

REPORTS OF SECTIONS :

UNITY

THE report of the Section on Unity was considered in two deliberative sessions of the full Assembly and amended in the light of the debate. The Assembly then VOTED *to approve the substance of the Report and commend it to the churches for study and appropriate action.*

THE REPORT

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 re-birth of many forms of church life as we have known them. We believe that nothing less costly can finally suffice.

A Commentary upon this Picture of Unity

4. The foregoing paragraph must be understood as a brief description of the sort of unity which would correspond to God's gift and our task. It is not intended as a definition of the Church and it does not presuppose any one particular doctrine of the Church. It is based upon a statement worked out by the Commission on Faith and Order, accepted by the Central Committee at St Andrews in 1960 and sent to the member churches for consideration and comment. The 'Toronto Statement'¹ was a landmark in the World Council's thinking about itself and its relation to work for unity. Here we seek to carry that thought a stage further, not by dictating to the churches their conception of unity but by suggesting for further study an attempt to express more clearly the nature of our common goal. Christian unity has been the primary concern of the Faith and Order movement from the beginning, and the vision of the one Church has become the inspiration of our ecumenical endeavour. We re-affirm that we must go forward to seek the full implications of this vision. We present this statement in the hope that the churches both inside and outside the World Council of Churches will study it with care, and, should it be found inadequate, will formulate alternative statements, which more fully comprehend 'both God's will and his gift'.

In him alone . . . the Church has its true unity

5. It is in Jesus Christ, God's Son and our only Mediator, that we have union with God. It is he who has given this gift to us through

¹ *The Church, the Churches and the World Council of Churches*, statement received by the Central Committee at Toronto, 1950.

his coming into our world. Unity is not of our making, but as we receive the grace of Jesus Christ we are one in him. We are called to bear witness to the gift of unity through offering our lives as sacrifices to his glory. The fact that we are living in division shows that we have not realized God's gift of unity and we acknowledge our disobedience before him. Our union with God is a mystery which passes our understanding and defeats our efforts to express it adequately. But as Christ has come visibly into this world and has redeemed men of flesh and blood, this union must find visible expression.

6. It is the living Christ who impels us to work and pray for a fuller manifestation among us of 'the one hope which belongs to our calling'. Thus the Faith and Order movement has found the focal point of its study in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Through its Commission on Christ and the Church it has sought to explore the biblical and historical witnesses to Christ, to determine what unity in the one Lord actually means. The unity which is given is the unity of the one Triune God from whom and through whom and to whom are all things. It is the unity which he gives to his people through his decision to dwell among them and to be their God. It is the unity which he gives to his people through the gift of his Son, who by his death and resurrection binds us together in him in his Sonship to the one Father. It is the unity given to his people through his Spirit, and through all the gifts of the Spirit which enliven, edify and empower the new humanity in Christ.

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.

Who are baptized into Christ

8. The mutual recognition of baptism, in one sense or another, has

been a foundation stone in the ecumenical discussions of the present century. However, closer examination of the assumptions and implications of this fact invariably brings to light deep and wide divergences in theory and practice amongst the churches of the World Council of Churches. Much progress has already been made through the studies of Faith and Order in the understanding of the one baptism.¹ We would urge that these studies be widely circulated among the churches and that the churches in each place study the meaning of baptism together, and in the light of such studies seek to come to a deeper understanding of the baptism by which all have been sealed into the one Lord through their one faith and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

By the Holy Spirit

9. The Church exists in time and place by the power of the Holy Spirit, who effects in her life all the elements that belong to her unity, witness and service. He is the gift of the Father in the name of Jesus Christ to build up the Church, to lead her into the freedom and fellowship which belong to her peace and joy. For any achievement of a fuller unity than that now manifest, we are wholly dependent upon the Spirit's presence and governance.

