involves indigenization, a process of becoming rooted in the culture of the people. This process occurs normally, and most authentically, where Christian faith and worship possess the maturity and vitality to appropriate and convert prevailing cultural

forms for the service of Christ. In this way Christian worship not only takes root in the culture but converts it to Christ, and so shares in the reconciliation of the whole creation to God. We ought not to be so much concerned with adapting worship to the local culture that we forget that the culture itself is to be transformed. Indigenization, we believe, is more nearly conversion than accommodation. The indigenization of Christian worship, required in every time and place, is the offering of the created order back to God, but converted and transfigured by the redemption that is in Christ.

115. Lukas Vischer, "A Growing Fellowship of Mutual Intercession," from *Intercession*, 1980

The book by Vischer from which this excerpt is taken articulates the theological foundation for the ecumenical prayer cycle, originally called For All God's People, published in 1978 and translated into numerous languages. The most recent edition, now called In God's Hands: Common Prayer for the World, was published in 2006. • Intercession, Faith and Order paper no. 95, Geneva, WCC, 1980, pp. 57-64.

. . . Although the proposal that the churches should pray for each other may seem a fairly obvious one, it could, if accepted, have far-reaching consequences for the ecumenical movement. As we have seen, intercession flows from fellowship in Christ. If the churches join together in mutual intercession, therefore, they will perforce have to re-examine their mutual relationship in the light of their responsibility to Christ. Their intercession will teach them how they should order their relationships with each other. Some thoughts on this may be offered by way of conclusion.

1. Gratitude for the Existing Fellowship

Just as Paul always begins with thanksgiving for the Christian communities, so too must we as divided churches begin our mutual intercession with thanksgiving. Above all else, intercession means giving thanks to God for one another. In their intercession for one another, the churches will focus first on the gifts God has given them. They will praise him for the witness they bear to him. They will turn in gratitude to him who has been pleased to let his name

dwell in them and has therefore given them all things necessary for unity.

There are certain dangers in concentrating closely on the unity of the Church. When we pray for unity, we have to examine the details of our disunity. Our attention comes to focus not so much on unity as on our divisions. Our differences, hostilities, conscious or unconscious animosities and feelings, appear to us larger than life-size. The common ground we imagined we saw to begin with will suddenly be buried beneath the manifest obstacles to unity. We are conscious now only of the difficulty of union and concord. As Rilke says: "The human heart lives closer to the injuries than to the miracle's melody." This is why it is so important to be brought back again and again to thanksgiving. Thanksgiving in our intercession is the only safeguard against cynicism; and how many people in the Church and in the ecumenical movement have already succumbed to cynicism!

Commitment to unity is also a dangerous enterprise because it forces us to face up squarely to the other churches. Efforts to achieve unity may in the first instance serve only to magnify the distance between us. The more clearly we see the features of another church, the more conscious we become of differences which we were only dimly aware of previously. We are at once tempted, then, to define our own positions more clearly and sharply. In this encounter we can easily become defensive. Gratitude emanates from the Gospel which holds us together, despite all differences.

Thankfulness does not mean ignoring the unfavourable aspects of the churches and their divisions. If we turn thankfulness into an abstract principle we may easily succumb to the opposite temptation of smoothing over the difficulties and dismissing any reference to obstacles and problems as a sign of spiritual immaturity. Genuine thankfulness, however, does not mean covering up our failures and unsolved problems but rather holding fast to what God has already given us and will continue to give us in his faithfulness.

2. Mutual Solidarity

Intercession will normally be the threshold to action in demonstration of our solidarity. There will be times when it will not be possible to express solidarity in such action. We shall often have to content ourselves with remaining in constant readiness for such action without actually being able to act at all. But intercession is never a substitute for such practical action. It is a concern for the other which is in constant readiness to help. We seek to understand what others need in their situation in order to bear witness to the

Gospel. Intercession is the mobilization of our imaginations on behalf of these others.

But intercession means our readiness not only to respond to the needs of others but also ourselves to receive from these others. In praying to God for others it is all too easy to yield to the temptation always to regard ourselves as the givers. But in fact, in interceding for others we are also bringing ourselves before God. As we intercede for them we realize that we ourselves are also in need of their intercession. We become receptive to what they give to us through their intercessions. Such reciprocity is particularly important for inter-church relationships. Churches find it much easier to give than to receive. They see very clearly the “contribution” they have to make to the ecumenical movement and what the other churches should, therefore, receive from them. They can expatiate on the “special contribution” they are called to make. But when it comes to their learning from other churches, problems begin. Suddenly the doors are shut. The churches remember once more their “inalienable identity.” But intercession is a constant giving and receiving. It is a fellowship in which partners live and grow, together.

Intercession thus leads us to self-examination. Our encounter with others in intercession raises the question of our position in fellowship with them, where we have a real contribution to make to them but also where we ourselves fall and need to be changed. Intercession begins with our own renewal in faith and witness. The churches can grow in solidarity only if they display openness of this kind in their mutual relationships. How far is our own tradition a stumbling block to the other churches? What changes are called for in our own life and witness if we are to be of real service to the other churches? We can only move towards other churches if we are constantly seeking an answer to these questions.

Intercession will begin, therefore, in our own locality. It would be idle to pray for the churches throughout the world if we were not first to intercede for those which are our neighbours. How could we possibly pray for other churches if we were not as a matter of priority seeking fellowship with those closest to us? We owe it to the churches throughout the world to achieve unity and common witness in the place where we live and seek to fulfill our calling effectively. As we intercede for our neighbour churches we may discover a surprising resistance in ourselves. It is easier to intercede for remote partners than for those close at hand. But precisely for this reason, the local dimension of intercession is the touchstone of our readiness for real mutual solidarity.

3. Knowing Each Other Better

If the churches are to pray for each other in a real way, they need to know one another far better than they do. In a general way, at least, we must know for whom we are praying. The proposal that the churches should pray for one another, therefore, is also a summons to them to acquire fuller and more accurate knowledge of each other. There is an intimate connection, a constant interaction, between intercession and knowledge. Intercession becomes possible as the churches become familiar with each other's opportunities and difficulties. When churches resolve to pray for each other, they are led to seek such deeper knowledge of one another. Intercession is a living reality, therefore, only when it is accompanied by a constant interchange of information. This service was already a reality in New Testament times in the shape of letters, visits, and meetings between congregations.

Intercession has an almost fatal tendency to get lost in abstract generalities. General concerns are brought before God in abstract language. Even in their intercessions for each other, the churches can fall into this danger. It can become an exercise which is performed simply by rote. The prayers used can lack profile. It is vital, therefore, that the churches should try really hard to get to know each other better.

The aim here should be to learn how the churches actually live today. In our dealings with other churches it is so easy to start from our own traditional stereotypes of them, which no longer correspond to the facts. We have our own set ideas of the various confessional traditions and project these ideas onto the churches of these traditions as if nothing had meanwhile changed. Or we allow ourselves to be guided by accounts of a situation which were given us long ago but have long since been out of date. The first step to real mutual knowledge, therefore, must be constantly to revise what we already think we know of one another. Our information needs constant updating. Otherwise it will not really be the other churches we are bringing before God in our intercessions but a distorted picture of them. Mutual solidarity will then rest on false assumptions.

The question arises, however, as to whether it is ever possible for us to acquire such knowledge of all the churches. Are we not asking too much when we propose that the churches should pray for all the others in the course of a year? An adequate knowledge of the churches he founded was still possible for Paul. But how could anyone today possibly claim to have an adequate knowledge of the situation of all the churches? Would it not be better, then, if each church confined itself to one or two situations? The answer is obvious. Intercession can be really concrete and specific only if it is limited in scope. Only between a few

partners is genuine mutual solidarity possible in practice. To pray for all the churches cannot possibly mean each church giving equal attention to all the others. That would simply mean that no single one of the churches prayed for would be brought adequately into focus. In practice, intercession calls for selectivity in relationships. It remains essential, nevertheless, that each church should intercede for all the churches. Although one church cannot concentrate on all, it must still remain open to the whole Christian fellowship. It must have some idea at least of the life of all the churches. It must remain aware of the fact that the relationships which it is in a position to cultivate are only part of the larger whole. The kind of intercession which is being proposed serves to remind the churches constantly of this larger whole. The purpose is to help each church to remain at least "potentially" in relationship with all the others.

We also need this sense of the larger whole if we are to deal responsibly with special political developments and events. It is quite natural for us in our intercessions to make reference to contemporary events and in this way to bring them to God in prayer. How could we possibly remain silent about anything which concerns us? Obviously, then, we will think especially of countries and churches caught in the ravages of war and disaster. But this form of intercession has its drawbacks. In many cases it is all too short-lived. Once the news cools, we tend to put it on one side. Not many years ago, for example, there were regular references to Vietnam, Angola, and Mozambique. These places receive less attention today even though they still depend on our solidarity. In the choice of situations to be mentioned in public prayers, too, we are often guided by our political judgements. We refer to situations which touch our personal political emotions most closely. Some will refer to the churches in socialist countries, especially China and Albania, for example. Others will refer rather to South Africa and Latin America. Yet others will offer a carefully diluted mixture so as to avoid any suspicion of political bias. Awareness of the larger whole is especially important here. We can only pray responsibly for churches in special situations of difficulty if we are also moved by a concern for all the churches. Our intercessions are then the concrete expression of our total intercession and not just dictated by what happens to be in the headlines at a particular juncture.

4. Intercession for the Persecuted and the Suffering

Intercessions will be offered, above all, for those who suffer for the sake of the Gospel. Oppressed and suffering churches, Christians subject to discrimination, falsely

accused, in prison, kidnapped and tortured, because of their faith—these all have a special claim to be remembered in our intercessions.

But in what spirit should we remember them? As we have seen, Paul's prayer was above all that the Christian community should remain steadfast and faithful. What most concerned him in his intercession for the Christian communities was their witness to the Gospel. By its very character, the Gospel provokes hostility and resistance. The sufferings Christians are exposed to, therefore, are not something extraordinary. On the contrary, there is an element of fulfillment in them. What matters most is that the Christian communities should understand and accept their sufferings in this light.

This attitude is still valid today for individual Christians and Christian communities who suffer persecution. The churches will also pray, of course, that such hostility may end and will do their utmost to see that the persecuted are delivered from their sufferings and their witness received. The churches would be failing to demonstrate their solidarity if they were not to do their best in this direction. But in all their endeavours they will not lose sight of the witness to the Gospel. They will not pray for deliverance if this will only be at the expense of the witness to the Gospel. Above all, they will do their utmost to ensure that these churches receive the material and spiritual aid they need in order to maintain their witness.

We must distinguish carefully here. It is part of the Church's task to promote justice in society. The churches will always pay particular attention, therefore, to those who are the victims of injustice for whatever reason. To speak up when fundamental human rights are violated is part of their witness to the Gospel. But when it is the churches who are the victims of injustice, persecution and suffering, this cannot be viewed and dealt with in the same way. What has to be understood here, above all, is the connection between these sufferings and the witness required of the Church. If the churches see here only a violation of human rights and immediately protest against it on this score, they are ignoring the vital dimension of witness. Their attention is being focused on the injustice rather than on the witness to the Gospel. The language appropriate to intercession here is the language of solidarity rather than that of protest.

A special situation arises, of course, when the injustice, persecution and suffering is inflicted by Christians. Protest is then called for, indeed more than protest. Intercession for the oppressors must then be combined with frank repudiation and, normally, also public resistance.

If this focus on witness in suffering is to be genuine, of course, the interceding churches must see persecution and

suffering as signs through which God is speaking to them. The question they have to ask themselves is how steadfast they really are themselves in their faith, and how far they are really bearing witness to the Gospel in their own part of the world. Intercession for the witness of other churches is only genuine if it is accompanied by the renewal of our own witness.

5. Limits of the Church's Proclamation

For all its insistence on the witness of the Church, intercession is at the same time a constant reminder that the success of this witness is not in our keeping. The Gospel is accompanied by no guarantee that it will change this world. The Church's proclamation will constantly come up against its limits. Its action in society will lead only to significant, symbolic achievements. Although the churches must constantly struggle together to bear effective witness in the world, they must understand that what they achieve is finally subject to the will and wisdom of God. Paul prays that God may open a door for the Gospel, but he also knows that the door may remain shut. The Church may have to wait a long time before closed doors.

In its prayers and intercessions, the Church brings its hopes and its works to God. It commits itself to him. It knows that God's will in history cannot be identified with its own expectations. His mercy and judgement may choose other ways. The Church has then to respect the mystery of his will. When its intercession remains ineffective, it must accept this. But as it trusts itself to him, it is at the same time protected from the paralyzing effects of failure. It remains free for the future. It remains open for love.

As they accept the common bond of mutual intercession, therefore, the churches will also strengthen one another in their freedom for the future and their openness for love.

116. Janet Crawford and Thomas F. Best, "Praise the Lord with the Lyre . . . and the Gamelan?" 1994

This essay draws lessons on worship in an ecumenical context from the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order. At the time of its writing, Janet Crawford, a church history professor from New Zealand, was a member, and Tom Best an executive secretary, of the WCC's Faith and Order Commission. • The Ecumenical Review, vol. 46, no. 1, January 1994, pp. 88-96.

Worship in Ecumenical Contexts: An Historical Survey

. . . For the fifth world conference on Faith and Order (Santiago de Compostela, 1993) the topic of worship as such was again not addressed in the preparatory materials, nor was it part of the conference programme. However, great attention was paid to planning the worship, and it formed a very significant part of the life of the conference.¹² The worship for Santiago integrated certain classic patterns of worship with the newer developments; its aim was to enable participants to experience and express something of that *koinonia* which was the theme of the world conference itself.

The overall pattern of worship was similar to that at earlier world conferences, with opening and closing services, and a eucharist hosted by a local church (in this case, the two Spanish WCC member churches). However, morning worship represented a significant shift from the "confessional" pattern followed at Edinburgh, Lund and Montreal; in Santiago morning worship was a service of the word, following a consistent structure each day of scripture, prayer and hymnology, similar to that used in many churches. The evening worship on most occasions followed a simple order prepared by a sister of the Grandchamp

12. Worship and Bible study in Santiago de Compostela were supported by an extensive set of materials, including the conference *Worship Book*, Geneva, Faith and Order Commission, 1993; *Celebrating Community: Prayers and Songs of Unity*, compiled by Janet Crawford, Terry MacArthur and Thomas F. Best, Geneva, WCC, 1993; *All of You are One in Christ Jesus*, by Frances M. Young (the Bible studies on Galatians), Geneva, Faith and Order Commission, 1993; *Partakers of the Promise: Biblical Visions of Koinonia*, ed. Thomas F. Best in collaboration with the United Bible Societies, produced by the United Bible Societies for the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, 1993; and a prayer card.

community (a Swiss Protestant religious order), which gave considerable space for silence as well as opportunity for extemporaneous prayer (two elements which some felt to be lacking in recent ecumenical worship). On one occasion, in response to a request from the conference, the evening worship was followed by a vigil of intercessory prayer for victims of injustice and violence around the world.

“Confessional worship” was also strongly represented within the world conference through Orthodox and Roman Catholic vesper services, and in the eucharist hosted by the Spanish Reformed Episcopal Church and the Spanish Evangelical Church. The latter service was something of an ecumenical event in itself, as it included Reformed and Anglican elements and was held in a Roman Catholic Church; but apart from this dimension there was little change in the area of eucharistic worship from the pattern suggested by Lund and Montreal. Orthodox and Roman Catholic communities had elected not to hold eucharistic services within the official conference programme. Many Protestants, however, felt that it was important to show and celebrate the significant advances in *koinonia* among them since the Montreal world conference by joining at the table of the Lord. Most of those present at the meeting attended this eucharistic service although, of course, not all could participate fully. As for the Lima liturgy, it was not used in the “official” conference programme but was employed in a series of early-morning eucharistic services conducted by ministers from various Protestant traditions or by Anglican priests. These officiants were encouraged to simplify and shorten the liturgy. The intention was to encourage a more frequent use of the text among a wider range of churches, particularly Reformed churches.

A comparison with worship at previous Faith and Order world conferences illustrates many of the most important developments in worship at ecumenical gatherings over the past decades. The increased diversity in worship leadership and, of course, among the worshippers was particularly striking. More churches were represented, with a much greater presence of persons from Africa, Asia and Latin America, as well as representatives from the Caribbean and the Pacific. Roman Catholics were present for the first time as full members of the conference, and Orthodox churches, both Eastern and Oriental, were well represented. There was a significant number of women delegates, including the moderator and two vice-moderators of the Commission on Faith and Order, and a lively and thoughtful group of younger theologians. A Roman Catholic bishop from Europe preached in Spanish at the opening worship, which involved the officers of Faith and Order and local dignitaries; a Methodist woman pastor from Latin America preached, also in Spanish, at the

closing worship, which was led largely by representatives of the younger theologians. Surely this would scarcely have been imaginable to those who participated in the Lausanne conference in 1927!

The rich diversity of the worldwide church was also reflected in the music, which included well-established ecumenical hymns, such as “All people that on earth do dwell” and “*A toi la gloire*,” more “evangelical” favourites such as “Amazing grace,” many chants and responses and some more recent hymns from within the ecumenical movement. While the worship book and all the orders of service were in the four conference languages (English, French, German and Spanish), many other languages were used during worship in hymns, in prayers and in the Bible readings. To hear scripture in Melanesian Pidgin or in Arabic, to hear it chanted by an Orthodox or read in Korean, was for many a powerful experience, as it was to listen to extemporaneous prayers in many languages and many different styles. The worship space for the regular morning and evening services was enriched, at appropriate times, by the use of elements from many traditions: clothes from Asia, Africa and Latin America; icons, candles, banners, flowers, incense and the shell, symbol of ecumenical pilgrimage, of baptism and of Santiago de Compostela. Movement was also part of the worship in a way that would have been unknown at earlier conferences. Participants exchanged the peace, gathered around a fountain for the affirmation of baptism, joined with actions in the song “Weave us together, Lord” and gave each other shells in anticipation of leaving Santiago to continue the ecumenical journey in local settings.

For many participants the memory of the procession at the end of the closing worship will be most powerful. This was a procession of church dignitaries in ecclesiastical and academic dress, but also of God’s people, of ecumenical pilgrims from all over the world, in traditional dress and in casual summer clothing, who processed joyously out of the church and through the streets, following a cross carried by a Roman Catholic seminarian in black cassock and lace-trimmed cotter, following the gold and blue conference banners bearing the names of the previous world conference cities, accompanied by guitars and African drums, and singing songs of praise as the whole conference witnessed, in this city so marked by pilgrimage over the centuries, to the ecumenical pilgrimage towards unity.

Developing Patterns in Ecumenical Worship: A Summary

This survey of worship from Lausanne in 1927 to Santiago de Compostela in 1993 reveals much about the practice

and role of worship within the ecumenical movement. The main points can be summarized as follows:

1. Worship is an essential part of the ecumenical vocation. It nourishes the search both for unity and for common witness and service. The worship life of ecumenical meetings is at least as important as its plenary presentations, group meetings and reports.
2. There has been a shift within the ecumenical movement over the years from the common *study* of worship as practiced by different traditions to the common *experience* of worship as practiced within an ecumenical setting.
3. There has been a growing appreciation that many different confessions share certain basic patterns of worship. Examples are the service of the word with its structure of hymns, confession, biblical readings and prayers; some evening or compline services; and the basic pattern of eucharistic worship shared by Anglicans, Lutherans and Roman Catholics and others.
4. From the beginning, some worship in ecumenical settings has combined liturgical features from different traditions. Worship in ecumenical settings at the global level has always been multi-lingual and multi-confessional.
5. The variety of *confessional material* in worship in ecumenical settings has increased greatly over the years, as the number and variety of Christian traditions active in the ecumenical movement has increased.
6. The variety of *verbal and musical styles* has also increased greatly. This reflects the growing participation of Christians from all over the world, and an increased respect for the manifold indigenous cultural expressions of the faith.
7. There is a greater appreciation and use of non-verbal elements such as music, symbols and movement within worship, a greater awareness of the creative role of silence within worship and a renewed interest in the active participation of lay people in worship.
8. There is a continuing interest in and evident need for an element of “confessional” worship in ecumenical settings. For some this remains a valuable way of experiencing and understanding Christian confessions other than their own.

9. The question of common participation in the table of the Lord remains complex and difficult. But no question is more urgent for the ecumenical movement as a whole.

10. The widespread (and largely unexpected) use of the Lima liturgy indicates *a need for doctrinal convergences to be embodied in the worship life of the churches and of the ecumenical movement*. This could be a powerful part of the reception process for theological agreements and other ecumenical achievements.¹³ This suggests that there should be a closer relationship between ecumenical theologians and liturgists.

Ecumenical Worship and “Confessional” Worship

We have noted that both “confessional” worship and worship which incorporates material from different Christian traditions have been practiced at ecumenical meetings from the beginning. Some still long for more “confessional” worship within ecumenical contexts as a way of experiencing the distinctive identity and ethos of churches other than one’s own.¹⁴ Our view is that “confessional” and “ecumenical” worship are complementary, and that both are essential parts of the ecumenical experience.

The discussion of this issue is often confused by the use of imprecise language, stereotypes and false oppositions which are prejudicial to one side or the other of the discussion. Occasionally, for example, one hears the term “real” (by which is meant, confessionally specific) worship set over against “artificial” (or “ecumenical”!) worship. This language should be avoided—unless one really means to say that only a recognizably (for instance) Methodist or Roman Catholic order of service is “authentic.” Sometimes “confessional” worship is set over against culturally diverse worship, for example, worship using African drums.¹⁵ This too is a false opposition: *an African Methodist “confessional” service would use drums*, assuming it used African expressions of the faith at all and had not merely adopted Western forms of worship. Finally, we see little justification for referring to “ecumenical” worship as a “potpourri” or simple mixture of confessional elements, given the care

13. Cf. the comment in the presentation in Santiago by Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon: “the creed is not there for theologians to study, but for congregations to sing.” This remark struck a very responsive chord among participants at the meeting—even though many were not quite sure what he had meant by it!

14. Ibid., tenth paragraph.

15. See *ibid.*, eleventh paragraph for some examples of possible programmes which move in this direction.

with which it is prepared (at least for major meetings)—not to mention the fact that most “confessional” orders of worship are themselves combinations of elements from earlier traditions.

The key to this discussion is the understanding of the nature of worship. We take worship to be the offering, by a particular community, of praise and petition to God. “Confessional” worship is clearly appropriate for confessionally specific groups standing within a specific tradition, such as local congregations and meetings of denominational bodies. It is of course very desirable that Christians should learn to understand and appreciate the worship of other confessions; and confessional worship is also occasionally appropriate at ecumenical gatherings as a way of sharing the riches of one particular tradition with others.

But we question whether ecumenical meetings are normally the proper occasion for such learning. To experience Anglican worship, for example, would mean worshipping with an Anglican congregation—or indeed *several* Anglican congregations—such as a small rural parish church, a cathedral in England, a parish in Africa, in Asia and so on, since all are different expressions of what it means to be “Anglican.” Because worship is more than words and music, but is a complex interaction of many elements, including the community gathered for worship and the worship space, an “Anglican” service at an ecumenical meeting will necessarily be lacking in some respects. Thus although some find “ecumenical” worship unnatural or artificial, we would argue that a confessional service, when conducted out of its natural confessional environment, in a worship space not adapted for it, by or for a group which is confessionally mixed is at least as “artificial.” What does make excellent sense is for Christians from one tradition to visit various churches of another tradition over an extended period of time, getting to know its people and practices in their own setting.¹⁶ We would hope that such visits could be organized by many churches as an expression of the ecumenical commitment.¹⁷

But what is then the appropriate form of worship for a community whose members come not from one tradition only, but from many traditions? What form of worship best corresponds to the distinctive identity of such a community—an ecumenical community? This would seem to be worship which expresses the confessional, cultural and regional diversity which is intrinsic to that community. In “ecumenical” worship these elements are brought into an

ordered and coherent whole, and this expresses the unity which the community is given as members together of the one body of Christ. It is worship which corresponds to the identity of that community more closely than worship which belongs to any one tradition possibly could.

Certainly it is important to be sensitive to the degree of diversity within worship. Ecumenical worship opens up many treasures from different traditions, most of which are accessible only through participation: for example, African singing and dancing, Caribbean or African vigils, Pacific Island drumming, Anglican cathedral singing, the Easter processions in Spain. There is a limit to the amount of new cultural and confessional material one can absorb, and the new styles of worship, new prayers and new songs often seem “strange” and “difficult” to those from the North or the South who are accustomed only to traditional “Western” patterns of worship. (Particular care is needed with music, as experience suggests that this is usually the most difficult for most people to absorb. Ironically it is precisely such music which often conveys most immediately and directly the genius of particular cultures.) Many who are impatient with new worship material might remember that their own traditions have absorbed a great deal from others over the past centuries, for any modern “confessional” hymnal is already ecumenical; a Lutheran hymnal, for example, will surely include hymns by the Methodist Charles Wesley, some Anglican songs and so on.

Finding the right balance between preservation and innovation in worship is worth our best efforts, for through the diversity and inclusiveness of good ecumenical worship we have a precious gift: the ability to experience the world church at worship, the *oikoumene* in praise and prayer.

Wider Participation in the Eucharist

No issue in the whole history of worship in the ecumenical movement has proved more difficult than the question of eucharistic participation. Ecumenical experience has undoubtedly been a major source of inspiration—not to say pressure—towards wider sharing at the Lord’s table. The issue was put acutely at New Delhi in 1961 by Philip Potter:

A group of people who have received the one baptism and have been incorporated into the body of Christ come together with the blessing of their churches . . . They submit themselves to the one word of God in the context of the one world. They rejoice together in common praise, and repent together in common prayer. They hear together God’s call . . . They have a deep and abiding sense of the Holy Spirit binding them together

16. See *ibid.*, eleventh paragraph for some examples of possible programmes which move in this direction.

17. For an account of an interesting programme of visits to the eucharistic services of various churches see R.T. Halliday, “Visiting Each Other’s Worship,” in *The Ecumenical Review*, vol. 45, no. 4, October 1993, pp. 463-68.

into a true community of the people of God. Is there not a new and wonderful unity given here which demands that it be sealed with receiving the one bread and the one cup of the body and blood of Christ?¹⁸

Surely this is the question which led WCC general secretary Emilio Castro, speaking from the frustration of experiencing thirty more years of division at the Lord's table, to exclaim during the Canberra assembly in 1991: "Let this be the last assembly at which we have a divided eucharist!" Of course there has been significant convergence in the understanding of the eucharist; and among some churches, particularly Protestants and Anglicans, significant advances in sharing have been made.¹⁹ But in terms of officially sanctioned eucharistic practice among the major confessional families of Protestant, Roman Catholic and Orthodox, we are essentially still at the point reached by the Lund guidelines of 1952.

Indeed our separation at the Lord's table has become more evident over the years, as the ecumenical circle has expanded to include not only Protestants but also Orthodox and Roman Catholic participants. And as we have become more used to having the eucharist at large ecumenical gatherings, the frustration at the barriers which continue to exist only increases. In spite of the official positions of the churches, these barriers are increasingly being broken at the local or "grassroots" level, as was clearly acknowledged in Santiago de Compostela.²⁰

Still the ecumenical experience of worship (together with common theological reflection by the churches, as in the BEM process) has led to significant shifts in eucharistic practice. Many Protestant churches now celebrate the

eucharist more frequently, and have a more clearly developed understanding of the presence of Christ in the eucharistic event. Ecumenical experience has led to the realization that a common basic structure underlies the eucharistic practice of many churches: Anglicans and Lutherans will recognize, from their experience in their own churches, many aspects of a Roman Catholic eucharist. This has clarified an important point: that when eucharistic sharing is impossible the "problem" is often not so much the liturgy itself as the authority of the minister who is presiding at it. (Indeed this is true of the Lima liturgy, for members of some confessions which recognize that it reflects a significant theological convergence still may not receive communion because Protestant or Anglican clergy are presiding.) At least this awareness has helped to focus the theological discussion on issues of authority, representation and apostolic succession.

Perhaps it is time to face squarely the issue raised by Philip Potter more than thirty years ago: what is the meaning of that *koinonia* which we experience increasingly in worship within the ecumenical movement? It is not a complete *koinonia*, but it is real and it outstrips the divisions still enshrined in our official theological positions. Does this common experience of the Spirit in worship push us beyond the barriers which our theological discussions have not yet been able to dismantle? At this point could worship lead theology, pointing us to a new understanding of our oneness in the one body of Christ?

18. *Despatch from New Delhi*, p. 85, emphasis added.

19. For example, see the recent Porvoo common statement by representatives of the Nordic Lutheran churches and Anglican churches of Britain and Ireland. If adopted by the churches, this will establish the full interchangeability of ministers, including their presiding at the eucharist. Cf. the article by Ola Tjørhom in this issue of *The Ecumenical Review*, pp. 97-102.

20. See the report of section III from Santiago de Compostela: "There are, nevertheless, people in many of our churches who, out of deep conviction and on the basis of their common baptism, knowingly engage in eucharistic hospitality, both in inviting and in receiving. Many who do this do not lightly transgress the boundaries of the communities, but do so out of an obedience to a different understanding of eucharist that allows it to be a means of grace on the road to that fuller unity which it signifies. There are serious ecclesiological issues at stake here . . . The effects of unofficial eucharistic sharing remain to be seen. But the churches are increasingly obliged to reckon with this phenomenon and respond effectively." *Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order, Santiago de Compostela 1993, Message, Section Reports, Discussion Paper*, Faith and Order paper no. 164, Geneva, WCC, 1993, para. 17, p. 25; to be published also in *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia*.

117. Walter Kasper, from *A Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism*, 2007.

Kasper, an accomplished theologian and Cardinal in the Roman Catholic Church, was President of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. The following excerpt from his book of 2007 lifts up a theme familiar to readers of the Decree on Ecumenism and the encyclical Ut Unum Sint of Pope John Paul II. • A Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism, New York, New City Press, 2007, pars. 4-23, 27-38.

Spiritual Ecumenism

This change of heart and holiness of life, along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians, should be

*regarded as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement, and merits the name "spiritual ecumenism."*²¹

4. On the eve of his suffering and death, Jesus prayed "that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I in you, may they also be one in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (Jn 17:21). It is significant that Jesus did not primarily express his desire for unity in a teaching or in a commandment to his disciples, but in a prayer to his Father. Unity is a gift from above, stemming from and growing toward loving communion with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Christian prayer for unity is a humble but faithful sharing in the prayer of Jesus, who promised that any prayer in His name would be heard by the Father.²²

5. Spiritual ecumenism finds its expression in "public and private prayer for the unity of Christians." Since unity is a gift, it is fitting that Christians pray for it together: "Such prayers in common are certainly a very effective means of petitioning for the grace of unity, and they are a genuine expression of the ties which even now bind Catholics to their separated brethren. 'For where two or three are gathered together for my sake, there am I in the midst of them' (Mt 18:20)."²³ Prayer for unity is the royal door of ecumenism: it leads Christians to look at the Kingdom of God and the unity of the Church in a fresh way; it deepens their bonds of communion; and it enables them to courageously face painful memories, social burdens and human weakness. In every age of history, the principal artisans of reconciliation and unity were persons of prayer and contemplation, inspiring divided Christians to recommit themselves to walk the path of unity.

6. Spiritual ecumenism also requires a "change of heart and holiness of life," arising from Jesus' call to conversion.²⁴ The way toward reconciliation and communion unfolds when Christians feel the painful wound of division in their hearts, in their minds and in their prayers. This experience makes them aware of how much harm has been caused by pride and selfishness, by polemics and condemnations, by disdain and presumption. It also awakens in them a readiness to engage in a serious examination of conscience, recognizing their faults and trusting in the reconciling power of the Gospel. Only in the context of conversion and renewal of mind can the wounded bonds of communion be healed.²⁵

7. Spiritual ecumenism, finally, is called "the soul of the whole ecumenical movement." According to the

Second Vatican Council, the ecumenical movement has been brought about "under the inspiring grace of the Holy Spirit."²⁶ It is a spiritual process, carried out in faithful obedience to the Father, following the will of Christ, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The work of ecumenism, therefore, is rooted in the foundations of Christian spirituality, requiring more than ecclesial diplomacy, academic dialogue, social involvement and pastoral cooperation. It presupposes a real appreciation of the many elements of sanctification and truth wrought by the Holy Spirit both within and beyond the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church. The words of the psalm apply to the endeavor to foster Christian unity: "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain" (Ps 127:1).

Growing in Communion

*For those who believe in Christ and have been properly baptized are put in a certain though imperfect communion with the Catholic Church. The differences that exist in varying degrees between them and the Catholic Church—whether in doctrine and sometimes in discipline, or concerning the structure of the Church—do indeed create many obstacles, sometimes serious ones, to full ecclesiastical communion. The ecumenical movement is striving to overcome these obstacles.*²⁷

8. Christians can say with joy and gratitude that "what unites us is much greater than what divides us."²⁸ All Christians profess faith in God the Father Almighty, in Jesus Christ, Son of God and Savior, and in the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, the Giver of life and holiness. Through the sacrament of Baptism they are reborn and united with Christ. They honor sacred Scripture as the Word of God and as an abiding norm of belief and action. They share in prayer and draw upon many other common sources of the spiritual life. Many Christians rejoice in the episcopate, celebrate the Eucharist and cultivate devotion to Mary, the Virgin Mother of God.²⁹ The sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit is operative among all of them, strengthening them in holiness. It is the Holy Spirit who has given courage to Christians of many traditions as they have faced persecution, even to the point of martyrdom. These elements of communion "which come from Christ and lead back to Him, belong by right to the one Church of Christ."³⁰

21. UR, n. 8; cf. Directory, n. 63.

22. Cf. Jn 15:7.

23. UR, n. 8; cf. UUS, n. 21 f.

24. Cf. Mk 1:14-15; UR, n. 7; UUS, n. 15 f., 33 f., 84 f.

25. Cf. UUS, n. 82.

26. UR, n. 4; cf. UR, n. I.

27. UR, n. 3; cf. CCC, n. 820-822; 836-838; Directory, n. 9-21.

28. UUS, n. 20, quoting Pope John XXIII.

29. Cf. UUS, n. 12.

30. UR, n. 3; cf. UUS, n. 13; CCC, n. 817-819.

9. The Second Vatican Council primarily understands the Church as communion. It teaches that the Church of Christ “*subsists in the Catholic Church*”—while recognizing that outside of the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church “*many elements of sanctification and of truth can be found,*” which “*as gifts properly belonging to the Church of Christ, possess an inner dynamism toward Catholic unity.*”³¹ The Church of Christ is not a prospective future reality, still to be realized; it already exists in a concrete historical form. This is also true for the unity of the Church, which the Catholic Church believes to subsist in it “*as something she can never lose and that we hope will continue to increase, until the end of time.*”³² Though not in full communion with the Catholic Church, other Churches and Ecclesial Communities retain in reality a certain communion with it, in varying degrees. This ecclesiology of communion is the context for understanding and nurturing ecumenism, directed to “*making the partial communion existing between Christians grow toward full communion in truth and charity.*”³³

10. Certain features of the Christian mystery have at times been more effectively emphasized by other Churches or Ecclesial Communities.³⁴ The Holy Spirit has enriched them with particular ways of reading and meditating upon the sacred Scripture, diverse forms of public worship and private devotion, differing expressions of Christian witness and holiness of life. All these treasures in East and West, in North and South, can rightly be valued as gifts of the Holy Spirit to the one Church of Christ: “*Whatever is wrought by the grace of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of our separated brethren can contribute to our own edification.*”³⁵

11. By sharing in these spiritual treasures, the Catholic Church can better express in actual life its full catholicity and further deepen its understanding of the means of sanctification entrusted to it by the Lord. This “exchange of gifts” is one of the ways for the Holy Spirit to guide the Church “*into all the truth*” (Jn 16:13). Christians need therefore to be invited and encouraged to jointly participate in spiritual activities, to make use of common resources, to do together all that is possible in a manner and to a degree appropriate to the present level of agreement.³⁶

The Word of God in Sacred Scripture

*Veneration of the Scriptures is a fundamental bond of unity between Christians, one that holds firm even when the Churches and Communities to which they belong are not in full communion with each other. Everything that can be done to make members of the Churches and Ecclesial Communities read the Word of God, and to do that together when possible (e.g., Bible Weeks), reinforces this bond of unity that already unites them, helps them to be open to the unifying action of God and strengthens the common witness to the saving Word of God which they give to the world.*³⁷

12. Out of the abundance of His love, God who is invisible, “*speaks to humankind as friends and enters into their life, so as to invite and receive them into relationship with himself.*”³⁸ The Church receives the one deposit of the Word of God through sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture together. It also has been entrusted with the task of authentically interpreting the Word of God and with a teaching function that “*is not above the Word of God but stands at its service, teaching nothing but what is handed down, according as it devotedly listens, reverently preserves and faithfully transmits the Word of God, by divine command and with the help of the Holy Spirit.*”³⁹

13. The Word of God in sacred Scripture has a central place in the life and mission of the Church. It is first of all in the liturgy of the Church that sacred Scripture is venerated, read and explained. All preaching must be nourished and ruled by it. Sacred Scripture also strengthens the life of the faithful, as “*food for the soul*” and source of spiritual life.⁴⁰ The Catholic Church, therefore, seeks to promote easy access to sacred Scripture for all and sees to it that suitable and correct translations are made available in different languages.⁴¹ It encourages biblical scholars to explore and to explain the sacred writings, following the mind of the Church,⁴² for “*the study of the sacred page is, as it were, the soul of sacred theology.*”⁴³ Finally, the faithful are urged to deepen their knowledge of Jesus Christ by frequent reading of the Scriptures, for “*ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.*”⁴⁴ Though many fruitful efforts have already been made, Catholics are further encouraged

31. LG, n. 8; cf. UUS, n. 10.

32. UR, n. 4; cf. UUS, n. 14.

33. UUS, n. 14; cf. Bibliography: Ecumenical documents on the Church.

34. Cf. UUS, n. 14.

35. UR, n. 4.

36. Cf. UR, n. 8.

37. Directory, n. 183; cf. UR, n. 21.

38. DV, n. 2.

39. DV, n. IO.

40. Cf. DV, n. 21.

41. Cf. DV, n. 22.

42. Cf. DV, n. 23.

43. DV, n. 24.

44. V, n. 25, quoting St. Jerome, Commentary on Isaiah, PL 24, 17.

to receive “the bread of life from the one table of God’s Word and Christ’s Body.”⁴⁵

14. The Word of God in sacred Scripture enlightens and nourishes Christians of all traditions. The Second Vatican Council affirms that the authentic theological traditions of the Eastern Churches “*are admirably rooted in Holy Scripture.*”⁴⁶ As to the Churches and Ecclesial Communities in the West, the Council states that they have “*a love and reverence*” of sacred Scriptures and that “*calling upon the Holy Spirit, they seek in these sacred Scriptures God as He speaks to them in Christ, the One whom the prophets foretold, God’s Word made flesh for us.*”⁴⁷ The Catholic Church considers sacred Scripture therefore as “*an instrument of the highest value in the mighty hand of God for the attainment of that unity which the Savior holds out to all.*”⁴⁸ How can sacred Scripture increasingly be used as “*an instrument of the highest value*” along the path of Christian unity?

“Lectio Divina”

Christians can come to a deeper familiarity with the sacred text through a prayerful reading of sacred Scripture or “*lectio divina.*” The first purpose of this reading is spiritual: welcoming the loving presence and voice of God, finding food for the soul, discerning the will of God and growing in obedience to it.⁴⁹ This reading of sacred Scripture becomes an intimate dialogue with God, for “*when we pray, we talk to Him; when we read the Divine Word, we listen to Him.*”⁵⁰

15. Together, Christians can

- read and meditate upon particular books of sacred Scripture in small groups, as part of a shared spiritual journey;
- make available reading lists of passages from sacred Scripture for reflection by Christians of different traditions, individually or in groups;⁵¹
- publish together commentaries on sacred Scripture, drawing from the writings or teachings of spiritual leaders and scholars of various traditions;

45. Cf. DV, n. 21.

46. UR, n. 17.

47. UR, n. 21.

48. Ibid.

49. Cf. CCC, n. 1177; 2705-2708.

50. DV, n. 25, quoting St. Ambrose, *On the Duties of Ministers* 1,20,88; PL 16,50.

51. E.g., the monthly “*Word of Life*” issued for all members and friends of the Focolare Movement; the monthly “*i*” forwarded with the “*Letter of Taizé*” to all friends of the Community of Taizé; the “*Daily Watchwords*” of the Moravian Church; calendars with scriptural quotations for each day of the year.

- conduct Bible courses, organized by and conducted together with neighboring parish communities.

Common Bible Work

16. In many regions, there is a well-established practice of working together on Bible-related projects, which has been much appreciated as an accessible and fruitful means of promoting Christian unity. Meritorious efforts have been made thanks to the ecumenical cooperation of scholars belonging to various traditions, in the preparation and publication of commonly agreed Bible translations and editions.⁵² These efforts are a valuable form of common service and common witness which could be expanded.⁵³

Together, Christians can

- organize specific days, weeks or years dedicated to the Bible or to biblical themes, e.g., a “Bible Sunday” for parishes, a “Bible Day” for families; a “Bible Week” for children or youth, a “Year of the Bible” on the level of dioceses;
- publish Bible study resources for use in local congregations, adapted to various groups in the community (e.g., children, youth, elderly, women, families, social commitment groups);
- explore the possibility of using common scriptural readings for liturgical purposes;⁵⁴
- face together the growing biblical illiteracy among many Christians and the spiritual thirst of many for the “Word of Life,” by offering appropriate resources;
- work together in the preparation of biblical programs or resources for audiovisual and electronic media, using easily accessible formats (TV, CD-Rom, DVD).

Common Understanding of Sacred Scripture

17. According to their doctrinal traditions, Churches and Ecclesial Communities developed different ways of understanding and using the sacred Scripture. When reading together the Bible, Christians begin to come to terms with their distinct confessional approaches to it. Common Bible work can allow them to better understand “*the relationship between sacred Scripture, as the highest authority in matters of*

52. Cf. “Guidelines for Interconfessional Cooperation in Translating the Bible” (new revised edition 1987 of the first 1968 version), in IS, n. 65 (19871111-IV), pp. 140-145.

53. On the role of the Catholic Biblical Federation and the United Bible Societies, cf. Directory, n. 184-185.

54. Cf. Directory, n. 187.

*faith, and sacred Tradition, as indispensable to the interpretation of the Word of God.*⁵⁵

Together, Christians can

- face directly those scriptural texts that have given rise to disagreements, especially those passages that have special significance for a particular tradition; while remaining loyal to the teaching of their own faith communities, they can grow in mutual understanding and gain appreciation for the ways others have approached the Word of God;⁵⁶
- gain new insights into different ways of reading Scripture. Diverse ecclesial traditions in East and West have given a privileged place at times to more literal, symbolic, theological or mystagogical understandings of sacred Scripture; working together, Christians can come to value the respective merits of these approaches and their possible complementarity;
- engage in joint witness as they respond to questions and issues raised by modern society, especially moral matters (human rights, the beginning and the end of human life, human sexuality, marriage and family life, war and peace, terrorism and security, poverty and justice) in light of the Word of God, as it comes to us through sacred Scripture and the Church's tradition.⁵⁷

Sacred Scripture and Church Unity

18. Coming together to read and to study sacred Scripture, attention can be paid to the mystery of unity and division as it unfolds in the history of salvation. Many passages of different literary genres (historic texts, psalms and prayers, prophetic sayings, teachings, parables) in both Old and New Testaments are particularly relevant from that point of view.

Common reading of sacred Scripture can usefully focus on:

- the loving unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and their divine reconciling activity in the origins and the life of the Church;⁵⁸
- the painful reality of division: its origin in human fragility and sinfulness, its profound and lasting effects, its crying out to God and searching for

words in prayer, its longing for forgiveness and reconciliation;⁵⁹

- the teaching of Jesus on the Kingdom of God, which He revealed and inaugurated in his words and deeds, and which, after his death and resurrection, the Church has been commissioned to proclaim among all peoples;⁶⁰
- Jesus' expressed desire for the unity of his disciples, and the subsequent teaching of the apostles and their constant endeavour to safeguard the unity of the Church when threatened by internal or external powers of discord and division;⁶¹
- the images or symbols used in the Bible for describing the nature or mystery of the Church:⁶² Old Testament images relating to "the people of God";⁶³ New Testament images centered on Christ as head of the Church, which is his Body;⁶⁴ images taken from daily life, such as the shepherd and his flock,⁶⁵ the cultivation of land (like the vineyard and the vinedresser),⁶⁶ the art of building (like the edifice or temple and the living stones,⁶⁷ the Jerusalem which comes from above),⁶⁸ and marriage or family life (like the bride of Christ⁶⁹ and the family of God).⁷⁰

Witnesses to the Word of God

19. The Word of God comes to us both through sacred Scripture and through the living witness of the Church, including men and women who have carefully and devoutly listened to the Word of God, have faithfully lived it and courageously given witness to it. Growing communion among Christians can only flow from following Jesus, the Word of God made flesh. The Virgin Mary, the saints

59. E.g., Gen 4:1-16 (Cain and Abel); Gen 37-50 (the history of Joseph); Is 42-53 (songs of the suffering servant); Ps 44 (lament and prayer for help); Mk 9:33-40 (Who is the greatest?); Lk 12:5-53 (Jesus the cause of division); Lk 15 (the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the prodigal son).

