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UNITY and MISSION

A study of the concept of *unity*
in ecumenical discussions since 1961
and its influence on the world mission
of the Church.

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University of South Africa
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For Cecile

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Preface

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to Unisa for accepting this study for publication. The doctoral study on which this book is based was undertaken before the Melbourne meeting of the CWME in 1980 and before the Vancouver Assembly of the WCC in 1983 took place. Although it would have been possible to add a chapter on these meetings to the manuscript, I have decided against this since I consider the period covered by this study (1961–1975) as a specific era which merits separate treatment. (The reasons for selecting these dates are set out in the Introduction). In my opinion, Melbourne, Vancouver and (to a lesser extent) evangelical meetings such as Pattaya 1980, introduce a new era with new concerns (such as the significance of the *poor* for the *missio Dei*) which should be the subject of a separate study.

I hope that by presenting the results of this study to a wider audience, it will benefit the ecumenical movement in general, and the ecumenical movement in South Africa in particular.

WILLEM SAAYMAN
PRETORIA — MAY 1984

Introduction

1. Background: The Integration of the International Missionary Council (IMC) and the World Council of Churches (WCC)

The growth of the ecumenical movement in the twentieth century has been called "the great new fact of our era" (Archbishop W. Temple). The important contribution of mission to the growth of the ecumenical movement is generally acknowledged. Yet the expression of the relationship between unity and mission in the life of the churches and of the ecumenical movement created many problems. This is illustrated, for example, in the search for the right relationship between the IMC and the WCC.

These two organizations existed side by side for some time, perhaps creating the (superficial) impression that the unity of the Church and its mission could be pursued in (at least) organizational isolation. Yet, as Newbigin pointed out, "it would be a false simplification to suggest that, within the whole ecumenical movement, the IMC stands for mis-

sion and the WCC for unity..... 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.... 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 Second Commission at Amsterdam.”¹ It is self-evident therefore why the IMC and the WCC from 1948 till 1961 existed “in association with” each other. It is equally clear, though, that this state of affairs could not continue indefinitely. If unity was such a strong concern in the ranks of the IMC, and mission was an equally strong concern in the ranks of the WCC, why should they not be merged into one ecumenical organization, expressing a concern for both unity and mission? Furthermore, such a merger would not only bring organizational benefits, but would give better expression to the intrinsic connectedness of unity and mission in the heart of the Gospel.²

Against this background, the IMC decided at its meeting at Achimota, Ghana in 1958, to integrate with the WCC, an act which was carried out formally at the Third Assembly of the WCC at New Delhi in 1961. This was indeed an event with immense significance for the world mission of the Church. In the words of Neill, “if the theological significance of this action was realized, this was indeed a revolutionary moment in Church history. More than two hundred Church bodies in all parts of the world, assembled in the persons of their official representatives, had solemnly declared themselves in the presence of God to be responsible as Churches for the evangelization of the whole world. Such an event had never taken place in the history of the Church since Pentecost.”³ Goodall comments on the integration in the same vein as follows: “In so far as the World Council of Churches is a symbol and embodiment of the ecumenical movement, it can now be affirmed that in structure, purpose and intention ‘mission lies at the heart of the movement.’”⁴ If these commentators are correct in their assessment of the importance of this event, it seems necessary to study the later history of the ecumenical movement to ascertain whether these expectations about the inter-relatedness of the unity and the mission of the Church did indeed materialize. This is one of the motivations for the present study.

2. Growing Controversy

In the ranks of the IMC particularly there was, however, doubt as to whether the integration would indeed be to the advantage of the world

mission of the Church. As early as 1957 Goodall reported after a world-wide journey that there was strong opposition to the integration among a group of missionaries and mission-supporters (whom he called "evangelicals"). The two strongest reasons for their opposition were (i) a general dislike (even fear) of the word *ecumenical*; and (ii) theological problems stemming from their fear of liberalism in the WCC.⁵ Johnston expresses this fear and opposition as follows, "Ecumenical unity is not conceived as the unity of individuals brought into a saving relationship with Christ by the 'new birth', but rather upon the visible unity of the Church."⁶ Even before the official integration between the IMC and the WCC, therefore, the signs of growing controversy (and possible polarization) between "ecumenicals" and "evangelicals" were present – indeed, the tendency towards polarization may have been strengthened by the very act of integration. It is well known how strident this controversy has become since then, with evangelicals portrayed as guardians of the (evangelistic) *missionary* fervour of the Church (in other words, the legitimate heirs to Edinburgh 1910 and the defunct IMC) and ecumenicals portrayed as being completely occupied with a fruitless striving for the visible unity of the Church. The imperative of finding a way out of this pernicious controversy provides a second motivation for the present study.

3. The Relevance of the Study

Two reasons for the relevance of a study on concepts of unity and their influence on the world mission of the Church have already been pointed out above. Something more needs to be said, though, about the relevance of the study. It is not the intention of this study to examine the fundamental theological link between unity and mission. This link is generally accepted as self-evident. There is, however, no agreement on the way this should be expressed. Attention will therefore be focussed on various schools of thought on the *ecclesiological* expression of the relationship, for, as Freytag stated, "Seeking unity no longer means seeking to join all the existing churches; it means seeking the true Church."⁷ This ecclesiological expression is indeed a pressing concern both in the search for unity and in the world mission of the Church.

The importance of the interrelationship between unity and mission was well put by Marty. Writing in 1964, he painted a somewhat sombre picture of the ecumenical movement. He was convinced that only one thing could revive the movement and provide new driving force: mission. Thus he wrote, "Christians possess now enough unity and ecumenical

spirit to renew their mission to the world. Without such renewal ecumenism is meaningless and its movement is tired and self-centred. Meanwhile, renewed mission will further the movement to unity, will give new energy to the tired, new youth to a prematurely aged movement, new openness to what was becoming self-concerned. Unity produces mission produces unity produces mission etc.”⁸ The importance of this interrelationship to the Church’s witness is expressed clearly in the constitution of Faith and Order: ”upon the realization of this unity depends our understanding of the full meaning and power of the Gospel and its convincing communication to the world.”⁹ Finally, the Structure Committee appointed at Uppsala in 1968 sounded a timely and very relevant admonition in its report, ”These concerns (i.e. unity and mission) have become more and more interconnected and it is appropriate that they be placed in fruitful tension with each other in the interest of forwarding an authentic ecumenical understanding of the faith of the Church in our world.”¹⁰ This study is an attempt to test this interconnectedness, to examine this ”fruitful tension”, and it is deemed relevant to do so in the context of the ecumenical discussions from 1961 until 1975 (for reasons which will be set out below).

4. Form, Content and Sources

The *terminus a quo* (1961) chosen for the period under discussion in this study speaks for itself. It was the year of the integration of the IMC and the WCC. Henceforth the two historical streams of missionary and ecclesiastical ecumenism would be accommodated in one ecumenical organisation, creating new challenges and problems for the interrelationship between unity and mission. Furthermore the membership of the WCC was strengthened in two important respects: with the joining of a significant number of churches from Africa, and with the joining of the Orthodox Churches from Eastern Europe and Russia.¹¹ The reasons for deciding on 1975 as the *terminus ad quem* are:

4.1 The discussions on the concept of unity within the WCC underwent a certain process of development (as will be indicated below) from New Delhi, via Uppsala (1968), to reach a certain culmination at Nairobi (1975).¹²

4.2 A convergence in differing concepts of mission/evangelism is revealed by the Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne (1974), the Synod of Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church on the Evangelization of the Modern World (Rome, 1974) and the Fifth Assembly of the WCC

at Nairobi (1975).^{1 3}

4.3 In a sense Nairobi can be seen as the first meeting of the *churches*, and not only of pioneers of the ecumenical movement.^{1 4}

As stated in the title, this study concerns *ecumenical discussions*. The first chapter presents a very general overview of developments before 1961. This is necessary as background to the more detailed study of ecumenical discussions since that date. There are three major "partners" in ecumenical discussions at present: the fellowship of churches bound together in the WCC; the Roman Catholic Church; and the group of individuals, churches and missionary societies generally called Evangelicals. For this reason the second chapter deals with the Third Assembly of the WCC at New Delhi (1961) and the first meeting of the CWME at Mexico City in 1963. These two assemblies provide the first opportunity to evaluate the new interrelationship between unity and mission in the WCC.

In the third chapter the development in thinking on unity and mission in the WCC is traced further, especially as it revealed itself in two important meetings: the Fourth Assembly at Uppsala (1968) and the meeting of CWME at Bangkok (1973). By the time of the Uppsala Assembly, the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church had already concluded its deliberations. It is necessary, therefore, in Chapter four to listen to the voice of Rome on unity and mission. This chapter will deal mainly with three relevant documents of Vatican II and subsequent developments in the Roman Catholic Church, especially the Synod of Bishops of 1974. Chapter five deals with the third "partner" in ecumenical discussions, viz. the evangelicals. Since 1966 (the congress at Wheaton), evangelicals have succeeded increasingly in articulating their specific point of view. Chapter five will deal with this evangelical alternative as articulated especially at the congresses of Wheaton, Berlin (1966) and Lausanne (1974). Although the Orthodox churches belong to the WCC, they also have a specifically Orthodox view on the unity of the Church and its mission, which has not always been reflected sufficiently in statements of the WCC.

As this Orthodox emphasis can have important consequences for theological thinking in the ecumenical movement, Chapter six is devoted to the Orthodox view on the unity of the Church and its mission. As was pointed out above, by 1975 there was an apparent convergence in theological thinking on unity and mission among evangelicals, Roman Catho-

lics and member churches of the WCC. In the final chapter the question is therefore posed whether the Fifth Assembly at Nairobi (1975) can be regarded as the starting point of a new direction. The study is concluded by an attempt to draw some guidelines for the future, first for the ecumenical movement in general, and then specifically for the Church in South Africa.

It is in the nature of the subject of this study that the sources will mainly be official reports of assemblies, synods, councils and congresses, as well as various studies which form the background against which these reports came into being. However, relevant writings of a great number of individual theologians on the developments reflected in these reports provide another important source of material for the study. Finally, the subject of the study was discussed by the author in personal interviews with a wide range of representatives of the various ecumenical groups dealt with in this study.

The author wishes to acknowledge that part of this study (chapters 2–6, as well as the first section of chapter 7) is based on a doctoral thesis presented for the Degree of Doctor of Theology at the University of Stellenbosch in 1980.

List of abbreviations

CWME: Commission on World Mission and Evangelization (of the WCC)
 ER : *The Ecumenical Review*
 IMC : International Missionary Council
 IRM : *International Review of Mission*
 ÖR : *Ökumenische Rundschau*
 WCC : World Council of Churches

Notes

1. Newbigin, L.: "The missionary dimension of the ecumenical movement", in *ER*, vol. 14, 1962, p. 209.
2. Cf. Honig, A.G. jr.: *De kosmische betekenis van Christus*, pp. 4–5.
3. Neill, S.: *The Church and Christian union*, pp. 108–109.
4. Goodall, N.: *The ecumenical movement*, p. iii.

5. Goodall, N.: " 'Evangelicals' and WCC-IMC", in *IRM*, vol. 47, 1958, p.210. For a more extensive discussion of objections to integration, cf. the article by Max Warren in (Verkuyl, J.): *Zending op weg naar de toekomst*, pp. 192–196; also Stirnimann, H. (ed.): *Ökumenische Erneuerung in der Mission*, pp. 10–13.
6. Johnston, A.P.: *The battle for world evangelism*, p. 92.
7. As quoted by Gensichen, H. -W.: "Joint action for mission in relation to confession. A Lutheran view", in *IRM*, vol. 56, 1967, p. 98.
8. Marty, M.E.: *Church unity and church mission*, pp. 102–103.
9. Goodall, N.: *Ecumenical progress. A decade of change in the ecumenical movement, 1961–71*, p. 176.
10. Goodall, N.: op. cit. p. 125.
11. The development of the concepts of unity and mission in the WCC up to 1961 has been the subject of a study by Portman, J.R.: *The concepts of mission and unity in the World Council of Churches*.
12. Cf. Degenhardt, J.J.: "Welche Einheit meinen wir? Welche Ökumene wollen wir?" in *Catholica*, no. 1, 1979, pp. 3–5.
13. Cf. Castro, E.: Editorial in *IRM*, vol. 64, 1975, p. 237. This convergence will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter VII.
14. CF. Vischer, L.: *Veränderung der Welt – Bekehrung der Kirchen*, p. 9.

I

UNITY AND MISSION

Development of an interrelationship

"The ecumenical movement does not derive simply from a passion for unity; it sprang from a passion for unity that is completely fused in the mission."¹ The integral relationship between mission and unity in the modern ecumenical movement is clearly reflected in these words of Le Guillou. The fact that it was largely the missionary endeavours of churches and missionary societies during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which gave birth to the ecumenical movement of the twentieth century, is generally accepted today. The creation of the IMC was clear evidence of this strong ecumenical impulse coming from the "mission field". Yet the expression of this interrelationship between mission and unity was no self-evident matter, but rather created many problems. This was the result especially of the fact that the ecumenical movement was born out of a passionate missionary (evangelistic) fervour (Edinburgh 1910). So urgent was the task facing the united Christian missionary forces that Church and confession had to yield second place to it. To a large extent, therefore, Edinburgh owed its existence to an awareness of the urgency of the evangelistic task, rather than to a strong

conviction regarding the obligation of the Church to be one. One of the prominent characteristics which can be observed in the history of the first fifty years of the organised ecumenical movement is therefore the development of the interrelationship between unity and mission, both in the "missionary" (IMC) and "ecclesiastical" (WCC) sections of that movement. This development will now be traced briefly up to 1961,² when the initial phase of the interrelationship was concluded with the integration of the IMC and the WCC.

1. The encounter between mission and Church

In the ranks of the IMC, the development of the interrelationship between unity and mission took place in the wider context of the encounter between Church and mission. In Protestant churches mission was mainly considered the task of a committed group, operating outside, or on the fringes of, "Christian" society. Missionary work was therefore carried out mainly by missionary societies. The growing ecumenical impulse from the "mission fields", though, inevitably brought these missions to an encounter with the Church, as being *the* theological context in which the interrelationship between unity and mission could – and must – be expressed.

1.1 *Edinburgh 1910*

Edinburgh's contribution to the development of the interrelationship between unity and mission must be evaluated in the context of the composition of the conference. All delegates attended the conference not as representatives of churches, but of missionary societies. Furthermore it was agreed beforehand that there would be no official discussion of doctrinal differences. Edinburgh's primary purpose is therefore not to be sought in the area of theological reflection. The overriding intention of the conference was to muster the missionary forces of a united Christianity for the evangelization of the world in that generation. One of the sections did however deal with "Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity". Two important conclusions arose from its deliberations: (i) "It was reported without evident disagreement that 'the ideal which is present to the minds of the great majority of missionaries is that it is the aim of all missionary work to plant in each non-Christian nation one undivided Church of Christ'."³ (ii) It recommended the creation of a Continuation Committee, which eventually became the IMC.⁴

These steps had important consequences for the development of the

interrelationship between unity and mission. If the aim of united missionary endeavours was to be the planting of "undivided churches", then obviously the gulf between church and mission (referred to above) had to be bridged, and therefore thorough reflection on the interrelationship between mission and Church was urgently needed. The establishment of the IMC created an organ to facilitate and co-ordinate this reflection, but in itself also engendered further reflection about *Church, unity and mission*. Edinburgh did not do much in itself to clarify the interrelationship between unity and mission. It was nevertheless important in the development of this interrelationship as it "did more than build on past achievements in evangelism and unity: it prepared for the turbulent years which lay ahead, blazed new trails in Christian fellowship and co-operation, and enlisted and inspired men who were to become outstanding in the ecumenical movement in later years."⁵

1.2 Jerusalem 1928

Building on the foundation laid at Edinburgh, as well as on the experience gained in the traumatic events of world history (World War I, the Russian Revolution) in the years between, Jerusalem forms the next important stage in the development of the interrelationship between unity and mission. An aspect of the Jerusalem conference which was of special importance in this development, was the prominent position which the relationship between older and younger churches assumed in the deliberations.⁶ The reason why this relationship assumed such significance was because Jerusalem realized, as had never been realized before, that the world-wide missionary task could only be undertaken by the one universal Church.⁷ In the light of this realization Jerusalem stated that the relationship between older and younger churches should be governed by the concept of *partnership*, "a partnership in which all 'the experience and resources' of the churches everywhere in the world 'would be pooled in the unfinished task of evangelism' ".⁸ Unfortunately the characteristic of the missionary effort at that stage was disunity, rather than partnership. Addressing this disunity, Jerusalem therefore issued a further appeal: "We appeal to the older churches to encourage and support the younger churches when, in facing the challenging task of evangelizing the non-Christian world, they take steps according to their ability, to solve what perhaps is the greatest problem of the universal Church of Christ."⁹

Some important consequences for the interrelationship between unity and mission can now be discerned. The awareness that *mission* could only

be the mission of *the Church* had obviously grown much stronger. As pointed out above, this meeting of Church and mission was a prerequisite for the development of the interrelationship between unity and mission. With the growth of this awareness, however, there was also the dawning realization that the disunity of the Church was perhaps the most serious obstacle to the evangelization of the world. The necessity of unity for the execution of the mission of the Church was therefore stated, although it was still clearly stated mostly in terms of a pragmatic or functional interrelationship. Neither *unity* nor *mission* was yet clearly theologically defined, with the result that reflection on the inherent and fundamental *theological* interrelationship between unity and mission still lay ahead of the IMC.

1.3 Tambaram 1938

The Tambaram Conference can be described as the mission conference where Church and mission truly found each other.¹⁰ This fact was reflected e.g. in the central theme of the conference, viz. "The upbuilding of the younger churches as a part of the historic universal Christian community". All five sub-divisions of the theme therefore also dealt with a specific aspect of *the Church*. It was, however, not a static, inward-looking concern with the Church — the concern was with the Church-in-mission, the Church living out "the Christian message in a non-Christian world". Quite correctly therefore the English volume containing the reports of the commissions bore the title: *The world mission of the Church*. After Tambaram it would be impossible ever again to speak about *mission* without speaking simultaneously of the *Church* — and vice versa.¹¹

There was also an awareness of another important characteristic of this Church, viz. that it was indeed one and universal.¹² Not only did Church and mission meet each other, but a great deal of reflection on the theological basis of the interrelationship had also begun taking place. For this reason Tambaram represents a very important phase in the developing interrelationship between unity and mission. The practical necessity (Edinburgh) as well as the functional advantages (Jerusalem), of mission in unity, were growing into a fundamental theological interrelationship, expressed in the context of Church and mission.

1.4 Whitby 1947

The Second World War influenced this conference significantly. The

"orphaned missions" project of the IMC to care for German missions cut off from their home base as a result of the war, proved not only the usefulness of the ecumenical body; much more, it proved that "the ecumenical tie transcended both national and denominational barriers"¹³ – even in times of war. When the IMC met after the war, it was therefore to find that "in contrast with the first world war, the disruption had been only physical and not both physical and spiritual".¹⁴ Another important result was the fact that autonomy and independence for several young churches had been precipitated by the effects of the war. The young churches therefore participated in the ecumenical movement after the war in a much stronger sense of maturity. It was against this background that the conference at Whitby coined the expression "partners in obedience". The slogan "was not just a suggestive description of what the relationship between older and younger churches should be.... but it was the all-embracing framework within which every area and every aspect of the life and mission of the Church must now be undertaken, and without which no conceivable advance towards the future could be made."¹⁵

On the organizational level, the formation of the WCC, delayed by the war, but now imminent, demanded reflection of the future relationship between the two councils. This was not simply an organizational matter – a theological principle, the relationship between Church and mission, unity and mission, was at stake. There was no unanimity on this relationship. "To some, the development of the ecumenical idea had made it plain that not only co-operation between the two bodies but their integration had become imperative. The ecclesiological basis of mission and evangelism and the missionary presupposition of the Church's unity, on the one hand, and the urgency of the world situation that demanded the manifestation of unity at every level of the Church's life and work, on the other, made such a move a necessity. There were many in the International Missionary Council, however, who voiced very strong concern that while there was obviously a unity of conviction and purpose between the two bodies, their integration would in fact stifle mission and evangelism and would create setbacks..... This suggested that some form of relationship other than integration should be tested and worked out."¹⁶

Whitby was a smaller meeting, and is often considered to have been less important than e.g. Tambaram or Willingen in its contribution to the development of the ecumenical theology of mission. However, in respect of the interrelationship between unity and mission, it was of great

importance. The coming of age of the younger churches as bearers of the world mission of the Church was officially recognized – henceforth they would be partners in obedience. This theological development, as well as the debate on the relationship between the IMC and the WCC, prepared the way for the integration which would follow 14 years later. The future direction of the development of the interrelationship between unity and mission became clear after Whitby 1947.

The phase of the development of the interrelationship between unity and mission which can be described under the heading: *The encounter between mission and Church*, can be regarded as having been concluded at the Whitby conference. Before the next conference of the IMC (Willingen 1952), the WCC was officially formed, existing "in association with" the IMC. This association existed not merely as an empty catch-phrase – it expressed a concrete reality which could be demonstrated in various ways.¹⁷ As part of this existence in association, reciprocal use was made of study documents. In this way the Rolle Statement of the Central Committee of the WCC on "The calling of the Church to mission and to unity" was, for example, one of the resources used at Willingen. It can be argued, therefore, that a new phase of the development of the interrelationship between unity and mission came into being after Whitby.

2. The common search for a new interrelationship

2.1 Amsterdam 1948

With the formation of the WCC at Amsterdam in 1948, the "ecclesiastical" wing of the ecumenical movement had its first opportunity to express an official view on the interrelationship between unity and mission. In doing this, it had the important advantage of being able to draw on theological reflection which had already taken place in the IMC, and on the wisdom and experience formed by leaders of the ecumenical movement in the IMC. The deep concern of the ecumenical movement (including its ecclesial expression), with the missionary task of the Church, was reflected clearly at Amsterdam. One of the four sections into which the Assembly theme was sub-divided, dealt explicitly with mission, viz. Section II: "The Church's witness to God's design." The section faced the problem caused by divisions in this witness, stating, "If we take seriously our world-wide task, we are certain to be driven to think again of our divisions. Can we remain divided? the ecumenical movement loses significance, unless all its constituent churches bear ceaselessly in mind the prayer of Christ, 'That they all may be one; as thou, Father,

art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me' (John XVII, 21), and are prepared to move forward, as God guides them, to further unity in Faith, in fellowship, at the table of the Lord, and in united proclamation of the word of life."¹⁸

In the Message of the Assembly to the churches, the concern for mission in unity was also clearly expressed: "Millions of our fellow-men have never heard it (God's word). 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..... 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."¹⁹

There are some clear consequences for the development of the interrelationship between unity and mission to be drawn from Amsterdam. First of all, the institutional churches here gave formal expression to their conviction that the significance of the ecumenical movement was to be found in its united witness to the mission of Christ. This unity (in mission) was furthermore to have a theological basis, not existing merely for functional advantages. And this united mission was considered essential for the renewal of the Church. Mission was therefore seen by the member churches of the WCC not as something to be relegated to second place, but as being of primary importance for the life and existence of the Church. The fundamental theological basis of the interrelationship between unity and mission was therefore firmly expressed (and stated) right at the beginning of the life of the WCC. If the WCC and its member churches were to take these findings seriously, it could be expected that in future the concepts of unity and mission would influence each other.

2.2 Rolle, 1951

The statements of Amsterdam regarding unity and mission did not succeed in removing all uncertainty about the interrelationship between unity and mission.²⁰ For this reason the Central Committee of the WCC deemed it necessary to issue a clarifying statement on "The calling of the Church to mission and to unity" at its meeting at Rolle in 1951. This statement was the most explicit and significant document on this interrelationship that had yet appeared, presenting a synopsis of the developments in thinking up till that time, while at the same time laying the

foundation for the future development of relations between the IMC and the WCC.