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 uni-

¹ 'Conference on the Nature of the Unity we Seek' at Oberlin, USA, 1957, and in the Report *One Lord, One Baptism*, SCM Press and Augsburg Publishing House, 1960.

formity of structure, organization or government. A lively variety marks corporate life in the one Body of one Spirit.

The one apostolic faith

11. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments witness to the apostolic faith. This is nothing else than those events which constitute God's call of a people to be his people. The heart of the Gospel (*kerygma*) is Jesus Christ himself, his life and teaching, his death, resurrection, coming (*parousia*) and the justification and sanctification which he brings and offers to all men. The Creeds of the Church witness to this apostolic faith. There are important studies now being undertaken of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition (which is Christian confession down the ages), and attention is drawn to the work of Faith and Order's Theological Commission on Tradition and Traditions.¹

Preaching the one Gospel

12. Preaching proclaims anew to men in each generation the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the faithful preaching of the Word the living Christ is present as our contemporary in every age; he grants us his grace, he comforts us and calls us to a renewed decision for him. In the human words of the preacher every new generation is confronted by the Christ as one who speaks to them where they actually are.

Breaking the one bread

13. Nowhere are the divisions of our churches more clearly evident and painful than at the Lord's Table. But the Lord's Table is one, not many. In humility the churches must seek that one Table. We would urge the Commission on Faith and Order to continue study and consultation to help us identify and remove those barriers which now keep us from partaking together of the one bread and sharing the one cup.

Joining in common prayer

14. God is to be praised in every tongue and in the setting of every culture and age in an inexhaustible diversity of expression. Yet there are certain common factors in Christian worship such as adoration,

¹ *The Old and the New in the Church*, SCM Press and Augsburg Publishing House, 1961.

penitence, intercession, petition and thanksgiving which are grounded inevitably in the unique acts of God in Christ, discernible still in our divided traditions. As we learn more of each other, we shall more clearly discern this common heritage and express it more fully.

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.

Ministry and members accepted by all

16. All agree that the whole Body is a royal priesthood. Yet one of the most serious barriers to unity is our diverse understanding of the nature of the ministry within the corporate priesthood. All who have been engaged in church union negotiations testify to this fact. There are those, for example, who affirm the necessity of an episcopally ordained ministry in the apostolic succession while others deny that it is essential for the true Church. How can two such divergent positions on so important a matter be settled? In this, as in all matters relating to Christ's Church, it is upon the Holy Spirit we must rely. He will, if we faithfully search, reveal to us the ways in which we can have a ministry accepted by all. Here biblical, theological and historical studies must be continued to seek to lay before the churches that which is necessary to have a true ministry according to God's Word. The mutual acceptance of members though not so formidable an obstacle as mutual recognition of ministries, still raises problems for some communions. The achievement of a ministry accepted by all would largely resolve the issues involved in the mutual recognition of members.

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.

II · SOME IMPLICATIONS TO CONSIDER

18. If we accept this picture of the unity for which we must pray and work, it has implications for the life of our churches as lived at the local level, as confessions and as we meet each other in ecumenical fellowship. If we shirk these implications, we come under judgment for turning away from the light that God has given us. So we ask our churches to consider seriously what those implications may be.

A. 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.

B. Implications for the Life of our Confessions

31. When we turn to consider the implications of a commonly accepted picture of our goal for our life as confessions or 'denominations', the first point to be made is the diversity in our understanding of what is meant by confession or denomination. Obviously, such understanding is related to our conception of the Church itself. For some, as for the Orthodox, there can be no simple distinction between 'Church' and 'Confession' for the Church itself is under-

stood as essentially undivided.¹ Others would speak more readily in terms of 'interior schism' or 'divisions' *within* the Church. But for the practical purposes of what follows, we agree that when we speak of confessions and denominations, we simply acknowledge the fact that we recognize the same Christ through a variety of corporate traditions, of long or short history and more or less clearly defined, but within each of them certain crucial elements are always preserved. Gospel and faith, baptism, eucharist and doxology, witness and service in our common life in the Body of Christ are all involved. We concentrate on the problems of (1) a doctrinal basis of unity, (2) baptism and unity, (3) eucharistic fellowship, or lack of it, (4) common action in witness and service, as this affects or is affected by our divided state. It is all too plain that our present answers are not fully adequate—yet no more adequate answers can be given until the churches themselves become more generally and vividly concerned with providing them.