60. Cf. LG, n. 5; cf. Mk 4:26-34; Rom 14:17-21.

61. Cf. LG, n. 7; cf. 1 Cor 1:10-17; 3:3-9; 12:4-27; Eph 4:1-16; Col 3:12-17.

62. Cf. LG, n. 6; CCC, n. 753-757.

63. Cf. Ex 19:5-6; Deut 7:6; Mic 4:1-4.

64. Cf. Rom 12:3-21; 1 Cor 12:12-31.

65. Cf. Jn 10:1-16; Ezek 34:11-31.

66. Cf. Mt 21:33-43; Jn 15:1-11.

67. Cf. 1 Cor 3:5-23; Eph 2:19-22; 1 Pet 2:1-9.

68. Cf. Rev 21:1-27; Col 3:1-17.

69. Cf. Mt 22:1-14; 2 Cor 11:2.

70. Cf. Mt 12:46-50; Eph 2:19.

55. UUS, n. 79.

56. Cf. Directory, n. 186.

57. Ibid.

58. Cf. LG, n. 2-4; cf. Jn 16:4-15; Eph 4:1-16.

and the martyrs in all ages of history have inspired and sustained Christians in walking as Christ's disciples.

Christ, the Faithful Witness

20. "Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come . . . and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead."⁷¹ Christ's whole earthly life—his words and deeds, his silence and suffering—is the revelation of the Father. Jesus says: "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father,"⁷² and the Father says, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"⁷³ The Word who became flesh is our model of holiness: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me";⁷⁴ "Love one another as I have loved you."⁷⁵

The mystery of unity stands at the very heart of Christ's life and mission. The Spirit therefore calls all the faithful to place themselves before Christ and to learn from him how to forge bonds of communion in true discipleship. Only when keeping their eyes on Christ and listening to him will they find the light and the strength needed to continue the long and arduous pilgrimage of unity.

21. The reconciling power of the Gospel can be seen and heard throughout Christ's entire life, in many moments that illustrate and make effective his prayer that "all may be one":

- his proclamation of the Beatitudes, as a new way of life ordered to the Kingdom of Heaven;⁷⁶
- his preferential love for the sick, the needy and the poor, calling them from the margins of social and religious life to the very center of the new community he establishes;
- the primacy of love which "binds everything together in perfect harmony";⁷⁷ this includes his teaching on not judging others,⁷⁸ on forgiving one another as God in Christ has forgiven us,⁷⁹ without limit and measure, as many as "seventy times seven times";⁸⁰ with a love that extends even to our enemies;⁸¹

- his teaching about the Kingdom and about the relations which should prevail among his disciples, relations based on humble service and self-giving love;⁸²
- his self-understanding as the Good Shepherd, who goes ahead of the sheep who "follow him because they know his voice" and who desires unity "so there will be one flock, one shepherd";⁸³
- his teaching about self-denial and taking up his Cross,⁸⁴ since "he broke down the dividing wall of hostility . . . through the Cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end";⁸⁵
- his teaching about the Kingdom as a wedding banquet to which all are invited,⁸⁶ revealing God's desire to see the unity of all divided humanity restored and celebrated in Christ;
- his prayer for his disciples and for all those who believe in him, that they might be one, a living communion;⁸⁷
- his sacrifice on the Cross, giving his life for the unity of God's children, since "Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the dispersed children of God."⁸⁸

Together, Christians can

- pray that they may grow in true discipleship, following Jesus Christ, the "one shepherd";
- reflect upon the New Testament, so as to deepen their understanding of the Lord's reconciling ministry and to make it their own;
- rediscover common traditions stemming from the early Church and the centuries prior to the present divisions, notably writings or witnesses related to Jesus Christ;
- study theological and spiritual resources stemming from various traditions during the centuries of separation regarding the life and mission of Jesus Christ.

...

71. Rev I :4-5.

72. Jn 14:9.

73. Lk 9:35.

74. Mt 11:29.

75. Jn 15:12.

76. Mt 5:3-12.

77. Col 3:14.

78. Cf. Mt 7:1-5.

79. Cf. Eph 4:32.

80. Cf. Mt 18:21-22.

81. Cf. Mt 5:43-48.

82. Cf. Mt 23:8-12; 20:20-28.

83. Jn 10:1-16.

84. Cf. Mt 16:24-28.

85. Eph 2:14-16.

86. Cf. Mt 22:144.

87. Cf. Jn 17:1-26.

88. Jn 11:51-52.

Personal Prayer

*As the Church turns her gaze to the new millennium, she asks the Spirit for the grace to strengthen her own unity and to make it grow toward full communion with other Christians. How is the Church to obtain this grace? In the first place, through prayer. Prayer should always concern itself with the longing for unity, and as such is one of the basic forms of our love for Christ and for the Father who is rich in mercy. In this journey which we are undertaking with other Christians . . . prayer must occupy the first place.*⁸⁹

27. Jesus prayed to his Father for the gift of unity. From that time on, the Church unites itself with Christ beseeching the Father, praying for the unity that Christ desires in the way he desires it.⁹⁰ Thus prayer for unity remains at the heart of any Christian prayer.⁹¹

In their personal prayer, Christians can

- give due attention to prayer for unity in the celebration of the Eucharist;
- insert, where possible, particular intercessions for Christian unity in the liturgical prayer of the Church (Liturgy of the Hours, Office of Readings);
- offer daily prayer or devotions for the intention of Christian unity (e.g., the Rosary, Eucharistic Adoration);
- seek Christian unity through fasting, penance and personal conversion;
- unite their hardship and suffering with Christ for the intention of Christian unity.

Prayer in Common

*In certain special circumstances, such as the prescribed prayers “for unity,” and during ecumenical gatherings, it is allowable and indeed desirable that Catholics should join in prayer with other Christians. Such prayers in common are certainly an effective means of obtaining the grace of unity, and they are a true expression of the ties which still bind Catholics to their separated fellow Christians: “for where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt 18:20).*⁹²

89. UUS, n. 102.

90. This expression of Fr. Paul Couturier has since 1938 become a leitmotif for the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

91. Cf. UUS, n. 27.

92. UR, n. 8.

28. Christians are encouraged to join in prayer with members of other Churches and Ecclesial Communities. Prayer in common is an effective means of petitioning God for the fullness of Christian unity, and gives genuine expression to the deep bond that exists between them. Prayer for the restoration of unity should therefore find a prominent place in any prayer in common. Such prayer might focus on the mystery of the Church and its unity, on Baptism as a sacramental bond of unity, on the renewal of personal and communal life, or on the healing of the brokenness of humanity.⁹³ The celebration of the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity world-wide is an initiative of singular importance to be encouraged and further developed.⁹⁴

29. Christians can benefit from taking part in liturgical services and non-sacramental celebrations of other communities. Such participation is an opportunity to better understand each other's communal prayer and to share more deeply in liturgical traditions which often have developed from common roots.⁹⁵ Since liturgical traditions are part of the sacred heritage of Churches and Ecclesial Communities and are constitutive of their identity, sharing liturgical worship requires a meticulous regard for the sensibilities of all those concerned, as well as for particular customs which may vary according to time, place, persons and circumstances.⁹⁶ Rather than blending liturgical elements stemming from various traditions, in ecumenical prayer preference should be given to preserving the particularity of existing forms of liturgical worship. Such a regard for the authentic diversity within our traditions gives better expression to the unity in diversity for which we are striving.

30. In many parts of the world, Christians also join in ecumenical prayer services which mark important events related to local history, civil society or social life. In some countries major events for the nation or for civil society are often commemorated with ecumenical worship.⁹⁷ These ecumenical prayer services give voice to the shared concerns and hopes of Christians in that region and are an eloquent means of common witness.

Christians can pray together:

93. Cf. Directory, n. 110.

94. Every year the World Council of Churches (Geneva) and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (Vatican) seek the assistance of a local community in preparing the materials for the Week of Prayer.

95. Cf. Directory, n. II 7.

96. Cf. Directory, n. 119.

97. Cf. Directory, n. 109.

- during the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (18 to 25 January or another appropriate time, often the period between Ascension and Pentecost);⁹⁸
- on the occasion of ecumenical gatherings;
- during some important periods of the liturgical year (e.g., Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter) and in conjunction with major feasts;
- in remembrance of the dead, or those who died for their country;
- in times of public disaster or mourning;
- on significant days in the life of other Churches and Ecclesial Communities (like Sunday of Orthodoxy, Reformation Day);
- amidst situations of profound human need and in response to shared concerns (e.g., for peace and justice in the world, the alleviation of poverty, hunger and violence; for respecting the dignity of the family);
- when a nation, region or community collectively gives thanks or intercedes before God;
- on the occasion of world-wide days of prayer for particular groups or intentions (e.g., World Youth Days);
- on particular days in public or social life (e.g. New Year's Day, the beginning or end of a school year, the beginning or end of holidays, thanksgiving for the fruits of the earth).

31. "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord', except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:3). Whenever Christians gather to pray, it is the Holy Spirit who moves them and teaches them to pray. The Holy Spirit is also the source of Christian unity, since "it is the Holy Spirit, dwelling in those who believe and pervading and ruling over the entire Church, who brings about that wonderful communion of the faithful and joins them together so intimately in Christ that he is the principle of the Church's unity."⁹⁹ Many Christians of various traditions today have testified to a profound experience of the presence of the Holy Spirit. As a result, prayer in the Holy Spirit is for them a source of personal renewal and of deeper belonging to the Body of Christ. Calling upon the Holy Spirit, they grow closer to Jesus Christ and to one another. The criteria for discerning the authenticity

of the working of the Holy Spirit, given by Saint Paul¹⁰⁰ and further developed in the spiritual tradition of the Church, are a help and a norm for them and for all Christians. Attentive to these criteria, living a life of discipleship and prayer receptive to the Holy Spirit can become a true means of mutual edification and can deepen the bonds of communion among Christians.

98. Cf. Directory, n. 110.

99. UR, n. 2.

100. Cf. I Cor 12-14; Gal 5:22-26.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Councils of Churches: Toward an Understanding of Their Nature and Purpose

Introduction

The ecumenical movement takes a variety of forms, but perhaps the most recognizable expressions of ecumenical life are councils of churches. They may also be the most significant in that council membership commits still-divided churches to engage, here and now, in common mission and in dialogue aimed at building trust.

Councils of churches of this sort are a new thing in the history of Christianity. Prior to the modern ecumenical movement, there existed voluntary alliances of individual Christians (e.g., the YMCA) dedicated to particular tasks. But when churches commit themselves to one another for shared service, witness, worship and study, something new is happening, something which the traditional theological vocabulary is inadequate to describe.

Since councils of churches began appearing on the scene, there has been a good deal of discussion about their nature and purpose. Several points have been widely affirmed as indicated by the documents included in this chapter:

- *A council of churches is not the church. Actions of councils are authoritative in and for the churches only to the extent that these actions bear the intrinsic authority of wisdom and truth (see the memorandum by Temple). Beyond that, membership in a council does not necessarily imply that each member regards the others as truly churches. The new fact about councils is that they manifest fellowship among churches that may not be able to recognize and accept each other fully.*
- *Membership in a council signals “a holy dissatisfaction” (Toronto statement) with our present separation. Membership also implies, at the very least, a recognition that our neighbors in the fellowship of the council belong to Christ and that they manifest crucial elements of the one church.*
- *The essence of conciliar ecumenism is not the relationship of the churches to the structure of the council but their relationship to each other. This fellowship among the churches should expand and intensify as a result of life together in the council. Where this is not the case, the council*

will become simply another utilitarian organization rather than a preliminary, provisional expression of the unity God wills.

- *Decisions about unity are properly left to the churches, but councils have an instrumental role in promoting a growing unity among their members—by fostering discussion of divisive issues, by encouraging the reception of agreements, and by generally building trust.*
- *Councils of churches are both instruments of the churches and of the ecumenical movement (see the speech by Lukas Vischer). They perform tasks that the churches authorize, but they also push beyond what the churches may initially identify as their common agenda. To put it another way, through their mutual engagement in a council, churches should expect and demand to be challenged to deeper and more costly ecumenical commitment.*
- *The structure of a council of churches must always be regarded as provisional, must always be prepared to die in order that fuller manifestations of fellowship may be born. Otherwise, councils can actually hinder the work of ecumenism by allowing the churches to feel good about their present stage of institutionalized division.*

The most influential of all councils is, of course, the WCC, whose primary document of self-definition, the famous Toronto statement of 1950, is included in this chapter. In one sense, nearly all of the other texts in this chapter are commentaries on Toronto, especially the important document from 1997, “Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches” (CUV).

A crucial question for any reflection on councils of churches is how the Orthodox churches and the Roman Catholic Church can be conciliar participants without violating their own ecclesiological assumptions. The issues for the Catholic Church, which is now a member of more than sixty national councils, are explored in two texts: the 1975 statement from the Vatican and the essay by Thomas Stransky, a key figure in implementing the ecumenical commitments of Vatican II. Principles for Orthodox participation in councils are set forth in the Sofia report from 1981 and the report from a Special Commission, called for by the WCC’s Harare assembly in 1998.

“A Word to the Churches” from the Lund conference on Faith and Order (1952), which comes near the beginning of the chapter, contains the most famous of all ecumenical principles: that the churches should “act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately.” The “Lund Principle,” as it is known, is the very foundation of conciliar life.

118. William Temple, Explanatory Memorandum on the Constitution of the World Council of Churches, 1938

This memorandum—prepared by the Anglican archbishop and ecumenical leader, William Temple—was sent to the churches as part of the invitation to establish a World Council of Churches. The “Basis” to which it refers now reads as follows: “The WCC is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” • W.A. Visser ’t Hooft, The Genesis and Formation of the World Council of Churches, Geneva, WCC, 1982, pp. 107-10.

I. Historical

The project of a World Council of Churches has arisen out of the natural development of the two movements known as the Life and Work and Faith and Order movements. This development had led to considerable overlapping with consequent waste of time and energy. Consequently at their separate sessions held in August and September 1936, in successive weeks, the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work, and the Continuation Committee of the World Conference on Faith and Order, passed resolutions recommending the appointment of a committee to review the work of ecumenical cooperation since the Stockholm and Lausanne conferences, and to report to the Oxford and Edinburgh conferences regarding the future of the ecumenical movement.

It was further agreed that this committee should be appointed by a group representing various ecumenical movements, and should consist mainly of persons holding positions of ecclesiastical responsibility in the different churches, but should also contain representatives of the viewpoint of laymen, women and youth, and some officers of the ecumenical movements.

The group designated for this purpose, after consultation with the leaders of the movements and of the churches, constituted the Committee, known as the Committee of Thirty-Five. This Committee of Thirty-Five met at Westfield College, Hampstead, London, in July 1937, and unanimously recommended that each of the two world conferences at Oxford and Edinburgh should adopt

certain proposals for the foundation of a World Council of Churches, the first of which was:

That the conference regards it as desirable that, with a view to facilitating the more effective action of the Christian Church in the modern world, the movements known as Life and Work and Faith and Order should be more closely related in a body representative of the churches and caring for the interests of each movement.

At both world conferences the proposal was approved in principle, and each appointed seven members, with alternates, to form together a constituent committee entrusted with the duty of revising and completing the scheme, of submitting it to the churches, and of convening the World Council. . . .

Two points will be noticed in this recital of the history of the proposal: first, the originators of the scheme are the governing bodies of the Faith and Order and the Life and Work movements. The World Council represents a new form of cooperation between these two movements; it will mainly be concerned to carry on their work; it is therefore to be regarded as a continuation of their activities. Secondly, at two stages the leaders of those movements called into consultation representatives of the churches, first a selected group at Westfield College in 1937, and later a strong body of officially appointed delegates at Utrecht in 1938. The scheme now submitted is that which was approved at Utrecht, modified as required by the Faith and Order Continuation Committee.

II. The Constitution

1. *The Basis:* This contains two points. First, the Council is envisaged as a fellowship of churches exercising its functions through different organs (see 5 and 6 below). It is not a federation as commonly understood, and its Assembly and Central Committee will have no constitutional authority whatever over its constituent churches. Any authority that it may have will consist in the weight which it carries with the churches by its own wisdom.

Secondly, it stands on faith in our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour. As its brevity shows, the basis is an affirmation of the Christian faith of the participating churches, and not a credal test to judge churches or persons. It is an affirmation of the Incarnation and the Atonement. The Council desires to be a fellowship of those churches which accept these truths. But it does not concern itself with the manner in which the churches interpret them. It will

therefore be the responsibility of each particular church to decide whether it can collaborate on this basis.

2. *Membership*: This clause calls for little comment. The second paragraph aims at securing due representation of those minority churches for which this might not be secured under any inelastic system, while avoiding any such excessive representation of very small bodies as would destroy a reasonable balance.

3. *Functions*: Here the main point of importance is that the Council exists to serve the churches, not to control them (see 4 below), and that continuance of the Faith and Order and of the Life and Work movements is put in the forefront.

4. *Authority*: This partly expands 3 above. Special attention is paid to the last clause. Not only has the Council no power to legislate for the participating churches; it is also forbidden to act in their name except so far as all or any of them have commissioned it to do so.

5. *Organization*: (i) The principal authority shall be the Assembly. This will consist of representatives of the churches, directly appointed by them. It is intended to invite every church which was invited to the Oxford and Edinburgh conferences to be represented, and also others in accordance with the most careful survey which it is possible to make. Thus the continuity with the two ecumenical movements will be preserved without exclusion of any entitled to membership.

The phrase "groups of churches" is intended to cover the case of some very small denominations and also that of churches such as some in Asia and Africa which are accustomed to act together in such matters.

In view of the nature of the Assembly's interests, great importance is attached to the securing of a considerable representation of the laity.

(ii) The *Central Committee* is to be chosen from among the members of the Assembly. The scheme provides that its members also shall be directly nominated for this service by their own churches. This will involve that in each regional group the churches concerned should agree among themselves on each occasion which of them should appoint members of the Committee. It may be that when the Assembly meets it will modify this procedure. Such difficulties as exist arise from the need to keep the size of the Committee within the limits appropriate to committee work and to comparatively frequent meetings.

6. *Commissions*: These form a familiar part of the machinery of the Life and Work and the Faith and Order movements. It will be noticed that the Faith and Order Commission is to be conducted on the basis hitherto accepted by that movement. Members of commissions need not be members of the Assembly or Central

Committee, and may include persons who are members of churches which have not joined the Council. Thus it is hoped that the establishment of the World Council will not involve any narrowing of the area of cooperation hitherto enjoyed in this field.

Other ecumenical Christian organizations: A world council of churches should be in touch with the confessional world organizations of the churches and with the main Christian organizations, the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches, and, not in the last place, the International Missionary Council. . . .

119. "The Church, the Churches, and the World Council of Churches," World Council of Churches Central Committee, Toronto, 1950

The formation of the WCC, and the holding of its first assembly, did not answer a number of fundamental questions about the nature of the Council and its relationship to the member churches. That task was left to the WCC's central committee at its meeting in 1950, with the following result. • The Genesis and Formation of the World Council of Churches, Geneva, WCC, 1982, pp. 112-20.

I. Introduction

The first Assembly at Amsterdam adopted a resolution on "the authority of the Council" which read:

The World Council of Churches is composed of churches which acknowledge Jesus Christ as God and Saviour. They find their unity in him. They do not have to create their unity; it is the gift of God. But they know that it is their duty to make common cause in the search for the expression of that unity in work and in life. The Council desires to serve the churches which are its constituent members as an instrument whereby they may bear witness together to their common allegiance to Jesus Christ, and cooperate in matters requiring united action. But the Council is far from desiring to usurp any of the functions which already belong to its constituent churches, or to control them, or to legislate for them, and indeed is prevented by its constitution

from doing so. Moreover, while earnestly seeking fellowship in thought and action for all its members, the Council disavows any thought of becoming a single unified church structure independent of the churches which have joined in constituting the Council, or a structure dominated by a centralized administrative authority.

The purpose of the Council is to express its unity in another way. Unity arises out of the love of God in Jesus Christ, which, binding the constituent churches to him, binds them to one another. It is the earnest desire of the Council that the churches may be bound closer to Christ and therefore closer to one another. In the bond of his love, they will desire continually to pray for one another and to strengthen one another, in worship and in witness, bearing one another's burdens and so fulfilling the law of Christ.

This statement authoritatively answered some of the questions which had arisen about the nature of the Council. But it is clear that other questions are now arising and some attempt to answer them must be made, especially in the face of a number of false or inadequate conceptions of the Council which are being presented.

II. The Need for Further Statement

The World Council of Churches represents a new and unprecedented approach to the problem of interchurch relationships. Its purpose and nature can be easily misunderstood. So it is salutary that we should state more clearly and definitely what the World Council is and what it is not.

This more precise definition involves certain difficulties. It is not for nothing that the churches themselves have refrained from giving detailed and precise definitions of the nature of the Church. If this is true of them, it is not to be expected that the World Council can easily achieve a definition which has to take account of all the various ecclesiologies of its member churches. The World Council deals in a provisional way with divisions between existing churches, which ought not to be, because they contradict the very nature of the Church. A situation such as this cannot be met in terms of well-established precedents. The main problem is how one can formulate the ecclesiological implications of a body in which so many different conceptions of the Church are represented, without using the categories or language of one particular conception of the Church.

In order to clarify the notion of the World Council of Churches it will be best to begin by a series of negations so

as to do away at the outset with certain misunderstandings which may easily arise or have already arisen, because of the newness and unprecedented character of the underlying conception.

III. What the World Council of Churches Is Not

1. *The World Council of Churches is not and must never become a superchurch.*

It is not a superchurch. It is not the world church. It is not the *Una Sancta* of which the Creeds speak. This misunderstanding arises again and again although it has been denied as clearly as possible in official pronouncements of the Council. It is based on complete ignorance of the real situation within the Council. For if the Council should in any way violate its own constitutional principle, that it cannot legislate or act for its member churches, it would cease to maintain the support of its membership.

In speaking of "member churches," we repeat a phrase from the Constitution of the World Council of Churches; but membership in the Council does not in any sense mean that the churches belong to a body which can take decisions for them. Each church retains the constitutional right to ratify or to reject utterances or actions of the Council. The "authority" of the Council consists only "in the weight which it carries with the churches by its own wisdom" (William Temple).

2. *The purpose of the World Council of Churches is not to negotiate unions between churches, which can only be done by the churches themselves acting on their own initiative, but to bring the churches into living contact with each other and to promote the study and discussion of the issues of Church unity.*

By its very existence and its activities the Council bears witness to the necessity of a clear manifestation of the oneness of the Church of Christ. But it remains the right and duty of each church to draw from its ecumenical experience such consequences as it feels bound to do on the basis of its own convictions. No church, therefore, need fear that the Council will press it into decisions concerning union with other churches.

3. *The World Council cannot and should not be based on any one particular conception of the Church. It does not prejudge the ecclesiological problem.*

It is often suggested that the dominating or underlying conception of the Council is that of such and such a church or such and such a school of theology. It may well be that at a certain particular conference or in a particular utterance one can find traces of the strong influence of a certain tradition or theology.

The Council as such cannot possibly become the instrument of one confession or school without losing its

very *raison d'être*. There is room and space in the World Council for the ecclesiology of every church which is ready to participate in the ecumenical conversation and which takes its stand on the Basis of the Council, which is "a fellowship of churches which accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour."

4. *Membership in the World Council of Churches does not imply that a church treats its own conception of the Church as merely relative.*

There are critics, and not infrequently friends, of the ecumenical movement who criticize or praise it for its alleged inherent latitudinarianism. According to them the ecumenical movement stands for the fundamental equality of all Christian doctrines and conceptions of the Church and is, therefore, not concerned with the question of truth. This misunderstanding is due to the fact that ecumenism has in the minds of these persons become identified with certain particular theories about unity, which have indeed played a role in ecumenical history, but which do not represent the common view of the movement as a whole, and have never been officially endorsed by the World Council.

5. *Membership in the World Council does not imply the acceptance of a specific doctrine concerning the nature of Church unity.*

The Council stands for Church unity. But in its midst there are those who conceive unity wholly or largely as a full consensus in the realm of doctrine, others who conceive of it primarily as sacramental communion based on common church order, others who consider both indispensable, others who would only require unity in certain fundamentals of faith and order, again others who conceive the one Church exclusively as a universal spiritual fellowship, or hold that visible unity is inessential or even undesirable. But none of these conceptions can be called the ecumenical theory. The whole point of the ecumenical conversation is precisely that all these conceptions enter into dynamic relations with each other.

In particular, membership in the World Council does not imply acceptance or rejection of the doctrine that the unity of the Church consists in the unity of the invisible Church. Thus the statement in the Encyclical *Mystici Corporis* concerning what it considers the error of a spiritualized conception of unity does not apply to the World Council. The World Council does not "imagine a church which one cannot see or touch, which would be only spiritual, in which numerous Christian bodies, though divided in matters of faith, would nevertheless be united through an invisible link." It does, however, include churches which believe that the Church is essentially invisible as well as those which hold that visible unity is essential.

IV. The Assumptions Underlying the World Council of Churches

We must now try to define the positive assumptions which underlie the World Council of Churches and the ecclesiological implications of membership in it.

1. *The member churches of the Council believe that conversation, cooperation and common witness of the churches must be based on the common recognition that Christ is the Divine Head of the Body.*

The Basis of the World Council is the acknowledgment of the central fact that "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid even Jesus Christ." It is the expression of the conviction that the Lord of the Church is God-among-us who continues to gather his children and to build his Church himself.

Therefore, no relationship between the churches can have any substance or promise unless it starts with the common submission of the churches to the headship of Jesus Christ in his Church. From different points of view churches ask: "How can men with opposite convictions belong to one and the same federation of the faithful?" A clear answer to that question was given by the Orthodox delegates in Edinburgh 1937 when they said: "in spite of all our differences, our common Master and Lord is one—Jesus Christ who will lead us to a more and more close collaboration for the edifying of the Body of Christ." The fact of Christ's headship over his people compels all those who acknowledge him to enter into real and close relationships with each other—even though they differ in many important points.

2. *The member churches of the World Council believe on the basis of the New Testament that the Church of Christ is one.*

The ecumenical movement owes its existence to the fact that this article of the faith has again come home to men and women in many churches with an inescapable force. As they face the discrepancy between the truth that there is and can only be one Church of Christ, and the fact that there exist so many churches which claim to be churches of Christ but are not in living unity with each other, they feel a holy dissatisfaction with the present situation. The churches realize that it is a matter of simple Christian duty for each church to do its utmost for the manifestation of the Church in its oneness, and to work and pray that Christ's purpose for his Church should be fulfilled.

3. *The member churches recognize that the membership of the Church of Christ is more inclusive than the membership of their own church body. They seek, therefore, to enter into living contact with those outside their own ranks who confess the Lordship of Christ.*

All the Christian churches, including the Church of Rome, hold that there is no complete identity between the membership of the Church Universal and the membership of their own church. They recognize that there are church members “*extra muros*,” that these belong “*aliquo modo*” to the Church, or even that there is an “*ecclesia extra ecclesiam*.” This recognition finds expression in the fact that with very few exceptions the Christian churches accept the baptism administered by other churches as valid.

But the question arises what consequences are to be drawn from this teaching. Most often in church history the churches have only drawn the negative consequence that they should have no dealings with those outside their membership. The underlying assumption of the ecumenical movement is that each church has a positive task to fulfill in this realm. That task is to seek fellowship with all those who, while not members of the same visible body, belong together as members of the mystical body. And the ecumenical movement is the place where this search and discovery take place.

4. *The member churches of the World Council consider the relationship of other churches to the Holy Catholic Church which the Creeds profess as a subject for mutual consideration. Nevertheless, membership does not imply that each church must regard the other member churches as churches in the true and full sense of the word.*

There is a place in the World Council both for those churches which recognize other churches as churches in the full and true sense, and for those which do not. But these divided churches, even if they cannot yet accept each other as true and pure churches, believe that they should not remain in isolation from each other, and consequently they have associated themselves in the World Council of Churches.

They know that differences of faith and order exist, but they recognize one another as serving the one Lord, and they wish to explore their differences in mutual respect, trusting that they may thus be led by the Holy Spirit to manifest their unity in Christ.

5. *The member churches of the World Council 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.*

It is generally taught in the different churches that other churches have certain elements of the true Church, in some traditions called “*vestigia ecclesiae*.” Such elements are the preaching of the Word, the teaching of the Holy Scriptures and the administration of the sacraments. These elements are more than pale shadows of the life of the true

Church. They are a fact of real promise and provide an opportunity to strive by frank and brotherly intercourse for the realization of a fuller unity. Moreover, Christians of all ecclesiological views throughout the world, by the preaching of the Gospel, brought men and women to salvation by Christ, to newness of life in him, and into Christian fellowship with one another.

The ecumenical movement is based upon the conviction that these “traces” are to be followed. The churches should not despise them as mere elements of truth but rejoice in them as hopeful signs pointing towards real unity. For what are these elements? Not dead remnants of the past but powerful means by which God works. Questions may and must be raised about the validity and purity of teaching and sacramental life, but there can be no question that such dynamic elements of church life justify the hope that the churches which maintain them will be led into full truth. It is through the ecumenical conversation that this recognition of truth is facilitated.

6. *The member churches of the Council are willing to consult together in seeking to learn of the Lord Jesus Christ what witness he would have them to bear to the world in his name.*

Since the very *raison d’être* of the Church is to witness to Christ, churches cannot meet together without seeking from their common Lord a common witness before the world. This will not always be possible. But when it proves possible thus to speak or act together, the churches can gratefully accept it as God’s gracious gift that in spite of their disunity he has enabled them to render one and the same witness and that they may thus manifest something of the unity, the purpose of which is precisely “that the world may believe,” and that they may “testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.”

7. *A further practical implication of common membership in the World Council is that the member churches should recognize their solidarity with each other, render assistance to each other in case of need, and refrain from such actions as are incompatible with brotherly relationship.*

Within the Council the churches seek to deal with each other with a brotherly concern. This does not exclude extremely frank speaking to each other, in which within the Council the churches ask each other searching questions and face their differences. But this is to be done for the building up of the Body of Christ. This excludes a purely negative attitude of one church to another. The positive affirmation of each church’s faith is to be welcomed, but actions incompatible with brotherly relationship towards other member churches defeat the very purpose for which the Council has been created. On the contrary, these churches should help each other in removing all obstacles

to the free exercise of the Church's normal functions. And whenever a church is in need or under persecution, it should be able to count on the help of the other churches through the Council.

8. *The member churches enter into spiritual relationships through which they seek to learn from each other and to give help to each other in order that the Body of Christ may be built up and that the life of the churches may be renewed.*

It is the common teaching of the churches that the Church as the temple of God is at the same time a building which has been built and a building which is being built. The Church has, therefore, aspects which belong to its very structure and essence and cannot be changed. But it has other aspects which are subject to change. Thus the life of the Church, as it expresses itself in its witness to its own members and to the world, needs constant renewal. The churches can and should help each other in this realm by a mutual exchange of thought and of experience. This is the significance of the study work of the World Council and of many other of its activities. There is no intention to impose any particular pattern of thought or life upon the churches. But whatever insight has been received by one or more churches is to be made available to all the churches for the sake of the "building up of the Body of Christ."

None of these positive assumptions, implied in the existence of the World Council, is in conflict with the teachings of the member churches. We believe therefore that no church need fear that by entering into the World Council it is in danger of denying its heritage.

As the conversation between the churches develops and as the churches enter into closer contact with each other, they will no doubt have to face new decisions and problems. For the Council exists to break the deadlock between the churches. But in no case can or will any church be pressed to take a decision against its own conviction or desire. The churches remain wholly free in the action which, on the basis of their convictions and in the light of their ecumenical contacts, they will or will not take.

A very real unity has been discovered in ecumenical meetings which is, to all who collaborate in the World Council, the most precious element of its life. It exists and we receive it again and again as an unmerited gift from the Lord. We praise God for this foretaste of the unity of his people and continue hopefully with the work to which he has called us together. For the Council exists to serve the churches as they prepare to meet their Lord who knows only one flock.

120. "A Word to the Churches," Third World Conference on Faith and Order, Lund, 1952

This brief introduction to the report from the 1952 Faith and Order conference contains the "Lund Principle," which has been frequently cited in subsequent ecumenical literature and regarded as a basis for conciliar life. • The Third World Conference on Faith and Order, ed. Oliver S. Tomkins, London, SCM, 1953.

A Word to the Churches

... We have seen clearly that we can make no real advance towards unity if we only compare our several conceptions of the nature of the Church and the traditions in which they are embodied. But once again it has been proved true that as we seek to draw closer to Christ we come closer to one another. We need, therefore, to penetrate behind our divisions to a deeper and richer understanding of the mystery of the God-given union of Christ with His Church. We need increasingly to realize that the separate histories of our Churches find their full meaning only if seen in the perspective of God's dealings with His whole people.

We have now reached a crucial point in our ecumenical discussions. As we have come to know one another better our eyes have been opened to the depth and pain of our separations and also to our fundamental unity. The measure of unity which it has been given to the Churches to experience together must now find clearer manifestation. A faith in the one Church of Christ which is not implemented by acts of obedience is dead. There are truths about the nature of God and His Church which will remain forever closed to us unless we act together in obedience to the unity which is already ours. We would, therefore, earnestly request our Churches to consider whether they are doing all they ought to do to manifest the oneness of the people of God. Should not our Churches ask themselves whether they are now showing sufficient eagerness to enter into conversation with other Churches, and whether they should not act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately? Should they not acknowledge the fact that they often allow themselves to be separated from each other by secular forces and influences instead of witnessing together to the sole Lordship of Christ who gathers His people out of all nations, races and tongues?

Obedience to God demands also that the Churches seek unity in their mission to the world. We share the failure to convey the Christian message to the mass of mankind. But it is precisely to these masses that we have the obligation to preach the one Gospel, and to manifest the oneness of the Church.

The word penitence has been often on our lips here at Lund. Penitence involves willingness to endure judgment—the judgment of the Lord to whom has been given the power to sift mankind and to gather into one the scattered children of God. We await His final triumph at the end of history. But, in God’s mercy, tokens of judgment which are also calls to a new and active obedience come to us in our day also, here and now. Surely we cannot any longer remain blind to the signs of our times and deaf to His Word.

121. “The Ecclesiological Significance of Councils of Churches,” National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, 1963

The national council in the United States came into existence in 1950 as a “cooperative agency of the churches.” This influential report from a Faith and Order study commission challenges the members of the council to recognize that their life together has greater ecclesiological significance. • Growing Consensus: Church Dialogues in the United States, 1962-1991, eds. Joseph A. Burgess and Jeffrey Gros, New York, Paulist Press, 1995, pp. 602-13.

Part III. Ecclesiological Conclusions

Understanding that councils of churches can be said to have ecclesiological significance if they bear significantly the marks of the Church, or if they are genuinely related to the Church in important ways, we present our conclusions in answer to three questions: (1) To what extent, if at all, is the reality of the Church expressed in councils of churches? (2) To what extent, if at all, are councils of churches instruments which the churches should use in fulfilling their mission? (3) To what extent, if at all, are councils of churches contributing, or capable of contributing, to the realization of the unity of the Church?

Is the Reality of the Church Expressed in Councils of Churches?

In the contemporary ecumenical discussion about the nature of the Church, it is emphasized that the presence of the Church may be discerned by such evidences as the following: the activity of the Holy Spirit, right preaching of the Word, due administration of the sacraments, provision for proper church order, the upholding of the faith of the apostles, growth in the grace of holiness, witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ over the world, service to needy men in the name of God, and the gathering of separated brethren in the unity of reconciliation. This is by no means an exhaustive list; not all Christians would agree that all of these marks are essential to the discernment of the Church; there are many variant interpretations of them. But insofar as some of these realities can be discerned in the life of the councils of churches, the latter then participate in the reality of the Church.

There are convincing signs of the presence and activity of God the Holy Spirit in the council of churches movement. The Holy Spirit moves where He wills; His activities are not bound within our historical institutions nor can they be summoned at our bidding (John 3:8). But many contemporary Christians do bear witness to His Presence in the councils of churches, bringing the fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22). Of course, it must be remembered that the Holy Spirit works as He wills outside of as well as within our churches; from His Presence it does not logically follow that a visible church is brought into being. But in another sense, as Irenaeus declared in the second century, “Where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and all grace.”¹ Therefore, insofar as the presence of the Holy Spirit can be discerned in the life and work of the councils of churches, the latter must be judged to be related through Him to His activity in the denominations (insofar as He is at work in *them*), and, with the denominations, through Him they bear a relationship to the One Church. His presence in the work of councils of churches, which can never be guaranteed but which has been convincingly felt, does bring to them ecclesiological significance.

Another way in which the reality of the Church is expressed in councils of churches is their provision of structures through which the denominations may participate in the loving service, *diakonia*, that is essential to the fullness of the Church.² There are many areas of service to

1. Against Heresies, Book III, chap xxiv.

2. See the Report of the Section on Service of the New Delhi Assembly of the World Council of Churches: Visser ‘t Hooft, W.A., ed., *The New Delhi Report* (New York: Association Press, 1962), pp. 93ff.

human beings in need in the modern world, areas especially demanding Christian attention, which could not be opened except through the cooperative efforts of churches in council. When the communions and their individual members through their councils of churches bring food to the hungry, clothing for the naked, medicine to the sick, education to the illiterate, love to the rejected, the Church is surely there in the acts of love and service. When the denominations through the councils contribute to the fairer treatment of those who have known injustice, then the work of the Church is being done.

The councils of churches also share in certain ways in the ministry of the Church. The ministry is a continuing institution in the Christian community from the time when the Lord "appointed twelve, to be with him, and to be sent out to preach and have authority to cast out demons" (Mark 3:14-15). The Christian ministry is the ministry of Christ; there is no Christian priesthood or ministry apart from His priesthood and ministry. Sharing His life, the Church as the Body of Christ has a general ministerial function derived from that of Christ. In this every member has his share, according to his capacities and calling (II Cor. 5:19; I Peter 2:9). In the Book of Acts, the Church is set before us as a body of believers having within it, as its recognized focus of unity and organ of authority, the apostolate. The apostolate was followed by a special, official, or ordained ministry to carry out the liturgical, preaching, teaching, absolving, and pastoral care functions of the Church, although Christians not formally ordained to the ministry could perform some of these functions also, and participate in others. Various theories of the official ministry and differing understandings of the meaning and method of their ordination arose in the long course of church history; some churches emphasizing and some minimizing (or denying) the distinction between clergy and laity. Although today the official ministry of the One Church is neither united nor universally recognized, councils of churches can serve as partial expressions of the general ministry of the whole Church in effective ways. The general ministry, as carried on through councils, does not supplant the special ordained ministry of the churches nor does it represent an emerging new form of that ministry, but it serves as an effective reminder and token that the ministry of Christ is one despite the brokenness of the Church.

In councils of churches, not only churches are brought into association with one another, but also their members are brought into an intimate and sometimes profound relationship with one another in which together they witness to a larger and more inclusive community than exists in any separate church or denomination. Although this larger

community does not have all the essential marks of the Church, it is a fellowship in the name of Jesus Christ; and in its work and worship the participants experience a quality of unity with one another which brings them closer to Him. Here, then, is one manifestation, partial though it may be, of the Church of Christ in its wholeness. Moreover, a change, subtle perhaps, takes place in the attitudes of the participants, because of the participation in a form of Christian community which may be wider and deeper than they have known in their own denominations. Thus this community, which in some measure witnesses to the essential unity of the Church in Jesus Christ, also stirs consciences to strive more vigorously for its fuller expression.

Though the reality of the Church is expressed in certain ways in councils of churches, the councils of churches are not themselves churches. Councils of churches do not normally have creeds or determine theological issues, and do not administer the sacraments or ordain. Nevertheless, as described in the preceding paragraphs, councils of churches may and do have important ecclesiological significance.

Are Councils of Churches Instruments Which the Churches Should Use in Fulfilling Their Mission?

Congregations and communions can find and have found opportunities to deepen and enrich their own lives through participation in councils of churches. In separation from one another, the denominations can lose sight of important emphases of the Gospel, and can be content with ideas of the Church not fully adequate to the New Testament. In competition with each other, they can magnify certain duties and practices but let others go in the effort to maintain distinctiveness. But through participation with others in councils of churches, they can move toward richer, more adequate understandings of the nature of the Church as they are freely led thereto through the study of the Word of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Councils of churches can help to bring the churches into encounter so that they must witness to each other of what they deem essential to the faith, appealing to the Bible, tradition, history, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the mutual and free search for fuller understanding of Christ and His Church. The very way in which a particular body of Christians understands and witnesses to the faith may bring inspiration and guidance to others; it may also painfully confront us with our own inadequacies and need to recover the fullness of the faith and of the Church. Congregations and communions may find their own lives deepened and renewed as they think and work with other Christians in councils of churches. Church renewal movements, in our

times, have often been stimulated and extended by councils of churches.

There is great emphasis in contemporary Christian literature on the importance of the missionary and evangelistic tasks of the Church—an emphasis which is richly sustained in New Testament study. In the face of the difficulties and complexities before congregations and denominations in carrying out these tasks, councils of churches can help to make the efforts and contributions of individual bodies more effective.³ By providing means through which the churches can eliminate duplication of effort, and by securing and sharing relevant information, the councils of churches can help congregations and communions do their work of witness better. From this point of view, councils of churches are instruments of the churches which help them do their proper churchly tasks more effectively and relevantly. They are also a testimony, though incomplete and confused, that God has given one Gospel to one Church for the sake of one world.

The way in which councils of churches share in the reality of the Church through acts of Christian service, through *diakonia*, has already been mentioned. A further point is now appropriate. In this day of vast human and social needs, part of the proper work of every congregation and denomination can be done better through the pooling of resources and competencies in cooperative action than alone. Given the situation of a deeply divided Church facing vast human needs, cooperation in councils of churches would seem to be the least that could be done in order that Christian *diakonia* be maintained on a scale in any way commensurate with the needs of the world. *Diakonia* should not be understood as flowing only from church to world, however. For it is also important within the life of the Church; indeed, in the New Testament the emphasis is on *diakonia* in the Church. This has been forcefully expressed by Nikos A. Nissiotis:

The division of the Church as a mystery hidden in the incomprehensible nature of God is not primarily either the result of hatred among the Churches, or of disagreement on fundamental views concerning Christian dogma. One is led by historical events to believe that at the root of the schisms in the Church there is one fundamental cause: the lack of care of the local churches for one another, the absence of *koinonia* between them, without which the vertical communion with God, though not broken, becomes a further power of alienation and isolation . . . Among the main

3. Although concern for the unity of the faith is a concern for all churches, there are certain churches which understand that missionary or evangelistic tasks cannot be carried out except on the basis of prior unity of faith.

reasons for the Church heresies, schisms and divisions is the lack of this inner power of mutual service, of mutual interdependent existence. The greatest sin of the people of God is that they have neglected to perceive the theological vertical dimension of *diakonia* in the ecclesiological, horizontal one.⁴

Councils of churches provide ways for churches to exercise such mutual service, to the glory of God and the enrichment of the people of God.

Part of the work of every Christian congregation and communion is to make more manifest the unity of the Church. As it was said at the Oberlin Conference, "Concern for unity is not an option open to those who happen to be interested in ecumenical affairs."⁵ It is for all Christians. Section 1 at the Oberlin Conference, considering "Imperatives and Motivations" for the quest for unity, stated the case for unitive concern by every Christian, congregation, and communion in strong terms:

The unity of the Church is both a gift and a demand. The Church is one as Christ is One (I Cor. 1:12-13). In a variety of images this unity is portrayed in the New Testament. The true vine has many branches but it is one vine (John 15:5). The One Shepherd has many sheep but they belong to one flock (John 10:16). The Church is the household of God, in which the members of God's family are at home (Eph. 2:19). It is the Israel of God, the heirs of the promises and responsibilities of the chosen people of the old covenant (I Peter 2:9-10). An outstanding description of the Church's unity is the figure of the Body of Christ (I Cor. 12:12-31). It is by *One* Spirit that men are incorporated into One Body. Within the Body there are many members; but all are coordinated by Christ who is the Head. There are diversities of gifts and ways of service, but under the guidance of the Spirit these are enhanced by the supreme spiritual gift of love and contribute to the upbuilding of the Body. As a physical body is animated by the spirit, so the Church is a visible community in which the Risen Christ is present in the midst of his people in life-giving and unifying love.

Thus the imperative to manifest our unity concretely and visibly in the world is based on the truth that God has made us one in Christ. Christ's sacrifice, which displays the infinite love and undeserved grace of God, places us under obligation to love one another, even as He has loved us (I John 4:17-21). Any form

4. "The Ecclesiological Significance of Inter-church *Diakonia*," *Ecumenical Review*, XIII (1960-61), pp. 193, 195.

5. Minear, ed., *The Nature of the Unity We Seek* (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1958), p. 169.

of disunity that prevents the fullest expression of love in community and which promotes strife, jealousy, or factionalism is a denial of the full meaning of the Gospel.⁶

Councils of churches provide readily available channels for the churches to fulfill the clear imperatives to seek unity. They are important means for bearing witness to the unity we have and enlarging our concepts about the unity we seek. They are structures by which congregations and denominations join together in the quest for Christian unity. The report of the section dealing with "The Role of the Councils in the Quest for Unity" at the world's first Faith and Order conference on an area basis (The Pacific Northwest) well said:

We earnestly look for the day when a congregation will count service in the local council part of its mission and the pastor will accept leadership as part of his ministry.⁷

Councils of churches help congregations and denominations fulfill their own God-given tasks of seeking to make more fully manifest the unity of the Church.