The statement expressed clearly the biblical basis for the interrelationship between unity and mission (using here for the first time the term *apostolicity*).²¹ Unity and mission both rest upon the completed work of Christ in his cross, resurrection and *parousia*. "Thus 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 two tasks violates the wholeness of Christ's ministry to the world. Both of them are, in the strict sense of the word, essential to the being of the Church and the fulfilment of its function as the Body of Christ."²² Several implications for the life of the churches and the ecumenical movement, flowing from this statement of principle, were then pointed out. These included, amongst others, the admonition that any separation between a static, introverted Church, and missionary organizations not based in the life of local congregations, should be eradicated.

The Rolle statement was basically a reiteration (and somewhat fuller development) of the points of view on the interrelationship between unity and mission already stated by both the "missionary" (e.g. Whitby) and "ecclesiastical" (e.g. Amsterdam) sections of the ecumenical movement. At the same time the implications for the churches and the ecumenical movement were spelt out more clearly, while the question of a different future relationship between the IMC and the WCC was officially raised. An opportunity to gauge reaction in the circles of the IMC would come very soon, with the next meeting of the IMC at Willingen in 1952.

2.3 Willingen 1952

As could be expected (given the interrelated nature of the various sections of the ecumenical movement), Willingen's statement on "The calling of the Church to mission and unity"²³ corresponded in many respects to the Rolle Statement. One of the few notable differences in expressing the theological basis of this interrelationship, was Willingen's affirmation that "the calling of the Church to mission and unity issues from the *nature of God Himself*" (whereas Rolle expressed it more specifically in terms of Christ's work).²⁴ This difference is quite understandable, however, when seen in the context of Willingen's emphasis on the trinitarian basis of mission, as expressed in the concept of the

missio Dei. Building on the foundation of this large degree of agreement on the theological basis of the interrelationship, Willingen "sought to encourage positive steps to demonstrate an awareness of the need to foster both mission and unity as complementary aspects of the church's total vocation."²⁵ This issued in a series of practical recommendations, one of which concerned closer co-operation in the field of Faith and Order²⁶ – demonstrating yet again that the closer interrelationship was no longer regarded simply as a matter of practical expediency, but was the result of fundamental theological conviction.

The importance of Willingen for the development of the interrelationship between unity and mission is therefore to be found especially in the fact that it added the official endorsement of the IMC to a conviction, now obviously shared by all sections of the ecumenical movement, and which would lead to a fundamental revision of the existing relationship between the IMC and the WCC.

2.4 *Evanston 1954*

The Evanston Assembly of the WCC had before it (and eventually approved) the Rolle Statement on mission and unity. This was apparently regarded as an adequate expression of the interrelationship between unity and mission, as no new perspectives on the interrelationship were formulated by the assembly itself.²⁷ Evanston did, however, approve a series of practical steps based on the recommendations of the Rolle Statement, e.g. the reconstitution of the Joint Committee of the IMC/WCC, and the constitution of a joint Division of Studies to serve both councils.²⁸ This would obviously accelerate the movement towards the integration of the IMC and the WCC.

After Evanston it was clear that the member churches of the WCC were in favour of a new relationship between the IMC and the WCC, expressing more adequately the theological convictions regarding the interrelationship between unity and mission which had been growing in the ecumenical movement. The IMC would be obliged, therefore, at its next assembly, to express itself clearly on such a possible new relationship.

2.5 *Ghana 1958*

Under the leadership of the Joint Committee, events progressed fairly rapidly in the direction of the integration of the IMC and the WCC.²⁹ As was to be expected, therefore, the debate on the possible integration

tended to dominate the Ghana Assembly. Yet it was not the only concern of the Assembly. The central theme chosen for Ghana was: "The Christian mission at this hour". The deliberations of this theme reflected great uncertainty in missionary circles, especially among Western missionary societies. This was clearly voiced in Freytag's oft-quoted words, "Then (at Jerusalem 1928) missions had problems, but they were not a problem themselves."³⁰ This uncertainty (or "lost-directness", as Freytag also called it) influenced, but was itself also influenced by the debate on integration, i.e. the debate on the organizational expression of the interrelationship between unity and mission as it had developed in the ecumenical movement.

In the debate, organizational and procedural questions received a good deal of attention. Yet integration was not regarded simply as an organizational question – it was also debated in the theological context of "The Christian mission at this hour". The central theological theme which surfaced in relation to this discussion, was the affirmation: "The Christian world mission is Christ's, not ours."³¹ Because this was the case, Hubble could state in her report on the group discussions, "..... Church and mission belong together. The Church, because it is Christ's, is one Church and from Him has received one mission to go into all the world to preach His Gospel, to fulfil with Him His mission to the world."³² For this reason, the Assembly stated in its preamble to the resolutions in which integration was approved, "The Assembly is also convinced that in every possible way it must seek to reconcile the views and convictions of all concerned in order that we may advance together in putting the world mission of the Church at the heart of the Christian community."³³

The conviction of the fundamental theological basis of the interrelationship between unity and mission, which had been expressed clearly particularly since Whitby 1947, was therefore confirmed by the Ghana decision in favour of integration. The influence of the long history of separation (sometimes even mistrust) between Church and mission in Protestantism, reflected in the growth and importance of missionary societies, would, however, still continue to make itself felt.³⁴ This was probably one of the important contributory causes to the uncertainty in missionary circles reflected so clearly in the Ghana Assembly, as well as in relation to the eventual decision in favour of integration.³⁵ Although convinced of the soundness of the theological basis of the interrelationship between (Church) unity and mission, the IMC still found it difficult to adapt to all the implications and consequences of this interrelationship.

3. Conclusion

As Visser 't Hooft pointed out,^{3,6} there was an inherent logic in the growth of a closer interrelationship between unity and mission in the ecumenical movement. The IMC was obliged to concern itself more and more with the life and being of the Church. The WCC, on the other hand, as a council of churches, was obliged to pay increasing attention to the world mission of the Church. It became more and more difficult, therefore, to justify the separate existence of these two organs of the ecumenical movement.

Yet mission had existed separately from most of the Protestant churches for more than a century, causing estrangement and even a degree of mistrust. Coupled to this was the anomaly that Protestant missionary *societies*, having grown in isolation from Western churches, were mainly responsible for the birth of the younger *churches*, which now had to (and indeed wanted to) enter into mature relationships with the *churches* in the West. Despite the inherent logic of the growing interrelationship, therefore, and despite the fact that there was general agreement on the soundness of the theological basis of this interrelationship, there nonetheless remained many obstacles to a true, spiritual integration between unity and mission, an integration which would lead to a reciprocal leavening between these two essential aspects of the total calling of the Church. The integration could (and can) therefore not be regarded as the final goal of the development of the interrelationship between unity and mission. In a very real sense it was only the beginning of the process of mutual influencing and growth. In the following chapters an attempt will be made to determine the subsequent development of this important interrelationship in the ecumenical movement.

Notes

1. As quoted by Boegner, M.: *The long road to unity*, p. 269
2. As this is an introductory chapter, meant to present in the form of an overview the main tendencies in the development of the interrelationship between unity and mission, no exhaustive discussion of the various conferences and assemblies will be attempted.

3. Rouse, R. & Neill, S. (ed.): *A history of the ecumenical movement 1517–1948*, p. 359.
4. Rouse, R. & Neill, S. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 362.
5. Rouse, R. & Neill, S. (ed.): *op. cit.*, pp. 356–357.
6. Cf. Rouse, R. & Neill, S. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 369; also Gort, J.: "Jerusalem 1928: mission, kingdom, church", in *IRM*, vol. 67, 1978, pp. 281–293.
7. Cf. Gort, J.: *op. cit.*, p. 278.
8. Gort, J.: *op. cit.*, pp. 282–283.
9. Quoted by Gort, J.: *op. cit.*, p. 285.
10. Thus e.g. Jansen Schoonhoven, E.: "Tambaram 1938" in *IRM*, vol. 67, 1978, p. 302; Andersen, W.: *Towards a theology of mission*, p. 20; Rouse, R. & Neill, S. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 369.
11. Cf. Andersen, W.: *op. cit.*, pp. 20–21.
12. Cf. Jansen Schoonhoven, E.: *op. cit.*, pp. 303–304.
13. Rouse, R. & Neill, S. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 370.
14. Rouse, R. & Neill, S. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 371.
15. Carino, F.C.: "Partnership in obedience", in *IRM*, vol. 67, 1978, p. 320.
16. Carino, F.C.: *op. cit.*, p. 319.
17. Cf. Rouse, R. & Neill, S. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 372.
18. Visser 't Hooft, W.A. (ed.): *The first Assembly of the World Council of Churches. The official report*, p. 69.
19. Visser 't Hooft, W.A. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 10.
20. Cf. for the causes of this uncertainty "The calling of the Church to mission and to unity": statement of the Central Committee, Rolle, Switzerland. August, 1951, in (WCC): *The first six years 1948–1954*, pp. 124–125.
21. *Apostolicity* can of course be understood in various ways: (a) the apostolicity of the Church can be understood especially in terms of apostolic succession (as is the case generally in episcopal churches); (b) the apostolicity of the Church can be understood in terms of remaining faithful to the apostles' doctrine (as is the case generally in churches of the Reformed tradition); (c) the apostolicity of the Church can be understood in terms of the apostolic mission of the Church in the world (the theology of the apostolate). It is in this latter sense that the term was used in the Rolle statement, and in which the term will be used throughout this study.
22. (WCC): *The first six years 1948–1954*, p. 127.
23. This statement can be found in the official reference volume, i.e. Goodall, N. (ed.): *Missions under the Cross*.
24. Goodall, N. (ed.): *op. cit.*, pp. 193–194. Italics mine.
25. Bassham, R.C.: "Seeking a deeper theological basis for mission", in *IRM*, vol. 67, 1978, p. 336.
26. Cf. Fey, H. (ed.): *The ecumenical advance. A history of the ecumenical movement*, vol. 2. 1948–1968, p. 181.
27. Cf. Fey, H. (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 181.
28. *Ibid.*

29. For an overview of the actions of the Joint Committee, cf. Fey, H. (ed.): *op. cit.*, pp. 182–184.
30. Orchard, R.K. (ed.): *The Ghana Assembly of the International Missionary Council 28th December, 1957 to 8th January, 1958*. London: Edinburgh House Press, 1958, p. 138.
31. Orchard, R.K. (ed.): *op. cit.*, pp. 180, 184. Cf. also Fey, H. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 185.
32. Orchard, R.K. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 172.
33. Orchard, R.K. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 166.
34. This problem, of bringing Church and missionary practice in line with the theological conviction, had already been pointed out in the Rolle Statement; cf. (WCC): *The first six years*, pp. 127–128.
35. This is reflected very clearly in an article on the integration by Max Warren. He writes, "The writer of this article did himself cast his vote for integration. He was not the only one to do so, however, while fully sharing the misgivings of many about this whole development". Cf. (Verkuyl, J.): *Zending op weg naar de toekomst*. Essays aangeboden aan prof. dr. J. Verkuyl. Kampen: Kok, 1978, p. 190.
36. Visser 't Hooft, W.A.: *Tot eenheid geroepen*. Nijkerk: Callenbach, n.d., pp. 47–48.

2

UNITY AND MISSION

In the light of the cosmic kingship of Christ

1. New Delhi

1.1 The interrelationship stressed

As has already been pointed out in the previous chapter, the integration of the WCC and the IMC was regarded as much more than simply an organizational affair. Rather, it was an effort to place mission where it belonged, namely in the heart of the ecumenical movement. It is therefore quite understandable that at the first assembly of the integrated body (already the third assembly of the WCC), the interrelationship should be stressed quite strongly. "Die Ökumene hat endgültig die Dimension der Weltmission hinzugewonnen, und die Weltmission ist vollends ökumenisch geworden. Wenn Christus wirklich das Licht der Welt ist, dann gehören fortan Zeugnis und Einheit der Kirche zusammen – um dieses Lichts und um dieser Welt willen; dann gibt es nur noch die eine Aufgabe, 'das missionarische Zeugnis zum Boten der Einheit zu machen, und die Einheit so zu suchen, dass damit der Welt zum Glauben geholfen wird'."¹

In the report of the section on Unity as well as that of the section on Witness, this interrelationship was consequently expressly stated. Thus in the report of the section on Unity it was stated, "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."² In the same way the report of the section on Witness stressed the interrelationship of this report with the reports on Unity and Service, and continued, "The question of the Church's unity is of vital importance, since the Bible teaches us that the Gospel cannot be authoritatively proclaimed to the world by a disunited Church..... The three themes of unity, witness and service are in the last resort not three but one."³ In the light of this conscious stressing of the interrelationship, it was to be expected that discussions about and decisions on the concept of unity were bound to have a strong influence on the concept of the world mission of the Church. It is against this background, then, that the concept of unity in the discussions at New Delhi must now be examined.

1.2 The concept of unity at New Delhi

In a paper on the theme "Called to Unity", J. Sittler articulated a concept of unity at New Delhi which was to influence theological thinking greatly for a long time. This was so because, as Honig points out: "Er zijn visies, die in een bepaalde fase der geschiedenis als het ware geboren worden uit de ontwikkeling, waarbij het betrekkelijk weinig ter zake doet, wie de formulering tot stand brengt."⁴ The vision which Sittler formulated in this paper, was that concerning the cosmic dimensions of the kingship of Christ. The reasons why the historical circumstances were right for this new vision, are to be found in the background of theological and missiological thinking in the fifties of this century. The fifties had been the decade of great emphasis on so-called "Biblical theology"; it had also been the decade in which "salvation history" (with the Church as bearer and mediator of salvation) had been emphasized much more strongly than (secular) "world history"; and finally it had been the decade of *Missio Dei*, understood especially in terms of the definitions of G.F. Vicedom and Willingen, 1952 (i.e. mission belongs to the Triune God, who sent his prophets, sent his Son and Spirit, and is now sending the Church).

At the same time, however, new concepts had been gaining ground,

especially in students' ecumenical circles. These were especially strongly influenced by J.C. Hoekendijk's exposition of the theology of the apostolate. These new concepts, or the filling of old concepts with new content, came to be articulated clearly at the meeting of the WSCF in Strasbourg in 1960. There was especially strong reaction to the central place of the Church according to the concept of "salvation history". For them (along the lines of the theology of the apostolate), the *Church* should not be central, but the *world* (and therefore *its* history). Where the Church was still spoken of, it had to be the Church-for-others. On the basis of this point of view, the concept of *Missio Dei* was also filled with new content: "*missio Dei* concerned God's offer of *shalom* to the whole creation, and was by no means to be domesticated in the Church."⁵ It is against this background that Honig's remark about the vision born out of a special set of historical circumstances, must be read.

Another contributory factor was the stronger presence of the Eastern Orthodox Churches at New Delhi, with their specific way of thinking (inherited mainly from Irenaeus, with whom Sittler was to link up quite strongly) in which all (apparent) antitheses are seen as part of a greater synthesis. It should be noted that in the opening worship of the New Delhi Assembly it was expressly stated that this way of thinking was necessary for the Church in order to break out of the bonds of the Western light/darkness antithesis.⁶ When all these factors are taken into consideration, it is clear that the stage was set for Sittler's vision of the cosmic kingship of Christ.

In his analysis of the meaning of the cosmic kingship of Christ for the call to unity, Sittler took as his point of departure Colossians 1:15–20. In the context of this pericope he stressed especially the relationship between *Christ* and the six-times-repeated *ta panta* (all things).⁷ In the light of this relationship, creation and redemption may never be divorced from each other: "In propositional form it is simply this: a doctrine of redemption is meaningful only when it swings within the larger orbit of a doctrine of creation. For God's creation of earth cannot be redeemed in any intelligible sense of the word apart from a doctrine of the cosmos which is his home."⁸

One of the important consequences of this fact is that the Light of God (Christ) permeates the whole world, that the Light of the Creator-God is in fact inherent in all his created world. Thus "it is now excruciatingly clear that Christ cannot be a light that lighteth every man coming into the world, if he is not also the light that falls upon the world into which

every man comes. He enlightens the darkling world because the world was made through him.... Creation is the work of God, who is light. And the light of the Creator God falls upon and inheres within his creation. The world of nature can be the place of this light that 'came' by Jesus Christ because, despite the world's hostility to that light, it was never without the light of God."⁹ As a result of all this, the Church had to start grappling with the idea of a cosmic redemption. Only in this way would a "fuller unity" be possible.¹⁰ Some of the very important implications which Sittler's view would come to have for the new concept of unity, are: (i) unity is grounded primarily in *creation*, rather than in *re-creation*; (ii) the antitheses between Church and world, between the Christian faith and other faiths tends to fade away somewhat, as they eventually form part of a larger synthesis; (iii) what had hitherto been accepted as "unity in Christ" therefore needed to be expanded.

The influence of Sittler's paper became apparent even in the deliberations and discussions at New Delhi. Honig points out its influence in Devanandan's paper, "Called to Witness", in which he enquired whether proclaiming the Gospel aimed at the complete destruction of all other religions. "Of zullen religies en volken als zodanig in hun eigen aard voortbestaan in de volheid der tijden, 'wanneer God alle dingen samenvat in Christus, beide wat in de hemel en wat op de aarde is', Ef.1:10?"¹¹ Its influence can also be detected in the report of the section on Unity, which stated, "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 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."¹²

1.3 The influence of this concept on mission

This concept of the unity of the Church, based on the cosmic kingship of Christ, was bound to have important consequences for the world mission of the Church. This is so because, as Ahrens points out, the ecumenical discussion on cosmic Christology started at New Delhi, was basically concerned with finding a new way of expressing the kingly rule of Christ. It thus stood in direct relationship to the older ecumenical debates on the kingship of Christ over Church and world. These debates on the theme of the kingship of Christ, though, had from the beginning

been characterized by the fact that they always implied the question of mission.¹³ According to Honig, it can therefore indeed be stated that this new vision of unity was to change the character of mission to its very roots.¹⁴ The most important of these consequences for mission were the following:

1.3.1 The old distinction between "salvation history" and "secular history" faded away, and "secular history" as history of the world, the arena where God is primarily at work, received great emphasis. The world where God is at work, has in fact already been united under its cosmic king (*kosmokrator*) Christ, and as the arena where his dominion must become visible, is of great importance. For this reason, the focal points for the Church in carrying out its mission had to be the focal points of social and political activity. That is where God is already at work in *his* mission (*Missio Dei!*) and it was therefore the missionary task of the Church to determine where God was at work in order to join him in his mission.

1.3.2 It is clear that such a concept was bound to provide a fresh impetus for renewal in mission. Faith had to be faith-in-action, especially faith-in-socio-political-action. It was therefore the task of mission to set man free from all "principalities and powers" which prevented him from realizing his full potential under the cosmic king, Christ, according to the light and potential of the Creator-God inherent in his creation.

1.3.3 The sharpness of the dividing lines between Church and world, between Christian faith and other faiths had to be blurred somewhat, as they were all apparent antitheses which were bound ultimately to be summed up in the *kosmokrator*, Christ. This latter view was bound to have a strong influence on mission, as it seemed to call into question the uniqueness of the Christian faith, which had always been a strong missionary motive.

1.4 Conclusion

It is thus clear that even at New Delhi the integration of the WCC and the IMC, with the resulting closer interrelationship between unity and mission on organizational as well as theological levels, proved to be of great importance for mission. McCavert is therefore correct in saying that it actually "marks a new stage in the Christian world mission."¹⁵ In his evaluation of New Delhi, Nagpur wrote, "Thus the first meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism within the integrated

World Council gives promise of a new obedience to the Lord of the Church who calls it to unity and mission. 'Integration must mean that the World Council of Churches takes the missionary task into the very heart of its life, and that the missionary agencies of the churches place their work in an ecumenical perspective and accept whatever new insights God may give through new relationships'. Those of us who were privileged to attend the meeting tasted the first fruits of this expectation."¹⁶ Yet a fuller understanding of the consequences could only really be expected at the meeting of the CWME at Mexico City in 1963.

2. Mexico City

The meeting of the CWME at Mexico City was the next in the tradition of the great missionary conferences started at Edinburgh in 1910 and continued by the meetings of the IMC at Jerusalem (1928), Tambaram (1938), Whitby (1947), Willingen (1952) and Achimota (1958). Because of the integration of the IMC and the WCC at New Delhi, however, there were two important differences in the make-up of the meeting at Mexico City: (i) Since the WCC is a council of *churches*, whereas *councils* could also belong to the IMC, the meeting at Mexico City had a much wider official representation of both older and younger churches than had been the case at meetings of the IMC. (ii) A completely new aspect in the make-up of the conference was the presence of official representatives of the Orthodox Churches. They had not been members of the IMC; actually the Orthodox Churches generally viewed the modern missionary movement with a great deal of (very often justifiable) suspicion as "the aggressive expression of a Protestantism which was fundamentally heretical and dangerous..... Conversely, most representatives of the great missionary enterprise of the nineteenth century regarded the Orthodox churches very largely as ecclesiastical museum pieces, lacking that vital spark which produces a passionate dedication to the task of winning the world for Christ."¹⁷

Since New Delhi, however, the majority of Orthodox churches was represented in the WCC, and as such they now also took their place in the CWME. This could be expected to have important implications especially for the interrelationship of unity and mission. Both these differences between the make-up of previous IMC conferences and that of the newly-established CWME, were therefore bound to influence the outcome of the meeting.

2.1 *The message of Mexico City*

The changing concept of mission is clearly reflected in the message of Mexico City to the churches. For this reason it is necessary to quote fairly extensively from the message: "We thus affirm that this missionary task is one and demands unity. It is one because the Gospel is one. It is one because in all countries the Churches face the same essential task. It is one because every Christian congregation in all the world is called to show the love of God in Christ, in witness and service to the world at its doors. It demands unity because it is obedience to one Lord, and because we cannot effectively witness to the secularized or to the non-Christian world if we are isolated from one another. We need the gifts God has given to each Church for the witness of the whole Church.... We therefore affirm that this missionary movement now involves Christians in all six continents and in all lands. It must be the common witness of the whole Church, bringing the whole Gospel to the whole world... God's purpose still stands: to sum up all things in Christ. In this hope we dedicate ourselves anew to his mission in the spirit of unity and in humble dependence upon our living Lord."^{1 8}

The following trends or changes can be noted in the message:

2.1.1 There was a very strong emphasis on the interrelationship between unity and mission – just as at New Delhi.

2.1.2 Although there was no explicit reference to the cosmic Christology of New Delhi, the influence could be clearly noticed in the concept of mission. In general the missionary task of the Church was described in the context of God's acts in the *secular* world. Specifically God's purpose in mission is described as a desire to sum up *all things* in Christ. The influence of the cosmic Christology of New Delhi is very clear in this statement. Newbigin was correct therefore in saying that Mexico City was the continuation of a line started at New Delhi, and taken up especially by Asian theologians.^{1 9}

2.1.3 There was clear recognition of the fact that mission now meant: mission in six continents. Indeed, this was the overriding thrust of Mexico City, providing a missionary slogan which was never to disappear from missionary thinking again. Because of its lasting importance, more needs to be said about this aspect. The articulation of this concept, as well as its world-wide impact and acceptance, was the result of the convergence of social, political and theological factors. The end of the colonial era, with the rising tide of nationalism and the renaissance of ancient cultures and religions in the Third World, coupled with the total destruc-

tion of the idea of the *corpus Christianum* in the West, made the whole Church aware of its position as a minority in the world. It was simply no longer practically possible to maintain the idea of mission from the "Christian" West to the "non-Christian" East.