1. *Doctrinal agreement*

32. In our consideration of next steps towards an agreed doctrinal basis for the unity we seek, two useful distinctions may be made—that intellectual formulations of faith are not to be identified with faith itself, and that *koinonia* in Christ is more nearly the precondition of 'sound doctrine' than vice versa. The primary basis of this *koinonia* is the apostolic testimony in the Holy Scriptures and 'the hearing of faith'. Yet this primary biblical revelation was given to and through the apostolic church and has continued to be witnessed to by our common historic Creeds, specifically the Apostles' Creed and the Nicaeo-Constantinopolitan Creed.² There is, as it were, an 'ecumenicity in time' which may be realized by serious attention both to the ancient witnesses and also to the gifts of light and truth given by the Spirit in various ages and traditions in the history of the people of God. 'The one apostolic faith', referred to in Part One of this report, is, first and last, faith in Christ as Lord and Saviour to the glory of God the Father. An obvious practical corollary of this understanding is the recommendation that a next step towards

¹ Cf. the contribution from the Orthodox members in the minutes of the Unity Section, obtainable from Faith and Order, WCC, 17 route de Malagnou, Geneva.

² Cf. the agreement on doctrinal unity in the Report of the First World Conference on Faith and Order (Lausanne, 1927), the doctrinal basis of the Church of South India and 'Agreed Statements' from the C.S.I.-Lutheran Theological Conversations, 1948-1959 (Madras, 1960).

unity, at the denominational level, would be a fresh consideration of our various doctrinal bases, in the light of the primacy of Scripture and its safeguarding in the Church by the Holy Spirit.

2. *Baptism and unity*

33. Our ecumenical fellowship is essentially based upon the fact that we all want to be obedient to God's commandment in being baptized 'into the body' (I Cor. 12.13). Our failure to share in the one Table of the Lord, to live and act as one visible and united body, is an obvious contradiction to the baptismal gift that we all claim to possess. This contradiction can be explained in some cases by unjustified rationalizations and must therefore be overcome. In other cases, it reflects an obvious lack of agreement as to the true nature of the fellowship into which baptism introduces us.

34. Mutual recognition of baptism (although it goes far) is not in itself a direct means to unity forthwith. This means that we must place our conceptions of baptism in a dynamic, forward-looking perspective and ask ourselves: Where does our baptism lead us? We all agree that baptism is both God's gift and human commitment, and that it supposes a growth into the 'measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ' (Eph. 4.13). By this growth the baptized believers can even now visibly manifest to the world the new race of a redeemed mankind. Common witness to our churches, to the world, to those who have not yet heard the Gospel and to those who refuse it, is our common responsibility here and now. Fellowship in witness and service may help us to discover the meaning of God's gift to all the members of his people.

35. Much fruitful thought is being given, especially in Faith and Order studies, to the deeper meanings of baptism into Christ.¹ Every such examination sheds some new light on a tangled issue. It is important that disagreement as to the meanings and modes of baptism does not now entail outright denial or non-recognition of non-approved baptism. Even more important is the wide agreement that the initiative in baptism is from God by his Holy Spirit and that the baptized person's appropriate response must be expressed in the entirety of the life of faith. Such an understanding of baptism would suggest to those churches which practise infant baptism that this entails a more serious enterprise of Christian nurture than is often the

¹ Cf. *One Lord, One Baptism*, and Faith and Order Commission Minutes, Faith and Order Paper No. 31, 1960.

case—and, to those churches that practise 'believers' baptism', that they should reconsider the place of infants and children in the household of faith. Baptism recognizes God's claim on us as his children. It marks out a person's 'place' in the Family so that even if that person does not 'take his place' it is there for him, awaiting his response to be faithful soldier of Christ in the Church militant.