Are Councils of Churches Contributing to the Unity of the Church?

The council of churches has its most dramatic ecclesiological significance in the fact that in it the churches labor together for the fullest possible manifestation of the unity of the Church. The very existence of the councils implies a continuing call for the overcoming of divisions in all areas of the life of the churches. The councils have taken seriously—perhaps at times too seriously—that they are councils of *churches*, and that they represent the churches. Councils of churches have not sought nor have they been asked or called upon to negotiate church unions. They have often been content to be agencies of cooperation—a significant role indeed. But even so, are they not called to become active agents of reconciliation? They can and should show an unceasing concern for feasible and Christian steps toward the larger unity of the Church. They can work in suitable ways toward the unity Christ wills as set forth, for example, in the Report of the Section on Unity at the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches at New Delhi:

The love of the Father and the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit is the source and goal of the unity which

the Triune God wills for all men and creation. We believe that we share in this unity in the Church of Jesus Christ, Who is before all things and in Whom all things hold together; in Him alone, given by the Father to be Head of the Body, the Church has its true unity. The reality of this unity was manifest at Pentecost in the gift of the Holy Spirit, through Whom we know in this present age the first fruits of that perfect union of the Son with His Father, which will be known in its fullness only when all things are consummated by Christ in His glory. The Lord Who is bringing all things into full unity at the last is He Who constrains us to seek the unity which He wills for His Church on earth here and now.

We believe that the unity which is both God's will and His gift to His Church is being made visible as all in each place who are baptized into Jesus Christ and confess Him as Lord and Savior are brought by the Holy Spirit into ONE fully committed fellowship, holding the one apostolic faith, preaching the one Gospel, breaking the one bread, joining in common prayer, and having a corporate life reaching out in witness and service to all and who at the same time are united with the whole Christian fellowship in all places and ages in such wise that ministry and members are accepted by all, and that all can act and speak together as occasion requires for the tasks to which God calls his people.

It is for such unity that we believe we must pray and work.⁸

Councils of Churches serve as agencies in which the churches not only work together, but also seek together to find and make more fully manifest the unity of the church.

Councils of churches have their special role in the economy of the Church. By establishing local, state, national, and world councils of churches, we have taken important steps toward unity, but unity has not thereby been accomplished. We must clearly realize that what we have done so far represents only the first feeble steps in the direction of unity. It has been suggested that we will take a leap forward if we consider that a council of churches is as much a church as one or another of the denominations.⁹ While there has been some support in our Commission for this general view, our conclusion is that councils of churches are not and should not claim to be churches. It is our conviction that for councils of churches to claim that they are the still imperfect yet actual nuclei of the One Church would not be to further the cause of Christian

6. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

7. John H. Van Lierop, ed., *Church and Unity in the Pacific Northwest* (Portland, Oregon: Greater Portland Council of Churches, 1962), p. 93.

8. Visser 't Hooft, ed., *The New Delhi Report* (New York: Association Press, 1962), pp. 116f.

9. Cf., e.g., Henry P. Van Dusen, "The Significance of Conciliar Ecumenicity," *Ecumenical Review*, XI:1 (1959-60), pp. 310-318.

unity but to add a new denomination or denominations to the spectrum. At the Oberlin Conference it was said, “. . . in North America we know by experience that efforts toward unity have been very productive of new and acute divisions.”¹⁰ The road to our present denominational divisions was a long and hard one, and the road to genuine Christian unity through the enlargement of areas of theological agreement and the reunion of churches cannot be by-passed. Councils of churches are not churches; they are improvisations made necessary because of the divided status of the churches. They are expedients, divinely guided, many of us believe, but provisional. They stand in the prophetic tradition, called into being for a particular function at a particular time for a particular need. The councils of churches are catalysts for the reunion of churches; though they may not invade the freedom of communions and make their unitive decisions for them, they can and should invade the consciences of the denominations in the name of the One Lord and press them to add to cooperative service, serious concern for union.

The council of churches movement will fulfill its important ecclesiological task better if it recognized that it has often exhibited a profound lack of concern for essential aspects of the Church. Just as in the case of individual denominations, so also councils of churches have at times reflected the thrust to organization for organization's sake. The movement has at times become an escape from the hard questions of genuine unity in faith. As a report of the World Council's Commission on Institutionalism and Unity has put it:

Institutionalized co-operation may become fixated and thus be a hindrance to more advanced steps of church unity. Such institutional drift does not assure the unity we seek or need or the unity that Christ wills.¹¹

The council of churches movement is itself in need of self-criticism and purification, which must take the form of increasingly direct confrontation of the question of the reunion of the Church (as distinguished from the cooperation of churches). As they press the ecclesiological question, the councils of churches cannot expect to remain unchanged themselves.

The pathway to unity that is suggested in this report is one that demands much patience. As Archbishop Arthur Michael Ramsey has said:

Yet just as the way of holiness cannot be hurried, and the way of truth cannot be hurried, so too there is concerning unity a divine patience. Guarding ourselves against confusing divine patience and our human sloth, we know that there is a divine patience, to be imitated in our patience with others, in our patience with ourselves, and in our patience with God's age-long patience. Patience includes the will to see that an apparent set-back in some scheme may be our call to go into things more deeply than before. Patience includes, above all, the will to expect that God's blessing upon our own cherished plans may not in His wisdom be separated from His disciplining us in holiness and in truth.¹²

The pathway to unity also calls for a willingness to lose life to save it. As the section on unity at the New Delhi Assembly declared, “The achievement of unity will involve nothing less than a death and a rebirth of many forms of church life as we have known them.”¹³ But the prospect of the self-transcendence of denominations and councils of churches by structures which far more fully manifest the unity of the Church is not a cause for regret but for rejoicing. Following the way of the Lord brings both peace and joy to his people.

The pathway to unity is one that also demands courage and boldness. A paragraph from the Report on the Section on Unity at New Delhi makes a fitting conclusion:

In this situation are we not constrained by the love of God to exert pressure on the limits of our own inherited traditions, recognizing the theological necessity of what we may call “responsible risk”? We emphasize the word “responsible”: for such actions must be taken with sincere respect for our confessional position and with the full attempt to explore with the Christian communion to which we belong the meaning of what we are doing. Clearly, also, the responsible risk will be different according to our different convictions. Nevertheless, unless there is this preparedness to seek for responsible ways of breaking through to fresh understandings, we cannot hope to be shown the way to that growing unity which we know to be God's will for us. Responsible use of local situations to explore such possibilities is a challenge in every place.¹⁴

¹⁰ Minear, ed., *The Nature of the Unity We Seek*, p. 175.

¹¹ *The Old and the New in the Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1962), p. 87.

¹² “Unity, Holiness and Truth,” *Ecumenical Review*, XIV (1961-62), p. 190.

¹³ Visser 't Hooft, ed., *The New Delhi Report*, p. 117.

¹⁴ Ibid.

122. Lukas Vischer, "Christian Councils: Instruments of Ecclesial Communion," World Consultation of Christian Councils, Geneva, 1971

Vischer was the director of the WCC's secretariat on Faith and Order from 1966 to 1979. This address to an international gathering of council representatives, like many of his writings, carried considerable weight in ecumenical circles. • The Ecumenical Review, vol. 24, no. 1, 1972, pp. 79-87.

The Ecclesiological Significance of Christian Councils

Some have suggested that the Christian Councils are already in some measure ecclesial in character. While they are not yet the Church, they are already ecclesial in so far as they lead the churches into a fellowship of worship and witness. The attributes used in describing the Church in the creeds can be applied also to the Christian Councils. As they bring about fellowship, lead to new obedience, proclaim the universal sovereignty of Christ, the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church becomes visible in them. They can possess a certain—greater or less—ecclesial reality depending on their structure and authority in any given case. But they have, in any case, a certain ecclesiological quality. How could a fellowship created by churches be completely neutral ecclesologically? Indeed, we may even ask whether the more comprehensive fellowship of the Christian Council does not have in principle even greater ecclesial reality than the individual churches.

This view, however persuasive at first sight, has one fatal weakness. It does not distinguish sufficiently between the visible structure of a Christian Council and the communion which is established among the churches as a result of the Council's existence and work. No one will dispute that this communion between the churches has ecclesial reality. When churches meet and bear joint witness, the unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity of the Church can in fact shine out, like signs of the promise that God wills to renew His Church in its totality. Even Orthodox theologians, who have displayed considerable reserve in the discussion of the ecclesiological significance of Christian Councils, have frequently acknowledged this ecclesial reality. But can we attribute ecclesial reality to the Christian Councils themselves, as such? Can it be said that they are already in an incomplete sense the Church? Would this not

be to go beyond what the realities warrant? Would it not imply that the Christian Council is the Church in process of becoming and that the individual churches are simply the material from which this embryonic reality is to be constructed? But on what basis can we know this? How do we know that the full ecclesial fellowship will in fact result from the further development and reshaping of the existing Christian Councils? The issue of the ecumenical movement remains an open question, possibly more an open question today than might have been imagined a few years ago. It would therefore be a disastrous mistake to exalt the Christian Councils by describing them as structures with ecclesial quality. What is gained by setting Christian Councils over against the churches and distributing the reality of the *ecclesia* among them in more or less generous proportions? This would only harden the already sterile opposition between Councils and churches and make it even more ideological. The ecclesial reality is not to be sought in the Christian Councils but in the communion among the churches, in their encounter with one another and with the world. As structures, Christian Councils have only *an instrumental ecclesiological significance* in the promotion of this communion, in bringing it to birth and helping it to grow.

Instruments of communion! This calls for fuller explanation. The churches which share in the ecumenical movement today all acknowledge that the present state of division is an intolerable anomaly. In the confused medley of traditions, the People of God cannot be the sign of Christ's presence which it is destined and called to be. The churches know that this anomaly must be removed. Whatever convictions they may each have about themselves they all recognize that this task of being a sign of Christ's presence can only be fulfilled in a common effort on which all are agreed. No church can cure this obscuring of the sign on its own. Christian Councils are the structural expression of this shared conviction, this common commitment. They are not anything in themselves. Their significance derives from the churches. The Christian Councils are, so to speak, the thorn in the flesh of the churches. They are a constant reminder to the churches of the anomalous situation in which they live. They prod the churches to expose themselves continually to the power of the Holy Spirit. They constitute the setting, created by the churches themselves, within which the promise of renewal may be heard, within which the churches can share their experiences and gradually establish a common tradition, and within which they can also face together and overcome together the crises to which they are exposed.

It follows from this that the form taken by Christian Councils must vary according to circumstances. *Christian*

Councils have instrumental ecclesiological significance when they stimulate the advance of this movement. They forfeit their ecclesiological significance when they become narcissistic or yield to the temptation to contemplate their own navels. The question for the Christian Councils and for the churches is this: "Are the Christian Councils *really* the setting in which the promise of renewal can come true and the renewed fellowship really grow?" One way or the other, the answer to this question will show whether or not any particular Christian Council can claim ecclesiological significance.

In the light of all this, can we now say something about the three difficulties mentioned earlier? I have three comments on this:

1. The Christian Councils can only really fulfill their instrumental ecclesiological function when they embrace the entire fellowship which has emerged in the ecumenical movement today. But this fellowship includes the Roman Catholic Church. It is vital, therefore, that we clarify the question of the membership of churches which do not as yet belong to the Christian Councils, and above all the question of the membership of the Roman Catholic Church. The question can no longer be avoided either by the Roman Catholic Church or by the Councils. The hesitancy and uncertainty which has surrounded the question so far must be dispelled. It is not a matter of pressing the Roman Catholic Church to become part of a structure in which it could no longer truly be itself. The form which the instrument must take today to correspond with the existing stage of fellowship in the ecumenical movement remains an open question. But the Roman Catholic Church also owes it to itself and to all its partners to clarify its position. Does it in fact continue as before to believe that the ecumenical movement must ultimately revolve around the Roman Catholic Church? Or does it too regard the Christian Councils as the appropriate instrument for extending and deepening fellowship between the churches? And if the Roman Catholic Church has any alternative to propose, what are the immediate steps which have to be taken in the ecumenical movement?

2. The Christian Councils are only real instruments of fellowship among the churches if they help to strengthen unity in ever new ways. This task assumes different forms at the local, national and international levels. But in any case the ecclesiological significance of the Christian Councils depends on their concern with the question of unity as a continuing matter of priority. In other words, it depends on whether the churches are constantly stimulated by the Christian Councils to advance on the road to closer and truer fellowship. We need, therefore, to re-examine the role of the Christian Councils in the furtherance of the unity of the Church. Neither the Councils nor the churches can

be satisfied with the classical but nonetheless questionable answer that this is a matter for the churches alone to handle. Christian Councils and churches must cooperate with each other. The Christian Councils can not only improve the atmosphere of mutual understanding among the churches but they can also help the churches to take concrete steps towards unity, in the framework of the Christian Councils. For example, they can provide the channel for agreement on the mutual recognition of baptism, marriage, the ministry or the eucharist. But they can also promote closer relationships between certain of their member churches. Unions must not be regarded as ventures undertaken independently of the Christian Councils. On the contrary, the Christian Councils can serve as channels through which concrete achievements of this kind are encouraged and made possible. The danger of non-committal superficiality is increasing today in the ecumenical movement. The churches are in relationships with so many churches that they are hardly able to summon sufficient determination to clarify at least one such relationship thoroughly. One relationship neutralizes another with the result that in the end they are all superficial. The Christian Councils can encourage this kind of attitude. But they can also help to overcome it whenever it appears.

3. But what are we to say about the third difficulty, the tension which exists in almost every church today [due to the increasing presence of movements and unofficial groups]? What must the Christian Councils do to fulfill their instrumental ecclesiological function in face of this new development? Neither the widening of membership nor a more intensive concern with unity can be of much help here. Indeed these developments could make the work of the Councils even more cumbersome and complicated. If the Christian Councils are really to act as midwives to assist at the birth of new fellowship, a profound transformation will be required here. They must become places where the strains and tensions of our time can really be dealt with. Movements and groups must be able to feel themselves to be an integral part of the Christian Councils and even those who feel that they no longer belong to any confessional group must be able to feel they belong to the Councils. This, of course, raises the difficult question of representation. Who is the Church? Who represents the churches? Can a Christian Council really embrace the entire gamut of conflicts in its work? Or is it ultimately committed to representing only the churches and possibly the movements which have become respectable institutions? It is difficult to break through these limitations, but it is not impossible. Councils can, for example, in specific areas of their work, grant full rights to certain movements and groups. They can arrange, by *ad hoc* meetings,

for representative confrontations and discussions. Councils which achieve this breakthrough forfeit none of their ecclesial significance. On the contrary, not to venture it would involve the forfeiture of their ecclesial significance. For the aim of the Christian Councils must in fact at all times be to maintain the nascent fellowship amid conflicts and controversies and to help it to bear a true witness.

The Vision of the One People of God—Life in Anticipation

But these comments made so far are inadequate. However important strategic considerations may be, they are basically only preliminary questions. The real question lies deeper. Is the life and work of the Christian Councils inspired by a vision? Do they see the goal of their journey, at least in outline before them? If they are really to fulfill an instrumental ecclesiological function they cannot be content to hold the churches, movements and groups together in as representative and as serious a dialogue as possible. On the contrary, they must strive to anticipate now in the provisional fellowship they have established the goal which is ultimately to be attained. Again they are not the Church, not even to a certain extent. But they would not be instruments of the embryonic and nascent communion if they did not strive in their life and their work for the ecclesial communion which the churches are to find with one another; and it is not just a matter of agreeing on a definition of this ecclesial communion—as was done for example at the Third Assembly in New Delhi—but rather a matter of living it in anticipation. To be sure, the goal is in many respects still far from clear. It is part of the essence of the ecumenical movement to be a journeying into the unknown. But it is equally true that the encounter between the churches thus far has not been entirely unproductive. Certain common perspectives have already emerged and the Christian Councils would fail in their duty if they did not make use of this common vision, and if out of mistaken respect for the churches limited themselves to tasks which are not thought to affect their ecclesiological self-understanding.

Let me give a few examples:

1. How is the Gospel to be stated today? How are we to give an account of the hope that is in us? The question faces the churches today at all levels. It occupies the official churches, the movements, and the groups each in its own fashion but all with equal urgency. No church, however, can answer it any longer on its own. Theological thinking keeps less and less to the confessional compartments and, in certain respects, the problems are so new that the concepts available in the confessional traditions are inadequate anyway. The answer can only develop, therefore, from common

effort, even if the individual churches may perhaps still be unwilling to admit this. Most Christian Councils have a formal Basis. But this Basis too easily tends to be a theological bow with no further consequences, a statement which later fulfills no vital role. But the Basis must not be regarded as a possession once-for-all acquired, any more than should the Church's confession itself. It must be constantly redeveloped, so that the centre and basis on which the Church lives can become clearly visible again and again. This is not yet achieved by establishing study-groups on some particular theological theme. The effort must go much further. Statements must be formulated which provide an answer to the questions which are actually raised by the members of the individual churches today. This effort may, in certain circumstances, take the form, for example, of drafting together a statement of common belief or a catechism for a specific region. Certain individual first attempts in this direction are already being made.

2. Thinking in the ecumenical movement on the nature of the Church has shown increasingly clearly that the proclamation of the Gospel, social and political witness and diaconal service are inseparably interconnected dimensions. None of these can exist without the others and therefore the Christian Councils must not separate them in their life and work. They must not remain standing always on the threshold of proclamation and confine themselves exclusively to the fulfillment of practical tasks. To do so would make them guilty of a lopsidedness which could only end in the spiritual distortion of the fellowship of the churches as well as the life of the individual churches themselves. The Christian Councils must, therefore, concern themselves with the witness of the Gospel and the problems this presents today. It is not enough for one church to respect the others and to abstain from illegitimate proselytism. On the contrary, the Christian Councils must help the churches to understand proclamation, social and political witness, and diaconia as one single coherent responsibility. Of course, the unsolved theological and ecclesiological problems cannot be ignored. But the Councils can become agents of witness. Witness, of course, will involve the Councils' exposure to opposition. Witness necessarily involves the Cross and therefore decision. If the Christian Councils are to be instruments of ecclesial fellowship, this aspect of witness cannot be evaded. However inclusive they are meant to be, and however imperative it is that they should bring together in confrontation as many partners as possible, their witness nevertheless also inevitably establishes frontiers. Openness does not exclude militant witness. The Christian Councils must have the courage to draw the boundaries between Christ and anti-Christ, church and non-church.

3. Worship is most profoundly anchored in the individual churches. For this reason the Christian Councils have concerned themselves relatively little with questions of worship. Certainly prayer and worship have never been missing from their life. But they have made only a modest contribution to the creative renewal of worship. They tend rather to evade the problems which worship and the spiritual life in general face today. They lean anyway to activism. While this has always been unsatisfactory, it has become intolerable today. The traditions of worship of the individual churches are less and less respected today. Almost everywhere new ways are being followed. Services increasingly bring together members of different confessions. The liturgical forms which are used often arise spontaneously from the particular situation. The hymns which are sung do not belong to any one church. Do not the Christian Councils, therefore, far more than ever before, have to become places where common worship is celebrated? Must they not devote far more energy than ever before to elicit and to test new forms? As they do so, they will also inevitably have to face the question of the eucharist. However much they have to respect the rules of the churches, they cannot ignore the irresistible movement towards a common communion. For the sake of ecclesial fellowship they must provide the place for a real discussion of this question.

4. The view has increasingly gained ground in recent decades that the Church is to be understood and fashioned as a fellowship in which each individual member can fully develop his gifts and place them at the service of the others. Those who hold an office in the church are not set over the fellowship but within the fellowship. They have a specific role to play in the fellowship. The Church is only a genuine fellowship when all its resources play their due part. This is not the place to explain this development in detail. Many explanations might be given. But the clear consequence of it is that the existing system of representation in almost all churches is felt to be inadequate. They are more and more felt to be authoritarian. Many churches are therefore seeking new solutions which make possible a much fuller participation of all members in decision-making and in their activities in general. The problem of communication is becoming more and more crucial. The Christian Councils can here fulfill an important ecclesial function. Just because they are more unhampered by the weight of traditions, they can create new patterns. They can create synodal structures in their own life which will do more justice to the contemporary demand for representation and communication. They can in this way help the churches to achieve a genuine ecclesial conciliarity.

5. My last example concerns the relationship between the local and the universal Church. In recent years the

ecclesiological debate has resulted in astonishing agreement on this point. Almost all the churches today stress with renewed emphasis the importance of the local church. The Church always means primarily the congregation in a particular place or in a particular situation, the baptized who come together for the eucharist and maintain fellowship with Christ together. They are not merely a part of the Church. In so far as Christ is present among them, they are the Church. At the same time, however, they belong within a universal fellowship. They belong to the one People which embraces all the baptized in every place. This universal fellowship is not only a spiritual reality; it must also assume visible expression. The tasks which are assigned to the churches at the universal level are so numerous that this visible form is more important today than ever before. The Christian Councils can play an important role in the building of this universal fellowship; and they have this advantage over the churches, that they can approach the relation between local church and universal fellowship without the handicap of cumbersome structures bequeathed them by history. In their own life they can relate the local and the universal fellowship to each other in a way appropriate to contemporary ecclesiological insights. The local Christian Councils are of fundamental importance here. It is they who have to establish the ecclesial fellowship in each place, that local Church whose unity in Christ is still hidden today. They must fulfill this function, each in accordance with its particular situation. The larger Councils, especially the World Council of Churches, have here a twofold task. On the one hand they must prevent the local Christian Councils from being side-tracked from their specific task, from having functions imposed on them from outside which make it impossible for them to carry out their immediate role. On the other hand, the larger Councils must also prevent the local Councils from losing sight of their universal horizon. They must remind them of the conditions to be fulfilled before it is possible to speak of a universal fellowship. We are in great danger today of absolutizing the local dimension. The non-conforming groups which, perhaps rightly, feel themselves to be progressive in their reaction against authorities, are in particular danger in this respect. They very quickly end up in a complacent provincialism. The fruitful inter-relationship between the various levels of Councils is therefore a decisively important task.

The list could be extended. The examples given are, however, sufficient to show that the tasks of the Christian Councils are scarcely any different from those which face the Church today. Or do not the same tasks impose themselves with equal urgency in countries where there is only one church and where there is therefore no Christian

Council? The battle fronts and the measures required are the same. The Christian Councils are not the Church. But they are so similar to the churches because like them they work for the ecclesial communion which it is God's will to rebuild today and tomorrow. The better, the more effectively they carry out these tasks, the more they will make themselves superfluous, and all of us can only hope that the day is not too far distant when Christian Councils will no longer be needed, a day when conferences such as this will no longer need to take place and discussion about the ecclesial significance of the Christian Councils can be closed, a day when we shall rejoice a little more spontaneously and a little more unselfconsciously in the fellowship which has been given us in Christ.

123. Nikos Nissiotis, "Christian Councils and the Unity of the Local Church," 1972

Essays by Nissiotis could have appeared in several chapters of this anthology. In addition to his roles as WCC staff member and, then, director of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, Nissiotis, a professor of theology, served as moderator of the WCC's Faith and Order Commission. • One in Christ, vol. 8, no. 2, 1972, pp. 158-66.

The creation of Christian Councils at local levels, constituted by Churches of different confessions and church traditions, is a new development in inter-church relationships which deserves full attention and positive appreciation from all who are earnestly working to promote ecumenical relations between separated church communions. These Christian Councils are definitely the natural product of increased and intensified ecumenical contacts and activities. They reflect locally what happens universally, as far as church effort towards renewal of unity and common witness is concerned.

It thus becomes increasingly evident that we face a new development within the ecumenical movement which must be welcomed, studied and further promoted, if we really wish to see ecumenism entering into its decisive era, the time when it will reach the grassroots situations of church life in applying and implementing sound ecumenical principles. An ecumenism which is not practiced directly at the local level, but remains an exclusive matter of

world gatherings, risks degenerating into a kind of church internationalism.

A healthy ecumenical movement must needs lay emphasis on the reality of its effects on the local, concrete situation. This is not simply because the practical needs of ecumenism, as regards the ways in which it is implemented, appear to be more urgent locally, but because the role of the local Church is also, ecclesologically, a decisive one. With the creation of local Christian Councils we are reminded of the *sine qua non* for promoting ecumenical interchurch relationships on a world-wide scale. Without a strong conception of the local Church and her central significance for all kinds of church universalistic visions and actions, the ecumenical movement lacks its authentic ecclesiological basis and its real presence in the world.

Christian Councils and the Restoration of the One Local Church

Owing to the separations between different confessions coexisting as separated church institutions in one locality, we tend to lose sight of the priority of the one local Church as over against the universal one. It is in this local Church that we become members of the one Body, and it is there that we have access to the sacramental life of the one Church. In order to achieve better organization at the national and especially at the universal level, we inevitably confuse the catholicity with the universality of the Church. This is why we tend to give priority to the universal rather than the local Church. The true universality of the Church, however, focuses on the qualitative meaning of catholicity, according to which the whole truth of Christ is manifest there where the Word is preached and the sacraments are administered. It is on account of the Church's catholicity that the truth is made manifest in every local situation.

Admittedly everything is done in the perspective and in the name of the universal Church. Thus it is in the one universal Church that a man is ordained as presbyter or bishop; yet one is ordained by and for a concrete local Church, and only through this Church has access to the universal Ecclesia. The catholicity of the Church can be grasped and experienced in the local eucharistic and missionary community, expressed through actual and charismatic persons who are inseparably linked with this community. Apart from such concrete expression in the local Church, catholicity remains an abstract and vague term. "Where the bishop is, there is the catholic Church." This ancient patristic affirmation points to the absolute need of a concrete, personal expression of catholicity at the local level. This understanding of catholicity helps us to conceive of the "catholic" Church primarily

not in geographical but in ecclesiological, charismatic and eucharistic terms. The catholic Church is a reality which comprises those gathered with one heart and one mind at one place in the name of Christ, who are baptized into him and meet to listen to the one Word, to partake in the one sacrament (celebrated with mention of the name of one “first man” [*proestos*] of the community), to preach the one Gospel to the whole world, and to live and act as one fully committed fellowship, being in full accord within the whole Church. All four marks of the catholic Church are given, experienced, and again and again realized by and in the local Church.

That is why the Church of the first century of the Christian era, the local Church, had no geographical boundaries, but only personal, charismatic ones. In the eastern countries, the local Church was mainly recognized as representing the Christian people gathered at one place around the eucharistic table. The conciliar system was not a world-wide system of governing the Church, but primarily a local way of administration corresponding to this qualitative significance of catholicity. We have either the episcopos together with the presbyters and the people, or the episcopoi of a large area under the chairmanship of a first bishop or presbyter, who was later called the metropolitan, as being the bishop of the first or bigger city of the area.

The ecumenical conciliar system has never been a regular administrative system of the catholic Church. The Ecumenical Councils were exceptional and representative world gatherings of the Church, called together to face urgent questions of dogma which threatened the cohesion of the Church and her faith. The convocation of these Ecumenical Councils was due to momentous crises, and they had only temporary existence; each of them was a separate event, and was convened by external authority rather than in obedience to the inner charismatic and pastoral authority of the Church. For that reason, the reception of the decision of the Councils in the consciousness of the Church, that is to say, by the faithful of the local Churches, representing the real spiritual authority of the Church, was one of the essentials for such a Council to be recognized as validly “ecumenical.” This original concept and praxis of the local Church as quite central to the life of the early Church was later modified, as a result of the expansion of Christianity, and of the role played by the Church in the service of the State. Alongside the metropolitan system, the local Church came to be confined within national boundaries both geographically and culturally. At the same time the absolutization of the metropolitan system through one world centre clothed with universal authority on the basis of the central apostolic see, combined with the political authority of the biggest

metropolis of the first century, created a new situation as far as any understanding of the local Church was concerned. And further, the creation of new institutional Churches on the basis of new church confessions, and their expansion as “new Churches” in places where old, national Churches existed, has created also an unprecedented phenomenon which confuses our understanding of the local Church today.

We thus now face a very complex situation as regards the clear definition of what a local Church is. We have the following types of local Churches coexisting in one place today, resulting from the above-mentioned development of the original charismatic-diocesan-metropolitan system:

- (a) a local Church as a national autonomous Church, identical with national geographical boundaries,
- (b) a local Church as a national but not autonomous Church, depending on a central ecclesiastical authority outside the nation or the state where she exists,
- (c) a local Church as an autonomous minority Church linked with a mother Church outside the country, on the basis of a new confession of faith—the result of mission in non-Christian countries or of conversions from the local majority Church, and
- (d) a local Church as a minority Church created out of migratory movements from the “old” to the “new” countries.

All these different kinds of local Churches are usually coexisting in one and the same place. In reality they are local Churches, but they cannot be called “the local Church,” since they lack essential elements of this oneness, namely, the full union and communion expressed in sacramental unity and doctrinal agreement.

In this confusing situation we are all challenged not only to clarify the concept of the local Church, but also to work for its restoration. One has to realize how all traditions have developed and deviated from the original notion and praxis of the ancient Church in this respect. An excessive nationalistic basis, or the universalistic-centralistic approach, or the confessionalistic-pluralistic movement, has little by little affected the simplicity of the original oneness of all Christians in the one catholic Church existing in each place. In different ways, following various ecclesiological presuppositions and on account of different political and ecclesiastical events, each of the church traditions has shaped and practiced a different notion of the local Church.

We are confronted by the extremist positions of a radical parochialism with the total independence of the local Church vis-à-vis the catholic-universal Church, on the one hand, and, on the other, an absolute universalism which refuses the autonomy of the local Church in the interests of a centralized ecclesiastical authority. Between these two extremes the national autonomous Churches, as local Churches, try to continue their life as such, though their main presupposition has already been shaken by the surrounding secular atheistic society (the Christian nation or country with its particular *Volkskirche* or state Church), or by the creation from within them of new minority Churches, either by conversion or through emigration of the faithful to new countries.

This confusion, therefore, is due, on the one hand, to the different approaches of differing church traditions to church authority and the structure of the catholic Church and, on the other hand, to church divisions, which are also to a great extent the result of different interpretations and praxis regarding church authority. It seems to me that the most difficult task is to restore the local Church through present ecumenical endeavours. Because it is precisely in the local Church that the church divisions of the past are most acutely reflected today.

Christian Councils and the Local Church

Church division is thus the reason for several misleading interpretations of the term "local Church." Our divisions also do not allow us at present to see any direct relationship between Christian Councils and the possibility or the reality of the restoration of the local Church. It is not strange, therefore, that for the moment Christian Councils are usually and primarily conceived as federations or associations of Churches, existing in one area. Their nature is defined only in functional terms and their purpose is mainly conceived as that of helping the Churches to act together in social questions. In many cases they are simply Church coordinating bodies on practical issues.

This kind of activity through Councils must be welcomed, praised and further developed. But their *raison d'être* must not be limited within this activism, in spite of its great importance at this juncture.

Christian Councils stand for something deeper. Their creation has an ecclesiological bearing; it is a reminder of the original church fellowship which has to be visibly manifested in each area and which has to find concrete expression. There are definite elements in their life and work which show that they should not remain as simply groups for dynamic action:

- (a) the fact that their member Churches meet as grounded on the same faith in Christ, preaching his Gospel to the same environment, and having the same mission in the world;
- (b) the fact that they invoke together the Holy Spirit in prayer and in some cases advance to common participation in the sacraments; and
- (c) the fact that they indirectly recognize one another as Churches, through sharing in each other's life and preoccupation with action in today's world.

There is, moreover, something else which has to be examined for its ecclesiological implications. I mean practical co-operation in social, humanitarian, and sometimes also political questions, and in the whole movement of liberation from racism and all kinds of economic and political pressures. In respect of some of these questions, no one Church can act alone. The presence of the Church in today's pluralistic world has to be pan-Christian if it is to be truly Christian as well as efficient. We are not yet accustomed to recognize in this situation certain ecclesiological dimensions, or its bearing upon a deeper understanding of the nature of a Christian Council. This is a quite new phenomenon, and we have at our disposal no appropriate ecclesiological terms with which to describe it. We here have to face a reality that goes beyond our capacity to conceptualize it theologically.

Certainly for classical and confessional ecclesiology, this new dimension belongs only and exclusively to the ethical stand made by Christians acting as individuals or groups in the social realm. This is true, yet not the whole truth. Such ethical responsibility, especially in practice, depends upon the measure of inter-church ecclesial collaboration, based on mutual recognition of one another as Churches of Christ, acting together not as a club or association but as a fellowship, without or outside of which no Church would ever be likely to act alone. In this case the ethical dimension, this implementation of the Gospel, reveals an ecclesial, communal character upon which the actions of the Churches and their validity totally depend.

Christian Councils, therefore, should increase as new ecclesiological phenomena, revealing the ancient one local Church. Councils cannot escape from their most important function, which is to restore hope and confidence in the local Church as the foundation of the catholic and universal Church, and to teach through their example something essential concerning the dynamic unity we seek.

Christian Councils and the Ecumenical Movement

The fulfillment of this duty by the Christian Councils justifies their existence—or better, proves their existence to be absolutely necessary for promoting the ecumenical movement. On the other hand, should they not care about the ecclesiological implications of their being and action, though they would still be useful and necessary for the ecumenical movement, they would nevertheless miss making their main contribution to it. This would also justify the various objections regarding their usefulness since, by their simple federal nature and their activism, they remove the interest of the local Church from unity, and block the way towards deepening and enlarging the ecclesial fellowship of one communion in each place. Councils are for the ecumenical movement miniatures of an ecumenism practiced in each place and in a concrete way. Consequently they should represent the effort of the Churches gathered in the ecumenical fellowship to realize the statement of the World Council's Third Assembly at New Delhi regarding unity as meaning "All as One in each place." No other purpose and activity of local Councils should make them lose sight of this their first and most important service to the ecumenical movement, namely, to realize the fellowship of the Church locally.

Certainly at this point a criticism against this thesis may come from either of two extremes. First, on the part of those who object to the recognition of any kind of ecclesial character in the Christian Councils, on account of their lack of full union and sacramental communion, or because any kind of re-gathering or action in common by separated Churches should not affect their particular ecclesiology. And second, on the part of the radicals, who maintain that ecumenism is nothing other or more than this social activism which is itself a manifestation of church unity, through the practice by separated Churches of at least partially united witness and mission in the modern world.

Both these attitudes hide, for me, a sick ecumenism, either a static doctrinal one or a pragmatic functional one. And it is a wrong ecumenism in both of these cases, not because they are exclusive and monistic, but because in their attitude they negate the real essence of ecumenism. The first attitude is partial and one-sided since it refuses to recognize the existence of the fellowship of Churches, their ecclesial coexistence and the implications of this for the life of each individual Church. Making charges of ecclesiastical separatism and relativization of the truth, they conceive ecumenism only as a Church-to-Church process of witnessing to the faith and refuse the essence of ecumenism, which is the inter-church communication of charismata, on the basis of which a common dynamic witness of the Churches can grow within the modern world. The second

attitude is also partial and one-sided and as anti-ecumenical as the first one, since it creates an alter ego of ecumenism, and absolutizes an ethical activist approach uprooted from its real foundation, which is the Church fellowship. It is the easy way of pretending to solve the hard problem of church unity and growth in church communion through a purely practical non-Church approach, which runs the risk of denigrating the Churches to simple welfare institutions or political movements.

Local Christian Councils have to beware of falling into either the one or the other of these extreme positions. This danger must be mentioned since these Councils are as yet of such a fragile and ambivalent nature that they are liable to adopt one or other extreme position in ecumenism. There are for instance, local Councils of Churches which group together all different confessions existing in one area. These Councils are tempted to act only as a federation or association of Churches and therefore their care for Church unity and promotion of ecclesial fellowship is diminished to the minimum possible. On the other hand there are Councils which are dominated by a great national state Church, to which smaller Churches are added, as at the periphery of the majority Church. In the latter case, this type of Council risks being unilaterally ecclesial according, of course, to the principles and confession of the dominating state Church.

In face of these dangers, Councils should be reminded that they are to give concrete local expression to the whole of the ecumenical movement in their own place, without omitting any essential part of a full ecumenical endeavour, regardless of the particular situation which their own composition of majority and minority Churches might seem to imply. They have at the same time to be a federation of Churches, yet caring that, through their common action in the world, their prayer and study of ecclesiological problems they may grow together towards the restoration of the one local Church. These Councils, therefore, have to move in a continuous and progressive way from their present federal conciliarity to the true eucharistic, doctrinal and synodical conciliarity. Because, though the local Christian Councils are not identical with the one local Church, they nevertheless create a new ecclesiological reality which exists *de facto* on the local level in a much clearer and more immediate way than it ever did in a universal dimension. Without them and their progressively changing process from the one type of conciliarity to the other, our ecumenism is in danger of remaining on a purely international level, remote from the local situation.

We should also, from the ecumenical point of view, welcome the existence and progress of local Councils for yet another reason. This is that, if the Roman Catholic Church, for her own serious reasons, remains without any

formalized links to the WCC on a world-wide basis, the Christian Councils might nevertheless provide an excellent solution on the local level. Roman Catholic participation in these Christian Councils can afford the possibility of the necessary corrective to a one-sided non-catholic ecumenism by emphasizing, more than through other factors, the need and urgency of church reunion on a universal scale. The fact that the Roman Catholic Church is already fully sharing the work of some Christian Councils can be seen as an encouraging sign, for it furnishes the proof that full co-operation between Roman Catholics and other Christians in ecumenical matters is possible.

The same is certainly valid, for other reasons and in another perspective, as regards the involvement of the so-called "conservative evangelical" groups that are opposed to international global ecumenism, for reasons they find serious which modern ecumenism must take genuinely into consideration. I think that they can share more easily in a local ecumenical fellowship than in international, official and representative ecumenical Church gatherings.

Summarizing, I would like to stress the one main idea that this paper has intended to emphasize. This is the opinion that, though most Christian Councils have been formed mainly on a pragmatic basis, for the sake of promoting local co-operation and the ecumenical action of separated Churches in the service of the world, nevertheless one has to grasp the deeper ecclesiological issues which are inevitably raised by this very pragmatic basis. Their present activity can, and indeed must, be taken as a token of, and as an introduction to, their main purpose: to restore the one local Church, as an absolutely necessary prerequisite of an authentic ecumenical movement.

124. "Ecumenical Collaboration at the Regional, National, and Local Levels," Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, 1975

This key document defines the character and conditions of Roman Catholic membership in councils of churches. Within the limits stated in this text, there is clear approval for full Catholic involvement in these ecumenical bodies. • *Doing the Truth in Charity*, eds Thomas F. Stransky and John B. Sheerin, New York, Paulist, 1982, pp. 104-10.

4. Councils of Churches and Christian Councils

a) *The Ecumenical Fact of Councils*

The existence of councils of churches constitutes in numerous countries an ecumenical fact which the non-member churches cannot ignore and may well challenge the churches in countries where such councils do not exist.

In some places the trend towards collaboration is hastened when governments refuse to deal with a diversity of agencies in the fields of education, development and welfare and the churches engaged in these areas have to devise joint programs.

b) *The Limits of Ad Hoc Bodies for Council-Church Relationships*

In the eyes of many councils of churches collaboration with the Catholic Church solely through ad hoc commissions is regarded as insufficient since this kind of collaboration:

- i) gives the impression that the ecumenical fact represented by councils is not treated with sufficient seriousness, and
- ii) tends to remain partial and to lack the necessary continuity.

c) *The Existing Relation of the Catholic Church to Councils of Churches*

The Catholic Church has full membership in national councils of churches in at least 19 countries and in a very large number of state and local councils. There is membership in one regional conference of churches covering a number of countries. In addition, there is considerable Catholic collaboration with councils and certain of their programs at various levels.

Given that no central guidelines would be found valid for the variety of councils and of particular circumstances, a number of questions and ecclesial considerations may be proposed, to be taken into account in deciding the appropriate relationship with councils.

5. Considerations Concerning Council Membership

a) *Cooperation with Other Churches and Ecclesial Communities*

The documents of the Second Vatican Council expound clearly the conviction that the unity which is the gift of Christ already exists in the Catholic Church, although susceptible of completion and perfection, and this qualifies significantly the Catholic participation in the ecumenical movement. However, since the Second Vatican Council's recognition of the ecclesial character of other Christian communities, the Church has frequently called

upon Catholics to cooperate not only with other Christians as individuals, but also with other churches and ecclesial communities as such. This cooperation is commended both in matters of social and human concern, and even more in support of Christian testimony in the field of mission.

“Insofar as religious conditions allow, ecumenical activity should be furthered in such a way that without any appearance of indifference or of unwarranted intermingling on the one hand, or of unhealthy rivalry on the other, Catholics can cooperate in a brotherly spirit with their separated brethren, according to the norms of the *Decree on Ecumenism*. To the extent that their beliefs are common, they can make before the nations a common profession of faith in God and Jesus Christ. They can collaborate in social and in technical projects as well as in cultural and religious ones. This cooperation should be undertaken not only among private persons, but also, according to the judgement of the local Ordinary, among churches or ecclesial communities and their enterprises” (*Ad Gentes*, 15).

The documents published by the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity have stressed that the world often poses the same questions to all the confessions and that, in the sphere of their internal life, most Christian communions have to face similar problems.

The nature of the Church, the normal exigencies of the ecumenical situation, and the questions facing all Christian communions in our own day demand that the Catholic Church give positive consideration to the proper expression at every level of her ecumenical relations with other churches and ecclesial communities.

b) Implications of Council Membership

From a theological point of view, membership in a council of churches carries certain implications:

- i) the recognition of other member churches as ecclesial communities even though they may not be recognized as being churches in the full theological sense of the word;
- ii) recognition of the council of churches as an instrument, among others, both for expressing the unity already existing among the churches and also of advancing towards a greater unity and a more effective Christian witness.

Nevertheless, as the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches said at its Toronto meeting in 1950: “...membership does not imply that each church must regard the other member churches as churches in the true and full sense of the word.” Therefore the entry of the Catholic Church into a body in which it would find itself on an equal footing with other bodies which also claim to

be churches would not diminish its faith about its uniqueness. The Second Vatican Council has clearly stated that the unique Church of Christ “constituted and organized in the world as a society subsists in the Catholic Church which is governed by the successor of Peter and the bishops in communion with that successor, although many elements of sanctification and of truth can be found outside of her visible structure” (*Lumen Gentium*, 8).

c) Councils and Christian Unity

Since councils of churches are not themselves churches, they do not assume the responsibility of acting for churches which are contemplating or have begun to engage in unity conversations. In principle their action is in the practical field. However, because of their facilities and their administrative resources, they are in a position to give important material help and can, upon request of the churches concerned, give a consultative and organizational assistance. While the study of “Faith and Order” questions, which goes on under the auspices of many councils and is authorized by member churches, has a deep importance in stimulating member churches to a deeper understanding of the demands of the unity willed by Christ, and to facing old deadlocks in a new way, nevertheless it is not the task of a council to take the initiative in promoting formal doctrinal conversations between churches. These belong properly to the immediate and bilateral contacts between churches.

d) The Problem of Council Statements

Councils of churches, in some cases more frequently than the member churches themselves, on occasion make public statements on issues of common concern. These are addressed more often to areas of social justice, human development, general welfare, and public or private morality. They are based on theological positions that may or may not be articulated in the statements themselves. Unless explicitly authorized they cannot be considered as official utterances on behalf of the churches, but are offered as a service to the churches. They are often directed also to the wider public or even to specific audiences, such as government authorities. They vary in character from broad statements of position or orientation in general areas to specific stands on concrete questions. In some instances they examine and illuminate a subject, identifying a number of possible approaches rather than adopting a position. This practice of making statements has caused concern in some churches, and calls especially for clarification where the Catholic Church considers the possibility of membership in councils of churches.

i) The Decision-making Process

In attempting to fix criteria to evaluate the deliberative process in a particular council, it will be necessary to give serious consideration to the hesitations and objections of its members. A common declaration which engages the moral responsibility of its members is possible only with the consent of all.

ii) The Authority and Use of Public Statements

Important as is the process by which statements are formulated and issued, equally important is the manner in which they are received—both by the individual members of the churches and by the public at large. Differences in the weight of authority given to official statements within member churches, as well as differences in the normal mode of formulation and issuance of statements, can result in serious difficulties. Efforts have to be made to obviate the confusion that may arise in practice. Such statements should clearly identify the theological principles on which they are based so as to facilitate their acceptance by church members as being in accord with their own Christian commitment. Since councils cannot usurp the position of the churches that comprise their membership, they need to study how best they can determine what matters fall within their own purpose and mandate and to be sure of the approval of member churches before publishing statements.

iii) Regard for Minority Viewpoints

Councils, being composed of separated churches, inevitably face issues on which they cannot reach a perfect consensus. A profound respect for the integrity and individuality of its member churches will lead a council to develop procedures for ensuring that a minority dissent will be adequately expressed for the mutual benefit of the council, its members, and all to whom the council speaks. Provisions have to be made within councils for such expression of minority viewpoints and in this context polarization ought to be avoided.

e) Joint Social Action—Opportunities and Problems

i) In the Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens*, the Holy Father has written: “It is up to these Christian communities, with the help of the Holy Spirit, in communion with the bishops who hold responsibility, and in dialogue with other Christian brethren and all men of good will to discern the options and commitments which are called for in order to bring about the social, political and economic changes seen in many cases to be urgently needed” (n.4).

ii) At a number of points Christian positions permit and encourage collaboration with other spiritual and ideological families. Therefore councils and

ecumenical organizations rightly pay serious attention to possible areas of collaboration (e.g., in the field of development, housing, health, and various forms of relief), which concern people of other living faiths as well as Christian churches and ecclesial communities.

iii) Christian social action to which many councils of churches and ecumenical bodies devote a large part of their endeavors also raises questions for theological reflection. In the first place there is the essential role of social action in the proclamation of the Gospel. “Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation” (Synod of Bishops, *Justice in the World*, p. 6). Further there are questions of morality, especially regarding family life, which more and more need to be faced seriously in all their complexity, in particular those which concern population, family life, marriage, contraception, abortion, euthanasia and others. These questions need to be studied with due regard to the moral teachings of the churches concerned and above all taking into account the objective content of Catholic ethics.