At the same time the integration of the WCC and the IMC took place, giving the younger churches from the Third World a much stronger presence in, and influence on, the missionary movement. Furthermore, this was perhaps the strongest evidence of the implicit influence of the concept of the cosmic kingship of Christ. If Christ is king of the cosmos, he is as much king in the East as in the West, in the North as in the South. The only way in which mission could therefore logically be viewed was as mission in six continents, that is to say, in *the world*. In his evaluation of Mexico City, Ranson could thus state: "Missionary theology cannot bypass the Church. But it must find its deepest roots in the Being of God as Creator and Redeemer and the Lordship of Christ not only in the Church but in the world. This change of theological focus was not merely evident in the theme of Mexico City. It permeated the thought of the meeting and affected its *ethos* and its mood."²⁰ Another aspect of the concept of the cosmic kingship of Christ pointed out above, viz. the focus of the missionary task of the Church on the focal points of social and political activity, also became evident at Mexico City. "Thus at Mexico speakers from east and west, in their endeavour to restate the full scope of the Christian mission, were affirming that missionary obedience requires this solidarity with the contemporary, the identification of the Christian with movements, trends and developments characteristic of a revolutionary period in the world's history."²¹

In the light of the above, it seems reasonable to conclude, then, that the concept of the cosmic kingship of Christ as articulated at New Delhi in its relationship to the unity of the Church, strongly influenced also the concept of the world mission of the Church as articulated at Mexico City.

3. Evaluation

That the interrelationship between unity and mission was confirmed by the integration of the IMC and the WCC and that the concept of unity influenced the concept of mission during the first period of this study, can therefore not be doubted. But how is this interrelationship and influence to be evaluated?

3.1 During this period the interrelationship was firmly established, both in organizational as well as in theological terms. This was clearly noticeable at New Delhi as well as at Mexico City. Henceforth it would be impossible to think about mission apart from this firm relationship with the Church.

3.2 In the light of the fundamental link between unity and mission, the "fruitful tension" in which the concepts of unity and mission were placed in relation to each other, was necessary and to the advantage of both the ecumenical movement and the missionary movement.

3.3 The broadening of the theological and ecclesial base of ecumenical missionary thinking, with the direct involvement not only of a larger number of *churches*, but also of different *traditions* (the Orthodox Churches), was definitely to the advantage of mission. Ecumenical missionary thinking was no longer simply a Protestant concern.

3.4 In the theology of the apostolate (which, as has been pointed out, greatly influenced New Delhi), the world forms the centre of theological reflection, and not the Church. At New Delhi, the centre of gravity in discussing the unity of the Church accordingly started shifting from the Church to the world. At Mexico City, then, the centre of gravity in connection with salvation/liberation consequently started shifting to God's salvific and liberating action in the world.^{2 2}

3.5 The concept of the cosmic kingship of Christ was responsible for the breaking of new ground in missionary thinking, especially with regard to the relationship with people of other faiths and ideologies. Dialogue would in future receive greater emphasis – an approach which was essential in the new world of the post-colonial era, both in the secularized "Christian" West and the renascent "non-Christian" East.

3.6 The concept of mission in six continents, which grew in part out of the concept of the cosmic kingship of Christ (as has been pointed out above) was to prove crucial to the integrity of the world mission of the Church. This is so not only on account of the changed context in which the Church had to carry out its mission, but also because this concept is completely in line with the biblical tradition of mission.

3.7 The concept of the cosmic kingship of Christ, coming as it did in a period when the Church was becoming painfully aware of its minority position and the erosion of its influence in the world, provided a stimulus

to counteract a ghetto-mentality in Church and mission.

3.8 Although the theological foundation of the concept of the cosmic kingship of Christ cannot be questioned, there is a question that needs to be answered, viz. whether there was sufficient awareness of the dangers inherent in pointing out the actions of the cosmic king, Christ, in the facts of everyday history. World history provides ample proof that such an exercise can be fraught with danger — to mention just one example, the messianism attributed to Hitler by the "deutsche Christen".

3.9 Another threatening danger inherent in developing a cosmic Christology, is that it can so easily develop into a monistic Christocentrism which denies the implications of a trinitarian concept of God and therefore offers no solution for the problem of the relationship between the acts of Christ and those of God.^{2 3}

3.10 A problem related to this monistic Christocentrism, is the following: If, according to this concept of the cosmic kingship of Christ, He is already at work everywhere in the world (also the world of the religions) and mission simply means joining him in this work, does it not then mean that eventually Christ's work in ushering in the kingdom of God will take place in any case, without any contribution from the Church-in-mission?

3.11 Another subject drawn anew into discussion after New Delhi and Mexico City, was the meaning and function of salvation history ("Heilsgeschichte"). According to the cosmic Christology of New Delhi, this salvation history had to be defined in very universal terms. "Zurücktreten muss das (heilsgeschichtliche) bis dahin im Vordergrund stehende Verständnis einer in der Weltgeschichte eingebetteten speziellen biblischen Heilsgeschichte..... Die Funktion einer solchen universalen heilsgeschichtlichen Schau liegt vor allem darin, den Gehorsam des Glaubens dem kosmischen Christus gegenüber zu bekunden..... Doch darf nicht übersehen werden, dass die Funktion der geschichtstheologischen Sicht auch darin besteht, der Welt die volle Solidarität der Christenheit zu bezeugen. Daneben ist die wichtigste kritische Anfrage im Auge zu behalten: Bringt die Universalisierung der Christologie nicht deren soteriologische Bedeutung in Gefahr? Und damit verbunden: Wird bei einer solchen komprehensiven Schau das Unwesen der Geschichte, ihre Sünde oder Ambivalenz noch voll beachtet?"^{2 4} In other words, the relationship between the salvific deeds of God in history and history itself, had not yet been clearly worked out. When one considers the enthusiasm with which the

old (in many ways mistaken) distinction between "salvation history" (Heilsgeschichte), and ordinary, secular world history was eradicated, one feels bound to apply some caution and to enquire whether this enthusiasm was not in a large part due to a latent and still undigested lump of nineteenth century evolutionary optimism in both theology and sociology.

4. Conclusion

The first phase of the new interrelationship between unity and mission, which came into being at New Delhi in 1961, thus produced mixed results. In many ways the closer link between Church and mission in the ecumenical movement, proved to be beneficial and led to progress. In some instances, however, the new relationship also gave (implicit) evidence of unresolved issues which were to plague unity and mission in the future. That the concept of unity greatly influenced the world mission of the Church can, however, not be denied, whether one regards this influence in a positive or in a negative perspective.

As coming events cast their shadows before them, so the next phase in the development of the interrelationship between unity and mission was already appearing on the horizon at Mexico City. In a paper read by M.M. Thomas, he put the question, "When we think of ecumenical missions we cannot but ask the question: how are secular ecumenism and Christian ecumenism related to each other? What is the peculiar Christian witness of missions to and within secular ecumenism?"²⁵ Thus the subject of unity and mission in the light of the relationship between the unity of the Church and the unity of mankind appeared on the agenda of the missionary movement. It is this next phase of the interrelationship which we now have to investigate.

Notes

1. Gensichen, H.W.: "Zeugnis und Einheit der Christenheit nach der Integration von Mission und Ökumene", in *ÖR*, p. 24.
2. (WCC): *The New Delhi Report*, p. 121.
3. (WCC): *op. cit.*, p. 78.
4. Honig, A.G. jr.: *De kosmische betekenis van Christus*, p. 8.
5. Newbigin, L.: "Mission and Missions" in *The Expository Times*, vol. 88, 1976-77, pp. 260-261. Cf. also Honig, A.G. jr.: *op. cit.*, pp. 12-20.

6. Honig, A.G. jr.: *op. cit.*, p. 10. This statement was made in relation to the theme of the assembly: Jesus Christ, the light of the world.
7. Sittler, J.: "Called to Unity" in *ER*, vol. 14, 1962, p. 177.
8. Sittler, J.: *op. cit.*, p. 178.
9. Sittler, J.: *op. cit.*, pp. 179–180.
10. Cf. Sittler, J.: *op. cit.*, pp. 186–187.
11. Honig, A.G. jr.: *op. cit.*, p. 10.
12. As quoted by Goodall, N.: *The Ecumenical Movement*, pp. 224–225. Italics mine.
13. Ahrens, T.: *Die ökumenische Diskussion kosmischer Christologie seit 1961. Darstellung und Kritik*, p. ii.
14. Honig, A.G. jr.: *De Heerschappij van Christus en de zending*, p. 16.
15. (WCC): *The New Delhi Report*, p. 55
16. Nagpur, J.: "New Delhi, 1961. The third assembly of the World Council of Churches", in *IRM*, vol. 51, 1962, p. 150.
17. Goodall, N.: *Ecumenical Progress*, p. 23.
18. Orchard, R.K. (ed.): *Witness in six continents*, pp. 173–175.
19. Quoted by Bassarak, G.: *Missionsstrategie im Wandel*, p. 150.
20. Ranson, C.W.: "Mexico City 1963", in *IRM*, vol. 52, 1964, pp. 137–138.
21. Goodall, N.: *op. cit.*, pp. 36–37.
22. Cf. Ahrens, T.: *op. cit.*, pp. 179–181.
23. Cf. Müller-Fahrenholz, G.: *Heilsgeschichte zwischen Ideologie und Prophetie*, p. 50.
24. Müller-Fahrenholz, G.: *op. cit.*, p. 38.
25. Orchard, R.K. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 15.

3

UNITY AND MISSION

In the perspective of the unity of mankind

1. Background

It has been pointed out in the conclusion of the previous chapter that the question about the relationship between the unity of the Church (or Christian ecumenism) and the unity of mankind (or secular ecumenism) had already been raised at Mexico City. This is not to be regarded as some unexpected development, unrelated to discussions at New Delhi and Mexico City. On the contrary, it was a logical theological development within the given socio-political context. In the theological sense, the theology of the apostolate (which, as has been stated, formed the theological background of ecumenical missiological thinking), with at its centre and focal point the *world* and not the *Church*, coupled with the whole development of a cosmic Christology, more or less made this subject self-evident. If Christ was (already) the cosmic king, in whom God was summing up all things, then obviously there had to be some inter-relationship between the unity of the Church and the unity of mankind. This theological link with the concept of the cosmic kingship of Christ

was pointed out explicitly by Rodger at the meeting of the Central Committee of the WCC at Enugu in 1965.

In explaining the background of the decision by Faith and Order at Aarhus in 1964 to start a study project on this relationship, he pointed out that the impulse for this study came from New Delhi via Mexico City. This was also the reason why this study would overlap with the study of the CWME started in connection with the concept of the cosmic kingship of Christ, viz. "The finality of Christ in an age of universal history." This theological link should furthermore be seen against the background of its socio-political context, which is described by Newbigin as follows: "The growth of what may be called a secular ecumenism, a widespread sense among men of all races that the human family is one and that everything which in practice denies this is an offence against God, has led many Christians to feel that the real task for our day is to manifest the unity of mankind rather than to manifest the unity of the Church."³ It is clear, therefore, that there was a link between, even a logical development from, the unity and mission of the Church in the light of the cosmic kingship of Christ, and the unity and mission of the Church in the perspective of the unity of mankind. A closer examination of this second phase of the interrelationship between unity and mission is therefore called for.

2. Preliminary Developments of the Study Project

2.1 *Aarhus*

As has already been mentioned above, the study of the relationship between the unity of the Church and the unity of mankind started with the study project on "The nature of unity" which was decided on by Faith and Order at its meeting at Aarhus in 1964. At this meeting, the goal of the proposed study was sketched briefly in the following words: "The Church is challenged to show forth its unity not only in communion with God through Jesus Christ, but also by sharing in the travail by which the whole creation is finally brought into communion with God." The influence of the cosmic Christology of New Delhi is quite clear (bringing the whole creation, i.e. the cosmos, into communion with God). The resulting shift of the focus in mission to the focal points of social and political action (see above p. 25), is also reflected in the statement ("sharing in the travail of the whole creation").

Actually it was the whole problem of the relationship between "Heils-

geschichte" and "secular" history, which had been on the agenda since New Delhi, but had not been satisfactorily dealt with yet, which formed the background against which this study was decided upon, L. Vischer formulated provisional terms of reference for the study by stating "that the new study would consider both the horizontal and the vertical dimension of the Church in her catholicity. He illustrated the horizontal aspect in terms of the world's increasing unity and the parallel need for the Churches 'to adapt their conception' of catholicity to the contemporary situation. The vertical dimension of the Church was safeguarded in Vischer's clear contention that the Church's catholicity is 'God-given'."⁵ Thus the study was prompted by theological as well as sociological and contextual factors.

2.2 Developments after Aarhus

As the study progressed, it soon became clear that the emphasis would fall on the world (mankind) rather than on the Church. This became evident especially at the conference on Church and Society at Geneva in 1966. The focus of this conference was almost exclusively on the world.⁶ This is not to be taken as proof that the WCC (or the ecumenical movement) had surrendered its theological basis, but rather that according to the new Christological developments, the relationship between Church and world was to be expressed in different terms and in a different way. That is why Fuerth can state in his comment on this meeting, "Any pre-dilection for thinking about the problem of church unity which would neglect the relationship of the Church and the world was considered to be misleading. The problems of the unity of mankind, of a Christian interpretation of secularization, and of church unity would have to be considered together."⁷ Again the influence of the concept of the cosmic kingship of Christ, according to which the world rather than the Church is primarily the concern and the arena of God's actions, was quite clear.

The emphasis on the world rather than on the Church, and the influence it would have on the mission of the Church, was clearly reflected in the discussion of the preliminary report on the study project prepared for the meeting of Faith and Order at Bristol in 1967. The report was criticized especially because "some felt it had too 'churchly' a character, and that 'Catholicity' should not be dealt with as a merely ecclesiological theme but it should be made clear in what ways the Church's catholicity was to be realized anew to fulfil God's mission in the world."⁸ By this time, however, the first signs of rather apprehensive reaction to the conclusions of the conference on Church and Society were becoming notice-

able among various groups. The members of the Faith and Order study group consequently also realized that this study could easily come to be dominated by an extreme sociological horizontalism. In order to help put it in the right perspective again, therefore, Nelson pointed out that "the Church exists for the world and has a mission to the world. The insight that unity and mission together involve the Church in service in the world has particular value if it is deepened by relating soteriology closely with unity and mission. Hence, the unity of the Church is not the same as the unity of the world, but it is in relationship to the Church's *salvific* mission to the world. These two kinds of unity are interrelated, to be sure, but they are not to be identified simply."⁹

To review the development and the preliminary conclusions of the study programme on the eve of the Uppsala Assembly of the WCC, then: unity and mission were to be judged in their interrelationship in the perspective of the unity of the world/mankind. It was essentially mission, specifically the "salvific mission" of the Church, which determined the relationship of the unity of the Church to the unity of mankind. The unity of the Church, through the Church's mission, should therefore serve the unity of the world/mankind. In this concept of mission the completely new content given to the concept of the *Missio Dei* can be detected (a development of the progress started at New Delhi – cf. Chapter 2). The strong interrelationship between the concept of unity and the concept of the world mission of the Church is thereby clearly illustrated. The eventual consequence of the changing meaning of these concepts could logically be expected to become clearer still at the Fourth Assembly of the WCC at Uppsala. This Assembly therefore now warrants attention.

3. Uppsala

3.1 Background

In various documents relating to the study of the relationship between the unity of the Church and the unity of mankind, the term *catholicity* began appearing more and more frequently. This was consequently to become the catchword decided upon at Uppsala to express the concept of unity. In analysing the concept of unity at Uppsala, therefore, the definition of *catholicity* is of great importance. This term was defined in the Report of Section I as follows: "Yet it is within this very world that God makes catholicity available to all men through the ministry of Christ in his Church. The purpose of Christ is to bring people of all times, of all

... races, of all places, of all conditions, into an organic and living unity in Christ by the Holy Spirit under the universal fatherhood of God. This unity is not solely external; it has a deeper, internal dimension, which is also expressed by the term 'catholicity'. Catholicity reaches its completion when what God has already begun in history is finally disclosed and fulfilled."¹⁰

This definition clearly differed somewhat from the generally accepted concept of catholicity as a "mark" of the Church. It was grounded in the cosmic kingship of Christ, and was therefore not to be confined solely to the Church – rather, it was to be found in God's acts in history (which here clearly referred to the history of mankind in general, "secular" history, and not "salvation history"). *Catholicity* was thus not a term which could be used solely in connection with the Church – there was a sense in which the term actually attained its true and full meaning only in relation to the unity of mankind. (This would be stated clearly in the concept of the unity of the Church as "sacrament" or "sign" of the unity of mankind). There was also a very strong sense of expectation of this attainment of full catholicity (the unity of mankind), or, as it were, a strong eschatological element: the process leading towards full catholicity has already begun in history, but is to be completely unfolded in future, perhaps in the *eschaton*.

However, it would be a grave error on the side of the Church merely to wait passively for this future disclosure. The Church should rather be working actively to promote its full unfolding, as was implicitly stated in the Report: "There are then two factors in it (catholicity): the unifying grace of the Spirit and the humble efforts of believers, who do not seek their own, but are united in faith, 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."¹¹ In this engagement (for the sake of full catholicity) lies the real task of the mission of the Church. "The Church's catholicity is closely linked with her apostolicity The catholicity of the Church is taken up and carried into her apostolicity, her mission When we speak of mission, we do not mean only the outgoing activity of the Church, but rather the accomplishment of her God-given task within and outside the Church The catholic understanding of apostolicity, or, the apostolic understanding of catholicity makes both these qualities interrelated, inseparable, complementary forms of existence and ways of witness."¹²

In these clear terms the interrelation of unity and mission was spelled

out at Uppsala. According to the dominant concept of unity at the Assembly, viz. the unity of the Church in the perspective of and in the service of the unity of mankind, the main thrust of mission therefore was to engage in the task of attaining the full disclosure of catholicity (the unity of mankind). In other words, the very comprehensive concept of unity led to an equally comprehensive concept of mission. That is why Goodall, in his commentary on Uppsala, could state, "Perhaps it was a mistake to sectionalize the study of mission and not recognize that it involved everything with which the Assembly was concerned, from Faith and Order to Rapid Social Change."¹³

3.2 Theological basis for the study: unity of the Church – unity of mankind

As has been pointed out above, even within the circles of Faith and Order there was an awareness of the fact that this study could easily fall prey to extreme sociological horizontalism. But outside of the WCC (especially among evangelicals) there was even greater apprehension that this study could lead the ecumenical movement completely astray, landing it in some vague, all-inclusive humanistic movement for world unity. It is therefore essential to determine what was considered to be the theological basis (if any) of this study. Another reason why this is very important within the total framework of this study, is that such a theological basis would necessarily greatly influence the concept of mission.

3.2.1 In the evaluation of Chapter 2, it has been pointed out that the problem of the relationship between salvation history ("Heilsgeschichte") and secular/world history, had been left unsolved by the cosmic Christology of New Delhi and Mexico City. The study of the unity of the Church in the perspective of the unity of mankind has therefore to be seen, inter alia, as a serious attempt to solve that problem. In this respect it is essential to take note of an important shift which had taken place in the ecclesiological thinking of the WCC. No longer did the Church consider itself to be the canonical interpreter of world history (from the vantage point of salvation history). Rather, the Church now considered itself to be the hermeneutical steward ("hermeneutischer Diakonos"), striving towards a socio-political praxis of salvation within history. "Man will nicht von Heilsgeschichte *reden*. Man will Heilsgeschichte *machen*. Es ist sinngemäss, dass solch aktiver Einsatz in der Geschichte den geläufigen Spielraum kirchlichen Handelns überschreiten und sich im diakonischen Einsatz für die säkulare Unheilsgeschichte, konkret im Kampf

gegen Armut, Ausbeutung, Rassismus, usw., bewähren will. Das liegt durchaus auf der Linie jenes Denkens, das Gottes heilhaftes Handeln auf alle Bereiche der Wirklichkeit bezieht.”¹⁴

The catholicity of the Church therefore has to be *lived out* in the world, and in so doing the Church promotes the unity of the world/mankind.¹⁵ It was in this sense, then, that the Church could be “bold in speaking of itself as the sign of the coming unity of mankind”. This involved a pro-existence, as “the Church lives in the world for her Lord and therefore for those not yet in her fellowship”.¹⁶ Salvation history was therefore no longer a (albeit very important, even central) sub-division of world history, interpreted by the Church for the world. Salvation history was world history in the sense of *pars pro toto*.

3.2.2 Closely linked to the previous observation, is the fact that this study was not conceived on the grounds of some humanistic impulse. At least in its official discussions and reports, the Study Committee made it clear that the centre and foundation of this unity was Christ and that it was only through the action of his Holy Spirit that this unity could be brought about. In other words, the (supposed) unity of mankind was not regarded as the impulse and foundation for the unity of the Church. This was explicitly stated by the Study Committee at its meeting in 1969: “(Human unity) is a useful way of entering into the discussion, provided it is clear that the study of the concept of human unity cannot provide a foundation for a doctrine of the unity of the Church. On the contrary, our understanding both of the unity of the Church and of the unity of mankind depends upon our understanding of what God has done in Jesus Christ in creating man in his image, reconciling him to himself, and leading him through the continuing work of the Spirit towards the final ‘summing up of all things’ in Christ.”¹⁷

It is possible, therefore, that in some circles (even amongst participants in the study), this study was regarded in a relativistic and humanistic light. However, that certainly was not the official attitude of either Faith and Order in particular or the WCC in general. This study must rather be judged within the theological framework of cosmic Christology, against the larger background of the theology of the apostolate (especially as propounded by Hoekendijk), in which the *world*, and not the *Church*, is the centre of theological reflection.

3.2.3 Another theological consideration which played a fundamental role in this study, was the universal aspect of the reconciling and libera-

ting life and death of Christ. As Newbigin pointed out, Faith and Order was not abandoning or disowning its original purpose and charter in attempting this study. They would have been erring rather in discussing the unity of the Church simply in terms of overcoming denominational differences. "Da Christus für alle gestorben und auferstanden ist und da seine Kirche das Zeichen der kommenden Einheit der Menschheit sein soll, muss sie für Frauen und Männer jeder Nation und Kultur aller Zeit und aller Orte, jeglicher Begabung und Behinderung offen sein..... Wenn wir unserer Berufung zur Einheit treu sein wollen, müssen wir folglich über diese Berufung in dem umfassenderen Kontext der Einheit und Vielfalt der Menschheit nachdenken."¹⁸

3.2.4 Another notable aspect of the theological foundation of this study was the realization that the unity of mankind would not be brought about by way of a smooth transition from the unity of the Church. In other words, there was an official awareness of the danger of utopianism. That is why the Study Committee could state, "It would be utopian to suppose that the realization of Church unity would bring unity to mankind (note the order — it is in itself a significant theological factor that the order was not reversed! — WAS): Christ still comes to cast fire on the earth; his gospel remains a scandal. But it is sober realism to believe that he who demonstrates in our day his power to break down the walls of animosity between two men and to create the 'one new man' also extends his promise of peace to all men..... The true realization of the visible unity of all Christians, in which a fragmented Church believes and hopes, can only come as an action of the Holy Spirit."¹⁹ The unity of the Church and the unity of mankind are therefore not linked to each other by way of an evolutionary, universalistic concept of salvation. Eternal judgement by Christ remains a fact, but does not preclude the catholic and apostolic calling of the Church.

3.2.5 As a matter of course, and as is the case in all theology (but especially perhaps in ecumenical theological thinking), this subject was not regarded as some "purely theological" matter in an abstract, philosophical way. The context and circumstances in which this study took place evidently played a part in shaping the direction and outcome of the study. This fact is freely admitted by the WCC (and can in fact only be denied in *any* theological discussion today by theologians living and working in absolute eremitic seclusion!) Thus Margull states that the purpose was "..... Ausdruck des Versuches, die Sache der Christenheit in unserer gegenwärtigen Welt, also die Mission wirklich dorthin zu bringen, wo sie sein muss, um eben Mission zu sein und also situationsbezogenes,

kommunikatives Antragen der Sache, geschichtliche Ermöglichung des Ereignisses der Evangeliums..... Wir hatten im Jahre 1968 schliesslich die Aufgabe, die Mission der Kirche in Beziehung zu setzen zur Geschichte der Menschheit im Jahre 1968."²⁰ The history of mankind at that stage was greatly influenced by the world becoming one "global village", as well as the growing interdependence resulting from Western colonialism as well as missions. Quite obviously these contextual factors would therefore also influence the study on the unity of the Church in the perspective of the unity of mankind, but clearly, at least in official WCC circles, this concept of unity had a firm and justifiable theological basis as its primary motive.