3. *Eucharistic unity and division*

36. We have already spoken of the deeply felt differences which centre round the word 'intercommunion'. A main responsibility for deepening understanding rests with those who are called to work and speak on behalf of their confessions as such. The present impasse presses the churches to re-examine all possible next steps that might be discovered, at any and all levels of their denominational life. Wherever existing convictions allow for more direct progress towards intercommunion between churches, it should be made without waiting for consensus and common action in the ecumenical movement as a whole. Moreover, if we reversed the usual order of discussion and focused on eucharistic action—what God does and calls us to do at the Lord's Table—rather than (first of all) on eucharistic administration—i.e. the problem of a valid ministry—we might find a clearer way to the heart of an adequate sacramental doctrine. As the matter stands at present, we have a major problem of interpreting to our people the ground (biblical, traditional, etc.) of our widely various practices—some of which seem to make intercommunion 'too easy' and others 'too hard'. There is value in divided Christians experiencing the agony of non-communicating Eucharists—but there is an equal need to re-assure the excluded that the agony is as great for the excluding. We must meet, in a responsible fashion, the rising tide of impatience amongst many young people, and indeed among many others, for more prompt and certain progress, toward mutual understanding in this most central and vital experience of Christian worship and witness. The urgency of finding a way to break through the present impasse on the question of intercommunion makes it imperative that denominations and confessions undertake a new examination of their eucharistic doctrines and liturgies in the light of all these new factors introduced by the ecumenical situation.

4. *Common action*

37. We have said that one outcome of such unity as we have envis-

aged would be the enabling of Christians to 'speak and act together as occasion requires in the tasks to which God calls the Church'. We see two spheres of Christian action which call for unity for their best effect and which promote unity by their very undertaking. The first is in the area of Christian ethics and discipline—especially in the face of the demoralization of modern culture and the increasing importance of divided churches uniting in effective action. The second is in the varied field of Christian education—including the enlistment as well as the training of ordinands with proper gifts and graces. There is, of course, a sense in which this is a peculiar prerogative of each autonomous church. Yet surely the magnitude and scope of the problem as it now faces us, calls for effective, ecumenical action. Such action would itself be a means toward greater unity.

C. Implications for the Ecumenical Movement

38. As we have participated in intensified efforts to clarify the nature of the unity which we seek to manifest, four questions have commanded our attention regarding our fellowship together, especially in the ecumenical movement, and, more particularly, in our mutual commitment in the World Council of Churches.

1. *What are the proper functions and limits of the WCC in regard to unity among its member churches?*

39. (a) Our deepest responsibility in the ecumenical movement is faithful prayer for the unity of Christ's Church as and when he wills it. Faith and Order has long sought to encourage such prayer as it is focused in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. We give thanks to God that recent years have witnessed a steadily widening observance of this Week throughout the world. But there is also need to think more deeply about the nature of the unity for which we pray, including the part which the ecumenical movement itself can play in developing a common understanding.

40. (b) It is agreed that the WCC must not attempt to violate the autonomy of any member church. Neither may the Council make official pronouncements on unity which contravene the recognized doctrines of member churches, nor attempt to impose any one conception of unity.

41. (c) In faithfulness to its constitutional function of proclaiming the oneness of the Church, the Council should do all within the

limits of its competence to enable the churches to perceive the meaning of unity and to realize it more fully. All the work of the Council has general relevance to this purpose. But the present and projected programme of the Committee on Faith and Order¹ is of particular importance. We mention only a few of these plans and suggest some others.