6. Pastoral and Practical Reflections for Local Ecumenical Action

a) Full account ought to be given to local needs and problems in organizing ecumenical action; models from other places cannot simply be imitated.

b) Ultimately, it is always the responsibility of the regional or national episcopal conference to decide on the acceptability and the appropriateness of all forms of local ecumenical action. They should do this in cooperation with the appropriate organ of the Holy See, viz. the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.

c) What really matters is not the creation of new structures but the collaboration of Christians in prayer, reflection and action, based on common baptism and on a faith which on many essential points is also common.

d) Sometimes, the best form of collaboration may be for one church and ecclesial community to participate fully in the programs already set up by another. At other times parallel coordinated action and the joint use of the results may be more appropriate. In any event, as collaboration becomes closer, a simplification of structures should

be sought and unnecessary multiplication of structures avoided.

e) Where joint actions or programs are decided on, they ought to be undertaken fully by both sides and duly authorized by the respective authorities right from the earliest stages of planning.

f) It is necessary that where there are regional, national and local doctrinal bilateral dialogues, episcopal conferences ensure that at the right time there is contact with the Holy See.

g) Among the many forms of ecumenical cooperation councils of churches and Christian councils are not the only form but they are certainly one of the more important. Since regional, national and local councils are widespread in many parts of the world and do play an important role in ecumenical relations, the responsible contacts which the Catholic Church is having with them are welcome.

h) It is normal that councils should want to discuss and reflect upon the doctrinal bases of the practical projects they undertake. But in such cases it is important to clarify the doctrinal principles involved. It should always be clear that when Catholics take part in a council, they can enter into such discussions only in conformity with the teaching of their Church.

i) The first and immediate responsibility for a decision to join a council rests with the highest ecclesiastical authority in the area served by the council. In practical terms this responsibility is not transferable. With regard to national councils the authority would generally be the episcopal conference (where there is only one diocese for the nation, it would be the Ordinary of the diocese). In reaching a decision, there must necessarily be communication with the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.

j) The degree of involvement of different confessions in the same council depends directly on their respective structures, especially in those things concerning the nature and exercise of authority. However, it would seem desirable that councils be constituted in such a way that the various members can all accept the full measure of involvement possible for them.

k) Membership in a council is a serious responsibility of the Catholic bishops or their delegates. It is necessary that the Catholic representatives in councils should be personally qualified and, while representing the Church on matters within their competence, they should be clearly aware of the limits beyond which they cannot commit the Church without prior reference to higher authority.

l) It is not enough that the Church simply have delegates in a council or other ecumenical structure; unless they are taken seriously by the Catholic authorities, the Catholic participation will remain purely superficial. For

the same reason all participation in ecumenical structures should be accompanied by constant ecumenical education of Catholics concerning the implications of such participation.

125. Report, Consultation on Orthodox Involvement in the World Council of Churches, Sofia, 1981

Orthodox churches have long been concerned that the WCC reflects mainly western and Protestant priorities. The Sofia consultation, organized by the WCC's general secretariat, addresses this issue directly, while yet affirming continued Orthodox participation. •

The Sofia Consultation: Orthodox Involvement in the World Council of Churches, ed. Todor Sabev, Geneva, WCC, 1982, pp. 17-22.

1. The Orthodox Understanding of Ecumenism and Participation in the WCC

... Conscious of being members of the same One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, preserving the same Truth, the representatives were unanimous in recognizing the ecumenical movement as an important sign of our times, which places before the Orthodox Church a challenge which she must meet responsibly. In their discussion of problems related to Christian unity, they were aware of the fact that "ecumenism in space" (i.e., concern for unity today) is inseparable from "ecumenism in time" (i.e., faithfulness to the apostolic and patristic teaching). They acknowledged the tension which inevitably exists between the necessary faithfulness to holy tradition and the concern for ecumenical relations and eventual unity between separated Christians today. They rejected any idea of compromise in the faith and remembered with satisfaction that the Central Committee of the WCC, meeting in Toronto (1950), declared: "No Church need fear that by entering into the World Council it is in danger of denying its heritage."

They also noted other important points made by the Toronto declaration, e.g., that "membership in the Council does not in any sense mean that the Churches belong to a body which can make decisions for them," and, furthermore, that "membership does not imply that each Church

must regard the other member Churches as Churches in the true and full sense of the word.”

Although it was recognized that the Toronto Declaration would need development or correction, its text was seen as an essential factor in the continuation of Orthodox membership in the World Council of Churches.

The members of the consultation were unanimous in their understanding of ecumenism, as a necessary expression of Catholicity itself. The Orthodox Catholic Church is concerned to strive for unity among Christians, just as it cannot be indifferent to all other forms of division or hostility in humankind, or in creation. The Son of God, in his Incarnation, assumed the fullness of human nature, and it is in God that humanity finds its true destiny and life. Consequently, the Christian faith cannot separate our human movement toward God from the concerns of human action in creation, and we do not accept the distinction between the so-called “vertical” and “horizontal” dimensions of the Gospel. Christ is indeed the life of the whole world, and the Holy Spirit descending upon the apostles “called all to unity” (Kontakion of Pentecost).

If ecumenism is understood in the light of the Catholicity of the Church, it is clear that the World Council of Churches, as an institution, cannot be seen as the only expression of the ecumenical movement. Indeed, the Council does not comprise all the Christian churches existing today, and other ecumenical organizations and initiatives are also performing an important function in the development of the ecumenical movement. However, the World Council of Churches today represents the most comprehensive ecumenical fellowship, which all Orthodox Churches have joined, and in which they have found:

- an opportunity to have living encounters with other Christians, praying for each other;
- a panel for a continuous theological dialogue on Christian unity;
- a possibility for inter-church aid and cooperation in the service of peace and justice in society, along with many other areas of Christian action and mission in the world;
- an occasion for enjoying fellowship not only with non-Orthodox Christian churches, but also among themselves.

In the opinion of the participants, WCC has been able to produce these fruits because, as it defined itself in Toronto, it exists “to serve the Churches . . . as an instrument, whereby they may witness together to their common allegiance to Jesus Christ, and cooperate in matters

requiring united action.” While the Council can neither “become the Church” nor assume the role of convening an ecumenical council, the fellowship among Churches which it has initiated and nourished will have served to realize the unity of all.

The membership of the Orthodox Churches in the WCC is therefore an expression of the concern which the Church had since Apostolic times for the life, salvation and unity of all. Thus, the consultation of Orthodox theologians, held in New Valamo, Finland (September 24-30, 1977) said:

The participation of the Orthodox in the ecumenical movement of today is not, in principle, a revolution in the history of Orthodoxy, but it is a natural consequence of the constant prayer of the Church “for the union of all.” It constitutes another attempt, like those made in the Patristic period, to apply the Apostolic faith to new historical situations and existential demands. What is in a sense new today is the fact that this attempt is being made together with other Christian bodies with whom there is no full unity. It is here that the difficulties arise, but it is precisely here that there also are many signs of real hope for growing fellowship, understanding and cooperation.

The Orthodox Churches, members of the WCC, have committed themselves to this understanding of ecumenism and intend to remain faithful to that commitment. But they also consider that the future of a fruitful Orthodox membership in the WCC can only be secured if some basic facts of past experience are taken into consideration.

2. Orthodox Experiences and Problems in the WCC

The present evaluation of these issues stems out of the following convictions:

1. Orthodox Churches were active in founding the ecumenical movement and are full members and partners in the WCC.
2. The Orthodox Churches here represented, acknowledge the promising, challenging and enriching role of the WCC since its foundation in 1948, for the cause of Christian unity and common Christian witness.
3. Participation in the WCC is a growing process wherein all member churches are bound to seek a fuller and more effective participation on their own

proper terms, not at the expense of other member churches, but with them in mutual understanding.

4. The Orthodox Churches here represented feel that in order to render a genuine contribution and a witness to the cause of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, they should always be able to act on the basis of their ecclesiology and according to their own rationale.

Positive aspects of Orthodox participation in the WCC

It is an undeniable fact that the Orthodox Churches have benefitted tangibly from their presence in the WCC and have had serious impact on its thought, aspiration and work along the lines of mutual understanding, serious discussion of doctrinal issues, exchange of views and experiences and common witness. Progress towards Christian unity has been made, though we still have a long way to go.

Among the positive aspects of this ecumenical endeavour, we would like to point out the following by way of selection, hoping to stimulate a keener interest, a deeper involvement and a more genuine thrust in the ecumenical undertakings.

1. WCC was instrumental in promoting ecumenical consciousness at various international, regional and national levels, in countries of many Orthodox Churches. It was in this spirit during meetings of the WCC that Eastern Orthodox Churches and Oriental Churches have entered into an informal theological dialogue. The getting together of the Orthodox during meetings of the WCC has also contributed to further strengthening of the existing bonds of brotherhood between Orthodox Churches. The WCC has also brought the Orthodox together in a series of consultations, seminars and workshops on various issues, to clarify their stands and bring their thinking into the life and action of the WCC.
2. WCC has also rendered great services to the cause of Christian unity and unity of humankind through its various units, sub-units, commissions and working groups. We specially mention the work of the Commission on Faith and Order to find points of convergence between differing confessions on fundamental doctrinal issues such as *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, or the endeavours of the Commissions on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) and on the Churches' Participation in Development (CCPD) to bring the Orthodox theological thinking in the field of mission and evangelism, and

of social ethics and development, respectively. We also mention the solidarity and the material and moral assistance of such Commissions and working groups as the Commission on Interchurch Aid, Refugee and World Service (CICARWS), Church and Society, Programme to Combat Racism, the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA), to respond to human and social needs.

3. On the other hand, the Orthodox presence has influenced considerably the life and work of the World Council of Churches, by promoting trinitarian theology, the primacy and urgency of unity of doctrine, the ecclesiology of the local Church, spirituality and sacramental life and the centrality of the Liturgy.

Problems emerging from the Orthodox participation in the WCC

It should be recognized that from the very beginning the participation of the Orthodox in the WCC has not been an easy task. This is especially due to the peculiar structural framework of the Council in which Orthodox theology could not always find its way. The affiliation of the local Orthodox Churches in the WCC at different times (1948, 1961, 1965, 1972, etc.) and for reasons proper to each Church, as well as the absence of an integrated Orthodox approach vis-a-vis the Council and the ecumenical movement did not ease the situation.

While committed to the Council and to its activities and while giving a common witness and service in it, the Orthodox Churches nevertheless have encountered some specific difficulties, which in substance could be summarized as follows:

1. Because of the working style of the Council, from time to time the Orthodox feel uneasy in it. They have not always the opportunity to promote their priorities in the programmatic undertakings of the Council. On the contrary, issues alien to the Orthodox tradition and ethos are adopted on the Council's agenda as priority issues, such as the question of ordination of women to priesthood. Therefore efforts should be made in order to bring Orthodox priorities and concerns before the Council, as listed in various documents of Orthodox member Churches.
2. The Orthodox believe that they are ecumenical because of the very nature of the Church. Therefore, they are called to make a specific theological

contribution to the ecumenical debate. However, the language used and the methodology of elaborating theological statements have not always been sufficiently transparent to allow Orthodox positions to emerge and become an integral part of documents emanating from the WCC bodies. Because of this, the Orthodox do not exclude the possibility of re-introducing the practice of producing separate statements.

3. The opinion was emphasized that the Council being primarily a Council of Churches, member churches should have the right of appointing their representatives to the various bodies of the WCC.

126. Thomas Stransky, "A Basis beyond the Basis: Roman Catholic/World Council of Churches Collaboration," 1985

Stransky, a Paulist priest, was a founding staff member of the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (1960-70) and, later, a member of the Joint Working Group between the Vatican and the WCC. • The Ecumenical Review, vol. 37, no. 2, 1985, pp. 213-22.

... The Holy See never used the argument that, say, WCC member churches or individual non-Roman Catholic Christians were not accepting or confessing Jesus Christ as God, Saviour and Lord (the text of the WCC Basis, to which this refers, can be found in the introduction to the first text in this chapter). But the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) judged that the *de facto* ecclesiological atmosphere and presuppositions of the WCC and its preceding root-structures (Faith and Order and Life and Work) were not in accordance with, not even neutral towards, but over against the ecclesiology of the RCC. The troubling words for the RCC were not the confession itself but the fellowship of churches which did the confessing. What is this "fellowship"? Other than the RCC, what are those "churches"? Where does "the ecumenical movement" intend to move? To what is "the common calling"?

Certainly the WCC itself was not clear as to what these words meant. According to the Toronto Document of 1950, the WCC "is not based on any one particular

conception of the Church," and there is "room for the ecclesiology of every Church . . . which takes its stand on the Basis." Membership "does not imply the acceptance of a specific doctrine concerning the nature of Church unity," or that "each church must regard the other member Churches as Churches in the true and full sense of the word," although they should recognize "in other Churches elements of the true Church."¹⁵

In short, I would claim that by the Christian act of faith, the whole person is committed to the whole Christ—recognizing, accepting and openly confessing him as God, Lord, Saviour, and to all that this implies, according to the scriptures. Christian divisions, insofar as they are theologically based, are rooted primarily in "all that this implies." This most fundamental Christian act calls us to a common search to overcome these divisions, and that includes a search for an ecclesiology.¹⁶

The shift in RC evaluation and policy began in the 1950s. The Holy Office Letter *Ecclesia Sancta* (20 December 1949) positively evaluated the ecumenical movement "among those who are dissident from the Catholic Church" and "believe in Christ the Lord" as derived from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (*afflante quidem Spiritus Sancti gratia*), and thus "for the children of the true Church a source of holy joy in the Lord." Other Christians do care deeply for church unity, and RCs must take their efforts seriously, in charity and in prayer. And under strict conditions, RC experts, approved by the hierarchy, can participate in discussions "on faith and morals" with other Christians, but all religious indifferentism should be avoided.¹⁷

Even though the RCC then stood firmly in its ecclesiology of "return," it now accepted the *basis* for that dialogue-in-fellowship which had been serving other Christians.

That same basis formula entered into the solemn vocabulary of the *Decree on Ecumenism* of the Second Vatican Council. The drafters were searching, for a description of the ecumenical movement in which the RCC could and

15. The Church, the Churches and the World Council," adopted by the WCC Central Committee, Toronto, 9-15 July 1950, *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. III, October 1950, pp. 47ff.

16. Oliver Tomkins in 1950 pinpoints the basic but necessary flaw in the Toronto Document: "We are using the word church in a sense of which we have no agreed definition, and the Council is . . . a religious phenomenon that fits into no previously used categories . . . All the churches do not see the same consequences flowing from that acceptance [of the Basis], which drives me to admit that the Council as such must be committed to the view that faith in Christ can be legitimately attributed to those who hold differing views as to what that faith necessarily implies." *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. IV, 1951, No.2, pp. 259-60.

17. AAS XLIV, 1950, pp. 142-47.

should be an active participant. “The growing movement” is for the “reintegration” and “restoration” of unity among all Christians, a movement “fostered by the grace of the Holy Spirit” (*Spiritus Sancti fovente gratia*). The drafters described also the participants as “those who invoke the Triune God and confess Jesus as Lord and Saviour.” The footnote in the working drafts explicitly refers to the Basis of the WCC, as adopted by the New Delhi Assembly (1961).¹⁸

But the Christological basis searches for an ecclesiology. The most fundamental ecumenical shift in Vatican II was in the self-understanding both of the RCC itself, and of its relations with other Christian communities. The process of sharing new life in Jesus Christ Lord and Saviour takes place not outside and despite another’s church—a position some pre-Vatican II theologians took vis-a-vis Protestant, not Orthodox, churches—but by means of that church. The One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church subsists in the RCC but is not coextensive with it, because other Christian “communities” are present in history, and the Holy Spirit uses them also as “means of salvation.” *Redintegratio unitatis*, the title of the Decree, suggests that the fullness of unity is not found in any one church in its actual life; only the unity of all Christians in the one church of Christ is necessary before this fullness of unity can be proclaimed to exist. At present there is indeed real communion between Christians because of what God has done and does to us, but an *imperfect* one because of what we have done and continue to do to each other—a real but imperfect fellowship between all Christian communions. Ecumenism is not a “return” to the past but a search for future reconciliation. And the most fundamental movement is not that of Christian communions towards each other, but of all towards Jesus Christ, Lord and Saviour, to the glory of the one triune God.¹⁹

In short, the Christological basis for entrance of the RCC into the one ecumenical movement²⁰ is undergirded

18. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, n. 1. In *Enchiridion Vaticanum*, Bologna, 1971, p. 286. Further on in the Decree, the notes also refer to the WCC Basis but expand it: “Those Christians who openly confess Jesus Christ as God and Lord, and as the only mediator between God and humans (*homines*),” N. 20, p.318. By traditional principle, all footnoted references in promulgated conciliar texts are excluded except those of scripture, of the early church fathers, and of previous councils.

19. For a more complete analysis of this shift and the careful nuances in the Decree’s language, cf. Thomas F. Stransky’s *The Decree on Ecumenism*, Paramus, 1965, and “The Decree,” in *Vatican II: an Inter-Faith Appraisal*, Notre Dame and London, 1966, pp. 377-87.

20. The title of Chapter I of the Decree had been changed from “Principles of Catholic Ecumenism” (1963 draft) to “Catholic Principles of Ecumenism.” The RCC shares in the one movement according to RC principles.

primarily by an ecclesiology. In fact, both Christology and ecclesiology shape “the common ground” for relations between the RCC, the member churches, and the WCC itself. The basis is beyond the Basis.

In careful, often belaboured language, the RCC/WCC Joint Working Group (JWG)’s Fourth Official Report (1975) offers from three perspectives this “common ground”:

1. “We confess that Christ, true God and true Man, is Lord and that it is through him and him alone that we are saved.” The triune God “gathers together the people of the New Covenant as a communion of unity in faith, hope and love.” Despite Christian divisions, this communion continues to exist, but because of them, it is a “real but imperfect” one. The ecumenical movement—“the restoration of the unity of all Christians”—is “the common rediscovery of that existing reality and equally the common efforts to overcome the obstacles standing in the way of perfect ecclesial communion Though this vision of perfect unity is far from being fulfilled, and even its concrete shape cannot yet be fully described, it has already become part of the life of the Churches.”
2. The gift of communion calls for common witness to Christ in the world, “wherever the partial communion in faith and life, as it exists among the churches, makes it possible.”
3. And this real but imperfect communion in today’s world calls for a shared commitment to the renewal of Christians and of the churches.²¹

Personal Reflections

Here I offer two major observations, admittedly personal, perhaps objectionable: (1) the need to improve or change the present image of that RCC/WCC collaboration which is based on “the common ground” or basis; (2) the need for a more articulated synthesis of the present WCC ecclesial understanding of the ecumenical movement, the church and the churches, and the World Council of Churches.

1. The “common ground” or basis requires the RCC, out of its own ecclesial integrity, to be an active participant in the ecumenical movement and to continue, indeed intensify, collaboration with the WCC. But the presumed consequences of the same RC ecclesiology are, above all

21. The Fourth Report in *Breaking Barriers: Nairobi 1975*, ed. David Paton, London, SPCK, and Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1976, pp. 271-82; “The Common Ground,” pp. 272-75.

other reasons, presently keeping the RCC as such from membership in the WCC.

After a three-year study by a mixed commission, and after thorough, frank and unpublished discussions, in 1972 the Holy See made its prudential judgment not to apply for membership “in the near future.” The RCC made it clear that “there is no doubt that *the RCC could accept the Basis of the WCC.*” But

factors, some theologically based, at present militate against membership as a visible expression of the relationship between the RCC and the WCC. To a much greater degree than other churches, the RCC sees its constitution as a universal fellowship with a universal mission and structure as an essential element of its identity. Membership could present real pastoral problems to many RCs because the decision to belong to a world-wide fellowship of churches could easily be misunderstood. Then there is the way in which authority is considered in the RCC and the processes through which it is exercised. There are also practical differences in the mode of operation, including the style and impact of public statements.²²

Behind these reasons, I repeat, are the presumed practical consequences of a specific RC ecclesiology, not the ecclesiology itself; that ecclesiology the WCC would respect as it does all the others of the member churches, whether Protestant, Anglican, or Orthodox.

In the early 1970s the RCC was facing the pastoral headaches of its very Vatican II renewal. Bishops and laity, and the Roman Curia, were required suddenly to “own” the council statements and to carry out explicit theological, pastoral and missionary demands. Too much came too soon for too many. For some RCs the stated reforms did not take place fast enough, even did not go far enough. For others, the pace of church renewal, including its ecumenical pace, was already too galloping, and many changes did not seem to make traditional Catholic sense. And in the middle were many who did not regard Vatican II as a Big Mistake; rather, they deplored the excessive exaggerations in the interpretations of the spirit and the decisions of Vatican II. Without a strong tradition of public self criticism and calm mutual correction, public dissent, polarizations and milder conflicts followed—among the bishops, among the clergy, and among the laity. What to most RCs was a sustaining fresh breeze was to some a faddish, passing ill wind. Furthermore, because of the vast variety of situations between and within six continents, unevenness in

22. Fourth Report, *ibid.*, p.275. The Study Document on Membership, *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. XXIV, July 1982, pp. 247-88.

awareness and execution of Vatican II demands ensued. London, Boston or a Canadian prairie town is not Dar-es-Salaam, Bangkok, a Peruvian mountain village, or Rome. Both conciliar authority and papal authority were at stake, and thereby also an essential element of Catholic identity.

In this context of the early 1970s, the membership study was in process. Hard questions were asked. I list but a few. Since the RCC is a family of local churches with and under the Bishop of Rome, RC representation in the WCC would come from both the Holy See and the local churches. What would happen if within the RCC there be public dissent among the RC episcopal, clerical and lay representatives, and between some of them and the Holy See contingent, especially on more important personal and social ethical issues, political judgments, etc? Would some RCs use the WCC as a public forum for obtaining the backing of others for their own dissent? How would contrary judgments within the RCC be handled by the RCC? The RCC would take its membership functions most seriously (I, for one, never doubt that). Would the RCC be too much alone with its seriousness in directly influencing the very shaping of WCC statements and policies, and too much alone in issuing public disclaimers, which it certainly would do if it disagreed with more important ones. (I wondered at Vancouver, for example, what the Holy See representatives would have done before and after the decision regarding Afghanistan.) And if the Holy See issued disclaimers, what negative and positive influence would these acts have on those ecumenical relations between the local RC churches and the other member churches there? On some theological issues would the Orthodox/RC form too heavy a block to allow other voices to be respected, e.g., the ordination of women? Indeed, these are all hard questions.

The RC mistake in 1972 may not have been the Holy See’s decision to abstain from WCC membership. The mistake, in my judgment, was the process of arriving at the decision. The JWG had never been naive enough to project that the hypothesis of RC membership would not require a lengthy and profound study.²³ In 1972 the Holy See blocked the intended plan of consultation, and pre-empted the decision to itself. The plan had been to share the study and its RC commentary with regional and national episcopal conferences (and those whom they in turn would consult, for example local WCC member

23. At his 10 June 1969 visit to the WCC headquarters in Geneva, Pope Paul VI said that the membership question is still a hypothesis. “It contains serious theological and pastoral implications. It thus requires profound study and commits us to a way that honesty recognizes could be long and difficult.” In *Doing the Truth in Charity: Vatican Ecumenical Documents, 1964-1980*, eds. Thomas F. Stransky and John B. Sheerin, Ramsey, N.J., Paulist Press, 1982, p. 278.

churches), RC international organizations, ecumenical theology groups, the entire Roman Curia, eventually the Synod of Bishops, etc.

After such consultation the final judgment might still have been “no membership in the near future.” But the worldwide constituency would have been involved in the educational process of understanding what the common ground or basis is for any cooperation with the WCC, and what the WCC is and does and how it works. The circle of RC leaders who are committed to the common ground would have widened, and they could join in “intensifying” collaboration in their area of leadership. The local member churches, by the example of the “seriousness” of the RCC, even as a nonmember, might have taken more seriously and intensely their own commitments to the WCC as members. Or . . . after such consultation, the final prudential judgment might have been otherwise.

One will never know.²⁴ In any case it may not be unfair to observe that the reason—“Membership could present real pastoral problems to many RCs because the decision to belong to a worldwide fellowship could easily be misunderstood”—seems uncomfortably similar to the argument used in Pius XI’s *Mortalium Animos*, a judgment “from a distance” about how RCs would react to a specific form of ecumenical collaboration.

True, visible expressions of RCC/WCC collaboration continue: the Joint Working Group, RC membership in Faith and Order, the Joint Consultative Group for social thought and action, RC consultants to the CWME and an RC nun on its staff, delegated observers or invited RC experts at assemblies and major meetings. We should not trivialize these active signs by cynicism.

But a damaging dominant image, or general visible message, still persists. Whether valid or not, the image is this: the WCC has its own brand of Protestant/ Anglican/ Orthodox ecumenism when its members are working in and through the WCC, and this brand operates better when the RCC as such keeps its distance; alongside of this the RCC has its brand, and it operates better at a distance from the WCC, whether in local, national, world bilateral or multilateral relationships; whether through local or national councils of churches, or not; whether with member churches, or not (for example, now with many conservative evangelical churches or parachurch groups). Furthermore, this image is claiming that the very “common ground” or basis which the RCC/WCC has forged to

24. In the early 1970s, I had the impression that not a few within the WCC were having second thoughts about RC membership. The reaction was similar to what I had heard in 1959: “We have enough problems.” Or to use my favourite image: once the Big Elephant is in the already cultivated garden, how delicately placed would be its first steps?

undergird present collaboration works more naturally and with less strain when the RCC as such and the WCC as such are not directly involved.²⁵

If this image or dominant message is in fact there, then the weakness of present RCC/WCC collaboration resides not in “the common ground” but in the visible expressions of that basis.

The Fifth Report of the JWG, approved by the Holy See and by the Vancouver Assembly, asks that both partners ever realistically keep in mind the valid question: “How can the RCC and the WCC intensify their joint activities and thereby strengthen the unity, common witness, and the renewal of the churches?” Or, as Cardinal Willebrands wrote in his response to the Fifth Report, if such increased collaboration “is to mean something, it must be taken seriously on both sides. There must be the will to utilize the possibilities.” I would add, “and thereby improve or change the visible signs of that collaboration.” And an improved change cannot come about simply by willing it.²⁶

2. What is becoming more obvious, at least to this observer/participant, is that the WCC is keeping intact both the Basis and the 1950 Toronto Document, but is developing, perhaps unawares, ecclesial understandings which flow from the Basis—a basis beyond the Basis.

Intermittent pressure to enlarge the Basis is countered by consensus not to open the doors to all proposals which try to write a classical confession of faith. Such efforts could be divisive, could easily marginalize or exclude some “churches which confess.” So the plea: leave the Basis alone; less than a confession and more than a mere formula, the Basis serves as a point of reference for WCC members, serves as a source or ground of coherence.²⁷

Past attempts to enlarge the Basis have focused on the Christ, on trinitarian doxology and on scripture (“the basis of the Basis”). “Fellowship,” “churches,” and “common calling” are not questioned. So the plea: leave more specific understandings alone; otherwise we will need to revise the 1950 Toronto Document, and that would indeed open a can of worms. But here the arguments against revision focus almost exclusively on the slightest danger of

25. An exception may be Faith and Order, where there is RC membership. Because of the surprising outbursts of enthusiasm in taking seriously the Baptism-Eucharist-Ministry study as a springboard for discussion, at least in the USA, many RCs for the first time are experiencing a WCC project as equal participants.

26. Fifth Report in *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. XXXV, April 1983. Cf. *Gathered for Life*, official report of the Vancouver Assembly, 1983, ed. David Gill, Geneva and Grand Rapids, 1983, pp.118-21; and the *Information Service of the Secretariat for Promoting Unity*, No. 53, 1983, IV, pp. 103-27.

27. Cf. *New Delhi Assembly Work Book*, WCC, 1960, pp. 30-33; *The New Delhi Report*, London, 1962, pp. 152-59, 37-38.

membership ever implying that “each church must regard the other member Churches as Churches in the true and full sense of the word,” a danger the Orthodox, as well as RCs, would be most adamant in withstanding.

In short, it seems that the WCC remains neutral on any ecclesiological implications of the Basis. But does it? While debates concentrate on the status quo of both the Basis and the Toronto Document, the *functions and purposes* are changing, in statement and in fact. And the ways in which the WCC member churches and the WCC—and the RCC in relations with them—are explicitly or implicitly carrying out, or not carrying out, those stated functions and purposes reveal the ecclesial self-understandings of the members more than does a cold reading of the Basis and Toronto. One need only compare the original 1948 list of WCC “functions” with the present list of “functions and purposes.” The present list implies far more ecclesiological understanding, not so much of what the WCC is but of what the member churches understand themselves to be. They may now be taking for granted what they might not have in 1948.

A clear example of this shift is the change from the vague “to carry on the work of the world movements for Faith and Order and Life and Work” (1948) to “to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship expressed in worship and in the common life in Christ, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe.”²⁸ It would be hard to defend this change as harmonious with the Toronto Document’s affirmation that “membership does not imply the acceptance of a specific doctrine concerning the nature of church unity.”

I suggest what is needed for us all is a “common ground” affirmation: *The Ecumenical Movement, the Church and the Churches, and the World Council of Churches*.

The Toronto Document is out of date. True, many of its affirmations about what the WCC is *not*, about what membership in the WCC does not imply, are still valid and need reaffirmation. But a 1950 statement cannot be expected to do justice to the collective experience of the churches in the ecumenical movement since 1950, whether they be member churches or not. (The one ecumenical movement is qualitatively wider and deeper than any of its structured expressions, including the structured fellowship which is the WCC.) The Toronto Document does not reflect what we today are perceiving our common calling is for, and to what we are called. What has thirty-five years taught us? What has been our experience of more

profoundly understanding not only the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour “according to the Scriptures,” but also according to the same scriptures, “the church and the churches,” and the world in which they pilgrimage? What do we see as the future of ecumenism, in vision and in fact? And one cannot claim that the present misunderstandings of the WCC and its role in the ecumenical movement are only repeats of what the 1950 Document was conscious.

Insights and analyses about all this have already surfaced in all too many scattered studies and affirmations of the WCC (and *not* limited to Faith and Order) and of member churches. But we have no articulated synthesis.

This proposed exercise already finds an example in the CWME *Mission and Evangelism: an Ecumenical Affirmation*. When Emilio Castro proposed this project to a small group of us participants in the 1980 Melbourne Mission Conference, immediate hesitations arose: no matter how much such a statement is needed, there still may not be enough coherence in the thinking and practices among the CWME constituencies. The hesitations proved to be wrong.²⁹ As that document proved, coherence is there, and coherence does not mean uniformity, and the lack of uniformity does not mean a chaotic collage of contradictions.

In conclusion, I plead for a basis beyond the Basis, limited to be sure, but at least not a neutral ecclesiological stance towards the ecclesial implications of the Basis and the reflections of our common ecumenical experience—both “according to the Scriptures.”

127. Jean Skuse, “The Councils Serving the Churches in Their Mission of Justice, Peace, and Service to the World,” Second Consultation of National Councils of Churches, 1986

Jean Skuse was, at the time of this address, the general secretary of the Australian Council of Churches.

• Instruments of Unity: National Councils of Churches within the One Ecumenical Movement, ed. Thomas F. Best, Geneva, WCC, 1988, pp. 80-90.

28. The recorded statement by the Lutheran Church of Finland at the Nairobi Assembly did not object to this change, as long as “the goal of visible unity does not necessarily mean unity of jurisdiction of church government.” Cf. *Breaking Barriers*, op. cit., p. 190.

29. *Mission and Evangelism*, WCC, 1983. RC consultants were very much involved in the drafting, and the text incorporates portions of the JWG’s study document, *Common Witness*, WCC, 1981.

Unity and the Search for Justice and Peace Go Hand in Hand

I begin with the basic assumption that councils of churches exist primarily to promote the unity God wills for the church. Whilst in our councils we have a variety of priorities, structures and emphases, we all have a common goal of unity within the church as a sign of the unity we long for for the whole of humanity—not that we may ever reach that goal, but we understand it as a gospel imperative for Christian discipleship “that they all may be one that the world may believe.”

In the context of this goal councils are called to assist the churches in their mission to the world. Unity is not to be pursued for its own sake, but to enable churches to discern God’s will and purpose for the world Christ came to redeem. It is often in the carrying out of God’s mission that Christians move towards unity. As the Fifth Report of the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches (1983) reminds us: “Today many people . . . receive their most significant experience of the ecumenical dimension in the common effort for justice, peace and development. Such initiatives touch on urgent problems and bring Christians together in the exercise of responsibility for building the whole human community as well as relating global issues to daily action.”³⁰ . . .

How, then, may councils serve the churches in their mission of justice and peace and service to the world?

1. Local, national, regional and world councils of churches are part of the one ecumenical movement.

This is an oft-repeated statement which must not become a cliché. While national and regional councils of churches are not members of the WCC, nor are some national councils members of regional councils, we do ourselves a disservice if we ignore this basic premise. We cannot afford to operate competitively or to distance ourselves from each other when difficulties arise. Our strength will come from assisting each other and working together to foster relationships among the churches and helping them in their mission.

While affirming the above, the report on the General Secretariat to the (WCC) Central Committee, 1984 (which recommended the holding of this consultation) warned that national and regional councils do not have an intermediary role between the churches and the WCC.³¹ Councils should relate directly to member churches and member churches to councils. This is certainly true, but we

30. Published in *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 35, No. 2, WCC, Geneva, April 1983, p. 215.

31. *Minutes of the Thirty-Sixth Meeting, Central Committee of the World Council of Churches*, WCC, Geneva, 1984, pp. 22, 129ff.

should not dismiss too readily the responsibility of national councils to help in the interpretation of world and regional priorities, to provide resources to member churches to assist in this interpretation, and to express solidarity in mutual concerns.

2. Councils of churches are places where churches are challenged in their denominational isolation and where appropriate ecumenical action may result.

The 1971 consultation on “Rethinking the Role of Christian Councils Today” urged “member churches to encourage their councils to pioneer on their behalf in controversial areas in which individual churches are not willing or equipped to act.”³²

As churches meet in councils, something happens which is more than each individual tradition or denomination pursuing its own agenda. An effective council will be more than the sum of its separate parts. Something radical happens when churches meet together—locally, nationally, regionally, internationally. They gain new theological insights. They become more informed. They learn from each other. They can take risks. New visions emerge. Issues too big to handle separately may be confronted together.

Of course, we all know the difficulties this sometimes creates. As Ernst Lange reminds us: “When they move in ecumenical circles, church representatives tend to talk big, to say and promise a great deal. This is not to question their personal sincerity, of course, but in the internal politics of their own churches they often find themselves in no position to redeem their ecumenical promises, or even to interpret them and enlist adequate support for them. An ecumenical maximalism and a denominational minimalism continue unreconciled side by side in the soul of one and the same church leader.”³³

Nevertheless, most churches accept this pioneering role for a council, and the decisions arrived at together influence the churches inescapably. An example of this from Australia concerns the proposed observance of a bicentennial in 1988 to celebrate the settlement of Australia. By “settlement” is meant, of course, European settlement with little reference to the Aboriginal population who have lived in Australia for more than 40,000 years. In 1980 the Australian Council of Churches (ACC) convened a national consultation on racism as part of the series of national and regional consultations encouraged by the WCC at that time. The consultation involved Aborigines

32. “Rethinking the Role of Christian Councils Today: A Report to Churches and Councils from the World Consultation on Christian Councils, 1971,” WCC, Geneva, 1971, p. 9.

33. *And Yet it Moves . . . : Dream and Reality of the Ecumenical Movement*, trans. Edwin Robertson, Belfast, Christian Journals Limited, and Geneva, WCC, 1979, p. 72.

and representatives of member churches. The report, subsequently endorsed by the ACC general meeting, urged churches not to participate in any celebrations unless satisfactory progress had been made in granting of land rights to Aborigines by 1988. We seem no nearer that goal now than we were in 1980. It was a controversial decision, particularly as government money is available for local and national celebrations and the whole nation will be involved in 1988 in a series of public events. There was an attempt to woo the ACC itself with government funds to organize a national religious event. If the churches had withdrawn their support in each town, and nationally, it would have made a significant impact and the government would have been considerably embarrassed.

Member churches have differed widely in their response and none has supported fully the ACC position. Nevertheless, the issue has been put firmly on the agenda of the churches, and most denominational synods and assemblies have at least had to debate the issue; once it was on the ecumenical agenda it was also on the agenda of member churches.

3. Councils of churches help churches to acknowledge and experience the universality of the church—a vision of ecumenism which is more than local interchurch relations.

A headline in a Melbourne newspaper recently caught my eye: "Making a Big Ecumenical Splash." What was this newsworthy event? A new agreement on baptism perhaps? No, the story was about two priests, one a Roman Catholic and the other an Anglican, rowing canoes in a race across the Yarra River to raise money for charity. A Baptist minister was in a nearby boat cheering them on. The word "ecumenical" is often so trivialized that it becomes meaningless.

Ecumenism, the oikoumene, the expression which signifies the unity of the whole inhabited earth, is a symbol of something much greater than two clergy being in the same boat, much larger than the number of different denominations represented at a church service; much more than the variety of liturgical dress in a photograph; something beyond the last-minute inclusion of other churches in a denominational programme already planned.

The ecumenical themes of peace, justice and the care of creation demand that churches are more closely knit across international boundaries than ever before. As a member of a church and council that exist on an island of affluence in a sea of poverty, on a continent of security in an ocean whose peoples are under constant threat from nuclear testing and the dumping of nuclear waste, I have to be challenged to an appropriate response to the cries of the dispossessed and marginalized. The Pacific Conference of Churches provides the challenge. The problem for

the people and churches in the Pacific is a problem for the people and churches in Australia. The problems in Southern Africa or Nicaragua or Chile or Poland are problems for us all.

In the past 18 months my involvement with the worldwide ecumenical movement has taken me to Buenos Aires (WCC Central Committee, 1985), to Rome (Joint Working Group), to the Middle East (a visit from the Australian churches), to Harare, Zimbabwe (consultation on South Africa). Whether it was walking around the Plaza de Mayo with the mothers and grandmothers of the disappeared in Argentina, or holding the hand of a woman in Beirut as she told me of her friend killed by sniper fire two days before, or discussing the paths to unity with the bishops in Rome, or listening with tears to the pleas of the black African leaders, it was evident to me, a professional ecumenist, in new and personal ways that, if one part of the church suffers, all suffer. I visited, too, at the invitation of Aborigines, the northwest town of Broome in Australia and shared once more the agony of a people dispossessed and marginalized. The churches of the world need each other if we are to make peace with the poor, bring justice to the oppressed and care for God's creation. It is a task of councils to remind the churches of this simple, yet profound, fact.

We need to find more ways of developing a constant exchange, an awareness, ways to express solidarity, processes of sharing, which characterize the universality of the oikoumene.

4. Councils are a two-way street, helping the world church listen to the local agenda.

Last year I visited a small community about 120 km south of Perth in Western Australia. I think it was the first time anyone officially representing any ecumenical council had been in the area. A person from a rural community a further 90 km away heard I was to be there and came to see me. In his hands was a copy of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM). He was enthusiastic and excited about the document and wanted to talk about it. I was impressed that BEM had made such an impact in this seemingly remote situation. Then he challenged me.

He was a pastor to an isolated community based on a tree-felling and logging industry. Now, in protection of the environment, the industry was closing down and people would be without work. The life of the entire town would be disrupted, and the people whose families had been there for generations were to be displaced. Where could they go? What would they do? Holding BEM in his hands, he said: "How can I encourage my people to study BEM when they are so preoccupied with what is happening here? What is

the relevance of the agenda of the Council of Churches to what is happening in the daily lives of these people?"

As councils we need to be more conscious of problems faced by all sections of our constituencies, to take mutual responsibility for the disruption caused in the pursuit of justice, peace and the integrity of creation. Possibly more dramatic examples would come from other countries. Maybe the experience of other places could help this community. Maybe their skills could assist others.

As each local church moves from maintaining its own life to reflecting on what it means to be the church in this place, it discovers links with other churches struggling with the same issues; it comes to an understanding of "church" which is infinitely greater, more exciting than any single congregation can perceive; it realizes that it has something to contribute to the whole church as well as something to receive from it.

5. Service to the world should be in the context of the ecumenical priorities of mutuality, justice and peace.

A parable

Once upon a time there was a small village on the edge of a river. The people there were good and so was life in the village. One day a villager noticed a baby floating down the river. The villager quickly jumped into the river and swam out to save the baby from drowning.

The next day this same villager was walking along the river bank and noticed two babies in the river. He called for help, and both babies were rescued from the swift waters. And the following day four babies were seen caught in the turbulent current. And then eight, then more, and still more.

The villagers organized themselves quickly, setting up watch towers and training teams of swimmers who could resist the swift waters and rescue babies. Rescue squads were soon working 24 hours a day. And each day the number of helpless babies floating down the river increased.

The villagers organized themselves efficiently. The rescue squads were now snatching many children each day. Groups were trained to give mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Others prepared formulae and provided clothing for chilled babies. Many were involved in making clothing and knitting blankets. Still others provided foster homes and placement. While not all the babies could be saved, the villagers felt they were doing well to save as many as they could each day.

One day, however, someone raised the question: "But where are all these babies coming from? Who is throwing them into the river? Why? Let's organize a team to go

upstream and see who's doing it." The seeming logic of the elders countered: "And if we go upstream, who will operate the rescue operations? We need every concerned person here!"

"But don't you see," cried the one lone voice, "if we find out who is throwing them in, we can stop the problem and no babies will drown. By going upstream we can eliminate the cause of the problem!" "It's too risky."

And so the numbers of babies in the river increase daily. Those saved increase, but those who drown increase even more.

It is out of the ecumenical experience of service to the poor that the churches and councils have been prepared to "go upstream" and seek out the structural injustices which keep people in a state of poverty and powerlessness. This is a much more dangerous and a much more difficult task, and a less popular one.

The delivery of services has become a source of competition within our churches. The poor are used, sometimes, for the churches' own spiritual enhancement. Independent aid agencies, with no accountability to the churches, no mutual understanding of mission, compete for the church dollar. The funding and organization of large programmes bypassing the churches, but acting in the name of Christianity, create new power elites unrelated to local mission priorities and diverting attention from root causes of inequality.

Councils, too, must be wary of being involved in programmes which tear apart the ecumenical structures, create tension within and among member churches, and ignore the concepts of resource sharing, justice, partnership and advocacy on behalf of and in solidarity with the marginalized and oppressed.

Financial assistance must go together with involvement in the struggle to change unjust structures, and that demands commitment and solidarity. Ecumenical sharing across the divisions of the world can be a powerful sign of hope, signifying that injustice can be overcome and that fellowship and solidarity are possible. The ultimate aim of this sharing is building up a Christian community committed to justice and peace, locally and worldwide, as a sign of hope for humanity.

6. Councils should reflect in their own life the unity, inclusiveness and justice they proclaim for the world.

The degree and quality of the participation of the whole people of God determine more and more the quality of the ecumenical community. Councils seek to include many groups which feel under-represented and powerless in their

own churches—laity, women, youth, and those marginalized by race or poverty.

The progress towards inclusiveness is not without cost to councils of churches. As more people from further down the institutional hierarchical ladder are included, it is easier for churches who are not so inclusive to be further removed from the decisions made. Thus each new stage of inclusiveness, widening the circle so that all may come in, places new challenges before churches to be as inclusive as they expect councils of churches to be.

Our structures should also reflect wholeness. Sometimes our programmes are so fragmented and compartmentalized (e.g., into the areas of faith and order, finance, aid, refugees, church and society, education) that there is little unity in our own work. We often carry this fragmentation into our relations with other national and regional councils. Member churches, too, need to be reminded that sometimes their bilateral relationships with churches in other countries, based on historical links or continued dependencies, hinder the work of ecumenical councils in those countries. Often churches are more closely related to their missionary parents in another country than they are to other churches within their own country.

7. Widening council membership should not be a goal in itself if it is at the expense of some hard-earned gains in our ecumenical endeavours.

There is sometimes a tension between including more churches in the membership of our councils and our existing ecumenical priorities.

I need to be frank here. There are some instances at local and state (provincial) level in Australia where churches which are not members of WCC and ACC have joined local councils. The result has been a disengagement from WCC, national and regional ecumenical programmes on the grounds that it is not right to the new members, who do not have these links, to involve them in such programmes. Similarly some of the principles of inclusiveness (women and lay) are sacrificed to include churches based on more hierarchical structures.