3.3 *Influence on mission: humanization*

The overarching concept of mission which developed out of this concept of unity, and was to raise tremendous controversy in the world mission of the Church, was (not surprisingly!) *humanization*. Mission was to engage in the task of striving for the full disclosure of catholicity (the full unity of mankind). Therefore mission should be concerned with the realization of genuine humanity, i.e. humanization. The connection between catholicity and humanization (as expression of apostolicity) becomes very clear in this quotation: "God's gift of catholicity is received in faith and obedience. 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 (i.e. in its mission) by working for the realization of genuine humanity. The Church hinders the manifestation of its given catholicity when it breaks down at any of these points."²¹

When Uppsala openly adopted *humanization* as the goal of the world mission of the Church, tremendous controversy resulted.²² To a large extent this controversy was probably promoted (i) by taking the term at face value and therefore concluding that *humanism*, in the sense of some pan-humanistic drive for world unity with man at its centre, had now suddenly become the goal of the world mission of the Church, and (ii) by *contrasting* humanization and redemption.²³ This, however, had not been the aim of the ecumenical movement, as one finds when one enquires what was meant by the term *humanity*, or, more specifically, *genuine humanity*. This latter term was very definitely defined in terms of the manhood of Jesus Christ himself, e.g.: "We can only talk about a new manhood if we first talk about the new man. It is in Jesus of Nazareth we see the new manhood in a human life..... This approach ensures that our thought about mission is Christocentric." For this reason,

Missio Dei was not to be used in such vague terms "as though, if he chose, God might have accomplished the renewal of man without Jesus Christ."²⁴

Humanization, therefore, was not meant to be defined or discussed apart from Christ; instead, it meant attaining that genuine humanity which became real only in and through the life, death and resurrection of the new man, Jesus Christ. Living as we do in the penultimate dispensation, it is of course impossible ever to attain that unity of mankind and that true humanization. "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."²⁵ From these quotations it must be quite clear that humanization was *not* humanism, as it was thoroughly Christocentric; that humanization could in no way be contrasted to or set over against redemption, as it could only be achieved in the new man Jesus Christ; and that humanization was not a this-worldly utopianism, as there was to be an ordeal of fire by which our deeds in this world be tested.

Up to Uppsala, then, the discussion had developed along the following lines: against the background of the theology of the apostolate, in which the *world* is the real arena of God's saving acts, and as a result of the cosmic kingship of Christ, in whom all things are ultimately summed up, the Church had to strive to attain its catholicity, particularly in terms of the unity of mankind. In all its activities therefore, but especially in its mission, the Church had to be engaged in the struggle to realize genuine humanity, that humanity which God has created in the renewal of man through the new man Jesus Christ. It is therefore quite clear that the concept of the unity of the Church in the perspective of the unity of mankind, building upon the cosmic Christology of New Delhi, strongly influenced the concept of the world mission of the Church.

3.2 From Uppsala to Bangkok

The clear articulation at Uppsala of the concept of the unity of the Church in the perspective of the unity of mankind, provided a strong new impulse to the whole debate on the unity of the Church. Within the WCC, this impulse was reflected most clearly, as could be expected, in the work of Faith and Order. Indeed, in the light of this developing new

concept, it seemed as if the nature of Faith and Order, as it had hitherto been perceived (in other words, in strongly traditional "theological" terms), would have to change. This was stated at a Faith and Order Working Committee meeting in 1970 as follows: "The question about Faith is not simply 'What message of grace can the denominations agree upon?' but 'What is the message of the Gospel for the actual controversies of mankind?', and the question about Order is no longer simply 'How can the denominations get together?' but 'What does Church unity, and not merely denominational realignment, mean for the race problem, the poverty problem, the generation problem? How does the right and creative ordering of Christian *koinonia* eliminate the problem of man-woman relations, the problem of revolution and social justice?'"²⁶ (in other words, problems related to the whole of mankind).

At this stage of the development of the study the influence of the new concept was apparent mainly in new questions being asked – no firm new answers were as yet formulated. Even in the form of questions, however, the far-reaching implications for the study of the concept of the unity of the Church were becoming clear. This was the case because these questions compelled "a new approach to an understanding of the nature of that unity, that unity in diversity which is God's will for all mankind. In pressing on with this fundamental search in ever-deepening 'apostolic' involvement in the world, the churches may find themselves confronted with new challenges not simply to their denominational separations but to some of their present assumptions about the meaning, the form and the criteria of ecclesiastical unity."²⁷ The new and growing concept of Church unity thus called for a continuous awareness of wider horizons than those of the separated churches. In fact, working to overcome present ecclesiastical divisions was only meaningful while it served the attainment of those wider horizons of the unity-in-diversity of mankind as a whole. And the way in which this was to be realized, was by an ever-increasing "apostolic" (missionary) involvement in the world. The close interrelation between catholicity and apostolicity, between unity and mission, called for in the definition of catholicity at Uppsala (see pp. 36–37 above), was thus clearly reflected in the developing debate on the unity of the Church in the perspective of the unity of mankind.

At the meeting of Faith and Order at Louvain in 1971 an attempt was made to formulate the preliminary insights and results of the study. According to L. Vischer (director of Faith and Order), the importance of this meeting lay exactly in the fact that the question of the unity of the Church was officially debated here in the new context of the unity of

mankind, and not only in the context of confessional differences. This placed on the churches the obligation to bring to fruition "the fellowship given them in Christ amidst the debates of the present. How can they be signs of the presence of Christ today? This question can only be answered if they seek once more to give account of their *raison d'être*, of that which makes them to be the Church."²⁸ This *raison d'être* was described in the report of the meeting as, "The ecumenical movement is concerned with the purpose of God for all mankind as it is revealed in Jesus Christ, and with the Church as instrument and first-fruit of that purpose."²⁹ In the context of the ecclesiological discussions of that time, that which made the Church to be the Church was especially its being the sign of the unity of mankind, its universal mission to embody on behalf of all mankind the fellowship which God willed for all mankind (pro-existence as *pars pro toto*). This fellowship had to be a fellowship based "on liberation in Christ. It is a fellowship of the free who live for the liberation of their fellow men."³⁰

The overriding importance of the unity of mankind in discussions on the unity of the Church was thus clearly stated. At the same time the importance of the interrelationship of this concept of unity to the world mission of the Church, became equally clear. The mission of the Church was to erect signs of the presence and action of the cosmic Christ and the resultant universal fellowship God willed in him for all mankind. The missionary task of the Church thus coincided with the task of striving for the unity of the Church in the perspective of the unity of mankind. Thus far the development of the debate on the unity of the Church in the perspective of the unity of mankind and its influence on the world mission of the Church, has mainly been traced in those circles of the ecumenical movement chiefly concerned with "unity" (e.g. Faith and Order). The real influence on the mission of the Church could, however, be expected to emerge especially in those circles more exclusively linked with "mission" (CWME). The opportunity for this to happen would come at the second assembly of the CWME at Bangkok in 1972–73. This meeting constitutes the next phase in the study of the influence of the concept of unity on the world mission of the Church.

4. Bangkok

It is impossible to describe the CWME Assembly at Bangkok on the theme "Salvation Today" in terms of one predominant concept, as e.g. that of Mexico City, "Mission in six continents". Methodologically the Bangkok Assembly differed completely from previous meetings of either

the IMC or the CWME. There were very few prepared papers read and discussed in plenary, and no comprehensive message or statement was issued at the close of the conference to recapitulate the gist of the discussions. Instead, the business of the assembly was conducted mainly in small groups and sections, because the aim was to celebrate salvation rather than to present an "arid" theological statement on salvation.³¹ Because of this, it is difficult to present a coherent and authoritative account of Bangkok's meaning in relation to the subject of this study.

Because of the controversy created by Uppsala, Section II, between evangelicals and ecumenicals, between protagonists of the "horizontal" or "vertical" implications of the Gospel, between the "individual" and "corporate/structural" aspects of conversion, there was a widespread feeling of uneasiness that Bangkok might turn out to be the final parting of the ways (as Beyerhaus actually described it) in missionary circles throughout the world. This feeling of uneasiness was intensified for evangelicals especially because of what they perceived to be the influence of the study on the unity of the Church and the unity of mankind. Linked with the growing popularity of *dialogue* as the dominant concept in the relationship between Christians and adherents of other faiths and ideologies, it was feared that this concept of unity would introduce such a relativistic and humanistic attitude into the organized ecumenical movement, that it would probably ring the death-knell on mission. If all mankind were already one in the cosmic Christ, any separation or frontier between Church and world — *the* frontier that had to be crossed in mission — would simply disappear, thus making mission redundant.

Examining the reports on Bangkok, though, one is bound to conclude that these fears did not materialize. In his report as outgoing director of the CWME, Potter indicated a sense of reserve about the concept of the unity of the Church in the perspective of the unity of mankind. He freely admitted the important role played by context in *all* theological deliberations, and especially that of the context of the one world in which we had to live. Yet, he continued, "the fact of one world has held out great prospects for the world mission of the Church. The eschatological words of Christ have become very vivid and urgent: 'This Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world (oikoumene), as a testimony to the nations' (Matthew 24:14). This had created a lively debate in missionary circles as to whether the emphasis should be on proclaiming the Gospel to the two billion or more who have never heard it in the lands which have lived for millennia by other faiths, or whether it should be preached literally to the whole world, including the so-called

Christian lands of Europe, North America and Australasia. This debate is totally futile when we look at this one world in which we are living. Our one world is in reality a world which is profoundly divided politically, economically and racially. This is the context in which Christ's words quoted above are uttered."^{3 2} One cannot but detect a certain sense of disillusionment with the "unity of mankind" in this statement. This was certainly not only an isolated point of view: nowhere else in the discussions or reports of sections or individual speakers does the Uppsala concept of unity, viz. unity in the perspective of the (universal) unity of mankind, play a direct role in the formulation of the concept of mission.

The one concept that grew out of this study on the unity of the Church and did play a decisive role in the concept of mission operative at Bangkok, was *humanization*. This could be seen e.g. in the report of Section III, according to which the aim of mission was "to call men to God's salvation in Jesus Christ; to help them grow in faith and in their knowledge of Christ in whom God reveals and restores to us *our true humanity, our identity as men and women created in his image*; to invite them to let themselves be constantly re-created in this image, in an eschatological community which is committed to man's struggle for liberation, unity, justice, peace and the fulness of life"^{3 3} (i.e. genuine humanity).

As has been pointed out above (para. 3.1, 3.3), humanization was closely linked to, sometimes even defined in terms of, catholicity. As Bangkok took over from Uppsala the *humanization* theme to describe the mission of the Church, it was therefore to be expected that *catholicity* should also play a significant role. This can be illustrated e.g. in the report of Section III, where the local church (which received more attention at Bangkok than at any other meeting of the WCC since New Delhi)^{3 4} is related to the universal Church by means of "agents of catholicity": "The more free and the more local the church is allowed to become in its mission the more it will need the 'agents of catholicity' that God provides. We choose two of these: a) Persons set aside for ministries in the church as a whole represent the wholeness of the church to each congregation, group or cell. b) A Christian from outside — who may be a new immigrant, a foreign student, a lay man or woman from abroad temporarily employed in the country, or a missionary from another church — also represents the catholicity of the church and the wholeness of the world and prevents the church from becoming self-sufficient and inward-looking. Churches that have a long tradition of 'sending' their missionaries elsewhere need to take deliberate steps to accustom their members to the idea that without the presence and wit-

ness of the foreigner they themselves are deficient. For these reasons we urge all member churches of the WCC to explore more urgently the various ways in which the sending and receiving of missionaries may become completely mutual and international, a universal enrichment of the church for its mission in all six continents."³⁵

The unity of mankind ("the wholeness of the world") and the universality of the Church's mission in six continents, were thus considered aspects of the mission of the local church, which give specific expression to the catholicity of Church and mission. It cannot be argued, therefore, that in relation to mission the concept of the unity of the Church in the perspective of the unity of mankind was to mean the creation of a universal, uniform and humanistic world community. Mission was rather seen at Bangkok as working towards creating conditions for the realization of genuine humanity, based on the manhood of Jesus Christ, in "liberation, unity, justice, peace and the fulness of life" in the local context. In this process the universality (catholicity) of the Church and the unity of mankind should constantly be kept in view in order to prevent the local church from becoming "self-sufficient and inward-looking". What was to be sought for, was therefore "a mature relationship between churches. Basic to such a relationship is mutual commitment to participate in Christ's mission in the world. A precondition for this is that each church involved in the relationship should have a clear realization of its own identity. This cannot be found in isolation, however, for it is only in relationship with others that we discover our selves."³⁶

As the Bangkok Assembly of the CWME marked the (preliminary) conclusion of the second phase in the interrelationship between unity and mission for the period under review in this study, this is the obvious place to turn to an attempted evaluation of this phase.

5. Evaluation

5.1 As has been pointed out above (paragraph 3.2), the WCC attempted throughout to articulate the theological basis for studying the unity of the Church in the perspective of the unity of mankind. That there is such a theological basis to this relationship, seems in our opinion to be undeniable. This theological basis is founded especially in the world-embracing missionary vocation of the Church, according to which the new universal community of the Spirit, which came into being at Pentecost, has to be established across *all* man-made boundaries to the ends of the earth.³⁷ The rediscovery of the cosmic dimensions of the kingship of Christ also forced on the Church the question about its relationship to

the whole cosmos, which is under the rule of Christ and is also to be summed up in him.³⁸ It was therefore particularly the world mission of the Church, and its thinking on eschatology, which created the theological framework within which the question about the relationship between the unity of the Church and the unity of mankind was to be studied. It seems quite clear, therefore, that the ecumenical movement was concerned with a thoroughly theological subject in dealing with this relationship. Indeed, it could be argued that the credibility of the biblical message of a universal fellowship of the Spirit in the Church, in a tragically disunited and disjointed world in which the Church had to fulfil its missionary vocation, compelled the Church into taking very seriously the relationship of the unity of the Church to the unity of mankind.

5.2 In the preceding sentence the possibility has already been conceded that the study of the relationship of the unity of the Church to the unity of mankind could also have been precipitated at least partially by the socio-political context. This contextuality of the study is (and ought to be) fully realized. What should be recognized at the same time, is the very important formative role Christian missions played in creating this one world and one mankind which pressed on the Church the urgency of relating its search for unity to the wider unity of all mankind.³⁹ This means that "secular" ecumenism has definite roots in Christianity as a universal religion. For this reason the study of the relationship between the unity of the Church and the unity of mankind should not be regarded as some sudden development resulting mainly from the so-called relativistic theological tendencies of the nineteen-sixties.

Another aspect of the context to be borne in mind, is that the ecumenical movement as it is embodied in the WCC, only became a truly universal fellowship after New Delhi. Therefore, as the whole world came increasingly to be represented in the movement, all the tragic racial, economic, cultural and other factors dividing mankind were also present in the WCC. At the same time, the universality of mankind came strongly to the fore in the Church and in the ecumenical discussions. This could not but exert an influence on any further studies on the unity of the Church. That the study was also precipitated partly by the socio-political context need not necessarily, therefore, in our opinion, lead to its outright condemnation. Apart from the role which the world mission of the Church played in shaping this context, no relevant theological statement can in any event ever be formulated in a contextual vacuum.

5.3 Particularly in evangelical circles it was feared that this new concept

of unity and its influence on the world mission of the Church (with the goal of mission being described as humanization), would mean nothing less than the end of mission (see pp. 41 above). From what has been said in paragraphs 5.1 and 5.2, it is already clear that this is a simplistic assumption. It was exactly the world mission of the Church that provided an important stimulus to undertaking the study on the unity of the Church in relation to the unity of mankind. A strong missionary element was therefore inherent in the whole study, and the missionary context was considered to be *the* context in which the study found its fundamental coherence.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the concept of pro-existence, of the unity of the Church constituting the sign (or sacrament) of the unity of mankind, was thoroughly missionary in character.

Consequently, in various official documents related to the study this centrality of mission in the relationship of the unity of the Church to the unity of mankind was explicitly stated.⁴¹ And in an evaluation two years after Bangkok, Dr. E. Castro, director of the CWME, stated in relation to the Bangkok Assembly: "It is impossible to speak of cultural identity in a Christian perspective, or of a Christian participation in the struggle for social justice (both subjects very much at the centre of the attention at Bangkok) without considering our responsibility to call people to Jesus Christ, and to join with them in Christian communities where the discipline of prayer and Bible reading will help us to grow to maturity and full participation in the search for identity and justice in our respective nations."⁴² It is therefore in our opinion simply impossible to maintain with any degree of conviction that the influence of the study on the unity of the Church in relation to the unity of mankind meant the end of the mission of the Church. Certainly its influence would be reflected in subsequent definitions of mission. The positive or negative value of certain aspects of that influence is discussed below.

5.4 It has been argued above (paragraph 3.3) that the influence of this concept of the unity of the Church on its mission was evident particularly in the definition of the goal of mission in terms of humanization. In the context of a world in which man is increasingly alienated and dehumanized by various processes of a technological society, this emphasis on humanization is not only understandable, but is actually to be welcomed. This is so especially because humanization was defined in terms of the new man Jesus Christ, who makes possible also in our increasingly dehumanized world a genuine new manhood. It is certainly a legitimate concern of the mission of the Church to engage in the task of promoting and realizing this genuine humanity.

This became clear especially in a definition of salvation (*sōtēria*) given in preparation for Bangkok: "What is happening here and in countless other Gospel passages is a redefinition of what it means to be human, or better, co-human, in the light of the reality of Christ himself as he projects the coming reality of his kingdom into the present. To many (i.e. in the time of Christ) it seemed like anything but salvation and they rejected it, although they were looking for a saviour. For one interlocutor at least the very question 'What must I do to gain eternal life?' was the decisive barrier to his becoming human with Christ in this world, because it was an escape from the relations in which his humanity was given him."^{4 3} Humanization therefore was seen as related to the contextual outworking of redemption/salvation/liberation in Christ,^{4 4} and the world mission of the Church certainly is very much concerned about that.

5.5 In formulating the concept of the unity of the Church in the perspective of the unity of mankind, an attempt was made to point out that the basis of this unity was Christ, and that the present unity of the Church could be no more than a sign or sacrament of that unity which would be fully unfolded only in the *eschaton* (cf. paragraph 3.2). However, in relating the unity of the Church in such a way to the unity of mankind, there was always the inherent danger that the basis of unity could be shifted, and that the unity of mankind could in fact become the basis on which Church unity could be and had to be attained. This was not some new development – as long ago as in the time of Constantine there clearly was the temptation for the Church to argue along the lines of: one empire, one emperor, one church. This temptation has never really left the Church since then. During the 19th century, for example, the "great century" of mission, this influence was particularly strong because of the universalistic and imperialistic social and cultural milieu.^{4 5}

In relating the unity of the Church to the unity of mankind (which is a legitimate theological theme), there has therefore always to be an acute awareness of this danger. It can certainly not be claimed that official documents relating to the study of the unity of the Church in the perspective of the unity of mankind present the unity of mankind as the *basis* for this unity. Nevertheless, in ecumenical discussions on this subject it would sometimes appear as if this may be the tendency.^{4 6} This will have to be resisted (and repudiated), as it presents a false basis for the unity of the Church and in the process denies what the WCC professes to be its true centre.^{4 7}

5.6 In studying the unity of the Church in the perspective of the unity

of mankind, it is unavoidable that a close connection will be made between Church and world (see pp. 35–36 above). That such a link exists and that it greatly influences the Church is self-evident. Expressing the nature of this relationship, though, is not a simple matter. Although it has always been stated in official documents relating to the study that the basis for the relationship between the unity of the Church and the unity of mankind could only be Christ, and that humanization could only be defined in terms of the new man Jesus Christ, a degree of vagueness and uncertainty may be detected in discussions on this subject, caused by uncertainty about the relationship between Church and world and between good and evil. This seemed to result mainly from the fact that the implications of the Incarnation and the cosmic kingship of Christ were much too easily universalized. This probably happened because the *continuity* between Christ, the new man, and humanity in general, was strongly (almost exclusively) emphasized.

What should be borne in mind is that, as a result of sin and evil coming into the world, there is undoubtedly also *discontinuity* between Christ, the new man, and humanity in general – and this tended to be underplayed. The impression was therefore sometimes created that the Incarnation was overemphasized at the expense of the Cross. Since Pentecost the Holy Spirit is indeed at work in renewing the world (and not only the Church), sometimes even through revolutionary movements. But the forces of opposition which want to destroy Christ's work are also still at work and will only be overcome by way of the Cross. Both these aspects have to be duly considered in formulating the relationship between Church and world/mankind. In the influence of the concept of the unity of the Church, discussed in this chapter, on the world mission of the Church, it seemed as if this distinction was much too easily glossed over. The impression was sometimes given that any kind of revolutionary change in the *status quo* could be accepted *ipso facto* as evidence of the liberating and humanizing work of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁸

5.7 In the development of the concept of the unity of the Church in the perspective of the unity of mankind, a tendency towards the confusion of the catholicity of the Church and its apostolicity revealed itself. This remark is closely related to the comments in the two previous paragraphs. If the unity of mankind tends to become the basis for the unity of the Church, and if the nature of the relationship between Church and world/mankind is not expressed in terms of both continuity and discontinuity, then the unity of mankind can easily become "the point of departure and the final end of the Church."⁴⁹ Such a development does not result in a close link between catholicity and apostolicity;

rather, apostolicity tends to lose its distinctive character and becomes simply a function of catholicity.

This happens to the detriment of the Church, however, because, as Torrance has pointed out, apostolicity is the "*critical criterion*" of the Church. If the apostolicity of the Church, as an autonomous "mark" of the Church, is therefore affected in any way, it calls into question not only its apostolicity but also its catholicity, "for it looses its moorings in the foundation of the Church laid in Christ Jesus."⁵⁰ The concept of the unity of the Church in the perspective of the unity of mankind did not always succeed in establishing the true nature of this relationship between the "marks" of the Church.

6. Conclusion

The aim of the ecumenical discussions on the concept of the unity of the Church in its relationship to the unity of mankind can be recapitulated to a large extent in the following prayer quoted by Margull: "O Gott, du hast uns aus Tode gerufen, wir loben dich. Schick uns zurück mit dem Brot des Lebens, so bitten wir dich. Du hast uns zu einem erwählten Volk gemacht, wir loben dich. Mach uns eins mit allen Menschen, so bitten wir dich."⁵¹

While this debate on the interrelationship of unity and mission was taking place especially in circles connected to the WCC, important developments in ecumenical discussions on unity and mission were taking place in other circles as well. In Rome the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church was convened, and Evangelicals were succeeding in articulating their specific concept of unity and mission at a series of world-wide congresses between 1966 and 1974. The contributions of these other "partners" in the ecumenical discussion are therefore investigated in the following chapters.

Notes

1. As a result of the Women's Liberation movement, all sexist language is avoided in documents of the WCC. As a result, this study is nowadays known as the study on the unity of the Church and the unity of *humankind*. Since we are

mainly concerned with its past history and will be quoting from the older original documents, we use the old terminology, without implying any sexist bias in the process.