42. (d) The educative function of the Council is indispensable and needs extension. Most members of churches know little of the beliefs and practices of churches other than those of their own communion or tradition. All kinds of ecumenical conferences thus have value. There is still need for good literature to further ecumenical education. Many helpful publications are issued by the World Council from its headquarters, but in themselves they can only be capable of a very limited circulation in comparison with the size of our constituency as a whole. The general membership of the churches can only be reached if every member church uses its own organs of communication to the full.

43. (e) A certain kind of *consultative* assistance can be given by the Council to churches which are engaged in unity conversations. The Commission on Faith and Order has already begun to render such service, though only, of course, upon the request of churches concerned, by sending persons of exceptional knowledge and experience to meet the church members who are responsible for negotiating union.

44. (f) The Council's Faith and Order Commission has also convened several consultations on church union with representatives from nearly all countries and churches where union negotiations are in progress. And it has been publishing regularly a survey of such developments, as well as distributing the relevant documents. We trust that this will continue.

45. (g) Perhaps the time has now come for the Council to undertake a new service. Although church union negotiations are continuing to arise at a rapid pace in various lands, and we rejoice that this is so, it is not always immediately clear how each of these has important implications for many churches within the Council's fellowship. For example, if churches of two or more communions in a certain country make progress towards union, this has relevance for

¹ As set forth in the Report on the Future of Faith and Order (see Minutes of the Faith and Order Commission, St Andrews, 1960, pp. 113-20).

churches of those same communions in other lands. Now, the Council is already accustomed to sending general statements on unity to the churches for their study and consideration. But could it not also address direct questions to particular churches, asking them on behalf of all the Council's churches to state what reactions they have to specific union negotiations in which their own communions are involved? This would both stimulate the interest of these churches in the obligation to manifest the unity of Christ's Church, and also provide useful information for the good of all. It would not infringe upon any church's inherent autonomy, but serve as a reminder that here too we are all 'members one of another'. We also raise the question as to whether, with due regard for freedom of faith and conscience, the good offices of the Council should be used to help in breaking deadlocks which sometimes arise as a result of church union negotiations and lead to the possibility of further schism.

46. (h) In pursuing its studies in the realm of faith and order, the council may now be ready to make penetrating enquiries into the way in which the very structures of the many churches tend to impede efforts by those churches to manifest greater unity. This has been initiated already through the important study on 'Institutionalism',¹ the result of which we expect to see soon. But still more remains to be done in this field of studies on unity.

47. (i) Finally, we are persuaded that the time is ripe for a fresh general study, among the member churches, of the conciliar process in the Church of the early centuries. This would be an extension and application of the significant inquiry already begun by the Theological Commission on Tradition and Traditions.¹ This would call attention not only to the results in doctrine, discipline and liturgy, but also to the processes by which they were achieved.

2. *How does current thinking on unity affect our understanding of the nature of the World Council of Churches itself?*

48. Having stood the test of a decade of discussion and criticism, the Toronto Statement still best expresses our understanding of the Council's nature. It could also be fruitfully studied as illuminating the nature of national and regional councils. However, the probing

¹ See *The Old and the New in the Church*, SCM Press and Augsburg Press, 1961.

studies and the prompting developments of these ten years keep driving us to seek further clarification. Mere insistence upon deeper study will not guarantee fresh insight. We are learning what the Council is by *living* together within it; and so it shall be. Nevertheless, the need for careful reflection on the theological meaning of our new life in the Council continues to be unfulfilled.

49. At least we are able to say that the World Council is not something wholly other than the member churches. It is the churches in continuing council. It is not over or apart from the churches but next to them at all times. We should speak of the Council as 'we' rather than 'it' or 'they'. Furthermore, many Christians are now aware that the Council is in some new and unprecedented sense an instrument of the Holy Spirit for the effecting of God's will for the whole Church, and through the Church for the world. What bearing has this upon our conception of the Church's unity?