What is the lowest common denominator for councils of churches? The New Zealand model may have something to teach us here. As I understand it, the plans for moving to a new, more inclusive ecumenical council involve the whole people of God at all levels of the life of the churches, with the concerns of the wider ecumenical movement still firmly on the agenda.

8. Councils have a responsibility to government as well as to churches.

Our oneness in the worldwide ecumenical movement and as councils relating to each other enables us to have insights which we can share with the churches and with governments. I think, for instance, of the role the churches play in the events in South Africa, Namibia, Sri Lanka and Nicaragua and how the involvement of the churches in these countries enables councils and churches around the world, through ecumenical and other networks, to have access to information which may not be so readily available in other ways. Councils can distribute this material to government as well as church sources.

Similarly national councils have a catalytic role to play with their own governments, challenging policies and priorities and structural injustices within their own countries, seeking to find ways whereby the voices of the poor and the powerless may be heard by those in power.

Councils must beware of being compromised by governments through the acceptance of funds with strings attached or the offering of privileges. Councils should maintain a critical distance from governmental authorities. This is a much more risky role for some councils than for others. As we meet here, we know that the involvement of some of our colleagues on the staff and boards of councils of churches has meant harassment, imprisonment, torture and disappearance.

9. Councils of churches are often the focus for action groups as well as for churches.

By action groups I mean a wide range of usually locally-based ecumenical movements working for justice, peace, the environment, liberation and community. It is not surprising that such groups can sometimes identify more with the programmes of ecumenical councils than they can with their own church; they may see more of their concerns being addressed ecumenically than anywhere else.

More importantly, for the life of the churches and the ecumenical movement councils should be open to the contemporary signs of renewal coming from these sources. We should not write these groups off as being on the fringe of the church or society, but find ways to listen to and to learn from them.

10. Each council must develop a deep spiritual life as a foundation for its engagement.

There is no one ecumenical spirituality, nor even a single coherent theology in the ecumenical movement. Yet worship and intercessory prayer are at the heart of the ecumenical endeavour.

In spite of differences in tradition, each council operates with a biblically based spirituality. The Ecumenical Prayer Cycle facilitates praying for the church in each place. Prayers for peace and justice and solidarity expressed in mutual intercessions shape our being and our doing.

Similarly our work will be enhanced if we find occasions to celebrate our life together, even if we are not yet able to celebrate it at the eucharist. Praise and thanksgiving affirm our achievements and help us discern signs of hope.

11. Councils serve the churches in their mission for justice, peace and service to the world.

This is our title and this is the crux of the matter. It is not the role of councils to do the difficult, and sometimes unpopular, tasks of the churches for them, but to challenge and enable each member church to enlarge its own understanding of mission and service to the world.

We can enumerate ways in which the agendas of world and regional councils have influenced the life and mission of churches in modern history—the changing concepts of mission, the agreements on doctrine, the relation of faith to science, the development debate, the dramatic response to refugee situations and advocacy on their behalf, the combating of racism, the challenging of international economic structures, and the concern for the integrity of creation, to name just a few. These are all convincing evidence of the contribution of ecumenism to the total life of the Christian church in recent years. All have come out of laying ourselves open to listen, to receive, to learn from each other.

The challenge for each council is to enable the ecumenical agenda to be at the heart of the churches they serve. It is to discourage them from hiving off into safe, unconnected cells—a sure sign of death and decay—but to be part of the living, pulsing organism of the body of Christ. It is to facilitate the mission of each church within the context of, and enriched by, an ecumenical dimension which is global in vision but grounded in the specific expressions of local, regional and national worship and witness.

Councils, too, are challenged to seek ways to reflect the faith and priorities of member churches, but with the added dimension of the wider ecumenical insights gained from churches and groups within the worldwide ecumenical networks.

The mission of the churches and the mission of councils are integral and integrated parts of the one mission, God's mission for the reconciliation of the church and the world.

128. "Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches," World Council of Churches Central Committee, 1997

CUV, as it is known, is the outcome of eight years of study and consultation. It was prepared for the WCC's fiftieth anniversary assembly (1998) and conceived by the Council's Executive Committee as an "ecumenical charter" for the 21st century. • <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/2006-porto-alegre/3-preparatory-and-background-documents/common-understanding-and-vision-of-the-wcc-cuv>

The full document, which can be found at the site listed above, is essential for understanding, not only the WCC, but councils of churches in general. All four parts of the text are valuable, but section 2, which speaks about the meaning of "ecumenical," and section 3, which speaks theologically about the nature and purpose of the WCC, may be most useful and interesting for students in courses on ecumenism and for general readers. The eight following affirmations highlight some key features of the understanding of the WCC developed in that statement.

1. The WCC is a *fellowship of churches which have committed themselves to make visible their unity in Christ and to call one another to a deeper expression of that unity through worship and common life, witness and service to the world.*
2. There have been many *signs of growth towards Christian unity* since the founding of the WCC.
3. It is impossible to speak about the WCC apart from the *ecumenical movement, out of which it grew and of which it is an important instrument.*
4. Today, no less than when the WCC was founded, *the world and the churches face a time of crisis whose deepest dimensions are spiritual.*
5. The contemporary spiritual crises call the ecumenical movement and the WCC *to reaffirm the vocation of being an impulse for renewal.*

6. As part of their fellowship in the WCC, the member churches acknowledge a *common calling, which they seek to fulfill together*.
7. To help the churches to fulfill together their common calling, the WCC must have an *effective organizational structure*.
8. At the dawn of a new millennium, the churches *recommit themselves to the ecumenical vision and deepen their participation in the WCC*.

129. Report of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the World Council of Churches, 2002

The Special Commission was called for by the WCC's Harare Assembly (1998), following considerable controversy over Orthodox participation in the Council and the withdrawal of two member churches. Material elaborating on the points made in the following excerpt can be found by consulting the whole document. • <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/2006-porto-alegre/3-preparatory-and-background-documents/final-report-of-the-special-commission-on-orthodox-participation-in-the-wcc>.

... History and process

1. The 60-member Special Commission was created by the WCC's eighth assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe, in 1998. Behind the assembly decision to create the Commission were increasingly vocal expressions of concerns about the WCC among Orthodox churches. These had culminated in a meeting of Eastern Orthodox churches in Thessaloniki, Greece, in May 1998. Central Orthodox concerns, as summarized by that meeting, included some activities of the WCC itself, "certain developments within some Protestant members of the Council that are reflected in the debates of the WCC", lack of progress in ecumenical theological discussions, and the perception that the present structure of the WCC makes meaningful Orthodox participation increasingly difficult and even for some impossible. In its action approving the creation of the Special Commission, the Harare assembly noted that "other churches and ecclesial families" have concerns similar to those expressed by the Orthodox. . . .

6. The Commission, experiencing a genuine spirit of fellowship, has had the courage, on occasion, "to speak the truth in love", as strongly held convictions have been vigorously defended. However, the whole engagement has been characterized by a deep respect for one another's spiritualities and a genuine desire to understand and to accommodate differences of confessional outlook, enabling the Commission successfully to achieve its work.

What kind of Council do member churches want in the light of the acceptance by Harare of the CUV documentation?

7. More than fifty years of being together should not be lost but fed into future proposals for the ecumenical movement. Much had been learned in these years and the churches enriched by sharing together in the common journey towards Christian unity. Appreciation of this fellowship underlined an intention to stay together and work more intensively for fulfilling the common calling.

8. At times it seems as if the Council had become a prisoner of certain bureaucratic ways of proceeding, notwithstanding the revision of article III of the constitution which, after Harare, refers to the churches calling each other to the goal of visible unity.

9. Whilst the Council has a critical role to play in helping churches in fellowship with it to work together to fulfill their common calling, the following affirmations should be kept in mind:

- Member churches belonging to the fellowship of the WCC are the subject of the quest for visible unity, not the Council.
- Member churches belonging to the fellowship of the WCC teach and make doctrinal and ethical decisions, not the Council.
- Member churches belonging to the fellowship of the WCC proclaim doctrinal consensus, not the Council.
- Member churches belonging to the fellowship of the WCC commit themselves to pray for unity and to engage in an encounter that aims at finding language for resonances of the common Christian faith in other church traditions.
- Member churches belonging to the fellowship of the WCC are responsible for developing and nurturing the sensitivities and the language that will allow them to sustain a dialogue with each other.

10. In a brutally divided world, churches have developed different ecclesial cultures, but by accepting the disciplines of the fellowship of the World Council of Churches they are called to acknowledge the necessity to witness together to their Christian faith, to unity in Christ, and to a community with no other limits than the whole human race.

11. The Commission envisions a Council that will hold churches together in an ecumenical space:

- where trust can be built;
- where churches can test and develop their readings of the world, their own social practices, and their liturgical and doctrinal traditions while facing each other and deepening their encounter with each other;
- where churches freely will create networks for advocacy and diaconal services and make their material resources available to each other;
- where churches through dialogue continue to break down the barriers that prevent them from recognizing each other as churches that confess the one faith, celebrate one baptism and administer the one eucharist, in order that they may move to a communion in faith, sacramental life and witness.

Areas for specific study

In its work the Commission identified five areas for specific study which were intensively investigated in sub-committees and plenary.

Ecclesiology

12. Ecclesiological issues embrace all of the matters under the consideration of the Special Commission: response to social and ethical issues, common prayer at WCC gatherings, matters of membership and representation, as well as how decisions are made together.

13. Joining a World Council of Churches entails accepting the challenge to give an account to each other of what it means to be church; to articulate what is meant by “the visible unity of the church”; and how the member churches understand the nature of the life and witness they share together now through their membership in the WCC. This is the question of how the church relates to the churches.

14. There are ecclesiological presuppositions lying behind both the basis and constitution of the WCC. How do churches belonging to the fellowship of the WCC currently understand the commitment they make to the trinitarian faith in the basis? How do they understand the

intention expressed in the constitution “to call one another to the goal of visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world and to advance towards this unity so that the world may believe”?

15. The response to these questions is influenced by the existence of two basic ecclesiological self-understandings, namely of those churches (such as the Orthodox) which identify themselves with the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, and those which see themselves as parts of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. These two ecclesiological positions affect whether or not churches recognize each other’s baptism as well as their ability or inability to recognize one another as churches. They also affect the way churches understand the goal of the ecumenical movement, its instruments—including the WCC—and its foundational documents.

16. Within the two basic ecclesiological starting points there is in fact a certain range of views on the relation of the church to the churches. This existing range invites us to pose to one another the following questions. To the Orthodox: “Is there space for other churches in Orthodox ecclesiology? How would this space and its limits be described?” To the churches within the tradition of the Reformation: “How does your church understand, maintain and express your belonging to the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church?”

17. Exploring these questions would lead to a greater clarity of how churches belonging to the fellowship of the WCC relate to each other and to the World Council. It would also invite them to reflect on the implications of including baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as a criterion for membership in the Council.

18. To continue the discussion begun in the Special Commission on ecclesiology, the following issues will need to be explored further:

- how the churches understand “visible unity”, “unity and diversity”, and the commitment they make to “call one another to the goal of visible unity”;
- whether baptism should be included within the basis of the WCC;
- the role of the WCC in encouraging the churches to respect each other’s baptism and to move towards mutual recognition of baptism;
- the nature of the shared life experienced within the WCC: what is the meaning of the word “fellowship” (*koinonia*) used in this context?

In exploring these ecclesiological issues there is need to clarify the theological meaning of terms (e.g. ecclesial, ecclesiastical, church, churches, *koinonia*, et al.) in order to avoid unnecessary confusion and misunderstanding.

19. Future discussions can build upon work already done together over many years, including the Toronto statement; the New Delhi statement together with the Orthodox response; the Canberra statement; the “Common Understanding and Vision of the WCC”; *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* and the church responses. It is important to take account of work already done on ecclesiology. The leadership of the WCC is asked to promote that work both within the structures of the WCC and by encouraging churches to continue in a process of reflection and response to that work.

20. Some of the issues identified will be addressed within the developing programmes of Faith and Order on ecclesiology and baptism. Faith and Order is asked, within the development of the convergence text on “The Nature and Purpose of the Church”, to explore the specific issue of the relation of the church to the churches, ensuring the engagement of the major streams of the Christian tradition in that exploration.

21. It is also recommended that the issues of ecclesiology which have been identified by the Special Commission form an important part of the next assembly of the WCC.

Social and ethical issues

22. At the beginning of the 21st century people all over the globe are confronted with unprecedented challenges: economic globalization, wars and ethnic cleansing, massive numbers of refugees, mounting xenophobia, threats to the environment, violation of basic human rights, racism, and the new possibilities of technology with the threats they pose.

23. Faced with the need to develop Christian ethics that respond to current problems and struggles, it is the responsibility of each church to shape its own moral teaching. At the same time, the Special Commission recognizes the WCC as a vital forum for raising and reflecting together on moral issues facing churches and society.

24. Many Christians all over the world give thanks to God for the role the WCC has played as an advocate for human rights, and as a participant in people’s struggles to combat racism, economic misery, unjust territorial occupation, and the politics of brute force. Underlying all of these themes has been a commitment to a “theology of life”. Churches have been helped to care for the refugees of war, the hungry and the poor, and the socially marginalized victims of bigotry and political oppression.

25. Nevertheless, the Special Commission was created in part because of dissatisfactions raised by Orthodox and others with the ways in which certain social and ethical issues have reached the agenda of the WCC, and the ways in which they have been treated. Specifically, there has been a perception that churches are coerced into treating issues they deem as either foreign to their life or inappropriate for a worldwide forum. There has also been a perception that the WCC has on occasion sought to “preach” to the churches rather than be the instrument of their common reflection. The following observations and recommendations are an attempt to address these dissatisfactions.

26. Taking into account insights acquired from social and political analysis, the Commission affirms that the formation of moral judgments on social and ethical issues must be a continuing discernment of the will of God rooted in scripture and Tradition, liturgical life, theological reflection, all seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

27. The Council cannot speak for, nor require, the churches to adopt particular positions. It can, however, continue to provide opportunities for all churches to consult with one another and, wherever possible, for them to speak together.

28. By the same token, member churches should understand that not all matters discussed within their own fora can be imposed on the WCC agenda. Skill and sensitivity are needed on all sides to perceive which matters should remain within the counsels of particular churches and which can profitably be discussed together.

29. It is critical that the result of such dialogue and cooperation be clearly shown to be coming from a distinctively Christian perspective, embracing the values of the gospel. The churches take on a “prophetic role” when they truthfully describe and react to situations in the world precisely in the light of the gospel. More reflection is required on what it means for churches in fellowship to engage in this way. A prophetic voice can never be divorced from the pastoral role, which includes building up, encouraging and comforting (1 Cor. 14:3).

30. The Council is a necessary and helpful instrument in facing social and ethical issues when it enables the churches to:

- reaffirm that they are bound together in fellowship by their common confession of Jesus Christ as God and Saviour, to the glory of the One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
- renew the commitment to stay together in order to foster love for each other, for love is essential to dialogue in freedom and trust;

- recognize that differences arising out of churches' responses to moral issues, stemming from churches witnessing to the gospel in varying contexts, need not be insurmountable;
- recognize that dialogue on social and ethical matters presupposes that they are not content simply to "agree to disagree" on their own moral teachings, but are willing to confront honestly their differences by exploring them in the light of doctrine, liturgical life, and holy scripture.

31. New and unprecedented issues constantly arise for which directly applicable models for ethical judgments are not to be found within the churches' own traditions, insights and ethical formulations. This holds true particularly within the bio-ethical and bio-technical sphere. Churches are challenged to articulate a Christian ethical approach, e.g. to cloning, in-vitro fertilization and genetic research. The experiences and reflections of others in the wider ecumenical fellowship provide a valuable and often indispensable resource.

32. The way in which a church (or churches together) orders and structures its own decision-making on moral matters is in itself a prime ethical issue. Who decides what and by which means? The forms of decision-making and communication already embody a social ethic, and influence moral teaching and practice. Structures, offices and roles express moral values. Ways of exercising power, governance and access have moral dimensions. To ignore this is to fail to understand why moral issues can be so divisive.

33. The WCC needs constantly to monitor procedures for dealing with social and ethical issues proposed for common deliberation. For example, how should it be determined that a given matter is directed to the WCC for discussion by a genuine "church" request, rather than by pressure-group advocacy?

34. Moreover, procedures for discussing such issues need constantly to be refined in a way that enables the Council to perform its role of enabling the formation of a common mind among the churches, and avoid causing or deepening divisions. The consensus method should determine the whole process of exploration at every level: governing bodies, staff, participants. It should not simply be reserved for the end of the process.

35. It is the expectation of the Special Commission that the use of consensus decision-making, with an increase in mutual trust, will make it easier for all to participate fully in the discussion of any burning ethical and social issue.

Common prayer

36. In the beginning of the new millennium humanity is confronted with new realities, new obstacles and new challenges. It is commonly admitted that we live today in a world of tensions, antagonisms, conflicts, wars, and rumors of wars (Matt. 24:6). Within such a situation isolation or destruction in no way can constitute paths to be followed by Christian churches. The continuation and strengthening of the existing dialogue and cooperation between Christian churches is an urgent duty. Isolation and disunity are anomalies which can only be understood as the result of sin and evil. In the biblical and ecclesiastical tradition sin and evil have been described as dismemberment, disorganization and dissolution of the unity created by God. This disunity leads to selfishness and a sectarian understanding of the Christian gospel.

37. The contemporary Christian commitment to visible unity by its range, its depth, and its instruments is a new reality in church history. Equally, the possibility of praying together in ecumenical settings is also a new challenge with specific and particular mission to accompany and strengthen Christians in their journey towards unity. In order to make progress in dialogue with one another, Christians need to plead together for divine assistance.

38. The Christian way is always based on and connected with prayer. Therefore at the very heart of every effort towards Christian unity and collaboration is also the reality of prayer. Before every important stage of his salvific work, our common Lord Jesus Christ prayed to the Father, teaching us that we have the task of pleading with God in order to overcome all painful divisions and to offer a common testimony to the Christian gospel. Christ's prayer for unity is striking and challenging—"I ask not only on behalf of these but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:20-21).

39. Decades of experience of common prayer and spiritual sharing within the WCC constitute a heritage which cannot easily be ignored. Many Christians have the same experience in local situations; the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is one of the most widespread examples of such experience. Some churches today would easily affirm that they do not worship in the same manner they did fifty years ago. While they have been challenged initially, they have been enriched by their experience of common prayer. They have received with gratitude many gifts from other Christian traditions. During these decades, through their common prayer, dialogue and shared witness, churches

have experienced progress towards unity, and some have even reached agreements leading to “full communion”.

40. Praying together has also revealed many of the challenges along the way towards unity. This is in part because of confessional and cultural backgrounds leading churches to worship in different ways. In addition, common prayer as it has developed in the World Council of Churches has caused difficulties for some churches. Indeed, it is in common prayer that the pain of Christian division is most acutely experienced.

41. The Special Commission has dealt with some of these difficulties, by identifying matters of ecclesiology, theology, eucharistic practice and other sensitive issues. While these difficulties are not to be minimized, the call to pray together continues to be a primary importance. A way forward is needed which will allow all to pray together with integrity, on the way towards visible unity. In that spirit, the Special Commission has prepared the attached framework for common prayer at WCC gatherings.

42. Towards that end, a clear distinction is proposed between “confessional” and “interconfessional” common prayer at WCC gatherings. “Confessional common prayer” is the prayer of a confession, a communion, or a denomination within a confession. Its ecclesial identity is clear. It is offered as a gift to the gathered community by a particular delegation of the participants, even as it invites all to enter into the spirit of prayer. It is conducted and presided over in accordance with its own understanding and practice. “Interconfessional common prayer” is usually prepared for specific ecumenical events. It is an opportunity to celebrate together drawing from the resources of a variety of traditions. Such prayer is rooted in the past experience of the ecumenical community as well as in the gifts of the member churches to each other. But it does not claim to be the worship of any given member church, or of any kind of a hybrid church or super-church. Properly understood and applied, this distinction can free the traditions to express themselves either in their own integrity or in combination, all the while being true to the fact that Christians do not yet experience full unity together, and that the ecumenical bodies in which they participate are not themselves churches.

43. Thus, the goals of the attached considerations are twofold. One is to clarify that “interconfessional common prayer” at WCC gatherings is not the worship of an ecclesial body. The other is to make practical recommendations for common prayer at WCC gatherings on how to use language, symbols, imagery and rites in ways which would not cause theological, ecclesiological or spiritual offense. To the extent that one can satisfy these goals, common prayer can become something in which all traditions may participate

in good conscience, and with theological and spiritual integrity. While it is the hope of the Special Commission that this work will facilitate progress, it is recognized that for some churches, prayer with Christians outside their own tradition is not only uncomfortable, but also considered to be impossible.

44. Eucharistic worship at ecumenical events has been a difficult issue for the fellowship of churches in the World Council of Churches. Not all can receive from the same table and there exists a range of views and disciplines among churches belonging to the fellowship of the World Council of Churches on the offering and receiving of the eucharist. Whatever one’s views on the eucharist and how it may or may not be shared, the pain of not being able all to receive at the same table is felt by all. Following the pattern of distinguishing between confessional and interconfessional common prayer, confessional celebrations of the eucharist at assemblies and other major events can be accommodated. The hosting church (or group of churches which are able to host together) should be clearly identified. While it should be very clear that the WCC is not “hosting” a eucharist, these confessional eucharistic services, though not part of the official programme, may be publicly announced, with an invitation to all to attend.

45. Exercising care for each other within the context of the WCC often means raising awareness about the ways in which we might unintentionally offend each other. In this spirit, these considerations seek to make planners of common prayer more aware of potential areas of concern. But these considerations are not comprehensive, and must be met by the sincere intention to develop opportunities for all participants to pray with integrity. As this framework makes clear, common prayer at WCC gatherings should be the result of serious and sensitive planning, and is not a task to be undertaken casually.

Consensus model of decision-making

46. The Special Commission early came to the conclusion that a change in decision-making procedures in the governing bodies of the WCC would:

- enhance the participation of all members in the various meetings;
- preserve the rights of all churches, regions and groupings, especially those which hold a minority opinion;
- provide a more collaborative and harmonious context for the making of decisions;
- enable representatives to have more “space” to discern the will of God for the churches, the WCC and the wider human family.

47. Having examined some models, the Special Commission believes that the Council should move to the consensus method as described in Appendix B to this report.

48. The reasons for change are elaborated in paragraphs 1-7 of Appendix B. The recommended consensus model is described in paragraphs 8-20. Some possible difficulties with consensus decision-making are outlined in paragraphs 25-32, and responses are made to these possible difficulties.

49. The following definition of the consensus method has been adopted by the Special Commission:

- a) The consensus method is a process for seeking the common mind of a meeting without deciding issues by means of voting. A consensus is reached when one of the following occurs: i) all are in agreement (unanimity); ii) most are in agreement and those who disagree are content that the discussion has been both full and fair and that the proposal expresses the general "mind of the meeting"; the minority therefore gives consent; iii) the meeting acknowledges that there are various opinions, and it is agreed that these be recorded in the body of the proposal (not just in the minutes); iv) it is agreed that the matter be postponed; v) it is agreed that no decision can be reached.
- b) Therefore, consensus procedures allow any family or other group of churches, through a spokesperson, to have their objections to any proposal addressed and satisfied prior to the adoption of the proposal. This implies that the family or group of churches can stop any proposal from passing until they are satisfied that their concerns have been fully addressed.
- c) Since consensus does not always involve unanimity, and since there will be rare cases when consensus procedures are tried and do not succeed, a mechanism will operate which allows the meeting to move forward to a decision. The revised rules of the WCC will need to specify how this mechanism works and to ensure that the consensus procedures are not weakened. This process of revision should include consultation with the Standing Committee (see par. 51 below).
- d) Within a consensus model, minorities have a right for their reasoned opposition to a policy to be recorded, whether in the minutes, in reports of the meeting, or both, if they so request.

50. Some matters will be better resolved by a voting procedure, even when consensus procedure has become the dominant model of decision-making. These matters include some financial and budget matters and some administrative decisions. Elections will need to be conducted according to rules which are specific to the particular election. While these rules may include elements of the consensus model, they may also include a process of voting at some points. Appointment of programme staff will normally be by consensus. As these rules are being reviewed and revised, consultation with the Standing Committee on Orthodox Participation (described below) should take place.

51. A major part of the discussion on decision-making has centred on the idea of "parity" between Orthodox representatives and other representatives. The Special Commission argues for the establishment of a standing committee in the following terms:

Upon the completion of the work of the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC, the central committee will establish a new body, to be called the standing committee on Orthodox participation in the WCC. In August 2002, the central committee will appoint the steering committee of the present Special Commission to fulfill that role until the next assembly of the WCC.

Following the next assembly, the new central committee will appoint the standing committee to consist of 14 members, of whom half will be Orthodox; of the overall membership at least half will be members of the WCC executive committee.

The Orthodox members of the central committee will appoint the seven Orthodox members, and the other members of the central committee will appoint the remaining seven. All members of the standing committee will normally be drawn from the member churches of the WCC. Proxies may substitute for absent members. In keeping with the practice of the Special Commission, observers (rules III.6.c) from non-member churches, or on occasion from churches in association with the WCC, can be invited by the standing committee.

Two co-moderators will be appointed from the membership of the standing committee, one appointed by the Orthodox members of the central committee, and one by the other members of the central committee.

The standing committee will have responsibility for:

- continuing the authority, mandate, concerns and dynamic of the Special Commission;
- giving advice in order to reach consensus on items proposed for the agenda of the WCC;
- giving attention to matters of ecclesiology.

The standing committee will give advice and make recommendations to governing bodies of the WCC, including issues of improved participation of the Orthodox in the entire life and work of the Council.

The standing committee will report to the central committee and the executive committee.

52. The principle of parity led the Special Commission to discuss the idea of having two moderators in the governing bodies of the WCC (one Orthodox and one from another tradition) and two vice-moderators (again, one from each). A considerable number of commission members proposed that this idea be referred to the central committee. Other suggestions, such as the rotation of Orthodox and “non-Orthodox” in the office of moderator, were also proposed. When working towards a consensus, the role of the person in the chair is crucial. He or she must regularly test the mind of the meeting as the discussion develops, must be careful to respect the rights of all, and help the meeting formulate its ultimate decision. Moderators need particular skills, and these skills will be enhanced if a process of preparation is entered into, before undertaking this task.

Membership and representation

53. Subsequent to the establishment of the Special Commission the executive committee of the WCC set up a separate study group to investigate matters of membership and representation and to make recommendations. This membership study group is composed of both members of the central committee and the Special Commission with parity between Orthodox and participants from the other member churches. It has already made interim reports to the executive committee and shared these with the Special Commission at its plenary meetings. It will present its final report to the executive committee for submission to the central committee meeting scheduled for August 2002.

54. All reports of the membership study group have been made available to all members of the Special Commission. The meetings of the membership study group purposely have been scheduled to alternate with the

meetings of the Special Commission so that at every stage of the development of the work of the Special Commission, the Commission has been informed of the work of the membership study group and at every stage of the work of the membership study group, the group has had the benefit of the comments, discussion and advice of the Special Commission.

55. With the encouragement of the Special Commission, major focuses of the membership study group’s work were (a) listing theological criteria required of those seeking admission as members of the WCC, (b) formulating new ways of grouping churches for purposes of their representation and participation in the Council, (c) exploring new models of membership including the family model and regional membership, and (d) evaluating new modes of relating to the Council.

56. The Commission proposes to the membership study group that the membership study group include in its recommendations to the executive committee two possibilities for churches wanting to relate to the WCC: (a) member churches belonging to the fellowship of the WCC, (b) churches in association with the WCC.

Member churches belonging to the fellowship of the WCC are churches that agree with the basis of the WCC, confirm their commitment to the purposes and functions of the Council, and conform to the theological and organizational criteria.

Churches in association with the WCC are churches that agree with the basis of the Council and are accepted for such status. Such churches can send representatives to the assembly and the central committee who can speak with the permission of the chair, but have no right to vote. Such churches can be invited to participate in the work of commissions, advisory groups, and other consultative bodies of the Council as consultants or advisers. Churches applying to be in association with the WCC should state in writing their reasons for requesting this relationship, which reasons must be approved by the central committee. ...

59. Exploring the question of membership, the Commission and the membership study group considered alternatives of either confessional or regional membership, but rejected both as leading to a diminished sense of the constituency’s owning the work of the Council. However, the study group and the Commission urge the churches to come together locally or confessionally for purposes of membership in the WCC.

60. The Commission and the membership study group propose that churches join in groupings, e.g. geographically, confessionally, or according to other models, in order to make nominations for the central committee. Such persons, if elected, would be expected to develop a greater sense of responsibility/accountability to those who nominated them. . . .

CHAPTER NINE

Challenges Ahead: Toward the Ecumenical Future

Introduction

Any adequate history of the church in the 20th century must give prominent attention to the ecumenical movement. The ecumenical pioneer and Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, declared in 1942 that ecumenism “is the great new fact of our era.” And, indeed, there were numerous highlights to celebrate throughout this century: the initiative of the (Eastern Orthodox) Ecumenical Patriarchate in calling, on the heels of World War I, for “a league (fellowship) between the churches”; the founding of the WCC (and councils of churches around the world); the advent of united churches from India to Canada; the Second Vatican Council, which signaled the entry of the Roman Catholic Church into the movement for Christian unity; theological convergence, even consensus, on a range of previously divisive topics; the common struggles of the churches against Nazism and, later, apartheid; a host of local expressions of collaborative mission and common prayer; and the witness of such ecumenical giants as John R. Mott, Willem Visser ‘t Hooft, Suzanne de Diétrich, Patriarch Athenagoras, M.M. Thomas, Yves Congar, Mercy Oduyoye, and the cloud of others whose words are recorded in the pages of this anthology. The positive relationships among Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Christians in many parts of the world, and the extent to which Christians from Asia, Africa, and Latin America now give leadership in the global church, would have been unimaginable to the delegates gathered in Edinburgh in 1910.

But what about our era—the first part of the 21st century? It is commonplace these days for commentators to declare that the ecumenical movement is losing momentum, or even to sound its death knell. And everyone acknowledges that the contemporary challenges faced by those who work for unity among Christians are daunting:

- *an ever-growing gap between rich and poor that splits the church as well as the human community;*
- *new sources of division (e.g., with regard to human sexuality) that threaten to undo previous ecumenical gains;*

- *the rapid growth of churches that have shunned ecumenical engagement, coupled with a weakening, especially in the West, of churches that for a century have been pillars of the movement;*
- *a cynicism born of the fact that shelves of theological agreements have resulted in relatively little change in the actual life of many churches;*
- *new developments in technology that have the capacity to improve communication, but also to undermine traditional bonds of community;*
- *a new imperative for interfaith collaboration that both enriches and complicates the ecumenical agenda.*

The essays in this chapter, generally speaking, give thanks for what the Holy Spirit has done over the past hundred years, while also attempting to discern new directions the Spirit may be leading in the face of the challenges named above. These essays are too disparate to be easily summarized, and they are too recent to be regarded as “classics” of the movement. I urge readers to see the pieces in this chapter as discussion-starters, informed reflections on future directions for the ecumenical movement by some of its contemporary leaders. My hope is that readers will be encouraged by these honest appraisals of where we are in the search for unity and common witness, stimulated by fresh thinking about ecumenical ministry, and challenged by the openness these authors display to the new things God may have in store.

*The chapter—indeed, the book—ends with an excerpt from one of the true classics of ecumenical literature, *And Yet It Moves* by Ernst Lange. Lange’s insights come from the 1970s—a reminder that challenges to the movement are by no means new, and that visionary thinking can happen in any generation.*

130. Aram I, "Ecumenism in Process of Transformation," World Council of Churches Consultation on "Ecumenism in the 21st Century," 2004

The author is Catholicos of Cilicia in the Armenian Orthodox Church and former moderator of the WCC's central committee. This presentation was made at the culminating consultation of a process to explore possible reconfiguration of the ecumenical movement. • Ecumenism in the 21st Century: Report of the Consultation Convened by the World Council of Churches, Geneva, WCC, 2005, pp. 38-45.

In all its aspects, dimensions and expressions, ecumenism is being transformed; and out of this transformation, a new image of the ecumenical movement is being formed. The ecumenical movement is called to renew and redefine its nature, its goals and vision through a self-critical approach and in response to the global changes and challenges. If this is not done, the ecumenical movement may soon find itself stalemated.

My intention is to share with you, at the beginning of this consultation, a few basic concerns and perspectives, which I hope will help us to read clearly the "ecumenical signs" of new times and to move forward realistically.

A Balanced Approach to "Movement" and "Institution"

The ecumenical movement is a movement by its inception and nature. Any attempt to compromise this unique character of the ecumenical movement would be simply the end of it. In the last fifty years the ecumenical spirit and vision were almost suffocated by an aggressive institutionalism. Restructuring, evaluation, financial crises and management-related concerns forced the World Council of Churches and ecumenical organizations to deal mainly with the institutional aspects of ecumenism and to look for immediate solutions.

The de-institutionalization of Christianity, a phenomenon affecting many churches and regions, is giving a speedy pace to the de-institutionalization of the ecumenical movement. People are tired of institutional ecumenism. They are looking for new ways of expressing their ecumenical

commitment. They are challenging the ecumenical movement to liberate itself from the narrow confines of institutions and to reaffirm itself as a future-oriented movement. As a movement that deals with human response to God's call in Jesus Christ in a given time and in a given place, the ecumenical movement is in a continuous process of self-expression and self-realization. This implies constant change and renewal. We must keep this understanding of ecumenism close to mind as we endeavor to scrutinize the present ecumenical situation.

We must not ignore the fact that the ecumenical vision was given concrete manifestation through institutional ecumenism, which played a pivotal role in promoting inter-relatedness among the churches, by calling them to grow together through a common life and witness. A vision demands a programme to articulate itself; a movement requires structure to survive; and a fellowship needs conciliar framework to grow. We must revitalize and sharpen the ecumenical movement.

Yet, we must somehow keep our impatience and criticism concerning the institutional ecumenism under control. A total and uncritical shift from institutional to non-institutional ecumenism might well polarize members of the movement. In my judgment, what is needed is a holistic, balanced and interactive approach, one that will enable us both to preserve the movement character of ecumenism and give due consideration to its institutional expression.

Is the "Oneness" of the Ecumenical Movement in Jeopardy?

The churches constantly remind themselves of the "oneness" of the ecumenical movement. The question is: how can this essential oneness of the ecumenical movement be ensured, safeguarded and manifested? The present ecumenical picture clearly indicates that the gap between the theory and praxis, the approach and vision is widening.

The multiplication and diversification of bilateral theological dialogues undoubtedly gave a new dynamism to ecumenical life. But if these dialogues do not converge towards a reception-oriented process, they may, sooner or later, endanger the integrity and oneness of the ecumenical movement. Trends towards proliferation and multi-centredness, which acquired a focal attention in the last decade, are indeed positive. They may significantly help to ensure diversity and wholeness by generating creative interaction between the local and the global, the bilateral and the multilateral. Yet, they may also become a potential source of polarization if they are not given a clear orientation and are not underpinned by a common vision.

The Harare Assembly revised article II of the WCC Constitution by spelling out clearly that the WCC serves and strengthens the one ecumenical movement. The question is not merely one of coherence and collaboration between ecumenical actors and actions. It is far beyond that. The danger lies in the increasing incompatibilities, inconsistencies and incoherence between the ecumenical goals. The “oneness” of the ecumenical movement has become loose and ambiguous. By ecumenism we mean different things. It has different connotations and implications in different confessional and regional contexts. Do we have a common understanding of ecumenism? How must the “oneness” of the ecumenical movement be articulated? The CUV (*Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the WCC*) defines the oneness of the ecumenical movement as a “‘common calling’, ultimately assured by the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through the manifold manifestations of the moment” (CUV 2.10). This interpretation deserves our serious attention.

Fellowship-Oriented Ecumenism Facing Challenges

The de-institutionalization of the ecumenical movement is already having negative repercussions on the fellowship character of ecumenism. Some feel that identifying ecumenism with fellowship distorts its nature as a movement. Others feel that the fellowship concept of the ecumenical movement has failed to lead the churches to take concrete steps towards visible unity; hence, they are seeking different alternatives. And, there are those who do not want to associate themselves with any institutional form of fellowship.

What are the reasons behind these approaches? Let me single out some of them:

- Fears arising from globalization have led many churches and communions to strongly affirm their identity. For these churches and communions, multilateral ecumenism is seen as a potential source of danger.
- An increasing number of churches are reluctant to respond to the moral, financial and, in a sense, ecclesiological implications of membership in a fellowship. They are attracted to an easy, non-committal type of ecumenism.
- Some churches find the ecumenical fellowship insecure ground because, in the ecumenical fellowship, the agenda priorities, conditioned by missiological and ecclesiological self-understandings, often clash rather than interact.

- “Conciliar ecumenism,” as a concrete expression of the multilateral ecumenism that has marked our ecumenical life in the last fifty years, is losing ground in many church and ecumenical circles. “Ecumenism of negotiation,” strengthened by the increasing pace of theological dialogues, is affirming its predominance both on global and regional levels.
- Confessional ecumenism is also gaining ground. The churches feel themselves more secure within their confessional boundaries.

Is the ecumenical movement only a “space” where the churches meet for mutual consultation, dialogue and collaboration, or it is a fellowship that must be deepened and broadened? In my view, true ecumenism aims at fellowship building. Through fellowship, interdependence and mutual accountability are created among the churches and diversities are preserved and enhanced. What kind of ecumenical vision should we develop for the 21st century, one that is fellowship-oriented or one that is movement-oriented? My answer would be both. They are closely interconnected and they enrich, strengthen and complement each other. If a movement-oriented vision of ecumenism is not sustained by a fellowship-building ecumenism, the ecumenical movement will lose its ecclesial nature and marginalize the centrality of unity. On the other hand, if a fellowship-based ecumenism remains totally conditioned and overwhelmed by its institutional expressions and does not open itself to larger spaces and broader horizons, then it becomes self-centred and static.

Broadening the Ecumenical Partnership Is a Must

The churches played a significant role in shaping and expanding institutional ecumenism. For many years ecclesio-centric ecumenism, dominated by euro-centrism, impacted all aspects and domains of ecumenical life and witness. However, the churches’ claim that they owned the ecumenical movement was not matched by a firm commitment to its goals. Moves to broaden the scope of the ecumenical agenda and partnership were often encountered by church resistance.

The ecumenical landscape is undergoing major changes. Christianity is changing its image and locality. In the north, Christianity is declining; the center of Christianity is shifting to the south. Mainline Christianity is giving way to a more non-institutional expression of Christianity. The Orthodox Churches are becoming self-contained and nation-oriented in spite of their global presence, and the Roman Catholic Church is becoming more sensitive to the growing charismatic movements within its fold.

It is evident that broadening the sphere and changing the nature of the ecumenical partnership has become imperative, particularly for the following reasons:

- The decline of institutional Christianity and the growth of the Pentecostal-charismatic form of Christianity and resurgence of religious movements has had, and will certainly continue to have, with far-reaching consequences, a direct bearing on the future course of the ecumenical movement.
- The continuing transformation of the ecumenical movement, expressed mainly by the steady move from global to regional, from multilateral to bilateral, from inter-confessional to confessional, and from euro-centred to multi-centred ecumenism, calls us to review the existing ecumenical paradigms and perspectives.
- With their professionalism and large financial resources, the ecumenical agencies, specialized ministries and Christian NGOs are moving from the periphery to the centre stage of the ecumenical movement, and the ecumenical interests and commitment of institutional churches are declining.

Probably the time is not yet mature for the Roman Catholic Church, which is deeply engaged in ecumenism on national and regional levels, to enter into a fellowship-based ecumenism on the global level. As for Pentecostal and Evangelical churches, they have their own perceptions of ecumenism. However, closer collaboration with these churches, expressed through joint initiatives and actions in specific areas, is crucial for the future of the ecumenical movement. A strong partnership with ecumenical actors is also imperative, not only for professional and financial reasons, but also to ensure the oneness and vitality of the ecumenical movement and to make it more participatory and inclusive. Because of their different nature, institutional interests and priorities, it is often difficult for the churches and ecumenical stakeholders to have a coherent and organized working relationship. We must develop a new perception and vision of partnership, which, first, does not marginalize the centrality of fellowship, second, considers ecumenical actors an essential part of the common ecumenical witness, and third, challenges the ecumenical partners to work to strengthen both the multi-centredness and integrity of the ecumenical movement. Indeed, broadening the ecumenical partnership and deepening the ecumenical fellowship must go together. They are interrelated dimensions of one ecumenical vision.

Towards People's Ecumenism: Strategy and Vision

Particularly in the last decade, parallel to and sometimes over against the ecumenism of institutional churches, we have been witnessing the emergence of the ecumenism of people, which is more spontaneous and attractive than institutional ecumenism. Indeed, the ecumenical movement is shifting from ecclesio-centric to people-centered paradigms within and outside the churches. Clergy-based ecclesiastical ecumenism is fading away, and the new expressions of ecumenism, such as spiritual movements, networking, advocacy groups and the global ecumenical forum, are moving to the fore of ecumenical life. The very ethos of the ecumenical movement is rapidly changing. What are the major thrusts and characteristic features of people-based ecumenism?

- It takes the ecumenical movement beyond the narrow boundaries of institutional churches and seeks dynamic models, forms and ways of articulating the ecumenical vision.
- With its holistic vision it promotes multi-centredness in ecumenical life, and encourages inclusiveness in ecumenical reflection and action.
- It creates interaction and interdependence between local, regional and global ecumenical expressions, concerns and priorities.
- It takes us beyond reception and consensus-oriented models and methodologies to fellowship-building strategies, particularly on the local level, by generating mutual trust among people at the grassroots.
- It grows from the bottom to the top and calls to accountability the ecumenism that is imposed from the top to the bottom.

As the gift of the Holy Spirit, the ecumenical movement belongs to the whole church. By the whole church I mean the whole people of God, a larger ecclesiological reality than simply the institutional expression of the church. Institutional ecumenism and people's ecumenism should not be opposed; they belong to and strengthen each other. Because they also contain the seeds of potential conflict, I hope that, through a critical process of mutual challenging and accountability, we will promote an integrated ecumenical strategy and vision based on a holistic and people-centred perception of the church and the ecumenical movement.

A Responsive and Prophetic Ecumenical Vision

Tensions and uncertainties are integral to the nature of any movement; the ecumenical movement is no exception. The concerns and values that have motivated the formation of the ecumenical movement are being replaced by new perspectives and priorities. The movement must remain alert to the changes in its context and time and must constantly transform its vision and action. We are facing a new ecumenical situation, one that calls us to a new vision, a prophetic vision that is responsive and relevant to the new concerns and expectations.

An ecumenical vision for the 21st century must be Gospel-centered and mission-oriented, and it must take into consideration the following factors and imperatives:

- The ecumenical movement is caught in a world where fragmentation and polarization, on the one hand, and interdependence and integration, on the other hand, are in continuous tension. The ecumenical vision must be able to provide creative alternatives to globalization by entering into critical dialogue with it and challenging its values.
- The ecumenical movement displays a wide range of dichotomies: unity- mission, institution-people, ordained-lay, man-woman, local-global, etc. How can the ecumenical vision overcome these dualities and polarities? “Coherence” and the “integrated approach” that the WCC has been working towards in the last decade must be given due consideration in this context.
- The ecumenical agenda requires a critical scrutiny. Ecumenism and globalization have qualitatively different visions of the world. The ecumenical agenda must be determined by a life-centred, faith-sustained and future-oriented ecumenical vision. This agenda should be pro-active, realistic and prophetic, and should focus on people rather than on institutional interests and should invest in issues rather than in programmes. Such an agenda would significantly help to ensure the specificity, vitality and credibility of the ecumenical movement.
- The churches and Christians are tired of ecumenical clichés. They are looking for a new language, a new look, a new culture, and even for new people. They are seeking ways of doing ecumenism that are more accessible, relevant and attractive.
- Dialogue with other living faiths has become an existential concern for the ecumenical movement. We cannot ignore its urgency nor underestimate

its complexity. We must seriously address the challenges posed by pluralism and the vision of “wider community” and consider their strong impact on our ecclesiological and missiological self-understanding.

A responsive ecumenical vision with a prophetic vocation must be able to embrace all these tensions and challenges as a source of strength.

“Being Church”: A Central Ecumenical Issue

The question of “being church,” which the WCC identified after the Harare Assembly (1998) as one of the foci of the ecumenical agenda, in my view, will continue to remain a major ecumenical concern for the coming period. What kind of church do we want to have for the 21st century: a church that lives within its established walls, self-contained and self-content, or a church engaged in the daily struggle of its people, in critical and creative interaction with the society, and bold enough to face the challenges of new times? We cannot separate the vision of the church from the ecumenical vision; “being church” and “being ecumenical” are closely interconnected.