2. Rodger, P.C.: "Towards the wholeness of the church", in *ER*, vol. 17, 1965, p. 154.
3. Quoted in Groscurth, R. (ed.): *What unity implies*, p. 117.
4. Fuerth, P.W.: *The concept of catholicity in the documents of the World Council of Churches, 1948–1968*, p. 139.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Cf. (WCC): *World conference on church and society*. Geneva July 12–26, 1966. Official Report, p. 48, where the four issues on which the conference focussed, are mentioned — all of them dealing with "the world". It is also interesting to note that in the reports of the four sections, there is only one sub-section dealing specifically with the Church's contribution.
7. Fuerth, P.W.: *op. cit.*, p. 163.
8. Fuerth, P.W.: *op. cit.*, p. 161.
9. Fuerth, P.W.: *op. cit.*, pp. 152–153.
10. Goodall, N. (ed.): *The Uppsala Report*, p. 13.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Goodall, N. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 7.
13. Goodall, N.: *Ecumenical Progress*, p. 132.
14. Müller-Fahrenholz, G.: *Heilsgeschichte zwischen Ideologie und Prophetie*, p. 64.
15. Cf. Fuerth, P.W.: *op. cit.*, p. 111. The report of the TCCC which Fuerth quotes here, shows a very strong influence of the cosmic Christology of New Delhi and the new understanding of *Missio Dei*.
16. Goodall, N. (ed.): *The Uppsala Report*, pp. 17–18.
17. (WCC): "The unity of the Church and the unity of mankind. A study document of the Commission on Faith and Order", in *Study Encounter*, vol. 5–6, 1969–70, p. 178. Cf. also pp. 163–164, 174–175.
18. Cf. Newbigin, L.: "Nairobi 1975. Ein persönlicher Bericht", in *Ökumenische Rundschau*, 25. Jahrgang, Heft 2, 1976, p. 154.
19. (WCC): Commission on Faith and Order: "The Holy Spirit and unity. Report to the Faith and Order Commission, Bristol, England, 1967." WCC Archives, Dept. of Faith and Order VI, Oct. 1966, pp. 19–23.
20. Margull, H.J.: "Heil heute. Bericht von der Weltmissionskonferenz in Bangkok 29. Dezember 1972 — 8. Januar 1973", in *Ökumenische Rundschau*, 22. Jahrgang, Heft 4, 1973, pp. 499–500.
21. Goodall, N. (ed.): *The Uppsala Report*, p. 9.
22. Cf. for an introduction to and overview of this controversy, Beyerhaus, P.: *Missions: which way? Humanization or redemption*.
23. As Beyerhaus did in the work just quoted (cf. the sub-title).
24. Goodall, N. (ed.): *The Uppsala Report*, p. 23.
25. Müller-Fahrenholz, G.: *Unity in today's world*. The Faith and Order studies on: "Unity of the Church — unity of humankind", p. 93. This is actually part of the official final report of Faith and Order submitted to the Nairobi Assembly.

26. Goodall, N.: *Ecumenical Progress*, p. 75.
27. *Ibid.*
28. (WCC): *Faith and Order Louvain 1971*, p. 6.
29. (WCC): *Faith and Order Louvain 1971*, p. 225.
30. (WCC): *Faith and Order Louvain 1971*, p. 208. Cf. also p. 209.
31. It was exactly this new method which caused the greatest dismay and uneasiness to certain evangelicals, to such an extent that Beyerhaus condemned the whole assembly as a gigantic conspiracy on the part of the Geneva staff to manipulate the delegates by way of group dynamics. Cf. Beyerhaus, P.: *Bangkok '73 – Anfang oder Ende der Weltmission? Ein gruppendynamisches Experiment*.
32. (WCC): *Bangkok Assembly 1973*, pp. 51–52.
33. (WCC): *Bangkok Assembly 1973*, pp. 102–103. Italics mine.
34. Cf. for example (WCC): *Bangkok Assembly 1973*, pp. 99–101.
35. (WCC): *Bangkok Assembly 1973*, pp. 100–101.
36. (WCC): *Bangkok Assembly 1973*, p. 104.
37. Cf. Berkhof, H.: *Christus de zin der geschiedenis*, p. 85.
38. Cf. Groscurth, R. (ed.): *op. cit.*, pp. 101–104; also Thomas, M.M.: "Report of the Executive Committee by the chairman", in *ER*, vol. 23, 1971, pp. 99–100.
39. Cf. in this respect Neill, S.: *The Church and Christian union*, pp. 94–96, and also Honig, A.G. jr.: *De kosmische betekenis van Christus*, pp. 40–42.
40. Cf. Deschner, J.: "Developments in the field of church unity", in *ER*, vol. 24, 1972, pp. 453–454.
41. So e.g. in (WCC): *The church for others and the church for the world*, pp. 43–44; Johnson, D. (ed.): *Uppsala to Nairobi*, p. 181.
42. Castro, E.: "Salvation today at Bangkok and after", in *Study Encounter*, vol. XI, no. 2, 1975, p. 9.
43. (WCC): "Salvation Today. A selection of comments", April 1971, p. 4. Geneva: CWME 55/71, WCC Archives.
44. Cf. the description by the director of the study on Salvation Today, Dr. T. Wieser, in Wieser, T.: "Giving account of salvation today. Reflections on Bangkok" in *Study Encounter*, vol. XI, no. 2, 1975, p. 3.
45. For an excellent discussion of this influence, cf. Hebly, J.A.: "De oecumenische beweging in wisselend historisch perspectief", in *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift*, Vol. 33, 1979, pp. 62–63.
46. Cf. for example Johnston, A.P.: *The battle for world evangelism*, p. 277, and Van der Bent, A.J.: *The utopia of world community*.
47. Cf. Thomas, M.M.: *op. cit.*, pp. 99–100; also Groscurth, R. (ed.): *op. cit.*, pp. 21–22.
48. This was the case e.g. in the way in which the revolutions in China, Angola and Mozambique were indiscriminately evaluated as liberating movements of the Spirit in certain circles in Bangkok. For further discussion of this aspect, cf. Honig, A.G. jr.: *De heerschappij van Christus en de zending*, p. 34.
49. Groscurth, R. (ed.): *op. cit.*, pp. 10–11.

50. Torrance, T.F.: "The Predicates of the Church". Unpublished paper, WCC Division of Studies, Commission on Faith and Order, TCCC/E 1961. Documents 1961–1962, WCC Archives. Cf. also Torrance's total exposition of apostolicity, pp. 12–24.
51. Margull, H.J.: "Heil heute. Bericht von der Weltmissionskonferenz in Bangkok 29. Dezember 1972 – 8. Januar 1973", in *Ökumenische Rundschau*, 22. Jahrgang, Heft 4, 1973, p. 493.

4

UNITY AND MISSION

The voice of Rome

1. Background

Developments in the Roman Catholic Church during the period covered by this study were completely dominated by the Second Vatican Council. Such were the effects of this Council that some even called it an "ecumenical revolution".¹ To understand why its influence was considered of such a revolutionary nature, it is necessary to give a brief overview of some points of view about unity and mission which prevailed in the Roman Catholic Church before Vatican II. The prevailing official concept of unity in the Roman Catholic Church before Vatican II was that the Roman Catholic Church *was* the only true Church of Christ. There was therefore no reason why the Roman Catholic Church should take part in ecumenical efforts to foster the unity of the Church. If people were really concerned about restoring unity, the way was clear: return to the Roman Catholic Church as the only true Church of Christ. Thus Pius XI declared in 1928 (the year of the Jerusalem Assembly of the IMC) in his encyclical, *Mortalium Animos*, that "the Apostolic See

can by no means take part in these assemblies, nor is it in any way lawful for Catholics to give to such enterprises their encouragement or support", since "the unity of Christians can come about only by furthering the return to the one true Church of Christ of those who are separated from it."²

For this reason, Abbott could conclude about Roman Catholic participation in the week of prayer for Christian unity: "Each year in January, for many decades, Roman Catholics have offered eight days of prayer for Church unity. Until 1959, the general idea behind those days of prayer, January 18–25, was the hope that Protestants would 'return' to the one true Church, and that the Orthodox schism would end."³ This concept of unity was still present even in Pope John XXIII's address before the start of the Council: "When we have carried out this strenuous task, eliminated everything which could at the human level hinder our rapid progress, then we shall point to the Church in all her splendour..... and say to all those who are separated from us, Orthodox, Protestants and the rest: Look, brothers, this is the Church of Christ..... Come; here the way lies open for meeting and for homecoming; come; take, or resume, that place which is yours, which for many years was your fathers' place."⁴ John XXIII thus also still thought in terms of a return to Rome as the way to restore union, but managed to introduce a new element: the very strenuous task of renewal of the Roman Catholic Church would have to be completed before it could be said that it *was* the Church of Christ to which all non-Catholics should return. In this shift of emphasis the beginnings of the dramatic changes in the concept of unity which would result from Vatican II can be detected.

The goal of mission in the Roman Catholic Church had always been the planting of the universal Roman Catholic Church (the true Church of Christ) in places where it had not previously been established. For this reason, Roman Catholic mission was aimed in equal measure at non-Catholics and non-Christians. This resulted to a large degree from the fact that the *Propaganda* had been born out of the Tridentine Counter-Reformation. It was thus possible for Pius XII in 1951 to point out to Roman Catholic mission schools their responsibility to counteract the heretical teachings of non-Catholics *and* Communists.⁵ Coupled to this was a conscious and strong tendency to compete with non-Catholics in mission: non-Catholics were more or less the same as non-Christians, after all, and therefore their influence had to be countered. Thus in 1919 Benedict XV exhorted Roman Catholic missionaries to better qualifications as it would be a shame if "the servants of heresy" (non-Catholics)

were to be better qualified than Roman Catholic missionaries.⁶ Before Vatican II, therefore, in the light of the concept of the Roman Catholic Church as the one true Church of Christ, mission was interpreted as the responsibility of Roman Catholics to spread true (Roman Catholic) teaching to *all* non-Catholics, Protestants and non-Christians alike. It is against this background that the statements of Vatican II and subsequent developments are to be evaluated.

2. Vatican II

In listening to the voice of Rome about unity and mission at the Second Vatican Council, two documents are of extreme importance: the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) and the Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*). The Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church (*Ad Gentes*) is not of equal importance, because of the noticeable difference between Roman Catholic ecumenism and Protestant ecumenism. It is generally accepted that the strongest impulse to Protestant ecumenism came from the "mission field". In the Roman Catholic Church, however, it was the other way round: mission had always been the mission of the one universal Church. There was therefore no ecumenical impulse from the mission lands. It was rather the influence of the (Protestant) ecumenical movement that compelled the Roman Catholic Church to reflect on its own involvement in ecumenism.⁷ That meant reflecting on the *church*, because, as has been pointed out above, reunion for Rome always meant the return to the Roman Catholic Church. The ecumenical impulse thus came from the *church*. For this reason it is understandable that ecumenism was treated most extensively in *Lumen Gentium* and *Unitatis Redintegratio*, and not as extensively in *Ad Gentes*.⁸ That is why these first two documents warrant special attention.

2.1 The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church

It has been said that the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church was actually the central theme and also the most impressive achievement of Vatican II.⁹ As this was one of only two dogmatic constitutions (the other being that on Revelation), whereas the other documents were decrees, all subsequent documents therefore have to be judged against the background of this document. That is why the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church is also of such importance in discerning the voice of Rome on unity and mission.

The Constitution started by describing the Church as "a kind of sacra-

ment of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind, that is, she is a sign and an instrument of such union and unity. For this reason, following in the path laid out by its predecessors, this Council wishes to set forth more precisely to the faithful and to the entire world the nature and encompassing mission of the Church. The conditions of this age lend special urgency to the Church's task of bringing all men to full union with Christ, since mankind today is joined together more closely than ever before by social, technical and cultural bonds."¹⁰ Already in this introduction to the Constitution, some very important aspects relating to the subject of our study can be discerned:

2.1.1 The description of the Church as a "sacrament" of union with God and the *unity of mankind* (which is very similar to that of Uppsala);

2.1.2 The influence on this description of the Church of the cosmic kingship of Christ ("bringing all men to full union with Christ"), as well as of the context ("social, technical and cultural bonds");

2.1.3 The description of mission as belonging to the very nature of the Church. On the basis of the Church being a sacrament of the unity of mankind, mission thus acquired a very comprehensive ("encompassing") character.

In the light of the fact pointed out in the introduction to this chapter, viz. that for Rome the Roman Catholic Church *was* the (only) Church of Christ, it is very important to determine whether the Church described thus in the Constitution was still considered by the Roman Catholic Church to be *the* (only) Church of Christ. In this connection the Constitution stated: "This Church (i.e. the Church of Christ), organised as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in union with that successor, although many elements of sanctification and of truth can be found outside of her visible structure. These elements, however, as gifts properly belonging to the Church of Christ, possess an inner dynamism toward Catholic unity."¹¹ The important word here was *subsists*. Previously, the more exclusive *exists* would have been used (as it actually was in preliminary drafts of the Constitution). With the introduction of *subsists* a fundamental change in Roman Catholic ecclesiology revealed itself officially. Although the Roman Catholic Church was still considered closest to the true Church of Christ, it was no longer regarded as being exclusively so and therefore the way was opened to the official recognition of "many

elements of sanctification and truth" outside the Roman Catholic Church. On the basis of this change it was possible in the Decree on Ecumenism to speak of "churches and ecclesial bodies" other than the Roman Catholic Church. This change therefore was also bound to influence Roman Catholic involvement in the ecumenical movement.

Another important shift in the Roman Catholic view of the Church became apparent in the fact that of all the biblical images which could be used to describe the Church, the one which received far and away the strongest emphasis (as evidenced in the fact that a whole chapter of the Constitution, Chapter 3, was devoted to it), was that of the Church as the people of God. Previously the Church had in fact been described nearly exclusively in terms of the hierarchy, especially the Pope (*ubi Papa, ibi ecclesia!*). Vatican II, however, attempted to view the Church from the view-point of the people of God, in which all share equally in grace and the love of God and all are called equally to sanctification.¹² This was bound to influence both the concept of unity as well as that of mission. As truth and sanctification were also present outside the Roman Catholic Church, it became possible to accept baptized Christians officially as brothers and sisters in Christ (although separated from the chair of Peter and therefore in imperfect communion and fellowship). Non-Catholics could therefore not simply be regarded as objects of mission like all non-Christians, as had previously been the case (see pp. 57–58 above) and this opened the way to a different/new concept of mission, which was to be reflected in the strong emphasis on the need for the unity of *all* Christians for the sake of mission (which will be dealt with in the discussion of the Decree on Ecumenism).¹³

2.2 *The Decree on Ecumenism*

The first notable factor in the Decree relating to the subject of this study is present in the title of Chapter 2, in which the fundamental principles were outlined. The proposed title of this chapter had been "Principles of Catholic Ecumenism". As that would have given the impression either that there was more than one ecumenical movement, viz. a Catholic one and other(s), or would have conveyed the impression that the Roman Catholic Church considered itself to be the only real centre of the ecumenical movement, the title was changed to: "Catholic Principles of Ecumenism". This change was made to express the fact that there could be only one ecumenical movement for all Christian churches and communities. Christians of various traditions could then take part in this movement according to their traditional Catholic, Protes-

tant, or Orthodox principles.¹⁴ This change of title reflected the changed view of the Church according to the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church. The Roman Catholic Church was no longer considered to be *the* Church of Christ to which all "separated brethren" should simply return to fulfil their ecumenical obligation.

The interrelationship between unity and mission, so strongly present in ecumenical discussions since 1961 (cf. Chapter 2 and 3 of this study), was also emphasized in the Decree. Thus it was stated in the first paragraph that "...almost everyone (i.e. every Christian) 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."¹⁵ This united witness was also laid on the Church (including the Roman Catholic Church) as an obligation: "Before the whole world, let all Christians profess 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."¹⁶ The new way of thinking about, and new impulse in working for, the unity of the Church, was thus reflected in such a forceful way in this interrelationship that, as Schlink pointed out, the calling to unity and mission in fact appeared almost parallel and equal responsibilities of the people of God.¹⁷

At this stage attention should be drawn once more to the development in the relationship between unity and mission in the Roman Catholic Church which has been pointed out above (p. 58), viz. that the ecumenical impulse in the Roman Catholic Church came via the Church to its mission. It was first of all the new vision of the Church which opened the way for more extensive Roman Catholic involvement in the ecumenical movement. Out of this state of affairs now arose the call to mission-in-unity. In other words, the emphasis on the interrelationship between unity and mission in the Roman Catholic Church came via the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church to the Decree on Ecumenism and hence to Roman Catholic missions.

Another notable factor in the Decree on Ecumenism (to which the way was opened in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) relating to the subject of this study, was the official description for the first time of Protestant churches as "churches and ecclesial communities" (Chapter 4). Although there was implicit in this terminology a certain degree of hesitation about accepting all Protestant churches as sister *churches*, and

although no attempt was made to clarify which Western churches were regarded as churches and which only as ecclesial communities, this still represented a major shift in Roman Catholic ecclesiology when compared to the attitude which was prevalent before Vatican II. The influence of this shift on the concept of unity and of mission became apparent when the Decree stated, "The Catholic Church accepts them (churches and ecclesial communities) with respect and affection as brothers",¹⁸ and "..... 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."¹⁹ Henceforth it would be possible to work with these churches and ecclesial communities as brothers and sisters in Christ to attain the unity of the Church. And as they were recognized as means of salvation, they could also become partners in mission and could no longer simply be regarded as objects of mission.

2.3 The Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church

It has already been pointed out above that the relationship between unity and mission was not treated extensively in this Decree. It was mentioned in two instances, though, and this necessitates a brief examination of the Decree. In the first instance, the interrelationship was briefly described and its importance emphasized: "Thus, missionary activity among the nations differs from pastoral activity exercised among the faithful, as well as from undertakings aimed at restoring unity among Christians. And yet these two other activities are most closely connected with the missionary zeal of the Church, because the division among Christians damages the most holy cause of preaching the gospel to every creature and blocks the way to the faith for many. Hence, by the same mandate which makes mission necessary, all the baptized are called to be gathered into one flock, and thus to be able to bear unanimous witness before the nations to Christ their Lord. And if they are not yet capable of bearing full witness to the same faith, they should at least be animated by mutual esteem and love."²⁰ It is immediately obvious that the relationship, although considered to be of great importance, was stated in very general terms. For a definition of the concept of this essential unity, as well as of the united witness that was or should be possible, one would have to turn to the two documents previously discussed, viz. the Constitution on the Church and the Decree on Ecumenism.

The second instance revealed a more interesting new development, in that the nurturing of an ecumenical spirit among (Roman Catholic) con-

verts was described as one of the obligations of missionaries: "The ecumenical spirit too should be nurtured in the neophytes. They should rightly consider that the brethren who believe in Christ are Christ's disciples, reborn in baptism, sharers with the People of God in very many riches. 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 co-operate in a brotherly spirit with their separated brethren, according to the norms of the Decree on Ecumenism They can collaborate in social and in technical projects as well as in cultural and religious ones. Let them work together especially for the sake of Christ, their common Lord. Let his Name be the bond that unites them! This co-operation should be undertaken not only among private persons, but also, according to the judgment of the local Ordinary, among Churches or ecclesial Communities and their enterprises."²¹

In this quotation it is explicitly stated that the norms for unity and mission had actually been laid down in the Decree on Ecumenism. Still, there are two notable aspects here: the clear statement that the fostering of an ecumenical spirit should be an obligation for Roman Catholic missionaries, and the statement that co-operation in mission should also be conducted on an official level. These undoubtedly welcome statements serve to reinforce the thesis that the ecumenical impulse in Rome is still conveyed to its mission via the Church. It will therefore probably still take some time to really make its influence felt in Roman Catholic missions.

2.4 *Evaluation of Vatican II*

Having examined the relevant documents of Vatican II separately, it is necessary at this stage to attempt a comprehensive evaluation of Vatican II as it dealt with the concept of unity in the Roman Catholic Church and its influence on the mission of the Church.

2.4.1 *The Roman Catholic Church in relation to other churches:*

Seen against the background of earlier statements on the position of the Roman Catholic Church in relation to other churches, the most significant change in outlook which Vatican II brought about was possibly in connection with this relationship. Yet it is not an easy task to define this change precisely, as various lines of reasoning about the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and other churches can be pointed out in the documents which have been discussed. Although the Constitu-

tion on the Church no longer claimed that the Roman Catholic Church *was* the Church of Christ (*subsists* instead of *exists*), the implicit assumption seemed nevertheless to be that the Roman Catholic Church came closest of all churches to being the Church of Christ. This assumption seemed to underlie also the hesitancy and vagueness inherent in the use of "churches and ecclesial bodies" to describe other churches. Yet in the Decree on Ecumenism it also seemed as if the Roman Catholic Church stood in exactly the same relation as all other churches to the centre, which in this document was defined as "the central, Spirit-inspired reality..... (of) the one and universal ecumenical movement, in which all Churches, including the Catholic Church, participate and through which they are modified, changed, renewed into greater fidelity to the Gospel."²

It seems as if this underlying divergence in the view of the Church at Vatican II sprang from difficulties in expressing the relationship between an "invisible" Church, coinciding with the one true Church of Christ, and our empirical, divided, "visible" churches. For a long time, according to Roman Catholic ecclesiology, the empirical Roman Catholic Church *did* coincide with the Church of Christ. Now this viewpoint could no longer be maintained. The result was the above-mentioned apparent divergence of views on the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Christ, and consequently between the Roman Catholic Church and other churches. Yet it was exactly this hesitancy and apparent divergence which revealed the important change in the Roman Catholic Church. Since Vatican II, it was no longer possible for the Roman Catholic Church to be "a church issuing a monologue from Rome" – the Roman Catholic Church admitted that it needed the other churches and communities to function properly as a Church of Christ.²³ Consequently the ecumenical calling of the Roman Catholic Church could no longer be defined simply in terms of a call to "return" to Rome.

Although this new view of the Church expressed by Vatican II can be regarded as representing an important change in Roman Catholic ecclesiology, it also must be admitted that this presented difficulties to many Protestants. In the light of such a long history of suspicion and mistrust because of their having been regarded as heretics and schismatics, they tended to think that the apparent concessions were introduced simply to facilitate what still was the actual desire of Rome, viz. their return to "the fold from which they never should have strayed."²⁴ Such thinking does not appear to characterize the official Roman Catholic position. It

is clear, though, that such suspicions would only be laid to rest when it became clear how the Roman Catholic Church was going to interpret the documents of Vatican II and how this change in relationship would be expressed in practice. McCavert is probably correct, however, in saying: "Unless all signs fail, the Decree on Ecumenism marks the beginning of a new era in the relation of the Churches to one another – an era that can truly be called ecumenical."²⁵

2.4.2 The relationship of Rome to the organized ecumenical movement: It has already been stated in the previous paragraph that the change in the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and other churches after Vatican II was bound to influence also the ecumenical calling of the Roman Catholic Church. It is necessary therefore to consider the influence of Vatican II on the relationship between Rome and the organized ecumenical movement, in this case specifically the WCC. In this regard the fact that it was (at least implicitly) admitted that the Church of Christ could subsist also in other churches, and that it was acknowledged that other churches therefore played a part in the mystery of salvation (cf. p. 59 above) is of great importance. This gave rise to the change in the title of Chapter 2 of the Decree on Ecumenism, which has been discussed previously (pp. 60–61). It therefore became possible for the Roman Catholic Church to acknowledge that there was a "single movement towards Christian unity, the ecumenical movement, in which each Church participates according to principles in harmony with its own self-understanding."²⁶ In practice this resulted in the establishment of an official Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC, as well as increased participation by Roman Catholic theologians in Faith and Order. The importance of this development for the present study is that the reciprocal influence of theological thinking on unity and mission, already present at Vatican II (as pointed out below), would be strengthened yet further.

2.4.3 The necessity of unity for the sake of mission: It was stated above that the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church was actually the central theme in the light of which all subsequent documents of Vatican II should be evaluated (cf. p. 58). It has also been argued that the change the Constitution brought about in Roman Catholic ecclesiology (and consequently in its relationship to other churches) was probably the most important consequence of Vatican II (cf. pp. 63–65). This change in Roman Catholic ecclesiology could likewise be regarded as the direct contributory cause of the shift in the Roman Catholic concept of mission which made it possible for Catholic and non-Catholic Christians (as

brothers and sisters in Christ) to co-operate in fulfilling the mission of the Church. Indeed, this unity in mission was regarded as an obligation for Catholics and non-Catholics alike, not only as individuals but also as churches and communities (cf. pp. 61–63).