3. *How may world confessional bodies contribute to the ecumenical movement and the unity of the churches?*

50. Most of these organizations existed many years before the founding of the World Council. Their purpose is not only to clarify and strengthen confessional understanding and loyalty but to serve responsibly in the wider ecumenical movement. Their contributions to the whole movement are well known and much appreciated. Their leaders are, for the most part, leaders in the World Council of Churches also. But opinion today is divided over the effects of their existence and work upon the participation of their churches in the movement for unity and upon the course which they ought to take in the future.

51. Some hold that a deepening understanding of the doctrines and traditions of the various confessions will in the long run enhance the possibilities of unity in the truth, even though for the present it may seem to restrain the churches from joining into full fellowship with one another. It is possible that unity could be further advanced by more frequent conversation between leaders of the confessions at the level of world organization. Already there are theological conversations in process between the Presbyterians and, respectively, the Lutherans and Congregationalists.

52. A contrary view is held by those who see the world confessional bodies as a threat to wider unity in particular areas, a view which some Asian and African Christians have often expressed with vigour.

53. Probably the critical question is whether or not the leaders of confessional bodies agree with the emphasis we have already made upon the centrality of unity of all Christians *in each place*, which must, of course, always seek to be a 'unity in the truth'. If they agree, they will not consider the union of one of their churches as a loss, but as a gain for the whole Church. And a service can be rendered to such churches if the confessional bodies assist them in the responsible study of all issues which are involved in a proposed union.

4. *Is the World Council now able to find new light on the problem of intercommunion?*

54. We call the attention of the churches to the reports of the Youth Assembly of Lausanne, 1960, the Bossey Consultation of March 1961, and the Pre-Assembly Youth Conference at New Delhi.¹ In all of these the tones of anguish and urgency are dominant, and the proposals for the adjustment of church policies on intercommunion are specific. The problem of Holy Communion at ecumenical conferences received particular study in these reports. But the following points may be noted:

55. (a) This is not a division between generations but *between and within the churches*. There are numerous older Christians whose sense of anguish and urgency is not exceeded by the younger. It is a problem for all churches and their members, and no one has excuse for apathy or resignation towards it as we meet in ecumenical gatherings.

56. (b) Surely a reconsideration of the policy laid down at Lund 1952 is now needed. But it is not yet clear that the proposals made at Bossey in 1961 provide a better agreement. Time for more reflection upon this might well be available before the Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order in 1963, when we hope that further consideration of this question will be undertaken.

57. In this concern for unity at every level of church life, we are mindful that the unity we seek is not for its own sake nor even for our sake. It is for our Lord's sake and for that of the world which he died to save. Unity is inseparable from renewal in holiness and truth, to God's glory. We offer this report to the churches in the

¹ *Youth* No. 2, October 1960, pages 79 ff. (Findings, Lausanne Youth Assembly); *Ecumenical Review*, vol. XIII no. 3, April 1961 (report of Bossey Consultation); both published by the WCC, 17, route de Malagnou, Geneva.

prayer that it may contribute to deeper unity in our witness and service in the name of Jesus Christ, the Light of the World.

DISCUSSION OF THE REPORT OF THE SECTION ON UNITY

First Session, 4.00 p.m., Friday, December 1. Dr Ernest Payne presided.

Dr D. G. Moses and Bishop Oliver Tomkins presented the draft report.

Canon R. R. Hartford (Church of Ireland) thought that the report was fair and objective. The work of the Commission on Faith and Order had become even more important since the entry of the Russian Orthodox Church into membership of the WCC.

Dr W. R. Cannon (Methodist, USA) missed the note of Christian unity and witness as expressed in the lives of believers. We are 'called to be saints' and this is a prerequisite of any further measure of unity. We should be thankful for what the Holy Spirit is already doing in our midst. The document should include a call to Christian love.