The forces of globalization and secularism are strongly impacting the life and witness of churches. Christian values, which have shaped our identity and sustained our societies and cultures, are disappearing from our families, organizations and communities. In the midst of growing ambiguities, uncertainties and meaninglessness, the churches are challenged to articulate clearly what “being church” means. The increasing tensions within the same churches, new developments in church-state and church-society relations are forming new models for “being church.” The forceful entry of religion into the public life and growing concern for “broader community” are raising fundamental questions. These developments call the churches and the actors in the ecumenical movement to reconsider the ecclesiological perceptions that have defined the churches’ doctrinal positions and their attitudes towards each other and towards the society at large. In fact, new ways of “being church” will help us to discover new ways of working together ecumenically, and vice versa. The ecumenical movement must constantly grapple with these issues and assist the churches in their struggle of “being church” in a new world context.

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These emerging concerns, briefly outlined, touch the very nature and vision, as well as the future course, of the ecumenical movement. Any attempt to reconfigure ecumenism

or redefine the ecumenical vision must take these realities very seriously, and we must avoid easy answers and short-term solutions. The issues pertaining to this process must be addressed in a broader perspective, with an interactive approach and on the basis of a long-term strategy. In my opinion, the aim of this process must be to give a comprehensive and coherent articulation to the ecumenical vision for the 21st century. Reconfiguration is only one important part of it.

131. Sam Kobia, Report of the General Secretary, Ninth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 2006

Kobia, a native of Kenya, was the sixth general secretary of the WCC. His report to the 2006 assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil, names important challenges for the future of ecumenism. • God, in Your Grace: Official Report of the Ninth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, ed. Luis N. Rivera-Pagán, Geneva, WCC, 2007, pp. 138-51.

... An Ecumenical Movement, Daily Grounded in Spirituality

7. We come together here in Porto Alegre to reflect, to deliberate, to discuss, and to make decisions. But most of all, we come together to pray for unity of the churches and for the world, to rejoice in the shared experience of glorifying God in Christ, and to affirm the deep spiritual bond that holds us together across many divides. Imagine a time ten years from now when this assembly has long been over, when the reports have been written and the decisions duly noted. What will you remember above all else? Most probably, the common prayers in the worship tent, the murmur of the Lord's prayer being said in 100 different languages; and the exhilarating feeling of this assembly, in all of its glorious diversity of those who have come together to praise God, the one who has given us life.

8. I invite you to think of the spiritual base of the ecumenical movement as the *fiesta da vida*—the feast of life. The invitation to the feast comes from God and we are all welcome. This feast, this *fiesta*, comes to us as grace. The wonder of grace is that it is a gift, which we don't deserve, a reward which we don't earn, but it is freely given and is ours for the partaking. In the Christian tradition, grace is defined as a spiritual, supernatural gift which human beings

receive from God without any merit on their part. Grace can better be defined as signs and, indeed, acts of divine love. Grace reveals itself as God communicating God-self.

9. In an Easter sermon, the father among the Saints, St John Chryostom, said it wonderfully:

The table is full, all of you enjoy yourselves. The calf is fatted let none go away hungry. All of you enjoy the banquet of the faith. All of you enjoy the richness of God's goodness. . . . Let no one bewail their faults: for forgiveness has risen from the tomb. Let no one fear death: for the Saviour's death has freed us.

10. *Festa da vida. Fiesta de la vida.* The feast of life. *Fête de la vie. Fest des Lebens. Karamu la maisha!*

11. As churches, we celebrate the life-giving presence of God among us in the holy eucharist. It is at the Lord's table that the broken body of Christ and the blood shed on the cross create a new community reconciled with God. This eucharistic vision of the world, reconciled and united with God in Christ, is at the heart of the visible unity of the church which we seek. This vision is rooted in faith.

12. Spiritual discernment is essential for our way towards unity. When I talk of spirituality, I want to make it clear that I am not referring merely to contemporary religious or quasi-religious responses to the felt lack of a deeper meaning in the values of affluent societies—although the spiritual hunger in those societies is real. I point here to the subject and origin of all life: God's Holy Spirit. All our efforts will be meaningless and powerless if they are not blessed by God and not driven by God's loving grace. After receiving such blessings, one's spiritual life is fully transformed. One's intellect, will and memory are ever more focused on God, thus creating space for a meeting point at which God's love is shared with us. The ecumenical movement is rooted in a common recognition that we are spiritual beings who long to know God and the knowledge that our spiritual quest is enriched by the fellowship we share.

13. Spiritual discernment grounds us. It gives us strength, conviction, and the courage to withstand the harsh realities of power. In this fractured and insecure world the forces of globalization and militarism threaten life itself. Being in touch with the word of God and experiencing the presence of God in the other makes us able to withstand the day-to-day rigours of working for peace and justice.

14. Spiritual discernment also allows us to step back from the immediate issues and to see the larger picture. We all get so wrapped up in specific issues, in details of our particular programmes, organizations, issues, and constituents that sometimes we lose sight of the big picture. A process of spiritual discernment can get us back on track.

15. I am suggesting that we take a different approach to the “business” of our meetings: our business is part of the process of spiritual discernment and is embedded in the *feita da vida*. Let us look at the assembly as a spiritual/experience and not just as a business meeting that has to fulfill a constitutional mandate..

16. This assembly is the first to use consensus procedures. Consensus is an effort to build the common mind. The differences among us reflect the realities of our congregations and the lives that we share with people around us. In fact, these differences help us to see the multi-faceted realities and lead us to search for the truth that is not ours, but the truth of the Holy Spirit among us (I John 5:6). It is this truth that ultimately lies in God that will transform us and make us free (John 8:32). We need to approach consensus these next ten days not as a technique to help us make decisions, but as a process of spiritual discernment.

Taking Ecumenical Formation and Youth More Seriously

17. We live in a world of proliferating Christian churches and related organizations, resurgent confessionalism, a shift in the centre of Christianity towards the South, painful internal struggles within church families, the growth of

Pentecostalism and of evangelical, conservative and charismatic churches. In main line Western churches that have been a mainstay of ecumenical councils, we find complex patterns of shifting membership and renewal. A clear vision of what these churches may become is still emerging. All of these trends and uncertainties have made the ecumenical movement fragile.

18. Young people are growing into this reality, struggling for orientation and meaning. The ecumenical movement emerged from the same search for new meaning by an earlier generation of young people. The heritage of those who came before us is too precious to be kept just for us. It must be transmitted to the next generation. We pledge to devote energy and commitment to nurturing a new generation, knowing that this is not just a matter of education and formation, but of trust and participation.

19. Ecumenical formation must be based on the formation of faith. Ecumenical learning is experiential. Young people need opportunities to experience the joy of working and praying with others from different traditions and different contexts. They need support and mentoring to participate fully in ecumenical gatherings with their sometimes intimidating elders. We need to go out to where young people are—to the schools and universities. We need to be willing to change to respond to the demands of young people. We must offer opportunities to know

and learn from others through scholarships and travel. At a time when information technology is forever advancing, we must enable our youth to interact more deeply and to discover creative ways of using virtual spaces for ecumenical formation.

20. The time has come when we must not only open opportunities to young people for their ecumenical growth and leadership, but where we must learn from the innovative and dynamic models of ecumenical relationships that youth can teach us. As an ecumenical and intergenerational family, we need to humble ourselves and to listen to young people. It was with young people that the ecumenical movement was born. It is young people’s passion and insight today that will ensure the relevance and vitality of it. Without young people our ecumenical family is incomplete. At this time we need to nurture meaningful relationships and shared leadership between the generations. Young people need to know that they are important partners and that we are open to learning from their ecumenical experience.

21. They can help all of us to understand better where we are going and what kind of response is required of us. It is young people today who increasingly have little patience with the divisions among us and who reach out to others with similar values. There is a widespread hunger for spirituality in young people, even though there may be a rejection of church structures. Out of desperation, one of my colleagues enlisted her 22-year-old daughter to format the *mutirão* schedule over last Christmas. When she finished the tedious work with Excel spreadsheets, she said excitedly to her mother, “I want to come to this assembly. The workshops are so diverse and so interesting—I had no idea that this was what ecumenism is all about. It makes me want to get involved.” The issues that engage the ecumenical movement today are the issues which attract young people. But they need to be invited in. And they need to be equipped and supported to participate.

22. We hope that this assembly is a wonderful experience of ecumenical formation for the participants—both the young and the “formerly young”—and that it becomes a part of our ongoing life. The *feita da vida*, the feast of life, is a call to young people. The *feita da vida* is an open feast, but sometimes participating in an open feast means that others must step back. I challenge all of you church leaders here at the assembly to look at ways that your young people can participate. I call on all of us—ecumenical organizations, denominational structures, international and regional ecumenical bodies—to commit ourselves to youth. We have tried very hard to make this a youth assembly, but we have only partly succeeded. It needs the will and commitment of all of us.

Working for Transformative Justice

23. It is in Jesus Christ that God's loving grace transforms the world from within. Christ became flesh, lived among us and shared human suffering and joy (John 1:14). In Christ we have all received "from God's full store grace upon grace" (John 1:16). In him and through him all were created and all are called together in unity, in justice and peace. In him, all are to be reconciled, transformed, transfigured and saved (Col 1:15-23): a new humanity and a new heaven and earth (Rev 21:1). The whole world is filled with God's grace in the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit.

24. The assembly theme is an invitation to look at the world as a place loved by God and permeated by God's grace. Such emphasis on God's transformative grace corresponds to a new emphasis on transformative justice in our work for change and transformation. Seen with the eyes of faith, we ourselves, and this world, can and must be transformed.

25. God has given us the gift of life and we have abused it. Human greed and thirst for power have created structures that cause people to live in poverty and systematically undermine the basis of life. Our very climate is in jeopardy. In an era when there is more than enough food to go around many times over, 852 million people across the world are hungry, up from 842 million in 2003. Every single day, 25,000 people are killed by hunger. Every day, more than 16,000 children die from hunger-related causes—one every five seconds. Threats to life—here in Latin America and in the world—abound. Globalization both brings us closer together than ever before and exacerbates disparities of power and wealth. Violence continues to cause untold suffering—violence in the homes, on our streets, in our countries, sometimes even in our churches. Asymmetries of power are manifest in a thousand ways—between people, between communities, between countries. The litany of sins and suffering could go on and on.

26. Something is gravely wrong when, at the beginning of the 21st century, the wealth of the three richest individuals on earth surpasses the combined annual GDP of the 48 least developed countries. Political arguments and economic rationalizations cannot counter the basic immorality of a world with this degree of inequality.

27. Something is gravely wrong in the world when there is still a real risk that nuclear weapons will be used in our lifetimes. Nuclear proliferation is an outrage to all humanity. The recent reports of countries acquiring nuclear weapons technology are frightening. But it is equally a scandal that countries which possess vast arsenals of nuclear weapons are unwilling to renounce their use.

28. Something is horribly wrong when children are sold into prostitution, when babies are aborted because

they are girls, and when people of a certain ethnicity or race or caste continue to be oppressed. We need to be spiritually centred to confront such realities.

29. As churches, we are called to plan together, to speak together and to take action together in the face of conditions that we know to be wrong in this world.

30. A belief in God's call for abundant life means, first and foremost, affirming human dignity and the right of the poor to liberate themselves from unjust conditions. The struggle for life must be rooted in the experiences and the actions of those who are oppressed and excluded. When the poor as social actors begin to disappear behind "poverty" as defined by the statistics of the international financial institutions, our whole understanding changes. Poverty becomes an abstract term, divorced from the reality of what it means to be people who are poor. We must struggle to hold up the voices of the poor, to recognize them as actors in their own struggles, and to continually strive to enable them to advocate on their own behalf, to tell their own stories in their own language.

31. The *fiesta da vida*—the feast of life—is not a party. It is a celebration of life, which will sometimes be painful. The *fiesta da vida* invites you all into the household of God, to experience the pain and the suffering of others, and to feel yourself a part of the fragile and imperfect community of humanity. The vision of Christians gathered around a table in celebration recalls the gospel accounts of the last supper. There the people of God received God's gifts directly from the hands of Jesus, sharing one loaf and one cup. This is the source of our eucharistic vision, an occasion for joy.

32. And yet at the very same time, the disciples sensed that something was amiss. There was a failure of mutual trust, a prophecy of betrayal, a conviction that something was terribly wrong. When Jesus confirmed that one of them would betray him, the response on the lips of each was, "Is it I, Lord?" And this question was not directly answered—for even though eleven of the twelve would not betray him, all would deny him. In today's world, we find that our celebration of being together is also marked by contradictions, by a lack of mutual trust, by failure to live up to the gospel call. *Is it I, Lord? Is it we? Teach us to pray, "God in your grace, transform the world."*

33. As part of humanity we must constantly ask why the world is in such a mess. Too often we have been silent or too quick to blame others, while failing to recognize our own responsibility to each other. We need to move from resignation to indignation to righteous anger in confronting these life-denying forces.

34. If we are to transform the world, we have to change our paradigms. For example, it is common practice these days to talk about the United States as the world's

sole superpower. And yet we know that the powers of this world and the empires they form come and go in history. At the end, the Bible tells us, they are built on feet of clay. They are vulnerable in many ways. How can we talk of any country as a superpower when the government cannot protect its people from terrorism, from natural disasters, from preventable diseases? Our conceptual tools are inadequate to understand the ambiguities of power. As we are recognizing, power is not only expressed in different forms of empire. The rapid development of newly emerging technologies is a very powerful tool with great potential impact on people and nature.

35. When there are such enormous inequalities and unequal access to different means of power, it counts in what part of the world one lives. Our churches and the stance they take on matters of economic justice and many other ethical challenges often reflects the realities surrounding them and impacting on the lives of their members. Some churches tend to see the present phase of economic globalization as the continuation of 500 years of oppression through colonialism and changing empires. Others emphasize change and discontinuity based on their experience of the rapidly changing political landscape. These different perspectives cannot be easily reconciled. We need to continue wrestling with these tensions because they help us to see the realities surrounding us more clearly and to identify the different entry points for both, advocacy and dialogue.

36. At this assembly we are celebrating the mid-term of the Decade to Overcome Violence. The goal of DOV is not so much to eradicate violence as it is to overcome the spirit, the logic and the practice of violence by actively seeking reconciliation and peace. This is an ecumenical task—because, as we are learning, preventing violence cannot be accomplished by any one particular group. Preventing and overcoming violence must be done collaboratively by churches together, and jointly in cooperation with governmental and civic institutions and people's grassroots initiatives.

37. In the second half of the Decade, several issues must be considered if we want to remain both realistic and hopeful.

38. Firstly, globalization is a reality on every level, not just economic. Terrorism appears to be globally networked, as is the war on terrorism. The consequences of this affect people in their activities and dignity almost everywhere. We must, therefore, take globalization and its many implications into consideration as we plan our common actions towards proclaiming the good news of peace.

39. Secondly, interfaith dialogue and cooperation is significant and imperative in the process towards

overcoming violence, seeking peace and promoting reconciliation. Churches and religious people of all walks of faith recognize the imperative of interfaith action in response to the pressing needs and concerns of the societies in which they live. More and more people see interfaith action as an integral part of the ecumenical task. The vision of many today is that God's *oikoumene* includes not just Christians, but people of all living faiths.

40. Dialogue is often called upon to assist in resolving many ongoing conflicts that seem to be framed by religious language or have religious overtones. However, contacts between people of different faiths built quietly by patient dialogue during peacetime may in times of conflict prevent religion from being used as a weapon. Contacts across communal divides may prove to be the most precious tool in the construction of peace.

41. Thirdly, spirituality contributes crucially to overcoming violence and building peace. I believe that prayer and contemplation together form the foremost discipline for overcoming violence. The joint exercise of that spiritual discipline is an ongoing challenge for our fellowship. We must make space for this exercise to inspire and shape our individual and joint actions.

42. Within this dimension of spirituality, I am grateful to our Orthodox brothers and sisters in helping the ecumenical movement to recognize the dimension of the earth and nature more consistently. Our spirituality is robbed of a crucial dimension if it does not include our being part of creation as well as co-creators in an intimate relationship with God's earth and all that fills it. . . .

48. Climate change is, arguably, the most severe threat confronting humanity today. This is not an issue for the future: severe consequences are already being experienced by millions of people. We can prevent catastrophic climate change—at least, we know enough to reduce the degree of human-induced climate change—if we find effective ways of combining the voice of the churches with others who can make a difference. We must call on all Christian churches to speak to the world with one voice in addressing the threat of climate change.

49. This divided world needs a church living as one body of Christ. Archbishop Desmond Tutu once said "apartheid is too strong for a divided church." I say that this planet, where life is threatened, needs a church which lives unity in diversity as a sign and foretaste of the community of life that God wants to be—God's household of life, the inhabited earth, the *oikoumene*. Even though our differences may at times divide us, deep in our hearts we know very well that we belong to each other. Christ wants us to be one. We are created one humanity and one earth community by the grace of God. . . .

It's All about Relationships

55. Why is it so difficult to overcome what separates us? Why do we fall still short in our relationships with other human beings despite the technological advances of our age that defy imagination? It is incredible to think of our ability to manipulate genes and to send rockets to the far edges of our solar system—while we are still engaged in wars.

56. There is a common element in the social, economic and environmental threats to life we are confronted with and the ambiguous experience of growing interdependence that provokes greater fragmentation and enmity instead of better cooperation. Those whose power thrives on our fears and anxieties exploit this situation. Fears and anxieties prevent us from a common witness. They pit us against each other, undermine our trust and confidence in each other, and force us to become defensive and reactive to the realities that surround us.

57. The biggest challenges that we face today, it seems to me, all converge at their roots in the lack of human capacity to relate to each other, to creation, and to God as we ought to. Whether we talk about our social realities, issues of power and politics, and even about the realities within and among the churches, we can see that the quality of our relationships has suffered considerably not just today, but for decades and centuries.

58. We live in a diverse world—a world of ethnic, racial, linguistic, cultural and religious differences. The migration of people has meant that almost all of our societies have become multi-cultural. And yet our capacity to relate to the other is sadly limited. We lash out and accuse those who are different from us. We are too often fearful of newcomers. We draw lines between ourselves and others in ways that are hurtful. Racism continues to rear its ugly head; xenophobia and Islamo-phobia spread to more and more places; anti-Semitism has revived where it was expected to have died years ago. And yet the commonalities that unite us are far greater than those that divide us. We are all capable of love, we all revere our families, we all depend on the environment, we all have a vested interest in making this planet a loving and hospitable place.

59. If we focus on our capacity to relate to each other, to creation and to God, we realize that our ethical challenges have a profoundly spiritual dimension and vice versa. We can no longer separate ethics and ecclesiology, the search for unity of the church and the unity of humankind. They are closely intertwined with each other. What aggravates our divisions and the inequality among us and what can contribute to healing and reconciliation has, indeed, a common centre.

60. This should not surprise us. The reality of sin reflects the reality of broken relationships with God, the

fellow human being and creation. Sin—so teaches the Bible—is first and foremost a matter of broken relationships in all of these three dimensions of our existence. Sin is real. Sin has its social and practical expressions, which breed death instead of life and undermine our fellowship. It is this reality that is directly targeted, redeemed and transformed by God's grace. Taking the toll of human sin on himself in his death on the cross, Christ restores life and heals and reconciles relationships distorted by sin. We celebrate this mystery of life renewed in Christ in the eucharist that transforms us as members of the one body of Christ. In our daily lives, this liturgy of the eucharist continues in the healing of relationships, in sharing life with life.

61. The life that God gives us and that sustains us, all of us, is the food that creates a new community of sharing, a community justified and reconciled with God by God's grace. The *feita da vida* is an open feast. It welcomes those who come and it builds community through relationships. For Christians, the "Agape"—the fellowship meal that often follows the eucharistic service—is a celebration of this community. It too anticipates the kingdom which is to come.

62. We will be best equipped to promote human relationships in the world around us if as churches we shall learn how to share with one another all the gifts of grace which we have received from God. To a very large extent our disunity as churches is due to our incapacity to practice this genuine sharing of gifts. One way of enriching our fellowship of sharing is by transforming the way we relate to each other as churches and as ecumenical organizations—a kind of horizontal sharing of the gifts of grace. Today, more than ever before, we need each other as churches. We must find new ways of deepening our fellowship as churches within the WCC fellowship. A new paradigm of being church to each other is an imperative in the 21st-century work on ecumenical and ecclesial relationships. This is needed for the churches' selfempowerment, not for their own sake, but for the sake of each other and in order to gain the capacity to contribute to the world in dire need of learning to build better ways of relating. But as churches we can also learn from many communities that have developed ways of sharing the richness of who they are in spite of what they are.

63. During my travels to different regions of this world, I have seen that in many places worship continues in a common Agape meal—a celebration of shared life for all. I remember poor Indigenous women in Bolivia sharing the little they had after worship and creating a festive meal for everybody on the basis of the different varieties of potatoes they had brought to church. There, in that deprived community, the communal joy radiated as life met life in earnest. By sharing the little each had, the women did

not become poorer than they had been; rather, they each became happier for each other because none went back home hungry. The miracle of feeding five thousand (without counting women and children!) is a reality on a daily basis among the poor. That is how they still survive in this otherwise cruel and merciless world.

64. Carnival here in Brazil is exactly such a sprawling and over-abundant celebration of life against a backdrop of poverty and marginalization. Poor communities continue to nurture the creativity and capacity to celebrate life together in the midst of the destitute and desperate situation that confronts them. Such celebrations of life among the poor remind me also of all the other parables of the invitation to the festive table that are told by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in various ways. They all have in common that the host is deeply disappointed by the negative response of those invited in the first place. In an act of transformative justice, he extends the invitation to those from the streets and the fences at the margins of society. Jesus' sermon in the synagogue of Nazareth speaks to their lives: the good news to the poor (Luke 4:18f). They want to celebrate the new, empowered community in Christ by worshipping together in song and prayer. They want to experience the healing power of the gospel in their daily lives. And this is for sure: they will celebrate with God when the usual patterns of exclusion and marginalization are turned upside down!

65. The *festa da vida* invites us to look afresh at the quality of our relationships and to put these relationships at the centre of the ecumenical movement. . . .

This presentation is based upon two assumptions: first, that the "mainstream" ecumenical paradigm, which has served well the cause of Christian unity, is no longer viable for the challenges of the twenty-first century; second, that the gifts present in the global Christian movement when honoured as equal partners are adequate for the cause of unity and mission.

Most would agree that the structures built to create and sustain the cause of the visible unity of the church are in need of a major transformation in order to meet the current challenges and needs of the churches. This is not to say that these structures were not vitally important during the twentieth century. Through them many of the historic divisions between Christians were confronted and overcome. The modern ecumenical movement originating in the world missionary zeal at the turn of the twentieth century provided Christians with a common vision, a common witness and a deep fellowship. We are indebted to those who made the difficult sacrifices, breaking through the walls of fear and suspicion of the divided churches.

Through the efforts of both the conciliar and bilateral dialogues there has emerged a common understanding of baptism, Eucharist and ministry (i.e., BEM), and the recent "Joint Declaration on Justification" must be celebrated as a historic achievement healing the deep wounds of the Reformation. There are countless other no less significant advances that have been made through heroic efforts of women and men committed to the visible unity of the church.

However, it should be noted that the Christian landscape today is in many ways vastly different from that of a century ago. Over the decades, unnoticed by most in the North, the axis of Christianity has shifted to the global South and to the East. This shift is now so pronounced that it is almost impossible to ignore the new face of Christianity. It has been difficult for Christians in the West to keep up with these shifts and the ecumenical movement has struggled to do so, often assuming that the new forms of the one faith could be merged into the existing structures created for understanding and common witness. However, the current structures are proving to be old wineskins that cannot contain the new wine. The newer forms of churches, like David trying on Saul's armour, find themselves ill-fitted and uncomfortable with the form, language and structures of the modern ecumenical movement. Those who have invested their lives into building and maintaining these structures are at times blind to the challenges of the newer forms of Christianity, assuming that the newcomers, once they have learned the "ecumenical grammar" will fit into and contribute to the old ways. Furthermore, the old are often blind to their impotence, in spite of reduced budgets and vacant buildings.

132. Cheryl Bridges Johns, "When East Meets West and North Meets South: The Reconciling Mission of Global Christianity," *Global Christian Forum, 2007*

Cheryl Bridges Johns, a Pentecostal scholar from the United States, has participated in the work of Faith and Order nationally and globally. The Global Christian Forum, the setting for this address, provides "space" for dialogue and relationship building among Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, and Pentecostal Christians from around the world. • Revisiting Christian Unity, ed. Huibert van Beek, Oxford, Regnum Books, 2009, pp. 93-101.

It is my thesis, therefore, that a new form of ecumenism is needed in order to embrace the present challenges of world-wide Christianity. While many are aware of this need, there is little understanding and even fear of the forms of Christianity that are emerging in the East and in the South. Here we are today in a quandary where the words of Matthew Arnold seem most appropriate: We are living between a past that is dead and a future unable to be born. This time-between-times is frustrating but it is also pregnant with promise. As never before, we are in need of a rebirth for the sake of the visible unity of the church. . . .

In light of these challenges, Andrew Walls, as one of the first to point out the shifting axis of Christianity, notes that the church historian's work at the dawn of the third Christian millennium requires the dual tasks of re-conception and re-visioning. He also mentions the need for conversion but understands it to be a sub-category of re-visioning. However, if we make it a separate task, we can borrow from Walls, noting that the ecumenical work at the beginning of this century requires re-conception, re-visioning and conversion.

Re-Conception of the Resources

Those desiring to construct a new ecumenical table must re-conceive the resources or gifts that are found within the world Christian movement. This means not only re-discovering the classical ecumenical heritage, but also taking stock of the resources found within the vibrant forms of Christianity in the global South. Re-conception would mean a blending of the old and the new in order to form a unique structure suited for the challenges ahead. There are "gifts" from the past that are to be honoured in the future, and conversely there are gifts in the newer forms of church that need to be equally valued.

Gifts of the Global North

While not being the "privileged carrier" of the Christian faith, the churches of the North offer many gifts for the task of Christian unity. Foremost among these is the legacy of the Great Councils. From these Councils there has been preserved the apostolic faith of the church. The ancient creeds serve as standards for its life and witness. For that reason, there has been a resurgence of emphasis upon the Creeds as the ecumenical centre. Those advocating a "new ecumenism" see that a return to the ancient way is a way forward into the future.¹ While there are those who would

1. Examples of "new ecumenism" can be found in the "Princeton Proposal for Christian Unity." See also Christopher Seitz, ed., *Nicene Christianity: The Future for a New Ecumenism* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2001).

disagree with making "Nicene Christianity" the heart of the contemporary church's life and witness, there is little doubt as to the richness found within the ancient ecumenical councils. The task of re-conception before us requires that we look deeply into the past for its wisdom and its standard of truth while at the same time seeking a vibrant witness in the present that honours the continuation of the revelation by the Holy Spirit.

Another resource found within the churches of the North may be described as "the gift of Christian humanism." This gift is derived from the ancient synthesis between Hellenistic philosophy and Christianity and bears the fruit of Christianity's elevation of reason and its quest for full "humanization." For some, such as Benedict XVI, this synthesis has been one of "decisive importance."² For Benedict, Hellenized Christianity is that which created the foundation of what "can rightly be called Europe."³ The heritage of Greek philosophy, with its primacy of reason, brought about a flourishing of culture, with an emphasis upon human rights and the rise of democracy. This legacy, while debated within Europe today, provided a template for the modern ecumenical movement. The "reason based" approach to dialogue, the work of Faith and Order and the quest for human rights are the results of this ancient synthesis.

The task of *re-conception* requires that the churches of the North re-examine their Hellenistic roots. Doing so may not mean agreeing with Pope Benedict's fervent desire to maintain the marriage of Greek philosophy and Christianity.⁴ Instead, however, it may mean that while treating the legacy of Greece and Rome as a paradigm in honouring the important role of reason and philosophy, there would be an honest appraisal of its limitations. . . .

[There also] is a need for what Benedict calls the "purification of reason," noting that it was human reason that created the atomic bomb and it is human ingenuity that has made human genetics a matter of selection.⁵ Southern

2. Benedict XVI, "Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and Reflections," Regensburg University, September, 2006.

3. Ibid.

4. Benedict laments Western civilization's "dehellenization." He sees this process occurring in three historical stages. The first was the program of the Protestant Reformation and its commitment to *sola scriptura*, the second took place with the advent of liberal theology in the nineteenth century. The third stage Benedict sees occurring at the present time in the "culture of pluralism." See his "Regensburg lectures." I am indebted to Dale Irvin for critiquing Ratzinger/Benedict's Hellenistic foundations. See his "Benedict XVI, European Christendom, and World Christianity," in William Rusch, ed. *The Pontificate of Benedict XVI: Its Promises and Promises* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

5. Jurgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger, *The Dialectics of Secularization* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2005), p. 77.

Christians would want to add that reason must be purified by the critical agency of the Holy Spirit. After all, it is the Spirit who knows all things and searches the hearts of humanity. Many in the global South know all too well the “epiphanies of darkness” that dwell within the structures of social systems and that human reason alone cannot move the church into “all truth.”

Therefore, while the churches of the North preserve the great legacy of Hellenized Christianity, they should offer this gift in the spirit of humility, knowing full well the temptation to be self-justifying.

Finally, within the churches of the North there are the resources of great educational institutions and organizations that have furthered the cause of Christian unity, and the financial resources for the continuation of the mission of the church. These resources, when used well, become means to power for the people and means whereby the hungry are fed, the poor are empowered, and the gospel is preached.

Gifts of the Global South

Southern Christians are “citizens of Jerusalem,” observes Philip Jenkins. As citizens of Jerusalem they offer unique gifts to the global church. The task of re-conceiving calls for incorporating these gifts without the Western assumptions that religion in the global South represents some form of “lesser developed Christianity” or “fundamentalist religion.” . . .

Glimpsing into this window of opportunity we see a Christianity that takes Scripture seriously. Taking Scripture seriously is not the same as being fundamentalist. Many in the Global South are quick to point out that they are not “fundamentalists” in the sense that they hold to a rigid legal code. Rather, Scripture is viewed as a living word of the Spirit for the present time. This is especially true among Pentecostals where there is a fusion between Spirit and Word. Thus the Bible presents Christ “now present in the world and in their lives, manifesting the same divine power, and doing what he did in Galilee.”⁶

“The ancient custom of hearing the Word is very much a living tradition in contemporary churches of the global South,” observes Jenkins, “giving quite different quality to the reception and the impact of the text.”⁷ Furthermore, passages are shared, aurally and communally, with an audience with old-established expectations about the nature of oral tradition and communication. Also, communal

reading occurs in a sacred setting, whether in reading and study groups or in the context of worship.⁸ In this context “experiencing scripture communally promotes exalted concepts of the nature of the group that hears the sacred words, a sense that the religious community becomes the vehicle for the divine message.”⁹

Any new ecumenical movement must re-conceive the role of Scripture in the life and witness of the churches. Taking seriously the dynamic, communal and Spirit-reading of the sacred text found in the global South means that Scripture is more central to the ecumenical task. It places a higher priority upon the present reality of the Holy Spirit in the text and within communities. The ecumenical journey includes more of what Jean-Marc Ela describes as “a festival of language . . . which includes grasping the Word, searching for its meaning, questions and answers, prayers and chants.”¹⁰

While the churches of the global South, for the most part, honour the legacy of Nicene Christianity, their “ante Nicene” life calls for the power of the apostolic witness to be that which validates the truth of the apostolic faith. While disconcerting to many Christians in the North, the South’s emphasis upon the continuation of miracles, dreams and prophecy stands as a great gift to worldwide Christianity. Receiving this gift calls for the North to lay aside the old “social deprivation” readings of Christianity among the oppressed and to re-conceive the nature of the Christian witness.

The type of re-conceiving necessary to do this can be seen in the life and witness of Richard Shaull, whose address at the 1966 World Council of Churches World Conference on Church and Society called for a “conversion to the poor,” and concerted action toward their liberation. His address captured the imagination of a rising generation of ecumenists. Shaull’s later conversion to the “religion among the oppressed” is, for the most part, an unknown story. This conversion came about as a result of years of studying Pentecostalism in Latin America. Here he found a form of Christianity that engaged the primal struggles between order and chaos. He described such Christianity as flourishing at “ground zero” of this struggle. Shaull identified this new paradigm of Christianity as a “reconstruction of life in the power of the Spirit.”¹¹ This power to reconstruct life is most profoundly manifest in those places where “the most basic forms of life in

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Jean-Marc Ela, *My Faith as an African* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988), 45-46.

11. Richard Shaull and Waldo Cesar, *Pentecostalism and the Future of the Christian Churches* (Eerdmans: 2000), p. 116.

6. Richard Shaull and Waldo Cesar, *Pentecostalism and the Future of the Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), p. 192.

7. Philip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (Oxford: 2006), p. 26.

the community—the family, local neighborhoods, social, economic and political structures—are becoming unglued, leaving masses of poor people in both rural and peripheral urban areas without stable work, medical care, or opportunities for education.¹²

In these regions of the world, truth is experienced as an encounter of a power that is able to liberate people from evil. In the face of evil the power of the gospel brings direct divine intervention. When social institutions fail and political solutions become corrupt the Christian way often becomes the only source of liberation and the churches the only stable institutions. Into this chaos the gospel is preached to the poor offering healing for sick minds and bodies, the power to reorganize broken lives and to overcome addictions. Salvation is deliverance from the power of systemic evil. “It is,” as Harvey Cox has observed, “the ability to lure anarchy into the sacred circle and tame it.”¹³

This ability is not just a gift to the Southern churches, but becomes a worldwide ecumenical challenge. As such, it speaks to those churches in the North who feel impotent in the face of terror, chaos and death. Thus the “sacred circles” drawn in the South can become protean for the rest of us who feel impotent in our ability to tame anarchy.

Another important gift or resource found within the South is the impetus to be the “militia Christi,” advancing the kingdom of God throughout the world. While the missionary nature of the Church has historically been manifest in the Western churches, this is ceasing to be the case. Instead, the missionary force of the twenty-first century will be coming from the Southern churches. The task of re-conceiving the ecumenical movement will call for incorporating the new face of mission into its agenda while at the same time honouring the forms of mission developed in the West/North.

The Task of Re-Visioning

Constructing a new ecumenical movement means also a re-visioning of the journey toward Christian unity. This will require us to make some paradigm shifts. First, we will need to move away from the Western assumption that there is a single ecumenical model with a universal application. In the future, more effort will need to be made in taking into account local relevance “in the selection of themes and in judging what belongs to the foreground and what belongs to the background.”¹⁴

12. Ibid.

13. Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1995), p. 120.

14. Walls, p. 14.

Critics within and without the ecumenical movement have pointed out that the quest for the visible unity of the church has often been co-opted by social movements for human liberation. They point out the turn the World Council of Churches took in 1966 at the World Conference on Church and Society as an example of a move away from classical Christian teaching in favour of human utopias. Such critics are hesitant in regard to re-visioning.

However, in spite of these criticisms, re-visioning is necessary for the continuing viability of the quest for Christian unity, and this quest must always take seriously the human condition. The Spirit’s work among the marginalized and the conditions of oppression, hunger, poverty and human trafficking are not peripheral to the ecumenical calling. The intentions of the World Conference on Church and Society, namely to see God’s presence and activity in the midst of human history, especially among the poor, is a call that should guide our present ecumenical calling.

Re-visioning the ecumenical movement would also mean that the churches of the North and the South are seen as equal partners in shaping the ecumenical future. Too often newer forms of churches are looked upon as exotic and under-developed. The result of such a bias is that in ecumenical gatherings participants from the Southern churches are asked to “flavour” the meetings with their worship, leaving the “real business” to the churches of the North. In the future the “real business” may include more testimony and more time for prayer and worship. Scripture may be more prominent as participants engage in a “festival of the Word.”

The format of the Global Christian Forum is a hopeful sign towards a future in which the churches of the global South are encouraged to incorporate their world views into the task of unity. The inclusion of testimonies of faith journeys and the sharing of stories of ecumenical calling and vocation have brought to the Forum a deep sense of solidarity and equality among the participants. The leaders of the Forum are to be commended for their patient listening and their discernment as they attempt to move forward toward a viable future.

The Task of Conversion

The tasks of re-conceiving and re-visioning cannot be accomplished without conversion. As Walls points out, “conversion means turning not substituting a new element for old—or adding a new element to the old, but changing the direction of what is already there.”¹⁵ The WCC Assembly in New Delhi called for death and re-birth. For a viable

15. Ibid., p. 21.

future there will need to be some death-like turning. This will require from all of us, those from the North and those from the South, both openness and humility.

On the part of Northern Christianity our conversion means that we soberly examine our gifts: the legacy of the Great Councils, the power of reason and critical thought, the institutions and resources. Conversion calls for examining how we have been guilty of making these gifts our own possessions. Have we been guilty of substituting reason and critical thought for life-giving faith? Do we have the legacy of the historic creeds without the authentic life they represent? Do we depend on our resources and our institutions rather than upon the power of the Holy Spirit?

On the part of Southern Christianity, conversion means that the gifts of apostolic power and faith, the living witness of Scripture and the passion for mission be soberly examined. All too often Southern Christians have imagined themselves as “true Christians” over against an “apostate” or “post-Christian” North. This stereotyping fosters pride which deeply wounds the church’s witness in the world.

The good news about conversion is that repentance and death prepare a path toward rebirth. True humility will bear the fruit of Christian unity. This unity is the distinctive mark of the people of God. So as we move toward a viable future, let us pray that we may be one: North embracing South, East embracing West, so that the world might believe.

133. Margaret O’Gara, “Ecumenical Dialogue: The Next Generation,” 2008

A Roman Catholic theologian who taught at the University of Toronto, O’Gara represented her church in a wide array of bilateral dialogues. The following is taken from her presidential address to the Catholic Theological Society of America. • CTSA Proceedings, 63 (2008), pp. 94-103.

... New Sources of Division

While the generation of theologians entering ecumenical dialogue today cannot neglect old sources of division, they also are faced with a bewildering cluster of arguments that cause new divisions between and within the churches.

Of course, it is possible to exaggerate the importance of these new arguments. Karl Rahner spoke of the neurotic

fear shown by those who, when faced with an ecumenical agreement, suspect that it is not “really” an agreement “in depth.” He observes, “Such fears then give rise to those strange efforts . . . to find new sets of ever more subtle formulae and nuances so as to prove the existence of mutual dissent.”¹⁶ When I hear of yet another new reason for slowing down our ecumenical work, I do sometimes suspect the presence of this neurotic fear that we may be in disagreement—or worse, the neurotic fear that we may be in agreement. Nevertheless, today it does seem that a new set of arguments has arisen that frequently function to divide.

Some of these arguments are about moral questions. Positions taken on homosexual behavior, same-sex marriage, abortion, and the justification of war are often cited by Christians from many churches as a cause for hesitation about ecumenical work. But these issues are also sources of new, unexpected alliances: evangelicals and Catholics band together to oppose abortion while mainline Protestants join Mennonites and Catholic religious orders in sending Christian peacemaker teams to Iraq. Churches of many kinds find new alliances in developing sanctuary movements for immigrants.

Other matters hover at the edge of these moral issues. The matter of women’s ordination, though many see it as a moral issue, also raises questions about doctrine and the exercise of authority. Moreover, interreligious dialogue also raises questions for ecumenists. Discussion of the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit, the salvation of non-Christians, and the relationship of the Church to non-Christian religions have become new issues facing ecumenical dialogue today. Finally, the voices of the young churches in countries where the Gospel was recently planted by missionary outreach raise new questions for the ecumenical dialogue.

How should we think about these many questions? One way to understand them is as fruits of our separation. Because the churches have been separated from each other for centuries, we have emphasized different parts of the Gospel, valued different cultural insights, and developed different areas of moral outrage. Different parts of the Gospel: Mennonites have held to a pacifist identity while Anglicans have loved the liturgy. Different cultural insights: Lutherans have modeled their decision-making structures more on modern democracies than have Catholics. Different areas of moral outrage: evangelicals are outraged by abortion while Disciples of Christ are outraged when women cannot be ordained. In our separation from each other, we have learned to value and to oppose different things. The fruit of these centuries of separation is now bitter in our mouth.

16. Karl Rahner, “Questions of Controversial Theology on Justification,” *Theological Investigations*, vol 4, trans. Kevin Smyth (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), 196.

A second way to understand these conflicts is as an encounter between Gospel and culture. In discussing the issue of women's ordination, the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue of Canada pointed out that each church must answer this question: Is the ordination of women a sign of the times—a positive inculturation of the gospel in our day—or is it a capitulation to secular culture that waters down our witness?¹⁷ The present painful debate within the Anglican Communion itself about same-sex marriage must answer the same kind of question. This is surely an issue of generations as well, since many young Catholics are attracted to the faith precisely because they yearn for a countercultural witness: they reject what Charles Péguy named the bourgeois Catholicism of his time.¹⁸ These Catholics share my admiration for John Paul II's fully pro-life teaching, a teaching that opposes abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, and war, and they enter ecumenical work ready to defend such a countercultural vision.

But of course, we must also ask: countercultural to which culture? My African students are totally opposed to abortion, but they also are scandalized by nursing homes for the elderly. "Why do you isolate your old people from their children and grandchildren and leave them so lonely?" they kept asking me. Within the Anglican Communion right now, this kind of intercultural discussion is a painful one. The African Anglicans say to North American Anglicans: Our cultures and the Bible you brought us teach that homosexuality is wrong. These African Anglicans preach the need of re-evangelizing the mother church. In addition, some North American Anglicans reply: But you are misinterpreting those precious biblical texts that we entrusted to you.

Again: which culture? My students from South America and from Hispanic or Latino/a cultures in the United States had hesitations about ecumenism that had nothing to do with the *Decree on Ecumenism*. For them, the experience of Protestants was of fundamentalist Protestants, often involving not dialogue but proselytism. Moreover, I still remember clearly the first Protestant student from mainland China in my course on ecumenical dialogue twenty years ago. After puzzling at length over my explanation of the teachings of late medieval Catholicism and of Luther on the eucharist, she finally said hesitantly, "But in our church in China we hold both of those positions." How necessary today in Asia is it to teach the history of the European Reformation?

17. Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue of Canada, "Agreed Statement of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue of Canada on the Experience of the Ministries of Women in Canada," *Origins* 21 (1992) 605, 607-17, #4.2-4.3.

18. Cited by Gilles Routhier during the Peter and Paul Seminar, Québec City, 2 March 2008.

All of these new questions raise the issue of discernment of gifts: How do we distinguish the offer of bread from a stone? Churches engaged in serious dialogue experience not only the mutuality of gift exchange, but also the refusal of a gift out of fear that what is being offered as a gift is really a poison.

Commenting on this dynamic, the "Princeton Proposal for Christian Unity" criticizes the ecumenical movement for sometimes giving in to a kind of "liberal indifference," a sort of relativism. It observes that some churches, trying to avoid such relativism, focus instead on older formulations to define their identity over against other churches in a "divisive sectarianism."¹⁹ They fear the gifts of others. But in fact, the "Princeton Proposal" argues, both a liberal relativism and a divisive sectarianism are often marked by a shift away from the question of truth and toward the question of identity: "rather than 'is it true?' some Christians ask, 'Is it authentically Catholic?', 'Is it Evangelical?', . . . 'Is it congruent with the dynamics of the Reformation?'"²⁰ The "Princeton Proposal" calls this shift from truth to identity a kind of "tribalization" (in the bad sense) of Christian communities that can play into the hands of secular nationalism, ethnic conflict, or consumerist dynamics.²¹

Such reflections raise the need for repentance before any exchange of gifts is possible. The "Princeton Proposal" speaks of the "wound" of disunity affecting all Christians,²² a language also used by Walter Kasper,²³ and it calls for disciplines of unity that are "penitential" and "ascetical."²⁴ Christians need a spirit of repentance to help them learn whether it is relativism or love for gospel truth which leads them to reject a position offered to them as a gift by a partner church. Such discernment is not easy, and it presents ecumenical dialogue with a new agenda.

Refusing gifts from others is a complicated matter. What seems in one communion like a gift of God for the Church's up-building may strike another communion as a deeply unfaithful betrayal of the Gospel. Two examples reveal the complexity here.

Many evangelicals are deeply troubled by the teaching of the Second Vatican Council that non-Christians and

19. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, eds., *In One Body through the Cross: The Princeton Proposal for Christian Unity* (Grand Rapids, MI, and Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), #24.

20. *Ibid.*, #41.

21. *Ibid.*, #42.

22. *Ibid.*, #10.

23. Kasper, 42.

24. *In One Body through the Cross: The Princeton Proposal for Christian Unity*, #71.

even atheists may be saved.²⁵ While mainline Protestants and some Catholics cringed at the line from *Dominus Iesus* that said non-Christians were objectively in a “gravely deficient situation,” these evangelicals were pleased.²⁶ While I repeatedly explain to my evangelical colleagues that the teaching of Vatican II shows an increasing testimony to the wideness of God’s mercy, some evangelicals find this teaching a capitulation to secular culture and a diminishment of Christ’s saving work. For them, official Catholic teaching on this point is not a gift offered but a stone. The discussion with evangelicals about this topic is not finished.