It was for this reason that Bea could argue that the whole pursuit of unity and everything related to it, actually found its *raison d'être* in the mission of the Church.²⁷ This was furthermore not simply to be regarded as some tactical move forced on the Church by circumstances, but arose from the very heart of the Gospel the Church had to proclaim.²⁸ The strong similarity in theological thinking about the inter-relationship of unity and mission which lay at the root of the integration of the WCC and the IMC (cf. Chapter 2), is quite clear. The practical consequences which this will have for Roman Catholic missions will take some time to become apparent. In requiring missionaries to foster an ecumenical spirit in new converts,²⁹ Vatican II clearly illustrated the urgency and importance it attached to unity in mission.

2.4.4 Signs of growing convergence in ecumenical theological thinking: Various signs of a growing convergence in current ecumenical theological thinking, also in relation to unity and mission, can be pointed out in the documents of Vatican II.

The concept of the unity of the Church in the perspective of the unity of mankind was present in the thinking at Vatican II about the unity of the Church. This was the case for example when the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church called the Church "a kind of sacrament of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind."³⁰ It was also reflected in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*) where it was stated: "The union of the human family is greatly fortified and fulfilled by the unity, founded on Christ, of the family of God's sons."³¹ In his comments on the Decree on Ecumenism, Alexander stated that this document also "was in effect expanding its horizons from the problem of Christian unity to the larger problem of world unity."³² Thus, according to McGovern, "the new people of God... are one, then, not only with Israel but with all men..... Indeed, it has already been seen that man by his very nature is called to some degree of belonging to the Church."³³ The concept of the unity of the Church in the perspective of the unity of mankind was therefore clearly evident in a wide range of discussions at Vatican II. When one bears in mind the fact that it was at the same time that the WCC also started its study on this concept of unity, the growing convergence in ecumenical

theological thinking is obvious.

The missionary nature of the Church both as people of God (the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) and according to the Decree on Ecumenism, was best reflected in the image of a "pilgrim Church" moving towards Christ.³⁴ This revealed a strong similarity with the concept of the missionary nature of the Church according to Uppsala. The comprehensive concept of mission on the basis of the cosmic kingship of Christ also revealed this similarity. These examples are not cited in order to arrive at any value-judgment, but simply to point out the existence of this growing convergence in ecumenical theological thinking about unity and mission — a factor which seems to be of special importance in relation to the Nairobi Assembly of the WCC. It will therefore be discussed more extensively in Chapter 6.

2.5 Conclusion

Events in the Roman Catholic Church during the period covered by this study were completely dominated by Vatican II. Having examined some of its documents, this seems indeed to have been the case. In concluding the discussion of Vatican II, however, one important fact needs still to be pointed out, viz. that Vatican II should not be considered the final word of the Roman Catholic Church about the ecumenical movement. It was rather the beginning of a new era of ecumenical development. "Thus the ecumenical future, on the basis of the ecumenism decree, is an open future. What direction the future takes depends not only on what Catholics do with the decree, but on how Protestants respond to it as well."³⁵ With this in mind, developments in the Roman Catholic Church after Vatican II are now discussed briefly.

3. Developments after Vatican II

3.1 General

It is quite understandable that in a church as big as the Roman Catholic Church it will take some time for the decisions and spirit of Vatican II to permeate to all levels of the church. That is why the comment of Shehan is quite appropriate in this respect: "It was a sense of continuity which inspired the saying, 'The king is dead; long live the king.' A similar sense would justify the statement, 'The Council is over; the Council has just begun'."³⁶ This continuing development in the Roman Catholic Church will be traced by way of various relevant documents, meetings

and commentaries. One of the first developments which warrants attention is the report on "Common witness and proselytism" issued by the Joint Working Group of the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC in 1970. The report stated: "Christians cannot remain divided in their witness. Any situations where contact and co-operation between churches are refused must be regarded as abnormal." Churches should however not be satisfied with common witness only, for "the more the need of common witness is grasped, the more apparent does it become that there is need to find complete agreement on faith – one of the essential purposes of the ecumenical movement."³⁷ The most important consequences of this report for the subject of this study are:

3.1.1 The clear statement of the interaction between unity and mission: unity is necessary for the sake of common witness, but this common witness should then lead to the discovery of the necessity of unity at an even deeper level.

3.1.2 For this reason unity should press beyond mere co-operation in witness to "complete agreement on faith". The influence of the ecumenical spirit of Vatican II with the obligation it laid especially on missionaries to foster unity, was clear in this report. That the Roman Catholic Church could issue such a report in conjunction with a predominantly Protestant body certainly pointed to revolutionary changes in practice and attitude within the Roman Catholic Church about unity and mission.

3.2 *The Synod of Bishops in 1974*

The specific subject dealt with by the Fourth Synod of Bishops in 1974 was Evangelization. The Synod is therefore important for the subject of this study for two reasons: (a) to evaluate developments in the Roman Catholic Church after Vatican II; (b) because of its subject matter. For these reasons particular attention will be paid to this Synod.

The following aspects of the Declaration approved by the Synod are of particular importance for our study:³⁸

- (i) The essential mission of the church was defined as its mandate to evangelize all men (paragraph 4);
- (ii) The duty to proclaim the gospel belongs to "the whole Church" (paragraph 5). In the context of a declaration by a Synod of Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church, the reference here would *primarily* be to the Roman Catholic Church. In the light of the

ecclesiology of Vatican II, though, one would feel justified in saying that "Church" here would not mean the Roman Catholic Church exclusively.

- (iii) The execution of this mandate called for an "incessant interior conversion on the part of individual Christians and continual renewal of our communities and institutions" through "the grace of God, spread by the Father in our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (paragraph 6). Notable here was the emphasis on *renewal*, as strongly present in the ecumenical movement since Uppsala.
- (iv) The necessity of ecumenical co-operation in evangelization was explicitly stated: "In carrying out these things we intend to collaborate more diligently with those of our Christian brothers with whom we are not yet in the union of a perfect communion, basing ourselves on the foundation of baptism and on the patrimony which we hold in common. Thus we can henceforth render to the world a much broader common witness of Christ, while at the same time working to obtain full union in the Lord. Christ's command impels us to do so; the work of preaching and rendering witness to the gospel demands it" (paragraph 10).

In this paragraph there were various note-worthy features. The consequences for mission of the Decree on Ecumenism were carried a step forward into practice in an official document of the Roman Catholic Church. The fact that a Synod of Bishops so explicitly propagated official co-operation, also strengthened the exhortation in the Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church (cf. p. 62 above). There was also continuity in the idea of the interaction between unity and mission (co-operating in witness while working to obtain full union in the Lord) expressed in the 1970 report of the Joint Working Group (cf. p. 68 above). A final important feature was the acceptance of baptism as a basis for this co-operation. This revealed again the growing convergence in ecumenical theological thinking, if the report on "One baptism" approved by Faith and Order at Accra in 1974 is borne in mind.

In coming to a general conclusion about developments after Vatican II on the basis of the meeting of the Synod of Bishops, it can be re-iterated that Vatican II was not the end nor the final word (cf. pp. 67–68), but that it indeed heralded the beginning of a new era. The ecumenical spirit of Vatican II is still present and is in fact emphasized in relation to the "essential mission" of the Church. The importance of the interaction between unity and mission in the quest to restore the unity of the Church is increasingly recognized. Indeed, the first fruits of this inter-

action are becoming increasingly apparent, as for example in the reciprocal acceptance of baptism. We are of the opinion, therefore, that the suspicions expressed by some (cf. p. 67 above) that Vatican II was intended mainly as windowdressing in order to facilitate a general return to Rome, can no longer be justified.

The Synod of Bishops was the last important event falling within the chronological boundaries of this study (1961–1975) to evaluate developments in the Roman Catholic Church after Vatican II. These developments are evaluated below.

4. Evaluation

4.1 A new self-understanding in the Roman Catholic Church

In the evaluation of Vatican II, it was stated that the single most important consequence of Vatican II was the change in Roman Catholic ecclesiology (pp. 63–64 above). The results of this new understanding of itself as a church (alongside other churches) in which the Church of Christ subsists (albeit in its truest form) were evident also in developments after Vatican II, e.g. in the report of the Joint Working Group on "Common Witness and Proselytism" quoted above. This enabled the 1974 Synod of Bishops to acknowledge the necessity of conversion and renewal within the Roman Catholic Church also if it was to carry out its duty of proclaiming the Gospel in the world. It also made a much broader common witness with other Christians possible without setting any pre-conditions other than baptism and common patrimony. If one compares all these facts with the attitude prevailing until the nineteen fifties, one cannot but conclude that a remarkable change has come about (and is still taking place) in the Roman Catholic concept of unity, a change which has also radically influenced the theory and practice of Roman Catholic missions.

4.2 Varying degrees of progress

Attention has already been drawn to the fact that the influence of Vatican II will take time to permeate to all levels of the Roman Catholic Church, inter alia because Vatican II was not an end but a beginning. For this reason ecumenical progress in the Roman Catholic Church seems to be taking place in varying degrees. This factor is underlined by Carter, who writes, "In some cases it seems to have stopped short at a new friendliness. In other places there has been an advance in co-operation in

the translation of the Bible and in social projects..... it is possible that we may have union, real corporate union, more readily on a regional basis than a world basis."³⁹ It may be for this reason that some commentators still detect a certain dualism in the Roman Catholic concept of unity and its practice of common witness: on the one hand it is stated that unity is to be achieved by all churches together drawing closer to Christ; on the other hand it still seems as if this is to be achieved by a prior return to Rome. This apparent contradiction may spring from the practical reasons stated above. There can be little doubt about the official Roman Catholic point of view as expressed at Vatican II and developed for example in the quoted report of the Joint Working Group, as well as by the 1974 Synod of Bishops. Although the development is not taking place at the same pace and to the same degree throughout the Roman Catholic Church, it seems clear that the official basis for the change in attitude to both unity and mission is firmly established.

4.3 The influence of a mutual history of suspicion and mistrust

Another factor related to the variation in progress in the Roman Catholic Church since Vatican II, which is of such importance that it warrants separate treatment, is the centuries-old mutual history of suspicion and mistrust between Rome and the churches of the Reformation. The importance of this factor was explicitly stated in the report on "Common Witness and Proselytism" of the Joint Working Group: "Differences about the content of witness, because of varied ecclesiologies, are by no means the only obstacle to co-operation between the Churches. The rivalries and enmities of the past, the continued resentments due to the memory of ancient or recent wrongs, the conflicts generated by political, cultural and other factors – all these have prevented the Churches from seeking to bear a common witness to the world. Only the willingness to extend mutual forgiveness of past offences and wrongs and to receive correction from each other will enable the Churches to fulfil their obligation to show forth a common witness to each other and to the world."⁴⁰

This reaffirmed the point of view of Brown (quoted on p. 69 above) that developments in the field of unity and common witness in the Roman Catholic Church after Vatican II would also depend on the response of Protestants to the changes which had taken place. The mutual history of suspicion and mistrust will play a role in this response, as it cannot be eliminated overnight. Vatican II did, however, take the first steps in opening a way to overcoming this by admitting (for the first time) that there was blame on *both* sides.⁴¹ This provided the necessary basis from

which mutual progress towards unity and common witness could begin.

4.4 *The final problem*

In the evaluation of Vatican II, the growing convergence in ecumenical theological thinking has been pointed out (pp. 66–67 above). A remarkable degree of consensus has indeed been reached in recent years on most of the theological problems which were generally considered to be the most serious stumbling-blocks on the road to unity (e.g. the ministry, the sacraments, soteriology, etc.). (This was evidenced at the meeting of Faith and Order at Accra, 1974). What could quite possibly prove to be the final problem, though, has not really been examined closely yet: the position of the Pope. The importance of this problem is revealed by Cardinal Höffner, when, having issued a serious call to unity, he states: "Garant der Wahrheit unseres Glaubens ist die Cathedra des heiligen Petrus und nicht die Meinungeines einzelnen Bischofs oder Professors."^{4 2} It was also implicit in the well-known words of greeting of Pope Paul VI on the occasion of his visit to the headquarters of the WCC in 1969: "Our name is Peter". This problem will have to be faced squarely before final clarity is reached on the Roman Catholic concept of unity.

5. Conclusion

In the evaluation at the end of Chapter I, it was stated that it would not be possible to return to a pre-ecumenical era in mission after the integration of the IMC and the WCC. In the same way, it is clear in the light of Vatican II and subsequent developments, that Rome is firmly established as a "partner" in ecumenical discussions on unity and mission. This has also become a reality from which there is no turning back. The next chapter deals with the other important "partner" in ecumenical discussions not dealt with so far — the evangelicals.

Notes

1. Cf. the title of the book by Brown, R.M.: *The Ecumenical Revolution*.
2. Quoted in Falconi, C.: *The popes in the twentieth century*.
3. Abbott, W.M.: *The documents of Vatican II*, p. 336.
4. Quoted in Küng, H.: *The Council and reunion*, p. 6.

5. Stirnimann, H. (ed.): *Ökumenische Erneuerung in der Mission*, pp. 81–86.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Cf. (SAWS): *Sendingwetenskap vandag. 'n Terreinverkenning*, pp. 45–52.
8. Cf. Berkouwer, G.C.: *Nabetrachting op het Concilie*, p. 85.
9. Abbott, W.M.: *op. cit.*, pp. 13, 102.
10. Chapter I.1, in Abbott, W.M.: *op. cit.*, p. 15.
11. Chapter I.8, in Abbott, W.M.: *op. cit.*, p. 23.
12. Cf. Bea, A.: *Der Weg zur Einheit nach dem Konzil*, pp. 166–167, 311.
13. In this regard, cf. the commentary of Outler in Abbott, W.M.: *op. cit.*, p. 104.
14. For a discussion on the title of Chapter I, cf. Fiolet, H.A.M. et al.: *Kerk en Oecumene*, pp. 35–36; also Abbott, W.M.: *op. cit.*, p. 343.
15. In Abbott, W.M.: *op. cit.*, p. 342.
16. Chapter II, 12, in Abbott, W.M.: *op. cit.*, p. 354.
17. Cf. Kantzenbach, F. & Vajta, V. (ed.): *Wir sind gefragt...* p. 192.
18. Chapter I.3, in Abbott, W.M.: *op. cit.*, p. 345.
19. Chapter I.3, in Abbott, W.M.: *op. cit.*, p. 346.
20. Chapter I.6, in Abbott, W.M.: *op. cit.*, p. 592.
21. Chapter II.15, in Abbott, W.M.: *op. cit.*, pp. 602–603.
22. Kantzenbach, F.W. & Vajta, V. (ed.): *Oecumenica 1967*, p. 153.
23. Fiolet, H.A.M. et al: *op. cit.*, pp. 169–170.
24. Neill, S.: *The Church and Christian union*, p. 367. Cf. also Brown, R.M.: *op. cit.*, pp. 78–83.
25. In Abbott, W.M.: *op. cit.*, p. 367.
26. Kantzenbach, F.W. & Vajta, V. (ed.): *Oecumenica 1967*, p. 154.
27. Bea, A.: *op. cit.*, p. 93.
28. Decree on the missionary activity of the Church, Chapter I.6 in Abbott, W.M.: *op. cit.*, p. 592. Cf. also Stirnimann, H. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 91.
29. Decree on the missionary activity of the Church, Chapter II.15, in Abbott, W.M.: *op. cit.*, pp. 602–603.
30. Chapter I.1, in Abbott, W.M.: *op. cit.*, p. 15.
31. Chapter IV.42, in Abbott, W.M.: *op. cit.*, p. 241.
32. Abbott, W.M.: *op. cit.*, p. 26
33. McGovern, J.O.: *The Church in the Churches*, pp. 116–117. Cf. also Kantzenbach & Vajta (ed.): *Wir sind gefragt...*, p. 130.
34. Cf. Abbott, W.M.: *op. cit.*, p. 338.
35. Brown, R.M.: *op. cit.*, p. 207; also pp. 201–202.
36. Quoted in Abbott, W.M.: *op. cit.*, p. xv.
37. Quoted in Goodall, N.: *Ecumenical Progress*, pp. 26–27.
38. All quotations from and references to the Declaration are based on the translated version which appeared in *IRM*, Vol. 64, 1975, pp. 311–314.
39. Carter, S.E.: "The Synod of Bishops – 1974. An assessment", in *IRM*, vol. 64, 1975, p. 300.
40. "Common Witness and Proselytism. A study document", in *ER*, vol. 23, 1971, p. 14.
41. Decree on Ecumenism, Chapter I.3, in Abbott, W.M.: *op. cit.*, p. 345.
42. In *Sein und Sendung*, Jan.–Feb. 1977, pp. 30–31.

5

UNITY AND MISSION

An evangelical alternative?

The integration of the IMC and the WCC did not meet with general agreement. A group of missionaries and mission supporters from the ranks of the IMC (called *evangelicals*) did not support the decision to integrate the two bodies.¹ In the years immediately following this event, the evangelicals started articulating more and more clearly their disagreement with developments in the thinking about unity and mission in ecumenical circles. A platform was provided for these views by the organisation of a series of congresses, starting with the Wheaton Congress in 1966. They succeeded in drawing together large numbers of missionaries and theologians from all over the world, presenting a point of view which cannot simply be ignored. This chapter will therefore be an attempt to provide an overview of the different emphases in expressing the interrelationship between unity and mission in evangelical circles.

1. The Wheaton Congress

The Wheaton Congress was predominantly North American in character.

It was organized by two American associations,² but as they represented a large number of missionaries across the world, Wheaton was bound to have world-wide influence. Wheaton is also important because it was the first exclusively evangelical missions conference after the integration of the IMC and the WCC, and therefore the first opportunity where evangelicals could articulate *their* position. Wheaton eventually became the first of a series of such conferences, and, for all these reasons, is thus of fundamental importance. A declaration was issued at the end of the conference, expressing the consensus reached by the delegates. In order to elucidate certain statements in the declaration, it is necessary also to take into account some of the papers read at Wheaton.³

1.1 Unity and mission according to Wheaton

In the Wheaton Declaration, a direct and fundamental link between unity and mission was established on the basis of John 17. This unity would not necessarily be expressed in organizational form, as organizational unity in fact very seldom led to greater missionary enthusiasm. "Biblical oneness" therefore was to be found rather in the agreement of true Christians on the basic truths of the Gospel, even though these Christians might (continue to) belong to different organizations. The declaration conceded that evangelicals often neglected this "biblical oneness" because of carnal differences and personal grievances.

In order to manifest this unity more clearly, therefore, certain "declarations" were issued: "That we will endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace so that the world may believe. That we will encourage and assist in the organization of evangelical fellowships among churches and missionary societies at national, regional and international levels. That we will encourage evangelical mission mergers when such will eliminate duplication of administration, produce more efficient stewardship of personnel and resources, and strengthen their ministries. That we caution evangelicals to avoid establishing new churches or organizations where existing groups of like precious faith satisfactorily fill the rôle."⁴

The definition of religious liberty in the Wheaton Declaration also revealed the thinking of the congress on unity and mission: "(Religious freedom) means freedom to propagate and to change one's faith or church affiliation, as well as the freedom to worship God.... We shall obey God rather than men in resisting the monopolistic tendencies both within and without Christendom that seek to stifle evangelical witness to

Jesus Christ..... we shall not use unbiblical, unethical methods of persuading people to change their religious allegiance. However, when we seek conversion of unregenerate men, even though they may be attached to some church or other religion, we are fulfilling our biblical mandate."⁵ The Declaration ended with a "covenant" in which delegates undertook to seek "the mobilization of the church, its people, its prayers, and resources, for the evangelization of the world in this generation."⁶ This "covenant" seemed to have been a conscious revival of the Edinburgh slogan and the fervent missionary (evangelistic) spirit which characterized the founding of the IMC.

1.2 An evaluation of the Wheaton Congress

1.2.1 In the concept of unity expounded at Wheaton, the emphasis was placed so overwhelmingly on spiritual unity that there was no real need for any form of visible, organizational unity.⁷ This was so because unity was seen as existing primarily (almost exclusively) in the link between Christ and the "true regenerate" individual believer. "Biblical oneness" therefore existed in the invisible unity created among certain individuals by way of their individual connectedness with Christ. This inevitably led to a devaluation of the Church as a visible institution, as became apparent in the definition of religious liberty. Where someone was not a "true regenerate" believer according to evangelical norms, church affiliation was of no importance and so the conversion of such "unregenerate men" could be regarded as a fulfilment of the missionary mandate. This concept of unity can in fact be compared to the pre-Vatican II point of view of the Roman Catholic Church, viz. that the way to restore unity was by returning to Rome. One can say that according to the Wheaton concept, the only way to unity was by "returning" to the evangelical fold on terms laid down by evangelicals.

1.2.2 Because unity was seen as invisible and completely spiritual, and could therefore not be established in any visible, organizational form, there was a tendency to divorce the missionary mandate from the call to unity. As nothing much could really be done in the realm of unity, the missionary mandate was elevated to the be-all and end-all of Christian responsibility.⁸ Such a separation is, however, incorrect, as unity must lead to mission must lead to unity must lead to mission.⁹ Christians therefore are called equally to unity *and* mission; one should not be emphasized at the expense of the other.

1.2.3 The concept of unity as expressed at Wheaton furthermore

revealed marked pragmatic overtones. This was evident e.g. in the "declarations" quoted above, where unity was specifically advocated mainly in order to avoid wasteful use of people and resources. It was even more evident in a paper read by Mortenson. He called for unity "designed for world evangelism, and (which) should be manifested by the effectiveness of its outreach." He tested previous union schemes according to statistics (new missionaries sent out and more funds contributed), and where there was generally not a significant increase in these, he concluded that the drive for unity was worthless and a waste of time.¹⁰ Such an evaluation conforms to what has been pointed out in the previous paragraph: because only the missionary mandate is really essential and binding, unity can be judged on completely pragmatic grounds according to the missionary results it accomplishes. The unity of the Church is thus relegated to a secondary position on completely pragmatic grounds.

1.2.4 Wheaton revealed a strongly polemical attitude towards other Christian groups in its statement of the missionary mandate. This was evident, for example, in the declaration on religious liberty, in such a way that reference could be made to a "legitimate Biblical proselytism."¹¹ In his overview of the congress, Lindsell could therefore point out the strong suspicion towards the WCC, the Orthodox churches and the Roman Catholic Church as one of the noteworthy features of the congress.¹² It comes as no surprise that Smith was able to express admiration for many aspects of the congress, but voiced his fear exactly on this aspect: the divisive results the congress could have because of its "preoccupation with opposition". This would have a detrimental effect especially on young churches in the Third World.

Smith pointed out that this polemical attitude had to be seen in the context of a "profound difference between the initiative which comes from the United Kingdom and that from the United States for the establishment of such (evangelical) fellowship. In the former case there is no desire to make such a fellowship exclusive..... In sharp contrast is the statement of the recently established Evangelical Fellowship of Africa and Madagascar, which restricts participation to bodies that have no part in the activities of the World Council of Churches or any related agencies. A number of well-informed persons at the Congress said that the same intention will underlie the establishment of other evangelical fellowships sponsored by the EFMA and IFMA. One can only regret the divisions thus produced by forcing Christian bodies to make such a choice, especially in countries where Christians compose small minority groups confronting massive and entrenched paganism."¹³ This can right-

fully be considered one of the most unfortunate influences of Wheaton on subsequent evangelical thinking on unity and mission, especially in the Third World.