Mr C. P. Wakiro (Anglican, Uganda) thought that the report was not a success. Co-operation is not enough. Fear had inhibited some members of the section from stating their full mind. The Assembly should enunciate principles of unity according to apostolic faith and practice, and a committee of lay theologians from various denominations should be asked to give a clearer definition of unity.

Metropolitan Parthenios of Carthage (Patriarchate of Alexandria) asked for a continuation of dialogue with the Orthodox. To what the report says about the catholic and apostolic nature of unity, something should be added about holiness.

Mr V. G. Montes (United, Philippines) questioned the accuracy of the use of the term 'ministry' in the report as meaning exclusively 'the ordained ministry'.

Professor E. Schlink (Evangelical Church in Germany) was of the opinion that the statement constituted a genuine step forward towards overcoming ecclesiological docetism. This docetism was a real danger, when in many ecumenical statements stress was laid on the unity in Christ of the divided churches, but without laying equal stress on the need for visible unity. In his view the statement was still too formalistic, because while mentioning the Creed, the Gospel, the Sacraments, the Ministry, etc., it did not sufficiently explain the substance of these terms and what is understood by them. It was of crucial importance for the unification of the churches to work out a consensus on their substance and meaning.

Metropolitan Athenagoras (Ecumenical Patriarchate, Canada) said that we must approach the question of unity in terms of love. In the words of the Liturgy 'Let us love one another that we may confess the

faith'. According to the Ecumenical Patriarch's statement union is the crown of 'unity' in the sense of brotherliness.

The Rev. S. B. Coles (Presbyterian Church in Canada) urged that paragraph 1 should be prefaced by an affirmation concerning the unity of the Holy Trinity and disunities throughout creation which grieve him. He suggested a form of words. It is nowhere mentioned that unity is purchased at the price of the Cross. *Dr R. M. Clark* (United Church of Canada) and the *Rev. Harry Dorman* (United Presbyterian, USA) supported *Mr Coles*.

Dr J. Norgaard (Baptist, Denmark) thought that the description of unity in paragraph 2 went too far. The quest for uniformity will always create division. The promise of Jesus to Peter (Matt. 16; cf. Eph. 2, 1 Pet. 2) proclaims our existing unity.

Professor J. A. Oosterbaan (Mennonite, Netherlands) asked for the deletion of the reference to infant baptism in paragraph 8.

Professor W. F. A. Küppers (Old Catholic, Germany) wished to add in paragraph 5 'our efforts for unity are thwarted again and again', and in paragraph 17 'both in judgment and in grace' to avoid all idea of self-satisfaction.

Dr Eugene Smith (Methodist, USA) asked for a clearer expression of the relation between mission and unity in paragraph 15, and expressed the concern for deeper unity in fellowship and witness with members of Pentecostal and Fundamentalist groups.

Professor B. Ioannides (Church of Greece) asked for the addition of a footnote to paragraph 31 referring to the statement by the Orthodox members of the section which is to be included in the minutes of the section.

Colonel A. B. Cook (Salvation Army, New Zealand) wished an explicit reference to baptism of the Holy Spirit to be added to paragraph 35.

Archbishop W. L. Wright (Anglican, Canada) asked that a prayer for unity should be included in the text of paragraph 37.

Bishop Rajah Manikam (Lutheran, India) praised paragraphs 42-44 and asked that questions should be addressed to missionary bodies and World Confessional bodies on these subjects.

Curé Léon Gauthier (Old Catholic, Switzerland) and *Commander C. A. Herdman* (Church of Ireland) suggested amendments in details.

Second Session, 6.30 p.m., Monday, December 4. Bishop Sherrill presiding.

Bishop Oliver Tomkins presented the revised report in which most of the suggestions made in the previous session had been incorporated.

The Rev. S. B. Coles (Presbyterian, Canada) moved the addition of two further sentences to paragraph 1. After *Bishop Oliver Tomkins* and *Dr Outler* had spoken against making any further addition, *Mr Coles'* motion was defeated.