In the discussion on the ordination of women, we have a topic where again the churches disagree about which teaching and practice really is the gift. In 1976, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith argued that “the Church does not consider herself authorized to admit women to priestly ordination” because of the practice of Jesus and the apostolic community that did not include women among the twelve apostles or invest them with “the apostolic charge.”²⁷ In 1994, Pope John Paul II argued from the will and practice of Christ “that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women” and that this judgment is to be held “definitively.”²⁸ But in explaining the decision of some Anglicans to ordain women, Robert Runcie, then Archbishop of Canterbury, also appealed to a christological basis. In a letter to Cardinal Jan Willebrands, he noted that, since in Jesus Christ the eternal Word of God assumed a human nature inclusive of both men and women, some Anglicans believe that ordaining women as well as men would “more perfectly . . . represent Christ’s inclusive high priesthood.” Hence, he explained, for some Anglican provinces this doctrinal reason “is seen not only to justify the ordination of women . . . but actually to require it.”²⁹

Since the area of women’s ordination remains in dispute among the churches, it is especially heartening that Archbishop Runcie and Pope John Paul II commented directly on the question of women’s ordination a few years before the publication of *Ordinatio sacerdotalis*. Explaining that the ordination of women prevents Anglican-Roman

Catholic reconciliation even while other progress has been made, they then added, “No pilgrim knows in advance all the steps along the path.” Recommitting themselves to the full visible unity of their two communions, they continued, “While we ourselves do not see a solution to this obstacle, we are confident that through our engagement with this matter our conversations will in fact help to deepen and enlarge our understanding because of the Holy Spirit promised to the Church.”³⁰

By drawing a parallel between teachings on the salvation of non-Christians and the ordination of women, I do not mean to suggest that they are the same kind of issue or that they have the same importance. However, I do underline that neither issue was considered a source of division among the churches in the sixteenth century. The Reformation churches did not call women to ordained ministry in the sixteenth century, and Luther taught that native peoples in North America would go to hell because they had never heard of Christ. Nevertheless, each issue also does show how a shift in teaching by one community causes dispute and hesitation by another community about how the dialogue should proceed.

What is the way that such disagreements on these new sources of division can be overcome? While of course we should keep talking, we need a guide for our talks, one who will open up for us the meaning of the Scriptures as we walk along the road together. Here I think the warnings against relativism are vital: they remind us of the importance of the christological and trinitarian core of our confession. The basis of ecumenical dialogue is a common confession of the Triune God and the Incarnation of the Word of God in Jesus Christ. These core teachings provide the norm by which we can discern whether the offerings of other churches are truly gifts or stones. Without a firm foundation in christological and trinitarian faith, we not only lose the norm for such discernment, we also lose the reason for seeking visible unity with other Christians in the first place: proclaiming the Gospel to the whole world together.³¹

In fact, it is striking to me that a great number of the new issues causing division are questions related to trinitarian and christological questions. I already showed how discussions on women’s ordination and on non-Christian religions draw directly on our teachings about Christ and the Holy Spirit. Nonetheless, debates about morals and voices from cultures where the Church is young also raise questions about what it means to follow Christ. Therefore, while earlier sources of division among Christians

25. Vatican II, *Lumen gentium*, in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Abbott, #16.

26. *Dominus Iesus*, #22.

27. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “*Inter Insigniores*: Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood [15 Oct. 1976],” *Origins* 6 (1977) 519-20.

28. John Paul II, “*Ordinatio sacerdotalis*: Apostolic Letter on Reserving Priestly Ordination to Men Alone [22 May 1994],” #4.

29. “Archbishop Robert Runcie to Cardinal Jan Willebrands [18 Dec. 1985],” *Origins*, 16 (1985) 156. Willebrands was president of what was then called the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.

30. John Paul II and Robert Runcie, “Common Declaration [2 Oct. 1989],” *Origins*, vol. 19 (1989) 317.

31. *Unitatis redintegratio*, #1.

demanded a deepening of our ecclesiology and sacramental theology, I think that new sources of division will be an occasion to explore more fully our core doctrines on Christ and the Trinity.

Rethinking the Understanding of Authority

While the next generation of ecumenists faces new questions that divide the churches, it continues to face as well the challenge of authority. Here, however, there is also a different question: not only the reform of authority's actual exercise, but also the reconceptualization of authority itself, particularly teaching authority.

Here I want to suggest a rethinking of that central teaching that Catholics offer to the Church about teaching authority: its claims about infallibility. The Catholic teaching on infallibility continues to pose grave challenges to our ecumenical partners, but this teaching is also in some disarray within Catholic theology itself, in need of rethinking.

Some wonder whether infallibility is worth rethinking. They fear that infallibility is too authoritarian, too patriarchal, or too historically naive to be worth our theological time. Let infallibility be quietly neglected and then forgotten, they suggest, like limbo or St. Christopher.

But I would argue that infallibility, suitably rethought and re-understood, gives an important teaching about God's assistance to the Church in preserving the core of the Gospel. Understood at its deepest level, I think infallibility is a doxological teaching about God's faithfulness. I think it also contradicts those forms of relativism—so often a concern of Pope Benedict XVI—that question whether the Church can know and teach the truth. Understood in this way, infallibility raises an important issue for all Christians and signals something important that Catholics can contribute to the ecumenical exchange of gifts: “the faithful transmission of the gospel and its authoritative interpretation,” about which all Christians are concerned.³² Hence, I believe that rethinking infallibility is worth our time and theological effort.

Of course, I will not review Vatican I's teaching on infallibility, but I will note two reasons why I think Catholics must spend so much time explaining again and again the meaning of this teaching. The bishops at the First Vatican Council spent a long time discussing papal infallibility and hedging it round with conditions, but in fact, they spent relatively little time on papal primacy. The Council confirms that the pope has universal, ordinary, and immediate jurisdiction over the local churches, but it specifies

almost no conditions to limit this jurisdiction. The members of the council spent months clarifying the conditions for the exercise of papal infallibility, but only one week directly discussing the conditions for the exercise of papal primacy.

In fact, the papacy in 1870 reflected the post-Reformation pattern of an increasingly centralized, pyramidal exercise of papal primacy. Vatican I's failure to specify conditions for papal governance can be seen as part of this pattern that only began to be countered with Vatican II's emphasis on the collegiality of the bishops and the dignity of all of the laity. I think that misunderstandings about infallibility are really linked to this pattern of a centralized, pyramidal exercise of the pope's primacy in his everyday governing decisions, his encyclicals, and his ordinary theological opinions. In his book on papal primacy, Klaus Schatz argues that papal infallibility was strenuously surrounded with conditions, but that papal primacy was left so vague both before and after Vatican I that the pope's ordinary governing and everyday teaching came to replace infallibility—in effect becoming a kind of ersatz infallibility.³³ Even in the ordinary exercise of authority, recent popes sometimes act as though they speak infallibly, even when they do not. Papal style can seem infallible even when papal teaching is not. Thus, this ersatz infallibility of the pope's primacy reinforces the misunderstandings of Catholic teaching about infallibility and becomes a serious problem in ecumenical work.

A second source of misunderstanding comes from the epistemology used by Vatican I, a static epistemology that Lonergan labels “classicist,” in which the unchanging and permanent character of the truth is emphasized. Lonergan contrasts such a classicist epistemology with what he calls an historical-mindedness that is aware of both permanence in truth and historical development of understanding.³⁴ Without denying the permanence of meaning present in dogmatic formulations, Vatican II also appropriated such historical-mindedness when it taught that we change—we grow—in our understanding of the truth. *Dei Verbum* presented this growth as an uninterrupted conversation which Christ has with his bride, the Church, as it is led into all truth by the Holy Spirit.³⁵

Now, what would happen to infallibility if we could reinterpret it freed from these two problems: its confusion with papal primacy and its formulation in a classicist epistemology? What if infallibility were to be rethought

32. U.S. Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue, “Teaching Authority and Infallibility in the Church: Common Statement,” #23.

33. Klaus Schatz, *Papal Primacy: From Its Origins to the Present*, trans. John A. Otto and Linda M. Maloney (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 167-68.

34. Lonergan, 5-6.

35. *Dei Verbum*, #8.

with historical-mindedness and as a gift given to the whole Church? Rather than appearing as an unchanging grasp of the truth, infallibility could be reinterpreted as the process through which, over time, the Church discerns core teachings of the Gospel for its age and culture. Roman Catholic theology claims that God assists the Church in this process so that the core of the Gospel is not utterly lost, so that we may hear the message of salvation. Even when a formulation of a central teaching is incomplete or misleading, the Holy Spirit helps the Church in a self-correcting process eventually to recognize and teach the Gospel. This interplay of authoritative teaching and reception or discernment by the whole Church is what Catholics mean by infallibility, and we believe that this process is guided by the Holy Spirit.³⁶

Rethinking infallibility in this way might allow us to translate it into something like inculturation: the Church assisted to reformulate the Gospel in new times and cultures. Of course, this rethinking includes the collegiality of the bishops together with the bishop of Rome in the exercise of teaching authority, but it also allows us to include the reality of reception by the whole Church as part of the process that is infallibility. Remember that Vatican II taught that the whole Church cannot err in believing because all of its members are anointed by the Holy Spirit.³⁷ The whole Church eventually recognizes whether or not a core teaching proposed by pope or bishops or council is really an announcement of the Gospel. Of course, this takes time; and infallibility is that process over time through which the whole Church, with God's assistance, discerns the Gospel in the face of a challenge.

I have offered here just one way that we might rethink Catholic teaching about infallibility. However, I am convinced that such rethinking is a task that has not yet really been faced in Catholic theology. In fact, locating infallibility more firmly within history in this way may actually underline Catholic convictions that merge Catholic identity with a defense of the truth, a concern mentioned again by Pope Benedict XVI in his comments about ecumenism on his recent U.S. visit.³⁸

Anticipating the Future

In this section, I will be very brief, in part because I am talking about the unseen future. Nevertheless, talk about the future is appropriate for discussion of ecumenical dialogue. Ecumenism has an eschatological character, because

it anticipates the fulfillment of a promise from God to heal the divisions of the Church. Christ prayed that all would be one, and Christians believe that his prayer is effective. Dialogue between Christians, then, has a kind of built-in restlessness, a cognitive dissonance that yearns for and anticipates the healing of the Church. Yves Congar wrote that ecumenists of every generation have a desire for unity that gives their present belief a dynamic future-oriented dimension "in which their intention of plenitude is fulfilled."³⁹

One place where I recognize this sense of restless anticipation is in the experience of dialogue with long-term ecumenical partners. I think such dialogue has more than a sentimental or anecdotal significance; I think it provides a means and foretaste of reception among the churches. It literally anticipates the future. Because dialogue partners can listen to each other sympathetically over long periods of time without the presupposition of hostility or competition, they can often discover aspects of the other's position that previously they have distorted or neglected. In this way, relationships between colleagues in the ecumenical movement parallel the relationships that have developed between churches once ignorant or hostile toward each other. These personal recognitions are a foretaste of the reconciliation between the many Christian communions. After the purification of memories, ecumenical partners can sometimes discover that "calm, clear-sighted and truthful vision of things" of which John Paul II spoke.⁴⁰ Such reevaluation of each other's positions allows the shock of recognition that I sometimes feel when I realize that my colleague from another church tradition truly shares the same faith that I am laboring to explain. Sometimes, of course, this includes the gift of criticism that I offer to the other church tradition or am offered in return. But such criticism seems a part of the ascetical disciplines that nurture ecumenical work.

I think that ecumenism will continue to demand ascetical disciplines from Catholic theologians. Even now, ecumenism is an ascetical practice. Ecumenists must regularly fast from the eucharist when not in full communion with the presider celebrating; they must spend their time and talents on lengthy study of positions they only gradually understand; they must endure the embarrassment and frustration that flow from the sins of both their own and now also their dialogue partner's church communion; and frequently their efforts are feared or suspected by members of their own church.

36. *Lumen gentium*, #12.

37. *Dei Verbum*, #8.

38. Benedict XVI, "Ecumenical Prayer Service [18 April 2008]," *Origins*, vol. 37 (2008).

39. Yves Congar, *Diversity and Communion*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM, 1984), 133.

40. John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, #2.

What has continued to nurture the foretaste of the Church's healing has been prayer in common, and I am sure that such prayer will remain at the heart of the ecumenical movement. This insight by Paul Couturier, founder of the Groupe des Dombes, seems even more clear today to the next generation of young ecumenists. Their taste in Taizé-style common prayer, their exploration of earlier spiritualities, their widespread use of icons, and their insistent hunger for a common eucharist point to the continuing importance that such prayer will have in future ecumenical work. As the next generation of Catholic theologians walks along the road together in dialogue with other Christians, all will find their hearts burning within them as their guide opens for them the meaning of the Scriptures, bringing them closer to the table fellowship of Emmaus. If we understand that *anamnesis* includes a kind of remembering that also points towards the future, perhaps we will not be surprised when the spiritual ecumenism of which the Second Vatican Council speaks becomes an even more central instrument for dialogue among

Christians in the coming century. . . .

134. Elsa Tamez, "Breaking Down Walls in Our Globalized Society: A Relevant Ecumenism," 2009

Tamez is well known as a theological educator and biblical scholar from Latin America. In this essay, she takes a hard look at what makes for meaningful ecumenism from the perspective of the global South.

• Ecumenical Trends, vol. 38, no. 7, 2009, pp. 1-7.

. . . Today, there are various important ecumenical organizations at the global level. . . . We cannot deny the invaluable contribution that these groups are making. Their documents are excellent and really, if many of them could be put into practice, it would help to advance the improvement of relationships among Christian Churches and between churches and the world.

But there is a difference between these dialogues among ecclesiastical institutions at a global, regional and national level and what it is really occurring between Christians on the ground, especially those thousands of Christian churches that do not participate in these high level dialogues. When we reflect on ecumenism in a threatened

globalized society, we should see this situation and recognize the advances have been more at the theoretical level or in ivory towers than at a practical level or at the base. The ecumenical retreat has not only to do with the affirmation of identities because of globalization but also because of the fact that there has not been a heartfelt, profound conviction of the importance of ecumenism, and there has been no political will in the institutions to change. To be frank, I believe that ecumenism has been restricted to being a necessary appendage in the ministry of different churches, large and small, and that, generally, the dialogues we have are among the leaders of church institutions and not at the grassroots.

I do not want to be skeptical. I recognize that there are highlights and certain advances in relationships thanks to this dialogue; the documents that the scholars and other interested persons have written on ecumenism are very good. I also realize that they are not oblivious to what is happening in the world with respect to Christianity. Even though Jenkins states that the West has not given its attention, the ecumenical movement recognizes that many Christian churches are not at the discussion table about the unity of Christians. Proof of this is the creation of the Global Christian Forum, born in 1997 with the purpose of opening up new dialogue with other churches that traditionally have not participated in the discussions on Christian unity. The Forum, besides including traditional ecumenical groups, such as the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the World Council of Churches, includes Independent and Pentecostal churches. And in 2004, a committee was formed to go deeper into "Ecumenism in the 21st Century," precisely in the light of the effects of a changing world. I am sure they are moving in the right direction.

But, I do insist, the way is very slow and the times are urgent. What we have is not sufficient, nor can we remain in dialogues at the level of church leadership. We must take steps toward a profound conviction for each Christian in the world of the importance of ecumenism in our globalized society, and the leaders of our churches must have the political will to reach that understanding.

Those of us who have been present in ecumenical events know the difficulty of dialogue, above all with respect to theological concepts, doctrinal traditions, forms of worship and Sacraments. The visible unity of the churches that these dialogues aspire to is very far from happening. Will it be possible to reach the objective of visible unity in only one faith and only one Eucharistic communion? Should all efforts be toward this objective? Because of inculturation, in practice we are rapidly becoming more different. . . .

I am not against all these dialogues that search theologically to deepen the meaning of the Apostolic Faith. I believe they should continue; but in taking account of the globalized society, I believe that a better emphasis should point in another direction without leaving behind this kind of dialogue: that of living ecumenically, with the diversity that exists in local expressions and aspires to the invisible church, that is the universal church, based on nothing more than the love of God and neighbor, as was taught by the human face of God—the crucified and resurrected. Visibility is very important for the world to believe, but this visibility, it seems to me, would be more pertinent if we, as Christians, could express this love around the crucified people of the world. This affirmation is very general. I want to explain it in four very simple points.

1) *To live ecumenically*

The first step is to make ecumenism more than a discussion, make it a way of living. A module about Ecumenism prepared by Dr. Mathias Preiswerk (*Ecumenismo: práctica, teoría y espiritualidad*, 2007) presents what I want to say by “to live ecumenically.” It is written from Bolivia, a very Catholic country, but at the same time very Aymara, and with the presence of not a few Evangelical churches. In fact, ecumenism is an attitude, a way of living with the other, and a way of placing ourselves face to face with the other. It means an attitude of openness in life, in particular the life of faith, and in the recognition of other traditions and spiritualities. This attitude of openness recognizes that faith itself can be enriched in dialogue, and at the same time we can be challenged in such a dialogue. This supposes, of course, the capacity to listen and dialogue with a heart tuned more than the head. The Joint Working Group of the WCC and the Catholic Church has proposed the same thing in similar words: “Ecumenical dialogue is a way of being, of living the Christian life. It presupposes an ample spirituality open to the other in light of the imperative of the unity of Christians. It is a process of conversion, discernment and of being attentive to the impulse of God” (JWG, 2005).

We have to recognize that a firm ecumenical consensus is a long ways away, given the different ecclesiologies and theologies of the persons in dialogue. For this reason we should begin by helping all people to have an open attitude toward the others, their culture and their expression of faith. In this way we can begin breaking down walls of distrust and fanaticism. It is a pedagogical question that should begin with our every day life. We need training programs and accompaniment at the congregational level of our Christian communities.

2) *Ecumenism happens as we converse and share with “the other”*

Ecumenism happens in everyday conversation with the other when nobody imposes anything on anyone. Today the other is on our doorstep. Because of human mobility we do not have to travel to the South to know them. According to Archbishop Silvana M. Tomasi, a former Permanent Observer for the Vatican before the United Nations, it is possible that there are around 200 million international emigrants in the world, not only from South to North, but South to South (*Concilium*, 2008). That is to say, globalization produces the fact that we all have different and foreign people close to us. This inevitable and visible multiculturalism dislocates thought and language and reopens the concepts of identity, culture, and concepts such as ecumenism, evangelism and mission. Our time is characterized by the affirmation that there is not only one way to signify reality, “not only one language or languages in which the ‘truth’ can be affirmed with certainty” (Ian Chambers, *Migración, cultura, identidad*, 1995, p. 49). The Joint Working Group is right when it affirms that “doctrinal formulations of faith are culturally and historically conditioned. The same faith can be expressed in different languages in different moments, demonstrating it to be a liberating experience in dialogues, and it has helped create possibilities for the development of new understandings and relationships. The process of discerning a consensus in the faith should take into consideration the distinct foci, emphases and languages and respect the diversity and the limits of diversity in and between the interlocutors” (JWG, 2005).

That is why coming together and dialogue with the other in the daily life is vital for understanding the world, understanding ourselves and the other. It is fundamental that the dialogue be recognized as mutual. The Spanish theologian Juan Jose Tamayo speaks of cultural polycentrism as the major fact of our time. He sees it as a paradigm shift in theological thinking. He affirms, “The new theological paradigm cannot sustain itself in the domination of one culture over another, that must submit or integrate with it. . . . This clashes with the major fact of our time, that has an increasingly strong accusing conscience: *cultural polycentrism*, that must be reflected in Christian theology” (*Nuevo paradigma teológico*, 2003, p. 31).

Only a short time ago ethnocentrism dominated our Western thought. If we accept reality as being polycentric, and we give to the other the space that we have, without hiding the unequal economic injustice, I believe that there could be a mutuality that is spoken of in the WCC Central Committee report when describing community in terms of mutuality: “mutual vision, mutual respect, mutual love,

mutual understanding, mutual correction, mutual challenge and mutual transparency.” Jon Sobrino, speaking of the importance of solidarity in an unjust world, also speaks of mutuality, but grounds it so it does not stay in the air: he speaks of the need to “mutually carry the victims of inequality” (*Terremoto, terrorismo, barbarie y utopia*, 2003, p. 54).

3) To Search for visible unity in the option for those excluded by the globalized society

Sobrino states that in today’s world there is “a deficit in ‘the will for truth’, a lack of integrity with the real” (p. 69). It is not that it is unknown; in the news the reality of poverty appears and at the same time all the excesses, the emergence of illnesses that had been eliminated, the high costs dedicated to war and government corruption, or the fact that every year 50 million die of hunger. There is “a deficit in the will for truth” because it is concealed, twisted and lives “effectively in the lie” (p. 73). This theater world is the central news along with horrifying news on the war in Iraq or the Middle East; there are no priorities or balances in the globalized society.

For Sobrino, the Christian faith must oppose the masking of reality with honesty with the real. This means “to listen to the word of reality and give voice to the reality” (p. 88). This means a conversion of what is human to be moved to solidarity and an ecumenical opening to what we have just been speaking about—an opening to the other through honesty with the real, because, in the first place, the other is “the impoverished and excluded other.” Change can occur if we “let ourselves be affected” by the unjust reality (p. 36). Sobrino implores us to pick up and carry reality, as the impoverished people must carry it. If we will not take on this reality of injustice, that 80% of the world’s population shares only 20% of the world’s resources, we are not being honest with the real. A true ecumenism begins with this context and stands faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ: it is called to live united around the “crucified people.” This term “crucified people” Sobrino takes from the Jesuit martyr Ignacio Ellacuria: “It is not only the existence of a great part of literal and historical humanity crucified by natural oppressions, but above all, by historic and personal oppressions” (p. 98).

I know that some people do not like to speak of “crucified people” because they say that now we are in post-modern times where we should speak more of cosmic truth that “we are all in all.” This seems to me beautiful, but I see it as a prayer to God, something we try to construct along the way when we live ecumenism as an opening to the other that is an I as I am. I believe, with Paul Knitter,

that “the cosmic truth can be and needs to be grounded and inspired by a shared preferential option for the suffering and the victims of this world.” This includes inter-religious dialogue; as Knitter writes, “through such an option, religious persons will better say to themselves and to their dialogue partners. . . ‘I know in whom /what I have trusted’ (2 Tim 1:12)” (“Cosmic Confidence or Preferential Option?,” 1996).

There is no other starting point that experiences the resurrection now, that is not that of reality itself, exposed today through the global financial crisis and the wars waged with impunity. This is why Sobrino insists in seeing the sin of reality and also grace: the solidarity of many, the goodness of those who have bet on the overabundance of grace in confronting the abundance of sin.

I do not believe that we will have visible unity in the Eucharist if first we cannot share bread, affection and care on the journey with the other. The story of the travelers on their way to Emmaus is inspiring: on the road they share the marvels with the other, finally recognizing him as Lord when they share the bread. To realize that in the “other” there is divinity, as a creature made in the image of God, helps to avoid violence, to look with tenderness, to live ecumenically.

4) To be guided by the principles that oriented the way of Jesus

Now that we have presented the two analyses about the crisis of the globalized society and the future of Christianity, which forecast wars, our way to ecumenism should be guided by certain counter-cultural principles that help to create a nonviolent mentality and do not allow society to invert them. The love for God and neighbor needs to be grounded so as not to fall into abstractions. I want to lift up three principles of Jesus, written in the Gospel of Mark in light of the Roman war against Palestine. They are instructions that Jesus gave to his disciples when they were going to Jerusalem and he announced his coming death three times. He inserts these instructions between the announcements of his passion

a) Those who win, lose

When Jesus says that those who want to save their life will lose it, this means that it is impossible to win by killing. Persons demean themselves and lose their quality of being human, because to kill the other, one kills oneself. A war or an armed conflict is collective suicide. In dehumanizing wars, all lose life by wanting to save it. Jesus shows another way: humanizing humanity by healing physical and social wounds and exorcizing the demons of militarism.

b) *The last will be first*

In the society of the First Century and in today's society, those who are first are the most important. Those who have power, prestige, nobility and in military conditions with more and better arms are the ones who occupy the first places. The disciples or Christian communities are not an exception in thinking in this way. Indeed, two times the disciples discussed amongst themselves wanting power and wanting to be important (Mk. 9:34; 10:35-37) even within the Reign of God. This also happens many times in ecumenical dialogues. Church leaders ask themselves who is the most important. Jesus teaches another way to think and to act opposite to that of the establishment: "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all" (9:35; I 0:44-45).

c) *Those who rule are those who serve*

In the third announcement Jesus explains how the Son of the Human Being will be turned over to the local authorities and the occupation forces and how he will be tortured, but will be resurrected on the third day. The request of the two disciples very close to Jesus did not make a connection with the announcement of suffering. To the contrary, they place themselves on the opposite side: the struggle for power (10:35-37). Again in this third announcement, the Gospel gives a guideline on how the Christian community should behave. James and John want to have honor and power at the side of Jesus in his glory. Instead, Jesus turns them again to the painful way of the cross. He teaches them another way to understand power. The search for power and glory traditionally understood as privilege and domination unleashes jealousy and struggles for power (10:41).

The power of governments and "the great" are described by Jesus as tyrants and despots (10:42). The two Greek words (*katakurieousin* and *kateksousiatousin*) point to this excessive domination. What kind of power do we have in our churches? Many churches speak in one way but act in another; they speak of democracy but in practice there is evident authoritarianism and patriarchalism. Jesus repudiates this form of government because it negates the form of leadership in the Reign of God. "But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant" (10:43). This is the way the new humanity inaugurated by the Son of the Human Being is manifested. His example was to serve even to give his life; he did not come to be served, but to pay with his life for the freedom of all.

Prayer from the Letter to the Ephesians

I want to finish with a prayer to God that I prepared during a course on the Letter to the Ephesians. It is the foundation of the promises that we read in this letter. The first part of the letter is a poem, where the ultimate desire is that all creation be a hymn of praise to God. I will refer only to this part of the letter.

The letter to the Ephesians suggests that all the cosmos is God's dwelling place, as a holy temple, as a well made construction, with room for the diversity of spiritualities. In this community all live "in Christ," a profound and constant image in Ephesians. It expresses that all inhale God and can smell God because we live bound to this divine atmosphere. For Christians, Jesus Christ is "God with us," the "the human face of transcendence." According to Ephesians 2:20 the human face of God is the cornerstone of God's dwelling place. This cornerstone in the construction of the cosmic community always remembers that God is peace. Jesus Christ makes peace and announces it as good news (2:14, 15, 17). He has authority to do so. He knows in his own flesh violence, torture, and betrayal because he died crucified by the *Pax Romana*. This kind of military peace believes that by killing the enemy they will achieve peace. Military peace is peace without justice or friendship. "God with us" that incarnates peace gives the scent of peace without deaths or rapes or domination or exclusions. It is a peace that builds, not pulling down people who climb walls, but pulling down the walls of enmity. It is not a peace that builds walls to protect themselves against migrants or for repelling wars. Walls lead to hate, exclusion, fear, assassinations and greed.

Ephesians 2:20 also says that the ancestors of this cosmic community, apostles and prophets, also form part of the foundation of this universal community. These pioneers of the community remind us of the vocation for which we have been created: to live simply as humans, interrelating as sisters and brothers, as God's family, including sister moon and brother sun. The footprints of the ancestors, the forgers of the community light our path.

Imagine peace lived in a cosmic community where there is room for everyone, from children with dirty faces and many noses to the elderly who use diapers. And everyone is respected because God is in all.

In this cosmic community, holy temple, God's dwelling place, there are no arms, not even as toys; the nightmares of war and crime are left behind, buried in the rubble of walls that separate. There is no violence because true peace brings food and work and dignity. There is no discrimination because "those who were once far off have been brought near" (2:13). There are no chosen nor left behind. All peoples dwell in the lap of God whose heart

beats peace and reconciliation. Those who were far away were not assimilated by those who were close and those who were close did not maintain their privileges over the others because all became a new cosmic community, blessed by the diversity of tongues, cultures and ways of glorifying God the creator.

This is why I imagine peace without assimilation or exclusions, without dominion of some over others, because God's dwelling in the other breaks the impulses of subjugation and violence. In this new human community diversity is lived in peace, and left behind are the desires to accumulate money at the cost of the poor and the preference for the color white and blond to brown and black. Oh! And it would never occur to anyone to feed machines with grains instead of living beings, because this new multicultural community is sensible, it lives the wisdom of God.

This is the ecumenism that I imagine and see in the Letter to the Ephesians as a promise which I want to believe is possible. It gives me strength to not fear the dark forces of the powers and authorities (6:12), forces that we do not see but feel their blows. It is this invisible hand that makes the monies of countries to rise and fall or petroleum to rise without falling and causes that suddenly basic foods become unattainable. Because God, the Epistle says, gathered all things in God, things in heaven and things on earth so that they would come together in the crucified divinity (1:10) and resurrected for the love of humanity. I am moved by the hope that as the crucified was resurrected and taken to a position beyond the dark powers, we have been resurrected and placed in this same position (2:10). This is why I believe that all of us are in some way "God with us" because God is in all parts, is all in all, and all give off the scent of God.

Now of course, when I open my eyes and see the world around us, I think that what I have said is no more than a prayer for a living ecumenism, a cry to God from the Spirit of God, the same as that from the earth that groans as a woman in labor pains (Rom 8:22).

135. Olav Fykse Tveit, "Renewed Mission of the WCC in the Search for Christian Unity," 2011.

Olav Fykse Tveit, a native of Norway, has been general secretary of the WCC since 2009. This address, which highlights a theme central to his vision for the ecumenical movement, was presented at the Centro Pro Unione, an ecumenical research center in Rome.

• That They All May Be One: Selected Sermons, Speeches, and Articles, *Geneva, WCC, 2011, pp. 100-105.*

. . . Mutual Accountability

The constitution of the WCC speaks of a spirit of mutual accountability in terms of "the prayerful search for forgiveness and reconciliation." Mutual accountability is a theme which holds together many of the varied dimensions of the search for Christian unity. Mutual accountability is also a vision about how we work together in the ecumenical movement as a demonstration that we are one. It is an ecumenical attitude required wherever we are and on our way towards unity. This is a theme which I believe belongs at the heart of the mission of the WCC in the search for Christian unity. It has been a substantial part of my own theological reflection on ecumenism, particularly as it has been addressed by Commission on Faith and Order, of which I was a member before my election as general secretary.

The key recommendation that I take away from my study of the work of the Commission on Faith and Order between 1948 and 1998 is the need to strengthen mutual accountability as an expression of the relations between churches. This implies that to be a church means being mutually accountable to other Christian churches. We cannot be church alone in the world—because we have received the same gifts from Christ and the same calling from Christ. The most profound meaning of being mutually accountable in an ecumenical relationship, therefore, is to be accountable to God, to share in the gifts of God, and to share the gifts of God with all who need them. Mutual accountability may thus be seen as a criterion for all ecumenical efforts, a quality of the relationship called *koinonia* in faith, life and witness.

The accent on mutual accountability is one of the significant features of the 2006 Porto Alegre statement, "Called to be the One Church," where it connects the

theological theme of catholicity with the practical imperatives of mutual accountability:

The relationship among churches is dynamically interactive. Each church is called to mutual giving and receiving gifts and to *mutual accountability*. Each church must become aware of all that is provisional in its life and have the courage to acknowledge this to other churches. Even today, when eucharistic sharing is not always possible, divided churches express mutual accountability and aspects of catholicity when they pray for one another, share resources, assist one another in time of need, make decisions together, work together for justice, reconciliation, and peace, hold one another accountable to the discipleship inherent in baptism, and maintain dialogue in the face of differences, refusing to say "I have no need of you" (1 Cor. 12:21). Apart from one another we are impoverished.⁴¹

The call for mutual accountability corresponds to a *calling to the churches* to manifest the unity given to the church by the triune God. There is, therefore, a *moral* perspective to the communion of churches. The marks of mutual accountability are reliability, faithfulness, trustfulness, solidarity, openness and ability to give and take constructive critique. In developing the servant leadership of the churches such mutual accountability presupposes a willingness to be examined, even criticized, for all aspects of the life of the church, from its liturgy to its standards of being corruption-free. It is openness to hearing truth from the other spoken to our power.

Mutual accountability is thus about how we work together in the ecumenical movement. Being accountable to one another as churches and Christians also means taking seriously conflict as we seek to give account to each other about our concerns, our positions, and our intentions. To be a church means being mutually accountable to other Christian churches. It means reliability, a commitment to listen and a willingness to criticize and to hear criticism constructively.

At least twice in the 20th century, in the struggles against Nazism and against apartheid, the fellowship of churches learned in a special way what it means to be truly mutually accountable: the importance of affirming a clear "yes" to one another, as well as a clear "no" when accountability to the marginalized and excluded is threatened. Such affirmations were not arrived at without conflict within the fellowship of churches about how to stand up for one another, and for humanity created in God's image.

41. "Called to be the One Church: Ninth Assembly, WCC, Porto Alegre, Brazil, February 2006," Growth in Agreement III (Geneva, WCC Publications, 2007), p. 608.

After the Second World War, in response to a visit in October 1945 by the World Council of Churches (still in process of formation), the council of the Evangelical Church in Germany issued the Stuttgart Declaration of guilt. In this, they described themselves as being not only in a community of suffering, but also in a solidarity of guilt with the German people: "With great anguish we state: Through us, inestimable suffering was inflicted on many peoples and lands. . . . We charge ourselves for not having confessed more courageously, prayed more conscientiously, believed more joyously and loved more ardently."⁴² This deep expression of mutual accountability between churches inside Germany and those outside was a first step towards rebuilding their relationship, through acknowledging the suffering that had gone before, not seeking to play it down.

In the apartheid era, the WCC and individual communions did not choose the easy way when the unity of the church was threatened. They did not play down apartheid for the sake of a superficial unity. They not only declared apartheid a sin and a heresy, but actively stood on the side of the oppressed black and coloured population. They accepted division for the sake of a deeper unity with God and with their oppressed sisters and brothers and the wider human fellowship. The fact that the black Reformed church today insists on nothing less than organic unity with the white Reformed church is a visible expression of this deeper, more costly unity.

Being accountable to one another as churches or a Christians can thus imply deep concerns as we seek to give account to each other about our concerns, our positions, our intentions. As Emilio Castro, one of my predecessors as general secretary of the World Council of Churches, put it, "We cannot turn ecumenism into an exercise of mutual congratulation; it must be a true discipline of mutual questioning."⁴³

In the fellowship of churches in the WCC—a global, ecumenical fellowship of churches—we become more mutually vulnerable and much more sensitive to the other, but that also gives us a greater opportunity to achieve and to live the fullness of the gospel.

The calling to churches to be one means that we stand up for one another and for all human beings whom God has created. This insight needs to be grasped by the ecumenical movement in the 21st century, seeing mutual accountability as an expression of the reality of communion in Christ, against the background of a globalization

42. Victoria Barnett, *For the Soul of the People: Protestant Protest against Hitler*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 209.

43. Emilio Castro, "Conflict and Reconciliation," *The Ecumenical Review*, Volume 25, Issue 3, July 1973, p. 289.

that leads to a fragmentation of societies and to the exclusion of more and more of the human family.

Every action in our life together as churches must have the aim to make us one—that the world may believe—and that God’s love for our divided humanity and for the wounded creation may be more clearly seen.

When we speak of “the ecumenical movement of the 21st century” we mean such walking together, particularly in the fast-moving, instant-communication global village of today and tomorrow. The World Council of Churches is called to give strategic leadership to this movement at the global level; such leadership belongs to the mission of the WCC in the search for Christian unity. Together, the fellowship of churches is called to create an open ecumenical space; to convene the mutual accountable encounters where we share what we have: resources and challenges, joys and burdens. We are called to encourage that openness to learn what we can from one another, to formulate and give our common witness to Jesus Christ together, and together to give direction to our common movement and action.

The challenge of mutual accountability presents itself in several dimensions. Let me outline just three:

Mutual accountability and the diversity of and in churches

The churches still have a way to go before we have a full mutual recognition of one another as churches. Christian disunity separates and hurts Christians on all continents, and weakens our witness for justice and peace. We are closer in respect of mutual recognition of one another’s baptism, the spring of living water. Thanks to the hard work in ecumenical dialogues, much more can be shared today than could be in Amsterdam at the founding of the World Council of Churches in 1948. Next month, the Commission on Faith and Order study text on *One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition* will be published, and this will be an historic sign post. But we can and we must go further, for the benefit of local churches divided, not to mention for families divided as they worship. At the same time churches and church communions face new threats to unity on ethical and moral issues.

Mutual accountability in one world: Globalization, peace and development

This world is torn apart by injustices and violations of human rights. The financial crisis makes some of the injustice worse. The poor get even poorer. We must powerfully address the greed and its consequences in this globalized world as they appear in the North and in the South, in the East and in the West. Together we need to respond to what people from Kiribati or from Greenland, and others,

tell us about the effects of climate changes they see going on, hurting the indigenous peoples and the most vulnerable first and foremost. We need to counteract the destructive powers of stigmatization of people with HIV/AIDS and other burdens carried by so many today. We need to listen carefully to God’s call as it comes to us in the Bible and through the face and the need of our neighbour, as the global ecumenical community prepares to gather in Jamaica 2011 to work for a just peace, against the misuse of military, political, financial or even religious power. To address the violence people experience in their daily life—not to forget what particularly women experience in the closest relations of all—in the family. The convocation in Jamaica should be a new manifestation of how the different movements in the one ecumenical movement belong together. We work for peace together because we are called to be one.

Mutual accountability and a religiously plural society

Almost 100 years after the meeting in Edinburgh where the churches agreed to be united in mission, we still have the same call to share the gospel. Today, however, we must also consider together, and with peoples of other faiths, how we can avoid our mission creating conflicts between human beings who have lived together and who must live together. The World Council of Churches plays an important role in the relations between world religions. One of its added values is a multilateral approach to other faiths because we are coming from so many contexts. Another is its common Christian ethos to be good neighbours to all peoples, no matter their faith: locally, nationally and globally. And together we can ask peoples of other faiths to be good neighbours to our Christian sisters and brother, where they are so needed. It is also time for more solidarity between Christians. We hear how urgent is such solidarity today in Iraq, Pakistan, Egypt and other places. This means accompanying and advocating with one another, being warm in our love for all, both the Jewish and the Palestinian people, and clear in our speech about sin, particularly when our Christian faith is abused to defend injustice.

Let us recall again, the primary purpose of the fellowship of churches in the World Council of Churches is to call one another to visible unity. We are unable to escape from this calling to demonstrate that we are one: one in faith, in life and in witness. To work together on the issues that divide us demands that we are mutually accountable to each other—identifying, demonstrating and nourishing the attitudes that the unity of the church requires. Such work on the basis of mutual accountability is an important dimension of ecumenical ecclesiology, and is itself a way of establishing a quality of relationships within the church.

At the same time, the calling of the ecumenical movement does not have significance only when we succeed. Whether we are heard or not, our call is to carry the cross with one another. Are we willing to walk in the shoes of the marginalized and oppressed? Are we ready to carry the burden of distress when we are not in agreement? Are we prepared for the disappointments when we are unable to solve all the problems we are addressing? Whatever happens, it remains our call to carry the cross in our search for unity, in our witness, in our service. And we do it together, never alone.

In short, by practicing mutual accountability, we discover what it is to be one, the blessing as well as the difficulties of being closer to one another, and we develop more fully the capacity to encourage the world to be one. The mission of the World Council of Churches in the quest for Christian unity includes providing an ecumenical space where we can give account of our concerns, our positions and our intentions; a space that helps us to act together, “that the world might believe.”

136. Walter Kasper, “May They All Be One: But How? A Vision of Christian Unity for the Next Generation,” 2011

Cardinal Kasper is President Emeritus of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. This paper was one in the series of Paul Watson Lectures, co-sponsored by the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement who have made a significant contribution to the cause of Christian unity. • Ecumenical Trends, vol. 40, 2011, pp. 1-6, 15.

... When Pope John Paul II in 1999 appointed me first as Secretary and then as President of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, together with my co-workers I started to undertake many efforts, traveling around the world and visiting almost all the Church leaders in order to fill them with enthusiasm for this vision. But when I left office at the end of June last year I asked myself: What did we really achieve? The ecumenical enthusiasm of the decade after the Second Vatican Council is over. The previous enthusiasm in our Church and in most of the other churches and church communities has gone. Many people are disappointed and ask: Does it still make sense to engage in this

issue? Can we ever make substantial progress and reach the goal of visible unity? Is this not a unrealistic dream and a useless utopia? Is ecumenism a dead relic of the Second Vatican Council?

Pre-Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Observations

Let me immediately begin with the most fundamental answer. Ecumenism is not a human invention, not a political issue or interest. Ecumenism is founded on the words of our Lord himself. When Jesus uttered the words “may they all be one,” these words by no means represented a vision or a dream. Jesus said these words on the eve of his death. This was not the time for triumphal utopias. Thus, the words “may they all be one” are a prayer, a prayer in a humanly perceived hopeless situation. But they are the testament of our Lord and therefore binding and obligatory for us, and do not at all depend on fast success or even on temporary failures. It is a testament which stands in the sign of the cross and under the promise of the resurrection. But it can be only accomplished by the coming of the Spirit in a renewed Pentecost.

As a consequence, what we today call ecumenism is not as new as we often think. In the same way that there have been schisms in every century, there have also been commitments to restore unity in every century. . . .

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council were aware of all of this and they felt the holy duty to unity. Already in the very first document they issued, the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, they declared that they had set out “to foster whatever can promote Christian unity.” Then in the *Decree on Ecumenism* followed the solemn declaration: “The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council. Christ the Lord founded one Church and one Church only.” The Council added that the division among Christian “contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages that most holy cause, the preaching of the Gospel to every creature.” These are strong words uttered by the highest authority of the Catholic Church.

All the post-Conciliar Popes reaffirmed the commission of the Council. Pope John Paul II was the first Pope in Church history to write (in 1995) an encyclical on the ecumenical commitment, where he told the entire Church that the Church committed herself irrevocably to following the path of the ecumenical venture. At the same time he warned against complacency, indifference and insufficient knowledge of one another and called for a shared re-examination of the painful past of divided Christians on the basis of truth and love. As early as his first message immediately after his election, Pope Benedict said to the cardinals: “Catholics cannot but feel encouraged to strive

for the full unity for which Christ expressed so ardent a hope in the Upper Room. The Successor of Peter knows that he must make himself especially responsible for his Divine Master's supreme aspiration. . . . With full awareness, therefore, at the beginning of his ministry in the Church of Rome, which Peter bathed in his blood, 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." Last year during the solemn vesper service for the conclusion of the Week of Prayer, he added that ecumenism is not a luxury addition to the pastoral commitment but a constitutive element of it.

Thus, with the ecumenical commitment we stand on solid ground. There cannot be any reason to doubt its importance and its obligation. It is Jesus Christ's own will confirmed by the Council and by the post-Conciliar Popes. When we engage in ecumenism we share Jesus' own prayer, we pray in his name and as we know he promised us that whatever we pray in his name will be heard (Jn 14:13). Let us therefore now ask what was heard and what was achieved in the last more than 40 years since the Council. It is no small matter. . . .

But at the same time we must be conscious that today we are entering a new phase of the ecumenical movement. After the first wave of enthusiasm, there is now much disenchantment at unfulfilled expectations. We face new questions and challenges, we still cannot gather together at the table of the Lord. Ecumenical progress has slowed down, with churches often seeming to withdraw into old self-sufficient confessionalism. There is no longer an eschatological *Naherwartung*. This development has become all the more marked as ecumenism itself has become a reason for internal conflicts and separations within the churches themselves. The question of their own identities came to the foreground and led often to delimitations. Ecumenism seems to be in crisis. Again, I would ask the question whether ecumenism has become a relic of the Second Vatican Council? What can be done next?

Two Points

Before I come to the concrete answer, let me first mention two points. First, when we speak of an ecumenical crisis, the term "crisis" should not be understood one-sidedly, in the negative sense of a breakdown or collapse of what has been built up in the last decades—although that is certainly not negligible. The term "crisis" in the original sense of the Greek term means a situation where things are hanging in the balance, where they are on a knife-edge; indeed, this state can either be positive or negative. Both are possible. A crisis situation is a situation in which old ways come to an

end but room for new possibilities also open. A crisis situation therefore may also present itself as a challenge and a time for decision. So it can be also a *kairos*, i.e., a God given new opportunity.

Second, in this new situation, there are two dangers to avoid. Firstly, ecumenical dialogue is at risk of becoming a mere academic affair. I am the last to deny the importance of theology for the ecumenical dialogue, for ecumenism can only be ecumenism in truth and not an ecumenism of mere emotion or of diplomatic superficial compromises. So serious theological work is indispensable for ecumenism. But ecumenism cannot be only an academic affair. German theologians, in particular, are defined by the fact that every one of them is more intelligent than his or her colleague, everyone is so intelligent that he or she will always have an argument against what the other has said. Such purely academic dialogues are an eschatological pursuit. "Normal" faithful cannot participate, and they become alienated and annoyed.

There is another danger too: to embark upon a mere ecumenical activism involving an endless series of conferences, symposiums, commissions, meetings, sessions, projects and spectacular events with the perpetual repetition of the same arguments, concerns, problems and lamentations. It may be useful to bear in mind that the ecumenical documents of only the last decades at the international level, leaving aside the many regional and local documents, now comprise three thick volumes, all together 2,310 pages! Who can read all this stuff and, indeed, who wants to? Most of this documentation is not really received in the churches, neither at the hierarchical nor at the grass-roots level. Often it is destined only for the bookshelves, and I can well understand lay people who disappointedly ask: What and where are the concrete results, and what is the visible outcome of your illuminated discussions and documents?