1.2.5 There was present at Wheaton an element of contrition which does not always characterize the evangelical point of view. This was evident for example in the declaration where it was stated that even amongst themselves, evangelicals had not succeeded in realizing the necessary unity because of carnal differences and personal grievances. In his commentary on the congress, Fenton (himself an evangelical), stated, "Doubtless our attempts to formulate and to express our opinions were often marked by inconsistency. We sometimes stressed the fact that organization was not essential to unity (an attempt to express one of our concerns about the World Council); a little later, we would be urging one another to organize evangelical fellowships and to consider the merger of some of our missions (an attempt to present a more united front, and a more efficient one, before the world – and before the ecumenical movement)".¹⁴ This element of contrition is an essential prerequisite for *any* group of Christians if that unity for which Christ prayed, and which will convince the world, is ever to be realized in the Church.

1.2.6 The history of missions provides ample evidence of the often haphazard application of missionary resources, resulting in duplication and over-denominationalization in many parts of the world. The concept of unity articulated at Wheaton, with its markedly pragmatic overtones, can be considered to have revealed an awareness of this state of affairs and to have provided a first tentative step towards overcoming it.

1.3 Conclusion

In this way Wheaton laid the foundation for the evangelical alternative to the ecumenical concepts of unity and mission. The way in which the basic evangelical concepts (on unity and mission) would develop or change in subsequent discussions, will now be traced. The first opportunity for such discussions on a world-wide scale, was provided by the World Congress on Evangelism in Berlin later in 1966.

2. The Berlin Congress

The World Congress on Evangelism in Berlin 1966, on the theme: *One race, one gospel, one task*, was organized mainly on the initiative of

Billy Graham. As it was attended by more than 1 000 delegates from 100 nations, with strong representation and input from the Third World, it was, however, more representative of world-wide evangelicalism than the Wheaton Congress.¹⁵ Since Berlin issued no declaration, but only a brief closing statement, an assessment of its thinking on unity and mission will have to be based more on papers read at the congress and on the comments of delegates and observers.

2.1 *The concept of unity*

2.1.1 As at Wheaton, the concept of unity articulated at Berlin emphasized most strongly the spiritual unity of individual believers. So, for example, Billy Graham stated in his closing message to the congress, "we have said to the world that we are a *spiritually united* fellowship regardless of race, culture, language, denominational or ecclesiastical affiliation... This is the *spiritual unity* of the Church."¹⁶ Any form of organizational unity was not only regarded with suspicion, but was actually rejected explicitly. In the letter of invitation to the congress Graham wrote, "There is no thought of organizing a new movement; in fact we are very definite that no organization will come out of such a conference. It will be for prayer, fellowship and study of evangelistic strategy in the face of problems of evangelism round the world."¹⁷ The Church as institution, therefore, was still devalued and unity still seen in (almost) exclusively spiritual terms. For this reason, Künneth in his paper on "Hindrances to evangelism in the Church" could simply ignore the division among churches as in any way presenting a hindrance to evangelism.¹⁸

2.1.2 Individual believers were bound together in this spiritual unity by a very specific binding force. "Berlin 1966 defined, as well as demonstrated, evangelicalism. The interdenominational unity of historical revivalism expressed itself."¹⁹ The binding force was therefore a specific perception of the need for evangelism, as it was expressed in "historical revivalism". This was also evident in Graham's paper, "Why the Berlin Congress?" He stated, "Do we want unity among true believers? Then evangelize! I believe that some of the greatest demonstrations of ecumenicity in the world today are these evangelistic crusades where people have been meeting by the thousands from various denominations with the purpose of evangelizing.... Having said that, however, our greatest need is *not* organizational unity. Our greatest need is for the Church to be baptized with the fire of the Holy Ghost and to go out proclaiming the Gospel everywhere."²⁰ According to this perception, revivalistic, crusade-type evangelism was to provide the binding force for spiritual

unity. The institutional Church was then of secondary importance, and consequently there was such a strong emphasis on the spiritual unity of like-minded individual believers.

2.2 *Influence on mission (evangelism)*

2.2.1 Because unity was regarded mainly as the spiritual unity of like-minded individual believers, evangelism was not to be the task of the whole Church, but was rather to be the responsibility of the "committed few" – the old pietistic concept of *ecclesiolae in ecclesia*. This is revealed clearly in Johnston's statement that at Berlin "the interdenominational unity of historical revivalism expressed itself..... Berlin represented a unity and a cohesiveness that drew not only the small separatist denominations together, but disclosed significant evangelical elements within traditional Protestant denominations and the Church of England."²¹ These "evangelical elements" within the historical *Protestant* churches were to be the true bearers of mission. Where other Christians might be called upon to join the Church's mission to evangelize the world, it would be by virtue of belonging to these "evangelical elements" – *not* by virtue of belonging to the whole Church.

2.2.2 The suspicion with which any kind of organizational unity was regarded, led to a rejection of the whole organized ecumenical movement as it had developed in the twentieth century. "The World Congress on Evangelism of 1966 held in Berlin represents a continuity in evangelism that has its roots in the New Testament as well. The great evangelistic and missionary movement of the last century was concluded by missionary conferences held in London 1888 and in New York 1900. The Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference was no longer evangelical: the infallibility of Scripture was sacrificed for the principle of organizational unity. World Evangelism would be accomplished, they thought, through an ecumenical movement."²² It is clear that, according to this point of view, world evangelism obviously would not be achieved through any kind of organizational unity. For this reason the missionary endeavours of all twentieth century ecumenical organizations, but especially those of the WCC, had been in vain. The Berlin Congress has therefore to be regarded *inter alia* as an attempt to present an evangelical alternative in world mission/evangelism.

2.3 *Evaluation*

2.3.1 The basic theological link between unity and mission was not

thought through at Berlin. Whereas Wheaton at least stated this link, Berlin did not even make mention of it. Where there was reference to the interrelationship between unity and mission at Berlin, it remained on the practical level ("how to do it better"). In this regard, Berlin can probably be compared with Edinburgh 1910.

2.3.2 The concept of unity at Berlin was still the unity of like-minded individuals. The very necessary element of the diversity in the Church enriching the unity of the Church (Eph. 3:18–19), was not allowed to play any rôle at all.

2.3.3 The historical churches generally were regarded as obstacles to, rather than partners in, world mission/evangelism. The Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox churches in particular were in fact regarded rather as objects of mission/evangelism. They were criticized because in practising "ecclesiastical totalitarianism" they would not allow "evangelical witness" to their members.²³ This can be seen as a result of the general devaluation of the Church as institution in evangelical thinking on unity and mission. Yet the history of the Protestant missionary movement since the 18th century provides ample evidence of the serious difficulties that had to be overcome for Church and mission to find each other. It is therefore extremely doubtful whether the evangelical point of view as articulated at Berlin would really benefit the world mission of the Church in the long run.

After Berlin a series of smaller evangelical missionary conferences took place at Singapore (1968), Minneapolis (1969), Bogota (1969) and Amsterdam (1971). The next world-wide gathering of evangelicals, however, took place at the International Congress on World Evangelization at Lausanne in 1974.

3. Lausanne, 1974.

The International Congress on World Evangelization held in 1974 in Lausanne was by far the most significant meeting of evangelicals to have taken place in the period covered by this study. Nearly 3 000 delegates from more than 150 nations took part in it. As such, the Lausanne Covenant,²⁴ drawn up at the congress and signed by many delegates, can rightly be regarded as of fundamental importance for the evangelical point of view.

3.1 *Unity and mission according to the Lausanne Covenant*

The Covenant was a fairly comprehensive document, setting out the evangelical position on the mission of the Church in fifteen paragraphs. One paragraph (no. 7) dealt with unity and mission, stating: "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 co-operation 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)".^{2 5}

The most important aspects to be noted in the covenant on the concept of unity at Lausanne and its influence on mission, are the following:

3.1.1 There was greater and more explicit emphasis on the fundamental link between the unity of the *Church* (and not just individual believers) and its mission than in any previous statement of the evangelical point of view: "We affirm that the church's visible unity in truth is God's purpose. Evangelism also summons us to unity....."

3.1.2 As a result, Lausanne started getting to grips also with *organizational* unity — something which was ignored at Wheaton and Berlin. It is clear that there was no consensus or complete clarity on this subject yet ("organizational unity may take many forms....."); yet the need for unity to take some sort of organizational or institutional form was clearly realized.

3.1.3 An element of exclusivism was still present, though, as the people to be so united should share "the same biblical faith". The content of this "biblical faith" obviously was to be determined by evangelicals themselves. There was not a pressing need for fellowship, work and witness with people not holding this interpretation of "biblical faith".

3.1.4 In stating the interrelationship between unity and mission, pride of place was still given to mission/evangelism. This is the inevitable conclusion of the implication that those forms of organizational unity

were to be pursued which would "forward evangelism". It was for this reason also that "the development of regional *and functional* co-operation for the furtherance of the church's mission was urged."

3.1.5 In stating the evangelical concept of unity and mission, as in the rest of the covenant, there was a noticeable openness to self-criticism and a greater readiness to confess (even as "sinful") weaknesses in the evangelical position.

3.2 *General assessment of Lausanne*

3.2.1 Lausanne recognised the fact that the *whole* Church (not just a group of individual believers within the Church) as an *organized* institution is to stand in the centre of all efforts at mission/evangelism. In his commentary on Lausanne, Stott admitted that evangelicals often have a rather "low view" of the Church. For that reason he rejoiced in the fact that Lausanne realized, "There can be no evangelism without the Church."²⁶ This greater importance attached to the Church is to be welcomed.

3.2.2 A general weakness in evangelical ecclesiology was, however, still present at Lausanne: the tendency to view the Church exclusively in terms of evangelistic success. If unity does not "forward evangelism" according to the evangelical understanding of the word, it does not really have the right to exist.²⁷ This means that three of the four classical "marks" of the Church, viz. unity, holiness and catholicity, are for all practical purposes ignored (or totally "spiritualized"), while the fourth, viz. apostolicity, begins to function as the touchstone of the authenticity of the Church.

3.2.3 In general the point of view as articulated by the evangelicals at Lausanne left the impression of greater openness than that of Wheaton or Berlin. This was evident, for example, in the openness to self-criticism.²⁸ "The concept of the church renewed for mission is hardly novel in the ecumenical movement, but Lausanne saw evangelicals recognizing in healthy self-criticism the need for the spiritual and moral renewal of their own churches."²⁹ On the other hand, a certain sense of exclusivism could also still be detected, e.g. in B. Graham's statement before Lausanne, "This must be a gathering of those totally committed to the evangelical position as we understand it. This should not be a gathering of those committed to liberal or to controversial positions."³⁰ It was also implicit in the Covenant: "Yet we who share the same biblical faith

should be united....."³¹ As Lausanne affirmed that "the Church's visible unity in truth is God's purpose",³² this raises the question whether possession of the full truth can ever be claimed by any *part* of the Church. Is the full truth not rather promised to the *whole* body of Christ, to be discovered and experienced in fellowship (Eph. 3:18–19)?

3.2.4 Despite the generally greater awareness of the basic theological link between the unity of the Church and its mission,³³ Lausanne still tended to express the interrelationship mainly in functional terms. That is why Johnston could state in his commentary on Lausanne, "Edinburgh 1910 sought it (world evangelization) by *organizational* unity while Lausanne 1974 sought a *functional* unity to accomplish regional evangelization and, ultimately, that of the world."³⁴ This tendency in evangelical thinking on unity and mission (also present in the pragmatic concept of the relationship between unity and mission at Wheaton) has to be questioned, as the interrelationship is one of *essence*, not of *function*.

3.3 Conclusion

It may be that Lausanne will prove to be the last congress where so large and representative a group of evangelicals could gather and reach such a degree of consensus. An influential evangelical such as P. Beyerhaus is quite outspoken in his criticism of the "irenic spirit" of Lausanne. He and a large group of followers (the "deutsche Bekenntnisgruppe" – "German Confessional Group") desired a much stronger condemnation of the WCC as heretical, in fact as the antichrist, in the spirit of the exceedingly polemical Berlin Declaration.³⁵ According to Beyerhaus, it is possible after Lausanne to distinguish six groups of evangelicals. The Lausanne Covenant reflected the spirit mainly of the "new evangelicals", who were (according to him) too optimistic in their assessment of the WCC. He termed their spirit one of "kontroversielle Selbstentwaffnung",³⁶ a spirit which would only be exploited by ecumenicals to prove significant areas of agreement between Lausanne and Geneva. This was completely unacceptable to certain groups of evangelicals, who were also disappointed because Lausanne did not form an evangelical counterpart to the WCC.³⁷ It seems, therefore, that there exists at least a possibility of a growing convergence between ecumenicals and a group of evangelicals, while another group of evangelicals may try to form a "new IMC" to express their growing polemical attitude towards the WCC in particular.

4. General Assessment of the Evangelical Alternative

To conclude this chapter, a general assessment is attempted of evangelical thinking on unity and mission in the period covered by this study.

4.1 The evangelical movement continually reminded the Church in general and the organized ecumenical movement in particular of its evangelistic obligation. In so doing, it has succeeded in serving as a constant reminder of the origins out of which the twentieth century ecumenical movement grew. To make use of Gensichen's distinction in a somewhat adapted form: the evangelicals have served as a constant reminder that the professed missionary dimension of the ecumenical movement must indeed be expressed in concrete missionary intention.³⁸ On the other hand, evangelicals might themselves benefit by learning from Gensichen that although everything the Church does must have a missionary dimension, not everything necessarily has a missionary (evangelistic) intention as well. As has been pointed out above (e.g. p. 83), evangelical thinking on the interrelationship between unity and mission is definitely in danger of an over-emphasis on the apostolicity of the Church at the expense particularly of its unity and catholicity. Ideally, the evangelical position as articulated at Lausanne should serve as complementary to the position of the WCC, and vice versa. One would hope, therefore, that this serious polarization does not turn into a final schism (something which certain evangelicals actually seem to desire — cf. p. 84 above).

4.2 Evangelicals have generally tended towards a concept of unity in terms of like-mindedness, and a very specific kind of like-mindedness at that, viz. holding to the same "biblical faith", and sharing an enthusiasm for historical evangelical revivalism. Unity, according to the evangelical viewpoint, therefore, to a large degree coincides with uniformity, and is to find expression mainly in one specific dimension of mission (evangelism). There is a sense in which such a concept of unity is very attractive, giving a comforting sense of security and belonging in an increasingly problem-ridden, divided and alienated world. It is, however, a very parochial kind of unity. The unity of the whole (catholic) Church is much more a unity in diversity, a unity which actually needs to be enriched by diversity, and which can also be expressed in diverse ways in the mission of the catholic Church.³⁹ In the same way the real fullness of biblical faith can only be grasped and find expression in communion with all God's people.⁴⁰ Many evangelicals, though, reveal a distinct uneasiness at any signs of such diversity.⁴¹ This seems to result from the one-sided over-emphasis on apostolicity at the expense of catholicity (pointed out in the previous paragraph).

4.3 There is a sense in which the strong emphasis on the *spiritual* unity of believers and their evangelistic responsibility, springs from a "theology of apocalyptic despair". This means that at least some (possibly many) evangelicals have abandoned hope for *this* world and have instead taken refuge in the imminent coming of the next. Working towards the visible unity of the Church in such a lost world is simply a waste of precious time and energy. The most important task is quite clear: that like-minded believers (i.e. those who share this "spiritual" unity) should do all in their power and concentrate every effort on "gathering the company of the Lamb."^{4 2} It seems, therefore, that we are back at the beginnings of the Protestant missionary movement, when, in view of the imminent return of Christ, spiritually united believers should join in "winning souls for the Lamb" (mostly in missionary societies), a task so urgent that it simply transcended denominational barriers (without ever really having thought through either the concept of unity or that of mission).

4.4 The whole process of polarisation between evangelicals and ecumenicals on the unity and mission of the Church, as it has developed especially since the issuing of the "Frankfurt Declaration" in 1970,^{4 3} has been detrimentally influenced by a tendency among some evangelical theologians to fight (like Don Quixote) against windmills of their own making in their crusade against the ecumenical movement. This was evident, for example, in Beyerhaus' attempt to ascribe the refusal to discuss the Frankfurt Declaration in the plenary at Bangkok to a sinister plot of the "Geneva Staff" in particular and to the unwillingness of ecumenicals in general still to "bow before the authority of God's Word".^{4 4} When pressed for a representative comment from the German delegation on this so-called crisis, W. Gengnagel of the Basel Mission responded, "Not every crisis in church history is of a dogmatic nature. Behind dogmatic controversies there are often other conflicts hidden. That applies to a great extent to the so-called Frankfurt Declaration. It defends with a grim courage positions which the missionary leaders in Germany do not even attack. And it fires with all guns on positions, which (in the form in which they are stated), nobody defends. The noise of gunfire, however, silences the real questions."^{4 5}

5. Conclusion

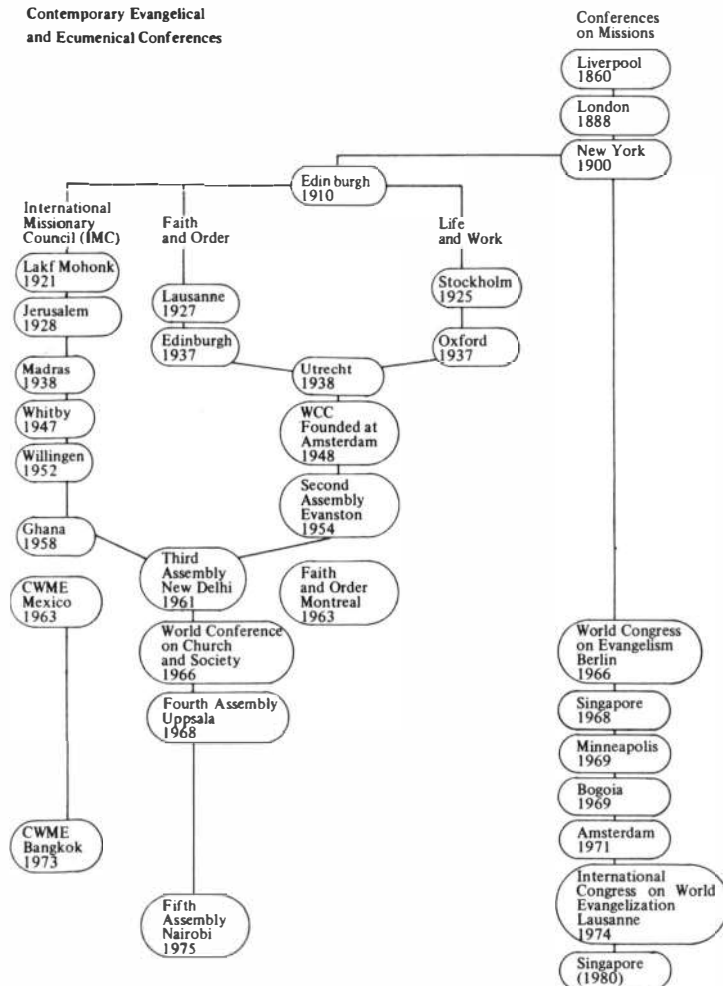
With Lausanne 1974 the Evangelicals firmly established themselves as a force to be reckoned with in ecumenical discussions on unity and mission. The stronger influence of European evangelicals^{4 6} such as J. Stott,

the architect of the Lausanne Covenant, certainly seemed to make for a more conciliatory approach. The first opportunity to gauge the extent to which the other partners in the ecumenical discussions took note of the evangelical alternative, would be the WCC Assembly at Nairobi in 1975. Before turning to that occasion, however, it is necessary to take note of the point of view of an important segment of the World Church: the Orthodox churches. They had all been members of the WCC mostly since New Delhi 1961, and as such it might be argued that their voice was part of that of the WCC. As will become clear in the next chapter, though, Orthodox theology, particularly in its thinking on the unity of the Church and its mission, had quietly been making a unique contribution. This contribution is the subject of the next chapter.

Notes

1. This was dealt with in more detail in the Introduction.
2. The Evangelical Foreign Missions Association (EFMA) and the Interdenominational Foreign Missions Association (IFMA).
3. The Wheaton Declaration, together with papers read at the congress, are published in the official report of the congress, viz. Lindsell, H. (ed.): *The Church's worldwide mission*.
4. Lindsell, H. (ed.): *op. cit.*, pp. 227–228.
5. Lindsell, H. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 226.
6. Lindsell, H. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 237.
7. This was actually one of Lindsell's conclusions in his overview.
8. Cf. Lindsell, H. (ed.): *op. cit.*, pp. 4–17; also Stirnimann, H. (ed.): *Ökumenische Erneuerung in der Mission*, pp. 18–20.
9. John 17: 20–21; cf. Marty, M.E.: *Church unity and church mission*, pp. 102–103.
10. Cf. Lindsell, H. (ed.): *op. cit.*, pp. 165–167.
11. Lindsell, H. (ed.): *op. cit.*, pp. 4–17.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Smith, E.L.: "The Wheaton Congress in the eyes of an ecumenical observer", in *IRM*, vol. 55, 1966, pp. 481–482.
14. Fenton, H.L.: "Debits and credits – the Wheaton Congress", in *IRM*, vol. 55, 1966, pp. 478–479.
15. An important factor to be borne in mind, though, is the difference in emphasis between American and European evangelicals referred to in 1.2.4. With the strong American initiative in organizing the congress, this different approach and attitude could still be expected to reveal itself.

16. Lindsell, H. & Mooneyham, S. (ed.): *One race, one gospel, one task*, Vol. I, p. 151. Italics mine.
17. Quoted in Johnston, A.P.: *The battle for world evangelism*. P. 160.
18. Lindsell, H. & Mooneyham, S. (ed.): *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 173–179.
19. Johnston, A.P.: *op. cit.*, p. 215.
20. Lindsell, H. & Mooneyham, S. (ed.): *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 32.
21. Johnston, A.P.: *op. cit.*, p. 215.
22. Johnston, A.P.: *op. cit.*, p. 18. In this respect Johnston's diagram of the history of the ecumenical movement is very interesting:



23. Cf. Lindsell, H. & Mooneyham, S. (ed.): *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 333–335 and 95–103.
24. The Lausanne Covenant, together with papers read at the congress, is published in the official reference volume, viz. Douglas, J.D. (ed.): *Let the earth hear his voice*.
25. Douglas, J.D. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 5.
26. Stott, J.: "The significance of Lausanne", in *IRM*, vol. 64, 1975, p. 292. Cf. also Johnston, A.P.: *op. cit.*, p. 318.
27. Cf. the Lausanne Covenant, para. 7 (quoted above); also Blocher's paper in Douglas, J.D. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 380.
28. Cf. 3.1.5 above.
29. Stott, J.: *op. cit.*, p. 292.
30. Quoted in Johnston, A.P.: *op. cit.*, p. 293.
31. Douglas, J.D. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 5.
32. *Ibid.*
33. Cf. p.82 above.
34. Johnston, A.P.: *op. cit.*, p. 324.
35. This declaration can be found in Künneht, W. & Beyerhaus, P. (ed.): *Reich Gottes oder Weltgemeinschaft?*
36. With this term Beyerhaus wanted to state that the only correct attitude to ecumenicals was one of sharp theological controversy – discussions and reconciliation were not possible. According to him, the Lausanne covenant, however, served only to disarm evangelicals theologically and therefore served no useful purpose.
37. Beyerhaus' argument can be found in Künneht, W. & Beyerhaus, P. (ed.): *op. cit.*, pp. 301–310. Criticism of the Lausanne covenant from within evangelical ranks can also be found in Johnston, A.P.: *op. cit.*, p. 297.
38. Gensichen, H. -W.: *Glaube für die Welt*, pp. 80–95.
39. Cf. e.g. the Greek word for agreeing, *sumphōnēō*, which means the harmony created by different tones. The same is true of the image used most often in connection with the unity of the Church, viz. that of a body with its diverse members. Cf. also what Paul says about evangelism (!) in Phil. 1: 13–18.
40. Cf. Ephes. 3: 16–19.
41. Cf. Beyerhaus' comments on Lausanne, pp. 92–93 above.
42. For a more extensive discussion of this argument, cf. Müller-Fahrenholz, G.: *Unity in today's world*, pp. 200–205.
43. The Frankfurt Declaration and a short history of its conception can be found in Beyerhaus, P.: *Missions: which way?*
44. Cf. Beyerhaus, P.: *Bangkok 73: the beginning or end of world mission?*, pp. 97–99.
45. "Yesterday", No.s 6/7, Jan. 5/6 1973. WCC Archives.
46. Cf. our earlier comment on the difference in approach and history between American and European evangelicals, p. 77 above.