Spiritual Ecumenism and Charity

In such a situation in order to find a vision and a way towards the future we should look again to Jesus's prayer "that they all be one." This is not a command, it is a prayer addressed to the Father in heaven. Ecumenism means to follow and to participate in Jesus's prayer. Exactly this did Mary and the disciples do who before Pentecost assembled to pray for the coming of the Spirit (Acts 1:12-14), and then on Pentecost Jesus sent the Spirit, who united people from all nations of the then known world. Also today the unity of the Church can be accomplished only by a renewed Pentecost—but just like the first Pentecost, when we too have to come together to pray for the outpouring of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the pioneer of the ecumenical

movement. But He may not be such a naive being as many may suppose. For the Spirit is dynamic, is life, is freedom. So He is always good for a surprise.

What does this mean in concrete terms? This means first of all prayer. A prayer movement was—as I have mentioned—the beginning of the modern ecumenical movement; today in order to undergo a renewal we must go back to the origins. For we cannot “make” or organize Church unity; unity is a gift of God’s Spirit, which alone can open hearts to conversion and reconciliation. And there is no ecumenism without conversion and spiritual renewal, no ecumenism without the purification of memories and without mutual forgiveness of what was wrong in the past.

Spiritual ecumenism means, further, common reading of the Bible, for the Bible is our common ground and at the same time the nourishment of all Christian life. So from its very origins the ecumenical movement was linked with the Biblical movement and with groups of common Bible reading and Bible sharing. Spiritual ecumenism means an exchange of spiritual experiences, of sharing how we live our faith every day in our personal life, in our families, parishes, in our work, in our leisure time, etc. Briefly: we must share not only ideas but our lives, fostering a real ecumenism of life. John Paul II defined the ecumenical dialogue as not only an exchange of ideas but as an exchange of gifts. I could also add that it entails an exchange of life, a sharing of our human and Christian joys and hopes and our sorrows and fears.

Finally, spiritual ecumenism means ecumenical collaboration in serving the poor, the sick, the jobless, the homeless, the lonely, the outcast and the suffering of all kinds. Through this tangible way of practicing our faith together we can also grow together and find each other together.

This kind of spiritual ecumenism is not restricted to the realm of elected experts; indeed, it is accessible and obligatory for all. When it comes to prayer and deeds of charity, all are experts or, rather, all should be experts. This kind of ecumenism does not start from above but from below. This is all the more urgent because while there is widespread disaffection with institutions, there is in contrast a new desire and a profound longing for spirituality, which should inspire and define the next phase of the ecumenical movement.

The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity held a Plenary precisely on the topic of spiritual ecumenism. In preparation we collected a series of witnesses of concrete experiences of spiritual ecumenism with a view to providing inspiring models and encouraging examples. We were overwhelmed at how many such examples already exist. We published a booklet entitled *Spiritual Ecumenism*

in which we collected all the many possibilities. If we were to undertake what is already possible today without violating the least paragraph of canon law and, on the contrary, if we were to implement what is already recommended by Church authority, we would already be able to take not only two but three steps further. All these possibilities represent a widely forgotten and overlooked aspect of the ecumenical movement that must be rediscovered, made known again and rendered fruitful.

These possibilities may be suitable at the beginning only for small groups, but every form of life begins in a small way. Jesus told us the parable of a small mustard seed, which then becomes a big tree (Mt 13:32), and also of the small amount of yeast mixed into a large amount of flour, which works all through the dough (Mt 13:33).

This new phase has already begun with meetings on the parish, regional or national levels all over the world of people interested in spirituality, of spiritual movements, and of monastic communities, which are emerging also in the Protestant world. I am convinced that such regular meetings prepare the future of ecumenism. In this perspective, it is not possible to draw a blueprint of the future unity of the Church. The light the Spirit casts is similar to a lantern that lights our next step and that shines only as we go ahead.

Ecclesial Communion

Insisting on spiritual ecumenism does not at all mean only an emotional vision. Saint Paul speaks of a rational worship and of a renewal of thinking (Rom 12:1f). Jesus himself asks us to love God not only with all our heart but also with all our mind (Mk 12:30). A central motto of the Fathers and of all theology is therefore “*fides quaerens intellectum*,” i.e., “faith seeking understanding.” Whoever loves his or her faith also wants to understand what he or she is believing. So spirituality involves theology, and with regard to ecumenism there are still many theological issues on which to reflect and to clarify. It is in no way true, as some may tell you, that theologically all is already clear and that only stubborn church authorities do not or will not understand. I limit myself in what follows to this very crucial point.

The main difference between Catholics and Protestants is ecclesiology, i.e., the question of what is the Church. Because we have different conceptions of the Church, we have also a different conception of what Church unity means and what therefore are the aims of the ecumenical movement. This is the question of the ecumenical goal. However, when we do not agree about where to go, there is the danger that we will run in different directions, with the risk that in the end we will become even more distant from each other than in the beginning.

Today all the churches say that the goal is church communion. Communion is a term which occurs in the Apostolic Creed, where we confess “I believe in the communion of Saints,” i.e., of faithful who participate together in the *sancta*, the holy things, and this means the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. This we confess together with all the historical churches. There is wide consensus that the ecclesial *communio* is rooted and has its ultimate model in the Trinitarian *communio* of Father, Son and Holy Spirit: one God in three persons, a unity within plurality. The Church is so to say the icon of the Trinity. But there are also differences in understanding. When it comes to the question of what communion means in concrete terms, different answers are given.

The most widespread position among the historical Protestant churches is that communion means that the different and separated churches can recognize each other as churches, and this means recognize their sacraments (Baptism and the Eucharist or the Lord’s Supper) and ministries, when there is a common basic understanding about the Gospel. If this is given different positions, even contradictory positions can remain, for instance about the Lord’s Supper, about ministries, etc. There can be a church-constitution with bishops or a presbyterial order. This was the basis for church communion in the sense of mutual recognition between churches in the Leuenberg accord of the Protestant churches in Europe (1973), the Agreement “Called to Common Mission” between the Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (1999/2000), the Waterloo Declaration between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and the Anglican Church in Canada (2001), the Common Declaration of Reuilly between the Anglican Church in Great Britain and the Lutheran and Reformed Churches (2001).

You see, there is a lot of movement among the Churches and communities which derive from the Reformation in which neither the Catholic Church nor the Orthodox Churches are part. They have a different understanding about the nature of the Church and therefore a different understanding of what is meant by unity or communion. For both, unity and communion can be understood only on the basis of truth. Therefore it is not enough to reach a vague agreement about the Gospel in which contradictions remain; we must have the same faith on the Eucharist and Church ministry; episcopacy in apostolic succession is for us an essential part of the constitution of the Church and belongs to its nature.

This unity of the Church which we confess and in which we hope is a visible unity and not only a spiritual one, which is hidden behind the different separated churches. There are visible criteria for unity: unity in the same faith,

unity in the same sacraments and unity in church ministry, i.e., in episcopal ministry, in apostolic succession. Church unity is impossible with contradictions, and churches cannot or should not enter into conflicting agreements with different partners. The identity and inner coherence of the Church must be clear *ad intra* and *ad extra*. “Every kingdom that is divided against itself will fall apart” and “cannot last” (Mt 12:25).

Such unity is needed in the synchronic and in the diachronic dimensions. The Church is the same in all centuries; today we cannot build a new Church in contradiction with her own tradition. We cannot be so proud as to believe that we have more Spirit than our forefathers, than all the Church Fathers and great theologians in the past. The Holy Spirit who was at work in the past does not now work in contradiction. The Spirit is faithful, recalling and preserving the truth.

The difference between the Catholic view and the Orthodox view is primacy, i.e., the understanding of the Petrine ministry, which we as Catholics consider as a gift of the Lord for His Church, a center of unity, which holds the Church together and gives to it a common voice and an unanimous witness to the world for justice, reconciliation and peace. What for us is a gift of the Lord, for others often seems to be a stumbling block and, by reason of negative memories of the past, a threat to freedom. It was Pope John Paul II who opened the door to future discussion on this subject. In his encyclical *Ut unum sint* (1995) he extended an invitation to a fraternal dialogue on how to exercise the Petrine ministry in a way that is more acceptable to non-Catholic Christians. Pope Benedict has already twice repeated this offer. The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity gathered the many responses, analyzed the data, and sent its conclusions to the churches that had responded. We hope in this way to have initiated a second phase of a dialogue that will be decisive for the future of the ecumenical movement.

This is not an easy dialogue and it will take much time and requires much patience and sensitivity from all sides. For here we touch upon one of the most sensitive points of the current ecumenical debate. The resolution of these problems remains a challenge for further theological work. In this context, we should bear in mind that already today there is a different form of the exercise of primacy in the Western (Latin) Church compared with the Oriental Churches, which are in full communion with Rome. Whereas bishops in the Western Church are appointed by the Pope, in the Oriental Catholic Churches they are elected by their synods, after which the Pope then grants them communion. So in the future, and on the basis of the first millennium, there could possibly be even more

different forms of the exercise of primacy in the East and in the West. This would be in conformity with the Council of Florence (1439-45), which was the first Ecumenical Council to define Roman Primacy, although the Council did confirm at the same time the traditional rights of the Eastern Patriarchs.

Unity needs to be distinguished from uniformity. The Second Vatican Council quoted from the Council of the Apostles that one must impose no burden beyond what is indispensable (Acts 15:28). The Spirit dispenses his gifts in great variety and richness (cf. I Cor 12:4ff), and human beings and human cultures are so different that any imposed uniformity will not only not satisfy human hearts but will diminish the richness and the very catholicity of the Church. It is only when the Church will have entered into all cultures and when she will have made her own the richness of all peoples and nations that she will have reached her full catholicity. The Spirit will guide us in to the whole truth (Jn 16:12) through encounter with new cultures, new situations, new challenges, new experiences and new needs, as well as through ecumenical encounter and dialogue. In this way the Spirit maintains the once and for all tradition perennially young and fresh. It is the Spirit of permanent renewal of the truth revealed once and for all time. The core challenge and the sticking point in the question is of how far pluriformity is possible.

Conclusion

To conclude let me come back to spiritual ecumenism which is my main concern. For although institutional changes are necessary, they alone are of little impact. They presuppose changes of heart, i.e., willingness to change and to open up to new perspectives; they presuppose conversion on all sides. There is no ecumenism without conversion. So my ecumenical vision is not only an institutional one but is primarily a spiritual endeavor. We need a new spirituality of communion, which Pope Paul John II in his Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte* (2001) described in the following way:

A spirituality of communion means an ability of think of our brothers and sisters in faith within the profound unity of the Mystical Body, and therefore as “those who are a part of me.” This makes us able to share their joys and sufferings, to sense their desires and attend to their needs, to offer them deep and genuine friendship. A spirituality of communion implies also the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and prize it as a gift from God: not only a gift for the brother or sister, who has received it directly, but also as a “gift for me.” A spirituality of communion means, finally, to

know how to “make room” for our brothers and sisters, bearing “each other’s burdens” (Gal 6:2) and resisting the selfish temptations which constantly beset us and provoke competition, careerism, distrust and jealousy.

The Pope concludes: “Let us have no illusions: unless we follow this spiritual path, external structures of communion will serve very little purpose. They would become mechanisms without a soul, ‘masks’ of communion rather than its means of expression and growth.”

I would like to summarize my vision with the words of the famous 19th-century theologian Johann Adam Mohler of the school of Tübingen, from which I come. Johann Adam Mohler captured the sense of *communio-ecclesiology* splendidly in the following words:

Two extremes in Church life are possible, however, and they are both egoism; they are: when each person or one person wants to be everything; in the latter case, the bond of unity becomes so tight and love so hot that choking cannot be averted; in the former case, everything falls apart to such an extent and it becomes so cold that you freeze; the one type of egoism generates the other; but there is no need for one person or each person to want to be everything; only everyone together can be everything and the unity of all only a whole. This is the idea of the Catholic Church.

I would like to add: This is also the idea of ecumenism and of a new phase of ecumenism. I hope you will join this pilgrimage, and I wish you God’s blessing on the way.

137. Michael Kinnamon, “New Contours of Ecumenism in the 21st Century,” Global Ecumenical Theological Institute, 2013

This presentation was made to a global gathering of theology students which met alongside the WCC’s Tenth Assembly in Busan. Kinnamon is a former general secretary of the National Council of Churches in the USA. • Ecumenical Review, vol. 66, no. 1, March 2014, pp. 16-24.

Four Familiar Challenges

... Let's begin our reflection on the shape of ecumenism in the coming years by naming four things on which I suspect we all agree:

1. *The circle of ecumenically-engaged churches needs to be expanded.* In 2010, the member churches of the WCC constituted little more than 20% of world Christianity, and that figure is decreasing since much of the growth in the global Christian population is in churches that have not historically been part of this movement. Of course, if you add the Roman Catholic Church, the percentage of ecumenically-engaged churches goes up dramatically; but that still leaves a large number of Pentecostal, independent, and conservative Protestant churches that are not involved.

I hope you agree with me that the churches gathered here in Busan must not say to those who aren't here, "We have no need of you." A movement that does not include a large portion of those who claim the name of Christ hardly deserves to be called "ecumenical." But this needs to be said carefully. The ecumenical churches must not back off hard-won commitments or weaken long-established relationships in an effort to accommodate new ecumenical partners; but they surely must be willing to rethink old structures and explore new issues in order to be a movement others want to join. The Global Christian Forum is one vehicle for expanding the circle. I hope we will explore other possibilities during this week together.

2. *The ecumenical movement needs a new generation of leaders.* To take my own country, the United States, as an example, we have several outstanding younger leaders—including the current President of the National Council of Churches, Kathryn Lohre, who was thirty-two when elected to that position—but too few of them. And the North American Academy of Ecumenists is populated, to a large extent, with scholars who, like me, were formed in the decade following Vatican II.

Of course, every movement needs a balance between those with long experience and those with fresh perspectives, new priorities, and innovative ways of communicating. There was a time when the Student Christian Movement helped provide this balance by raising up a new generation of leaders who were grasped by the vision of a church united and renewed, a church committed to justice and peace; but, despite the excellent work of the WSCF, those days have largely passed. And if the U.S. is any indication, seminaries are not, for the most part, emphasizing ecumenism in their curricula. Programs such as the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute are obviously important, but I hope we will explore other possibilities during this week together.

3. *The connection between ecumenism at the global or national level and ecumenism at the local level needs to be strengthened.* I don't want to overstate the case. The WCC, as well as the various regional and national councils, have made a difference in the way Christians live out their faith. Global and national theological dialogues, even when they don't result in structured agreements, have contributed in many places to the enrichment of worship and to expanded conceptions of mission. This global movement has over the decades led to changes in our local churches—thanks be to God!

Having said that, however, you know as well as I that, no matter how exciting this assembly may be for us, most Christians around the world will be little, if at all, affected by it. Ecumenism today is widely regarded as another program or denominational office, rather than a way of understanding the faith and the church that needs to take deeper root in congregations and parishes. The Latin American ecumenist and economist, Julio de Santa Ana, a man known for his advocacy on behalf of the poor, ends a recent essay on the future of ecumenism, not with a call for social justice, but by arguing that "the challenge of our times is to make ecumenism appealing once again for the educated and activist-minded laity"⁴⁴—people who may never attend a national or global event. I hope we will explore possibilities for strengthening the connection between this global movement and our local churches during our days together.

4. *Various ecumenical structures, which came into existence in a very different era, need to be reconceived.* I am a strong advocate for councils of churches. Bodies such as the WCC—in which churches commit themselves to one another for common service, witness, worship, study, and dialogue—are really a new thing in the history of Christianity—and I, for one, am thankful to God for their existence.

But, as you know, councils are generally based on a denominational structure that seems increasingly outdated. Denominations that once were the pillars of conciliar fellowship are, in many places, experiencing diminished numbers and resources—which takes a toll on ecumenical organizations. In my experience, an understandable concern for a council's survival begins to take precedence over innovative thinking; financial difficulties lead inevitably to fewer staff being asked to do impossible amounts of work. And, at a time when the churches aren't supporting existing ecumenical bodies, we see a proliferation of new ecumenical organizations.

Here in Busan, I urge you to pay close attention to discussion of how the WCC needs to change. And I hope

44. Julio de Santa Ana, "The Ecumenical Movement at the Crossroads," at http://www.wscfglobal.org/pdfs/247_Art1_SantaAna.pdf

we all will consider other possibilities for structuring or networking ecumenical life during our days together.

Three Pressing Questions

There is obviously much more to say about these four challenges—to expand the circle of ecumenically engaged churches, to encourage a new generation of ecumenical leaders, to strengthen the connection between the global movement and local churches, and to rethink how ecumenism is structured—but I trust that we agree on their importance. . . . What I propose to do in the time I have remaining is to press deeper by posing three questions that have to do, not simply with the form of the movement, but with its essential character. To put it bluntly, I believe that the ecumenical movement is in danger of losing its way, its soul, in the early years of the twenty-first century; and it is my hope that these questions will provide a framework for us to talk about it. Please understand: I have devoted my ministry to ecumenism, including the WCC. But we who love this movement must be able to pose hard questions about it. I will use the documents listed as resources for this assembly to flesh out my argument.

1. Are the churches involved in the ecumenical movement still committed, in the language of the WCC Constitution, to “the goal of visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship expressed in worship and in common life in Christ”? To say it simply, *are the church and its unity still central to the vision of this movement?*

I suspect it is evident to all of us that there is an extensive split between two sets of ecumenical priorities, to the point that it is difficult to speak of one ecumenical movement. In the U.S., this split becomes very visible each spring in the different constituencies that attend what we call Ecumenical Advocacy Days and the National Workshop on Christian Unity. In my experience, most Advocacy Days participants argue that the fundamental divide in human community is between rich and poor, oppressor and oppressed, and that the basic division in the church has to do with how Christians respond to and take part in these divisions of the world. They use language like “unity in solidarity” and focus, not on theological agreements, but on a shared willingness to act together in response to human need.

By contrast, those who attend the National Workshop on Christian Unity generally contend that the church would serve the human community best if it were to live more fully as the church God wills—confessing Christ together, sharing the eucharistic meal, recognizing one another’s ministries, making decisions in common when needed. Addressing these areas of division is, therefore,

the highest ecumenical priority and the basis for authentic Christian witness and mission.

Both groups see themselves as central to the movement, and, in my experience, there is almost no overlap between them. Indeed, many Advocacy Days participants see Faith and Order-style dialogue as irrelevant, even detrimental, to their efforts since they have little interest in unity with those who don’t share their social-political commitments. For their part, many National Workshop participants have a negative attitude toward political advocacy, viewing it as inherently divisive.

This split is clearly evident in the background documents for Busan. The Faith and Order text, “The Church: Towards a Common Vision,” suggests that there is wide agreement that “God established the Church as the privileged means for bringing about his universal design of salvation. . . .” (par. 27). Such agreement is not evident, however, in some of the other assembly texts. For example, the document “Economy of Life, Justice, and Peace for All” makes more than incidental reference to the church in only three of its twenty-six paragraphs—and then only to slam the churches for their complicity in unjust structures (see, e.g., par. 17). One of the four major sections of the mission document, “Together Towards Life,” speaks of the church as “a gift of God to the world for its transformation toward the kingdom of God” (par. 10); but there is little indication in this text that the church’s *unity* is essential to its participation in *missio Dei*, that our unity is a sign of God’s intent for all creation.

I am sure you can already sense my conviction that unity and justice go hand in hand in any adequate understanding of the church or ecumenism. Several of the documents for this assembly struggle to maintain this tension—as when the “Ecumenical Call to Just Peace” contends that “the church divided about peace, and churches torn by conflict, have little credibility as witnesses or workers for peace” (par. 16)—but such passages are few and far between.

However, as problematic as this split is between unity and justice, there is an even deeper issue: a loss of commitment among leaders of our churches to the possibility, to the very idea, of Christian unity. I agree with the head of the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Cardinal Koch, when he says that what pains him most is that so many Christians are no longer pained by divisions that, in the words of Vatican II, contradict the will of Christ, scandalize the world, and damage that most holy cause of preaching the gospel.⁴⁵ In my experience at the National Council of Churches in the United States, the great vision of eucharistic fellowship is reduced

45. Kurt Koch, “Fundamental Aspects of Ecumenism and Future Perspectives,” an unpublished paper presented 3 November 2011 at Catholic University of America.

in the minds of many church leaders to policies of good neighborliness and occasional cooperation that can easily be demoted on the list of ecclesial priorities. Our divisions are now taken for granted, which reinforces the failure to receive agreements reached through dialogue—which, in turn, reinforces the cynicism about the possibility of unity.

I give thanks, as I hope you do, for the improvement in interchurch relationships that makes it possible for our churches to cooperate in various ways. This, however, is not the unity for which Christ prayed! A vision of cooperating when expedient will not generate the passion needed to sustain this movement. And so it must be asked: Are the church and its unity still central to the vision of the ecumenical movement?

2. *Is the ecumenical movement in danger of becoming too ideological?* As Jonas Jonson observes in a new study of ecumenism since 1968, many Christian leaders now worry that the WCC has lost its competence and trustworthiness because it is dominated by “an ideologically determined ‘orthopraxy’ [which excludes] divergent interpretations.”⁴⁶ Let me take an example that is not often discussed. There is in much current ecumenical literature a very negative assessment of contemporary history. The document “Economy of Life, Justice, and Peace for All” is particularly apocalyptic, but still representative. “People and the Earth are in peril due to the over-consumption of some, growing inequalities . . . and intertwined global financial, socio-economic, ecological and climate crises. . . . Our present stark reality is so fraught with death and destruction that we will not have a future to speak of unless the prevailing development paradigm is radically transformed. . . . Time is running out” (pars. 1,9).

I do not for a minute want to minimize the problems facing the human community in 2013—including, especially, obscene disparities in wealth both within and between countries. I do want to submit, however, that there are other, very defensible, ways of interpreting the present historical moment—and that how we interpret history matters for how we act. For the sake of argument, let me offer the following paragraph which I have written based on widely available data from the UN and the Center for Systemic Peace.

The world is making substantial progress in meeting several of the Millennium Development Goals. For example, 700 million fewer people lived in conditions of extreme poverty in 2010 than in 1990. During that same period, 2.1 billion people gained access to improved drinking water sources, the percentage

of undernourished people in developing countries fell from 23% to 15%, and there has been a remarkable reduction in the proportion of the world’s population that lives in urban slums. On the health front, new infections of HIV fell by one-third between 2000 and 2012, mortality rates from malaria decreased by more than 25% during the past decade, and the mortality rate for children under five dropped by 41% between 1990 and 2011. The number of children out of school has declined by almost half since 2000, and the gender gap in primary education has closed in almost every country. And, despite the violence in such places as Syria and Afghanistan, levels of interstate and societal warfare are lower than at any point since the early 1960s.⁴⁷

I certainly am not suggesting that the WCC back off its strong commitment to economic, social, and ecological justice. But I am suggesting that how we read contemporary history usually reflects our ideological bias, and that our readings of history, therefore, need to be debated, not simply asserted. It may be, for example, that the apocalyptic tone of assembly documents will alienate potential partners in the work of fostering improved life for all, and, worse, cause readers to miss the astonishing things God is doing to promote fullness of life for many global neighbors.

Let me spell out my point more explicitly. As I understand it, the ecumenical movement is *both* a forum where churches that hold divergent perspectives on critical issues meet for dialogue *and* a renewal effort that challenges the churches to proclaim together God’s partisanship on behalf of the most excluded and oppressed. Ecumenism, as I have already suggested, is most profound when it lives in this tension. On the one hand, the WCC, to take that example, is not a debating society. Through dialogue, churches have arrived at common convictions about what the gospel entails that give substance to their fellowship in the Council. And we pray for God’s guidance to hammer out further areas of common mission. On the other hand, the WCC is not a social justice coalition. It is a space where, because of a shared confession of Jesus Christ, churches have sufficient mutual trust to seek God’s guidance together with regard to questions, vital questions, on which they may disagree. If the WCC becomes too driven by a single ideological perspective, then it cuts off dialogue prematurely and the movement becomes far less profound. Thus, as we participate in this assembly, I hope we will wrestle with the question: Is the ecumenical movement in danger of become too ideological?

46. Jonas Jonson, *Wounded Visions: Unity, Justice, and Peace in the World Church after 1968*, trans. Norman A. Hjelm (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), p. 45.

47. See *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013*, United Nations New York, 2013, at <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/report-2013/mdg-report-2013-english.pdf>

3. *Is this a movement that truly trusts in the leading of God?* The Second Vatican Council is consistent with many statements over the past century when it refers to prayer for unity as the “soul of the ecumenical movement,”⁴⁸ a claim underscored in Pope John Paul II’s encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* and exemplified in such communities as Taizé and Iona. Prayer for unity makes clear that God is the Chief Actor in this movement. Since unity is a gift, we ask for it in prayer; because it is a gift that must be received, our prayer is also for the strength and courage to act in response to what God has given. Prayer opens us to the reality of God’s grace and reminds us of our fundamental connection to others who call on the name of Christ. It requires a humbling of ourselves in order to recognize our shared identity as children of God.

With this in mind, I certainly welcome the fact that the assembly theme is a prayer and the focus on the work of the Holy Spirit that is found in several of the documents for this assembly, especially the texts on mission and evangelism and the church. Having said that, there is still a decided human-centeredness in the assembly resources. For example, the document on peacemaking is filled with statements of what we, humans, must do, without much discernment of what God is doing in which we might participate. In the key paragraph, “just peace” is defined as “a collective and dynamic yet grounded process of freeing human beings from fear and want, of overcoming enmity, discrimination and oppression, and of establishing conditions for just relationships” (par. 11)—with no reference to God’s initiative in this process.

I urge you to watch for this at the assembly: Do the churches trust in God’s leading, in the gifts that God has provided? Do they emphasize our agreements or trust in our God-given connection even when we disagree? When speaking of the Council or the movement, do they celebrate our achievements or give thanks for this evidence of God’s grace? Do they speak of our work for justice or our participation in what God is doing to bring good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sign to the blind, and to let the oppressed go free?

To put it another way, watch for expressions of hope, even if there is little reason for optimism. Jonson calls hope ecumenism’s distinctive mark,⁴⁹ and I think that is true. Those who are optimistic speak of what *they* can accomplish. Those who live in hope give thanks for what *God* can and will accomplish, regardless of how difficult the present may seem. The fact that ecumenists can no longer revel in institutional success might just drive us back to the

revitalizing realization that, if the movement “moves,” it is because of God’s leading.

This paper has obviously not been a blueprint for ecumenism in the coming years. Those who predict the future in one generation are usually embarrassed in the next! But it does seem safe to say that, if this movement is to survive, the churches will need to address the four challenges with which I began. And I am convinced that if the movement is to maintain its soul, it will need to wrestle with the three questions I have just named: Are the church and its unity still at the center? Are ecumenical bodies, such as the WCC, becoming too ideological? Do ecumenical leaders truly trust in God’s guidance?

I will end by affirming an insight from two of the resource documents for Busan. As the report on ecumenism in the twenty-first century puts it, “. . . it would be misleading to call for a new vision for the ecumenical movement . . . the main emphasis of the vision on the unity of the church and the unity of humankind is firmly rooted in the Bible and is, indeed, a gospel imperative” (pp. 4-5). Ecumenism is nothing more, but also nothing less, than an effort—guided, we pray, by the Holy Spirit—to renew the church and strengthen its mission of reconciliation by overcoming its historical and unbiblical fragmentation. But, in the words of the “Ecumenical Covenant on Theological Education,” we do need “a *fresh articulation* of the ecumenical vision” (p. 4).

With this in mind, I give thanks for the ways this vision has been expanded and deepened in recent generations: becoming more fully trinitarian, embracing God’s love for all creation, stressing that it is God’s mission in which the church participates, defining unity as *koinonia*, affirming the importance of interfaith relations. I trust that, with God’s leading, the ecumenical vision will continue to be expanded and deepened, and, that with the leadership of some of you, this movement will continue to be an instrument through which God renews the church in the years ahead.

48. See *Decree on Ecumenism*, pars. 7 and 8.

49. Jonson, p. 159.

138. Ernst Lange, "The Test Case of Faith," from *And Yet It Moves*, 1979

Forty years after its German publication, And Yet It Moves remains one of the most insightful books ever written about the ecumenical movement. This excerpt takes the form of a letter to a friend. Its author, Ernst Lange, was a minister in the Evangelical Church in Germany and a member of the WCC staff. • *And Yet It Moves: Dream and Reality of the Ecumenical Movement, trans. Edwin Robertson, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1979, pp. 147-63.*

Dear Friend,

I recall writing a letter to the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches shortly before taking up my post in Geneva and still find myself rather embarrassed when I think of the grand words I used in it. I was at pains to explain my real motive for making the change to Geneva. What I said was: "I want to do something for peace." I know now that such things, which sound a little ridiculous, not least to oneself, are better left unsaid.

However, as an implicit assessment of the churches' ecumenical enterprise, I do not feel that I really have to revise that statement. The ecumenical movement is a movement for peace. Far wider than the Geneva association, it is in fact the way in which the Christian churches really serve the cause of peace.

But this means that it is the way in which the churches today are truly churches. For the peace, the *shalom* proclaimed, exemplified and created in Jesus of Nazareth is the sole *raison d'être* of faith in him as Christ and of the social forms of this faith: it is its source and foundation, its driving force, mandate and purpose. Whatever else it may be, a church which ceases to understand itself in terms of *shalom*, which ceases to make *shalom* its focus, is not church but non-church. But if *shalom* can only be understood ecumenically, then ecumenical commitment at once becomes a criterion of the authenticity of the Church's existence today.

It is no longer possible to mince our words. For far too long ecumenical commitment has been simply one option among many for the local churches, a matter of indifference, one area of activity among others. Ecumenism can no longer be toyed with as a mere possibility. It has become the test case of faith. Today there is only one way of putting the four credal marks of the Church into practice,

only one way for the Church to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic, and that is the ecumenical way. And being ecumenical is at the same time the contemporary expression of peace, of *shalom*. . . .

The problem of peace, therefore, constitutes the inescapable context which determines the relevance and credibility of Christianity and its social expression today. A Christianity which cannot relate itself to mankind's increasingly urgent need for peace is irrelevant. It lacks the very minimum of credibility required for communication of any kind. The theme of peace stands on the agenda. The Church can reformulate it, expand it, examine it critically in different contexts, but either it addresses itself to the theme or it has nothing whatever to say.

This is precisely why ecumenical commitment is a criterion of the authenticity of the Church's life today. For the theme is universal peace. And ecumenism is the form, the only form, in which the universality of Christianity is possible today. In the one world, Christianity is present ecumenically—or not at all. This still leaves open the question of how this presence is expressed. Even if there were no ecumenical movement, no World Council of Churches, the existence of the one world would still be a challenge to the churches, a challenge to their ecumenical calling. Even for the individual local congregations the truth is that the ultimate frame of reference for their preaching, their service and the forms in which their church life finds expression, is world peace as the indispensable condition for a genuinely human future for mankind.

Nor is peace a theme which is foreign to the Christian community. It is indeed its own original theme. Rightly understood, it is the primary theme and the ultimate theme of faith. It is the message which in the ministry of Jesus engenders faith. And it is also the message which at the final judgement will vindicate faith on its own terms. Faith must necessarily be much more at home in this world where the absence of peace is so decisive for the future than in any of the parochial worlds from which it comes, where the chief concern was always the survival of one group at the expense of others.

The provoking thing is that Christianity has a way of speaking of peace which is different from that of the world of nations: a way which is at once more elementary and more utopian. It is not, of course, speaking of a different peace. The *shalom* proclaimed and exhibited in the tradition of the Christian faith is precisely the peace which other men have in mind: a life safe from, no longer threatened by, the disaster of universal self-destruction; a new social life-style in which each accords others the room and the time to live; a new order with the fifth commandment as the golden rule of common life. The greatest hymn of

peace in the Old Testament, Psalm 85, is unquestionably about earthly peace, and its interpretation and fulfillment in the life and ministry of Jesus is undoubtedly about life in this world.

Yet the churches' way of speaking of this same peace differs from that of the nations. The churches speak of it as a peace which has already been given, a *datum*, and, at the same time, as an eschatological promise, as the future of futures. According to Christian faith, there is a divine credit-balance of peace, guaranteed both by the past and by the future, more than sufficient to offset mankind's deficit.

...

Obviously Jesus Christ is not the only relevant example for mankind in its quest for peace and human development. . . . But, in a quite specific sense, Jesus' way of life is the criterion for every life-style devised by men now and in the future. And this is so precisely because his is not meant to be reproduced but rather to be constantly adapted to changing conditions, and itself provides, at the same time, the incentive and the power to achieve such adaptations. It does not lay down strict rules for human praxis but guides it and judges it. It offers certain guiding principles by which each historical situation is to be relativized and set in movement. It makes extrapolations possible.

One such permanent directive for human development, for example, is the orientation of the ministry of Jesus towards the margins of society. Sinners, lepers, demons, Gentiles, enemies—all those whom society expels to the margins, is driven to expel to the margins for the sake of its own stability—are embraced within the community of Jesus' love. More precisely, his love in its transcendence reaches them where they are. This transcendence, this inclusiveness, this bias to universality, is the very essence of love.

Another directive provided by the praxis of Jesus is the advance from lordship to service, from paternalism to fraternity, from subjection to liberation. In Jesus' way of life, the lowest is highest, is given priority, exercises power, has an authority which is not inherent but conferred on it by faith.

A third directive is the movement of Jesus from the sacred to the profane. The division of the world into holy and unholy spheres, into places close to God and places shut off from him, disappears. The whole of reality is rich with promise, and this axiom militates against all man's repeated attempts to split the world into the sacred and the profane.

A fourth pointer, already implicit in the previous one, is the biased way in which Jesus insists, not on judging possibilities in the light of what is, but what is in the light of its eschatological possibilities, in the light of the promise. That

is why the excluded must be brought into the community, why the power of the powerless must be respected, why the holiness of the "profane" must be reckoned with.

These few examples must suffice. They at least suggest how Jesus' programme for his own life can become the pattern, the criterion and incentive for future programmes. Yet it should be remembered that, in this respect, Jesus of Nazareth is more than simply a historical figure. His handling of life became in the first place the key to Israel's history and to its unique significance. It then became the touchstone for the history of the Church and of Christianity, for all that is of permanent value in that history and still significant for the future. And finally, it has become custodian of the permanent gains of mankind's past history in its entirety. It spotlights what is of abiding significance, what is worth keeping. For example, in the light of the life Jesus lived, it is clear that the reverence for all life is an enduring value in Hinduism, an advance in human development from which there can be no retreat.

But even as custodian of the permanent gains of man's past, the Church will not win the undisturbed friendship of a world preoccupied with its hopes and plans for peace. Both as pattern and key to tradition, Jesus is a disturbing factor. Even in the period of the Constantinian coalition he was uncommonly disturbing.

Yet it is precisely by being an irritant, a built-in protest, a witness to the "unsearchable riches of Christ," precisely as the presence and action of the non-contemporary, of that which is still to come and of that which is past, and only in this way, that the social forms of Christianity can find a truly indispensable place in mankind's peace programme.

You may say that all this is a highly subjective and rather questionable account of the contribution Christianity could make to the coming world community. But what on earth has it got to do with the ecumenical movement and with ecumenism as the criterion of authentic church life today?

The answer is that the Church cannot fulfill its role as custodian of the "unsearchable riches" of Christ merely by words alone. From the very beginning, the transmission of the Christian faith and experience has depended on there being some sponsor, some guarantor, a living and institutional sponsor and guarantor, of that faith and experience. Jesus himself—in person—is the guarantor of the new way of life which he expects of and entrusts to his contemporaries. On the strength of his word, his person, his presence, his ministry, people began to believe, to love, to hope. "No man has ever seen God," declares John. "But God's only son, he who is nearest to the Father's heart, has made him known" (Jn. 1:18). The man from Nazareth is the guarantor

of that which even in the New Testament is inconceivable and inexpressible. On the strength of the surety provided by Jesus, men begin to live *etsi Deus daretur*.

That continues to be the wellspring of faith. Only this surety enables us to enter on the way of life along which God grants us experience of himself. And as we begin the life of faith in this way, so we ourselves in turn stand surety for others. The way we actually live must commend God, if others are to speak of God and put their trust in him. There is nothing specifically religious about this. In every area of human life we depend on others standing surety for us and others on us standing surety for them. The presence of guarantors is the secret of all traditions and all movements of renewal, of all educational and liberation processes.

It is also the deepest reason why Christianity must, in all circumstances, assume a social form, whether by forming churches or in other ways. Human life in practice—and faith is nothing if it is not a way of life—is by definition life in society. It is therefore a life which depends on order. The Church is the network of interlocking sponsorship relations which provides access to faith as a way of life and makes its transmission possible. The Church is the sponsoring society for the divine sponsorship in which faith believes and trusts. . . .

If the Church is faith's guarantor, especially in concrete situations where faith finds itself assailed, when the language of facts gives the lie to God, it is not difficult to see why ecumenism is the contemporary criterion for an authentic churchmanship and why the ecumenical movement is indispensable for the churches. In a world whose entire future is indissolubly linked with the problem of the deficit of universal peace and in its dealings with a human race driven to efforts to achieve universal peace by the threat of disaster, the Church is summoned to stand surety for the *shalom* of God, and this it can only do ecumenically: by incorporating in the community those who have been relegated to the margins, by putting the powerless into power, by sanctifying the profane, by anticipating here and now what has been promised.

Ecumenism has a very precise connotation. Mankind is threatened by its failure so far to come to terms with political, economic, social, and cultural interdependence on a world scale. The choice is between an international community of law and order or disaster. The now bogus division of mankind into various species, into groups, races, nations, though it may once have enabled mankind to survive, has become a deadly menace. In this situation, the challenge which the churches cannot evade is to stand surety for man's capacity to move forward to a new situation. They must show that in Christ the divisions of mankind become opportunities for charismatic cooperation,

concrete examples of unity, occasions for consensus (Gal. 3:28). In a situation in which the confession of faith is literally "shouted down" by the language of facts, by uncontrolled interdependence, what the churches must stand surety for—in their doctrine and their order and their political *diakonia* (what other kind of *diakonia* is there other than one which serves in the life of the *polis*?)—is precisely shalom as the conciliar reconciliation of the irreconcilable. Ecumenism is certainly more than internationalism. But it does include internationalism. And today, when the whole future of mankind depends on the achievement of an effective international order of justice and peace, it is more than ever a question of internationalism. Anything else is sheer humbug. Churches which are incapable of crossing the traditional frontier, churches which are perhaps not even aware of the relevance of faith's bias towards the frontiers, are fated to become unauthentic churches, no longer the irritant which is absolutely vital for mankind's advance towards peace.

But failure to achieve an international order of justice and peace is not the only evidence of inability to deal with our inescapable interdependence. There is also the constant ironing-out of individuality, the constant erosion of personal and group identities in our Coca-Cola world. Mankind is not only failing with its international future, it is even letting the richness and variety of its past slip through its fingers. And the two things are connected. If the Church is to stand surety in this situation, it means that it must be committed more than ever before—precisely as a universal conciliar organization—to the particular, the local, the individual, to champion identities, and to do this, too, in its faith and its order, and in its political *diakonia*. This is the other side of the coin of ecumenism, the ecumenism needed today. It is not uniformity. That is one of the oldest insights of the ecumenical movement. That the churches had to be taught the thousand and one variations of the maxim "black is beautiful"; that the churches did not discover this for themselves despite the fact that it is an implicitly Christian truth; that the churches should feel themselves threatened by ground-level ecumenism with its concern for and solidarity with oppressed minorities and by the "underground" churches which have sprung up all over the world, instead of providing these protest movements with room and time and opportunity to take part in worldwide conciliar exchange, representing as they do the churches' responsibility to stand surety at a most fundamental level; that the request to the churches to halt their missions to dying cultures in Latin America and elsewhere because these traditional missions are inexorably helping to complete the destruction of these cultures should have had to come from concerned ethnologists—all these facts

constitute as severe an indictment of the churches as they at present exist as it is possible to imagine.

Only by ecumenical action, only by uniting the incompatible, only by demonstrating the art of faith, which champions the universal rights of the particular and stands surety for concrete universality, for an international, intercultural consensus, will the churches make credible amends for their betrayal of the universal (parochialism) and of the particular (their cult of conformity).

Even by their ecumenical obedience, the churches do not relieve mankind of its responsibility for programming peace. The churches stand surety for the same peace which mankind is seeking but do so in a quite special way. They are “disturbers of the peace,” witnesses to the alpha and the omega of peace, and as such they make all human projects for peace relative. The international order of justice and peace on which mankind’s future depends cannot be achieved in accordance with the ecumenical model, even if the churches themselves take this model seriously.

Yet individuals and groups do provide examples of ecumenical action: religious organizations working at every level of social action, displaying an immense variety of individual and corporate life-styles. We find them precisely in situations of human conflict where people are searching for peace. The presuppositions of the ecumenical programme may differ from those of society’s hopes for peace but the programme has to be made a reality in and through the very same materials of secular world society.

To this extent, the ecumenical programme is an alternative to the world’s peace plans. And alternatives are opportunities to learn. Churches which are working out their ecumenical destiny will certainly stimulate people’s imagination as they work at their peace plans. They could, for example, do what the nations in their international efforts seem quite unable to do, namely, ensure full equality between the unequal, between strong and weak, between rich and poor, in all the decision-making processes. This is obviously still not the case in the World Council of Churches, but it is ecumenically conceivable, and even inescapable. The truer it becomes, the more it will bring pressure to bear on the relations between nations. There, of course, the equality of the unequal will undoubtedly take a very different form, but willy-nilly it will have to learn from the alternative offered by the churches. In the history of Christianity, the alternatives offered by active faith have repeatedly proved relevant in spite of distinctive assumptions and goals. In the measure that the churches quietly pursue their own objectives without always and everywhere having to assume the role of schoolmaster to the world and vanguard of mankind, in the measure that they exploit their own potential, the potential of faith, to

that extent will they really become an institutionalized irritant to mankind’s own efforts for peace, custodian of the “unsearchable riches” of Christ, an anticipation of God’s *shalom*, and also a stimulus to such efforts.

Well, that’s my ecumenical testament! Knowing you know your Bible well, I can imagine you quoting the words of the Ethiopian eunuch: “Tell me, please, who it is that the prophet is speaking about here?” Does he really mean the churches such as they are?

My answer: Yes, I mean the real churches—in the light of their possibility. I mean the real churches—under the pressure of their calling. This calling, I believe, obliges them to make the ecumenical utopia a reality. Of course, it is well known that the churches betray their calling.

Shalom!

Yours,
E.L.

Chronological List of Documents

Edinburgh 1910: World Missionary Conference

Messages from the Conference to the Church (V)

V.S. Azariah, "The Problem of Co-operation between Foreign and Native Workers" (V)

"An Appeal to All Christian People," Lambeth Conference, 1920 (II)

"Unto the Churches of Christ Everywhere," Encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, 1920 (II)

Stockholm 1925: Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work

Message (IV)

Nathan Söderblom, Sermon at the Closing Service (I)

Lausanne 1927: First World Conference on Faith and Order

Germanos of Thyateira, "The Call to Unity" (I)

"The Church's Message to the World—the Gospel" (III)

Jerusalem 1928: Meeting of the International Missionary Council

"The Call to the World" (VI)

John R. Mott, "The Summons to Cooperate," 1931 (I)

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "The Confessing Church and the Ecumenical Movement," 1935 (I)

Edinburgh 1937: Second World Conference on Faith and Order

"Affirmation of Union in Allegiance to Our Lord Jesus Christ" (II)

"The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ" (III)

William Temple, Sermon at the Opening Service (I)

Oxford 1937: Conference on Church, Community and State

Message (IV)

Section on Church, Community and State in Relation to the Economic Order (IV)

Tambaram 1938: Meeting of the International Missionary Council

"The Call to the Church" and "The Relevance of the Church," Reports of Sections I and II (V)

Hendrik Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, 1938 (VI)

William Temple, Explanatory Memorandum on the Constitution of the WCC, 1938 (VIII)

Paul Couturier, "Prayer and Christian Unity," 1944 (VII)

Amsterdam 1948: First Assembly of the WCC

Message (I)

"Responsible Society" (IV)

"The Church and the International Disorder" (IV)

Toronto 1950: WCC Central Committee

"The Church, the Churches and the World Council of Churches" (VIII)

Lund 1952: Third World Conference on Faith and Order

"A Word to the Churches" (VIII)

"Ways of Worship" (VII)

Willingen 1952: Meeting of the International Missionary Council

"The Missionary Calling of the Church" (V)

Evanston 1954: Second Assembly of the WCC

"Christ—the Hope of the World" (III)

Willem Visser 't Hooft, *The Ecumenical Movement and the Racial Problem*, 1954 (IV)

Madeleine Barot, "Considerations on the Need for a Theology of the Place of Women in the Church," 1955 (IV)

Suzanne de Diétrich, "The Church 'Between the Times'," 1958 (I)

Willem Visser 't Hooft, "How Does Unity Grow?," 1959 (II)

New Delhi 1961: Third Assembly of the WCC

Lesslie Newbigin, "The Missionary Dimension of the Ecumenical Movement" (V)
 Report of the Section on Unity (II)
 Joseph Sittler, "Called to Unity" (IV)
 Paul Devanandan, "Called to Witness" (VI)

Second Vatican Council 1962-65

"Decree on Ecumenism," 1964 (II)
 "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," 1965 (VI)

Roger Schutz, "Keep Yourself in God's Presence so that Unity May Come," 1962 (VII)

Montreal 1963: Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order

"Scripture, Tradition and Traditions" (III)
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