6

UNITY AND MISSION

In eucharistic perspective: the contribution of the Orthodox churches

1. Introduction

The Orthodox churches, a communion of autocephalous and autonomous churches,¹ were the first to recommend officially the formation of a fellowship or league of churches. This was done in the encyclical of 1920 of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.² Since the meeting of Life and Work in 1925 in Stockholm, therefore, they were committed to the ecumenical movement as *churches*, and also committed to giving this movement firmer and more "official" ecclesiastical shape. For this reason alone the concept of unity in the Orthodox churches is of particular importance for this study. As has been stated above, however, the main reason for devoting a separate chapter to Orthodox thinking on the subject of unity and mission, is their very distinctive contribution, as will be pointed out below.

Before this can be dealt with, however, it is necessary to point out that

the Orthodox churches had great problems in accepting the fact of the integration of the IMC (of which none of them had been a member) and the WCC. This was the result mainly of the deep suspicion with which Orthodoxy regarded the Protestant missionary endeavour, viz. mainly as a campaign of proselytism, intent on coaxing away Orthodox members from the churches to which they traditionally and culturally belonged. It was also partly the result of the completely different (unique) Orthodox concept of mission, which will be discussed in greater detail below. In many Protestant circles, however, these reservations were misunderstood as being simply the result of a total lack of missionary spirit. For the Orthodox churches, therefore, the whole process of integration had been a traumatic experience.³ All these factors need to be borne in mind in the subsequent discussion of the Orthodox churches' approach to unity and mission.

2. The Orthodox concept of Unity

Trying to articulate the Orthodox concept of unity in written form and theological terms is a process totally foreign to Orthodoxy, where (a) *experience* of the given unity (in eucharistic communion) is much more important than theologizing about unity, and (b) the Western theological concepts are quite strange to, and actually insufficient for, articulating the Orthodox position. What follows on the next few pages is therefore something inherently foreign to Orthodoxy, and it should be borne in mind that what is attempted here is the labours of a Western theologian and is ultimately incapable of adequately expressing Orthodox thinking on, and their experience, of unity.

Another important factor to point out is that Orthodox thinking, especially on unity, but also on mission, has actually changed very little during the years. Therefore, what is presented here as the Orthodox concept of unity and its influence on the world mission of the Church does not necessarily originate only in the period of time covered by this study to the same extent as is the case in other chapters and with other churches or groups. The most important elements in the Orthodox concept of unity, then, are the following:

2.1 The one holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ exists in the communion of autocephalous and autonomous Orthodox churches. This is simply a given fact in Orthodox eyes and therefore not really open to discussion. "The Greek Orthodox Church knows and proclaims that she is not dealing with human teaching and human precepts..... She is the

whole and only Church, the Body of Christ, the only mandatory agent of the Apostles. So she only can define the faith..... We do not come to criticise other churches but to help them, to illumine their mind in a brotherly manner by informing them about the teaching of the One Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church which is the Greek Orthodox Church..."⁴ In general, however, there is no arrogance in this claim – it is simply stated as a self-evident fact.

Where this attitude differs from that of the Roman Catholic church – which, in the years preceding Vatican II also laid claim to being the one true Church – however, is that the Orthodox churches do not claim, as a result of this assertion, that all other churches should therefore now return to the Orthodox community in order to restore the unity of the Church. Rather, it is the duty of Orthodox churches to enlighten other Christians to the experience of the true Church of Christ, transmitted through the ages by way of Orthodoxy. "Although the Orthodox Church maintains constantly and unshakably its ecclesiological self-understanding as the 'only Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church', nevertheless it follows the way of the love of Christ and the command of the Apostles 'to lay upon you no further burden than these essentials'. The Orthodox Church applies the law of church 'oikonomia' where necessary; and without considering an immobile and static uniformity in secondary matters as a necessary condition for unity (accustomed as it is from its own synodal experience to unity in diversity) it has promoted encounter and co-operation with the Christian churches which are separated from it, with a view to restoring the apostolic tradition and the dynamic renewal of the unchangeable ethos throughout Christendom."⁵

The restoration of unity will come about rather through a return to the doctrinal heritage (common to all churches) of the first seven ecumenical councils. This was clearly stated in the Orthodox statement at the Second Assembly of the WCC at Evanston (1954): "We believe that the return of the communions to the faith of the ancient, united and indivisible Church of the seven ecumenical councils, namely, to the pure and unchanged and common heritage of the forefathers of all divided Christians shall alone produce the desired reunion of all separated Christians. For, only the unity and fellowship of Christians in a common faith shall have as a necessary result their fellowship in the sacraments and their indissoluble unity in love, as members of one and the same body of the One Church of Christ..... We are bound to declare our profound conviction that the Holy Orthodox Church alone has preserved in full and intact 'the faith once delivered unto the saints'."⁶ The restoration of unity

will find embodiment in the convocation of a genuine ecumenical council on the doctrinal basis of the first seven ecumenical councils. Such a council's first task would therefore not be to formulate doctrine about unity, but to serve as a means of *experiencing* and *expressing* the unity of the Church of Christ.⁷

2.2 The unity of the Church is a given fact, founded on and eventually giving symbolic expression to the unity within the Trinity. "In Orthodox thinking Church Union is an absolute reality pre-established by God. It is not a 'spiritualized', sentimental, humanistic expression of good will. It is not the result of a human agreement or of the acceptance of a particular confessional position. Unity among Christians is to be identified with the union of the Father and the Son – 'that they may be one, even as we are one' (John 17: 22–23). Unity among men in the Church is the result, the reflection, of the event of the Father's union with Christ by his Spirit realized in the historical Church on the day of Pentecost. The One undivided historical Church is the outcome of God's revelation and his real Presence which is realistically affected in his Communion with men. Unity is not an *attribute* of the Church, but it is its very *life*."⁸ That is why unity has existed in the communion of Orthodox churches since Pentecost, because a denial of this unbroken unity would be a denial of the Triune God himself. That is also why any abstract theological discussion of the unity of the Church is impossible (and also indeed impermissible) – after all, one does not *discuss* the Triune God; one experiences his existence in faith and expresses it especially in the liturgical life of the Church. A restoration of unity does not therefore imply primarily a return to the communion of Orthodox churches, but a return to the Triune God himself. It is quite clear that this founding of the unity of the Church in the existence of a Triune God is of great importance in discussing the unity of the Church with Orthodoxy, but also in attempting to understand (as a Westerner) their concept of unity.

2.3 The implications of the cosmic kingship of Christ for the Orthodox concept of unity are therefore related to this rootedness of the Church within the Trinity. This was expressed as follows by Nissiotis at New Delhi: "This unity is expressed in distinctive and unshakable historical forms and inspires that regenerating life-process which will incorporate the whole world into one (Colossians 1: 15–20). The cosmic christological vision of the economy of salvation in this biblical passage reaches its climax with v. 18..... Thus this cosmic vision of salvation does not

remain a theoretical contemplative or eschatological vision. Through the concrete act of God at a certain moment in this (our) time.... everything is decided and realized in this historical Church in which and out of which we live in this world, on this earth. It is therefore at this moment of 'He gave' and at every Church moment that this whole cosmic, universal vision is concretized in and for every Christian community and congregation, which has to grasp its existence as part of an undivided whole, as being unavoidably rooted therein. Therefore we can say that the unity of the Church on the day of Pentecost reveals the mystery of the fact of the Creation of the whole world out of union, through union and for Communion."⁹ The cosmic kingship of Christ is clearly not just some theological concept; it is actually embodied and concretized in the whole (one) Church at every moment of history. The unity of the Church thus is grounded in the cosmic kingship of Christ, but must also exist to express that kingship at any and every moment in time. Again it is clear why an absolute (but not arrogant) claim can be made that the communion of Orthodox churches *is* (and has been since Pentecost) the embodiment of the one Church under its cosmic head, Christ.

2.4 Because the communion of Orthodox churches *is* the one Church under the cosmic headship of Christ, it is logical that the unity of the Church must also be closely related to the unity of mankind. This is so because the Church must concretize the cosmic scope of salvation through Christ in this (our) time, which includes the incorporation of the whole world into one (see quotation p. 93). It is for this reason that the Ecumenical Patriarch could call on the WCC to collaborate in movements "towards unity and co-operation among the family of mankind which, though divided, has within it the seeds of the fundamental unity of humanity. For as the human race is linked to the Creator by a single man – the first Adam – so also it is kept in unity with God the Father through a single man, the second Adam."¹⁰ The unity of the unbroken communion of (Orthodox) churches is therefore the symbol of all mankind's link with God the Father through the cosmic king, Christ. For this reason the unity of the Church cannot be visualized apart from the unity of mankind. At the same time, the unity of mankind can also not be visualized apart from the unity of the Church. This provides one of the reasons why the unity of the Church has to exist at all times as a visible, concrete reality – i.e., why the unity of the communion of Orthodox churches has had to exist since Pentecost, "in unity with God the Father through..... the second Adam." The Orthodox concept of the unity of the Church has therefore always to be seen in the perspective

of this concept of the unity of mankind.

2.5 Finally, the whole Orthodox concept of the unity of the Church is concretely and fully expressed and experienced in the eucharistic communion of members of the Church. Here we are really at the heart of the matter as far as Orthodox are concerned. This concept of the unity of the Church was clearly (even passionately) articulated by Argenti at Nairobi: "Jesus himself identified his risen body with the assembly of believers: they dwell in him and therefore are united in him. 'Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells continually in me, and I dwell in him' (John 6:56). Those who communicate in the flesh of the Risen Christ are therefore united in one body, the body of Christ who is the Church. It is therefore by dwelling within the body of the Risen Christ, by sharing in Holy Communion or the Lord's Supper that the followers of Christ find each other. The gathering of the congregation for the celebration of the eucharist is the laboratory which transforms the community of believers into the Church, and thereby ensures their unity..... here the believers discover communion and become the Church..... This means that belief in Christian unity, belief in the unity of the Church, belief in the resurrection and belief in the mystery of the eucharist are one and the same belief..."¹

This is inter alia the reason why the Orthodox churches even today refuse to participate in the so-called practice of "inter-communion" – because there can be no such thing as the "inter-communion" of divided churches. There can only be the one eucharistic communion of the one Church of Christ: the communion of Orthodox churches. It is, after all, in fact the shared eucharistic communion which constitutes the Church of Christ. Sharing in communion with other churches would therefore imply recognizing the existence of more than one Church, which, as has been pointed out in 2.1–2.4 above, is simply impossible. As this eucharistic communion constitutes the Church, it forms also the foundation for the unity of the Church: "The gathering of the congregation for the celebration of the eucharist is the laboratory which transforms the community of believers into the Church, and thereby ensures their unity." All other elements of the Orthodox concept of the unity of the Church therefore find their fulfilment, and are only adequately expressed and experienced in, the eucharistic community. Unity in Orthodox eyes can therefore always only be unity in eucharistic fellowship – hence the title of this chapter. The next task is now to try (however inadequately through Western eyes and in Western theological terms and thought forms) also to articulate the Orthodox concept of mission,

especially as it has been influenced by the concept of unity.

3. The Orthodox Concept of Mission

3.1 Mission in Orthodox terms is *missio Dei* in the strictest trinitarian sense of the word. "The mission of the Church is based on Christ's mission. A proper understanding of the mission requires, in the first place, an application of Trinitarian Theology..... Trinitarian Theology points to the fact that God is in Himself a life of communion and that His involvement in history aims at drawing man and creation in general into this communion with God's very life..... Mission does not primarily aim at the propagation or transmission of intellectual convictions, doctrines, moral commands, etc., but at the transmission of the life of communion which exists in God. The 'sending' of mission is essentially the sending of the Spirit (John 14:26), who manifests precisely the life of God as communion."^{1 2}

As the unity of the Church is founded on and has to give concrete expression to the unity within the Trinity, so also the primary object of the mission of the Church is to point to and concretize the life of communion within the life of the Triune God. The theology of the apostolate (which exerted such a strong influence on developments in missionary thinking in the ecumenical movement (see Chapter 2)), with its strong emphasis on the *world*, is therefore foreign to the Orthodox concept of mission. Mission in the Orthodox churches is therefore essentially inward-looking, directed towards the Church, and the Triune God as the well-spring of the life and being of the Church, and not outward-looking towards the world outside the Church *in the same sense* as Protestant mission in general.^{1 3} This was probably a strong contributory factor to the misunderstandings and hesitancy surrounding the Orthodox attitude towards the integration of the WCC and IMC (cf. pp. 90–91 above). In the perspective of the Orthodox claim to be *the* one true Church of Christ, transmitting the experience of life in communion with the Triune God uninterrupted since the day of Pentecost, it is therefore also unavoidable that Orthodox mission should claim not only a position of primacy, but actually one of uniqueness.

3.2 As a consequence of 3.1, Orthodox mission is regarded almost exclusively as the continuation of the Church in order to make possible the sharing in the expression and experience of the essential life of the Triune God. In describing Orthodox missiology, Nissiotis can therefore

state, "Die ekklesiologische Grundlage der Mission soll verhindern, dass die Missionstätigkeit sich von dem Ereignis der Kirche, an das sie untrennbar gebunden ist, löst. Denn Mission ist die Art und Weise, in der die Glieder der Kirche die Gnade Gottes den Menschen ausserhalb der Kirche verkünden und übermitteln oder versuchen, den schlafenden Glauben der Namenchristen zu wecken. Von dieser Zielsetzung her erhält das ganze missionarische Unternehmen seinen tief ekklesiologischen Charakter. Es wäre ein grosser Irrtum anzunehmen, dass durch die Diskussion sozialer Fragen oder eine Analyse der säkularen Umwelt, durch die Behebung der Schul- und Bildungsnot oder materieller Missstände Mission getrieben wird. Solche Massnahmen sollten nicht als Mittel der Evangelisation verwandt werden, obwohl sie zur missionarischen Tätigkeit im weiteren Sinne gehören. Eine derartige Tätigkeit darf jedoch niemals zum Selbstzweck werden. Der Zweck ist nicht einmal die Verkündigung des Evangeliums allein oder die Verbreitung einer christlichen Weltanschauung, sondern die Errichtung der eucharistischen Gemeinschaft durch die Taufe."¹⁴

Mission can therefore (in Orthodox theology) only be defined in strictly ecclesiological terms (more or less the exact opposite of Hoekendijk's viewpoint!). It would in fact be legitimate to speak of Orthodox mission as being "ecclesiomonistic". Furthermore, mission not only has *as its goal* the planting of the Church, but actually mission *takes place* only in and through the liturgical life of the Church. Orthodox mission, therefore, does not see as its prime responsibility the crossing of frontiers and conquering of new territories, but rather as guaranteeing "the continuity of the Church in time" and "the transmission of the faith (i.e. in terms of trinitarian life) from age to age."¹⁵

3.3 This ecclesiological and trinitarian understanding of mission compels consideration of the implications of the cosmic kingship of Christ for Orthodox mission. This is actually of great importance in understanding the Orthodox concept of mission, for, as Brianna writes, "For the Orthodox, the main ground of mission is *the cosmic dimension of the event of Redemption*. The whole universe (*oikoumene*) is redeemed by the life-giving sacrifice of the Son of God incarnate, through whom all things came into existence (John 1:10). Therefore the Good News is not proclaimed as a 'surprise' but as a fulfilment of the expectation of humanity to be delivered from servitude of corruption. Not only the physical universe, but also human beings are waiting for adoption as sons (Rom. 8: 19–23). The whole of creation is in the process of becoming *ecclesia*, the Church, the Body of Christ."¹⁶ The missionary

implications of the cosmic kingship of Christ therefore finds expression in the hope that the whole world is going to become *ecclēsia*, that the whole creation *longs* to become *ecclēsia*, so that it can share in the experience of trinitarian life as sons of God. That is also another reason why the "continuity of the Church in time" is of prime importance for the mission of the Church, because only by way of the faithful transmission of the faith from age to age by the Church through its mission can the (inevitable) cosmic headship of Christ (centred in the Church) eventually be realized.

3.4 Finally, the whole Orthodox concept of mission (as all other aspects of Orthodox church life) can be defined adequately only in terms of the liturgy, specifically the eucharist. That is why the Orthodox churches can issue a missionary statement entitled, "Confessing Christ through the Liturgical life."¹⁷ The liturgy mentioned here is defined by Orthodoxy in the following terms: "Both in the Gospel and in the Liturgy, Jesus Christ is continually offering Himself as 'the Way, the Truth, and the Life' (John 14:6). Because Orthodox Liturgy is founded on the Word of God and is permeated by it, it is of particular importance for evangelism.... The Liturgy becomes a living Word of God addressed to people."¹⁸ This explains inter alia why the aim of Orthodox mission is not *primarily* the crossing of (any kind of) frontiers, but the continuation of the Church through the ages so that this liturgy, as a living word of God addressed to people as a call to join the liturgical community, can be celebrated continuously. For without the liturgy, there is no possibility of mission, of really confessing Christ in the world.

The centre and well-spring of this liturgy is of course the Eucharist. Therefore the celebration of the Eucharist also entails very important missionary considerations. These are expressed by Bria as follows: "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 non-Christians and strangers..... 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 *ecclēsia*'..... On the other hand, renewed by the Holy Communion and the Holy Spirit, the members of the Church are sent to bear 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 sending out the people of God to the world to confess the Gospel

and to be involved in man's liberation."¹⁹

This, then, is why without the Church there can be no mission according to the Orthodox concept, as the Church as the eucharistic fellowship is a prerequisite for mission. And this is also why the primary consideration of the Orthodox in mission is the continuation of the Church as an expression and experience of the life of the Triune God (an aspect of the Orthodox concept of mission which has often in the past, especially at the time of the integration of the IMC and WCC, been interpreted by Western churches as a lack of missionary spirit). Orthodox mission, therefore, can be described as the liturgy *in* the Liturgy, as well as the liturgy *after* the Liturgy. What is self-evident, however, is that mission simply cannot take place separately from the liturgy as centred in the Eucharist. One has to conclude, therefore, that the Orthodox concept of mission is mainly centripetal in character.

4. The interrelationship between Unity and Mission

From what has been said above about the Orthodox concept of mission, it is clear that this was directly influenced by the concept of unity. The most important characteristics of this interrelationship according to the Orthodox point of view, seem to be the following:

4.1 The interrelationship of unity and mission in Orthodox theology is characterized by its radical emphasis on the unity of the Church as a condition and basis for the mission of the Church. As Nissiotis puts it, "Mission als Ergebnis des inneren Lebens der Kirche kann nur von der einen, ungeteilten Kirche ausgehen."²⁰ This is so because the one Church of Christ shares and expresses in its life and being the life of the triune God (cf. 2.2 above). "Unity and mission coincide in the nature of the Church; for mission means: sharing directly in the grace of God the Holy Trinity in his Church. It does not imply witness and service apart from unity, but out of, in and for this unity. Mission is the calling of all the peoples of the world to become partakers, in repentance, through the mysteries of the Church, in that Oneness which is the origin, essence and being of the Church, through the regenerating, all-embracing and uniting mysteries of the Holy Spirit."²¹ This interrelationship is of fundamental importance therefore in understanding the Orthodox view of the mission of the Church. According to this point of view, what is regarded as *mission* in the Western churches is thus simply missions, the multiplication of (schismatic) churches, or even proselytism, but certainly not the true mission of the one Church of Christ.

4.2 This interrelationship between unity and mission is not some feature in the life of the Church which might be regarded as an optional extra. Rather it is an essential quality of the life and being of the Church without which it ceases to be the Church of Christ. "Mission is not to be related exclusively to the 'apostolicity' but to all the 'notae' of the Church, including unity, holiness and catholicity. This affects the concept of Mission in a decisive way, since it removes it from the realm of quantity to become a qualitative reality..... the holiness, unity and catholicity (which is not to be confused with geographical expansion and universality) determine the notion of Mission more than any success in numbers. This ecclesiological perspective implies that Mission is ultimately concerned with pointing to a quality of existence which reflects that of the Trinity."^{2 2} According to this ecclesiological point of view, any polarization between ecumenism and evangelism is quite impossible, as it is foreign to the nature of the Church of Christ.

4.3 The interrelationship between unity and mission finds its fullest expression in the Orthodox churches in the Eucharist. "In the Eucharist 'the Church becomes what it is', fulfills itself as the body of Christ, as the divine *parousia* – the presence and the communication of Christ and of His Kingdom. Orthodox ecclesiology is indeed eucharistic ecclesiology. For in the Eucharist the Church accomplishes the *passage* from this world into the world to come, into the *eschaton*; participates in the ascension of its Lord and in His messianic banquet..... Thus the whole life of the Church is rooted in the Eucharist.... This is indeed the *mission* of the Church.... The Church is fulness and its home is in heaven. But this fullness is given to the world, sent into the world as its salvation and redemption. The eschatological nature of the Church is not the negation of the world, but, on the contrary, its affirmation and acceptance as the object of divine love. Or, in other terms, the entire 'other-worldliness' of the Church is nothing but the sign and the reality of the love of God for this world, the very condition of the Church's mission to the world. The Church thus is not a 'self-centered' community, but precisely a missionary community, whose purpose is salvation not from, but of, the world. In the Orthodox experience and faith it is the Church-sacrament that makes possible the Church-mission."^{2 3} The interrelationship between unity and mission in Orthodox thinking can thus be termed a sacramental reality. That is why the unity of the Church is the condition for and basis of the mission of the Church. That is also why Orthodox mission is so strongly centripetal in character; for where the one Church celebrates the Eucharist, there the mission of the Church is indeed fulfilled.

5. Evaluation

5.1 The Orthodox position can certainly serve as a necessary corrective to many present-day points of view on the interrelationship between unity and mission, as the tendency is often to emphasize one at the expense of the other. In this respect the Orthodox witness can play a very important bridging rôle in ecumenical discussions. "Die Theologen müssten heute wieder zu der Erkenntnis gelangen, dass die Ekklesiologie zwei extreme Elemente miteinander verbindet und enthält, ohne eines der beiden zu vernachlässigen, zu verwischen oder zu leugnen. Durch das 'Zusammenleben' der Kirchen wird der Ekklesiologie heute die Aufgabe gestellt, das Wesen der einen Kirche, nämlich ihr Leben, das Leben der Katholizität und Apostolizität, der Einheit und der Mission, der Fülle der Evangelisation, zu erläutern und zu beleuchten."²⁴ In this process the holistic view of Orthodoxy can present a valuable foundation on which to build.

5.2 Orthodox theology reveals the tendency, in dealing with the subject of *unity and mission*, to replace both unity and mission by *the (Orthodox) Church* (cf. note 17). The result is two-fold. On the one hand, it can result in an (unintentional?) overvaluation of the Church, in which the Church almost becomes the Kingdom of God: "..... die Welt besitzt jetzt ein konkretes Mittel der Gnade: die Kirche. Sie übermittelt die erneute Gnade Gottes und erneuert selbst das Ganze der Schöpfung zur Rückkehr zur persönlichen Gemeinschaft mit Gott."²⁵ On the other hand, it can lead to a church which is turned in on itself to such an extent that it loses touch with the world in which it exists. In the former case, both ecumenism (unity) and mission will have a false goal. In the latter case, both the unity of the Church and its mission will be irrelevant.

5.3 One cannot escape from the impression that the Orthodox point of view on unity and mission is the result of, but can also result in, a very static doctrine of the Church and its mission. As long as the Orthodox Eucharist is celebrated somewhere, the one Church of Christ still exists, and its most important (sole?) mission is to preserve that celebration of the Eucharist so that it can serve as a light which eventually must enlighten and draw people/the world to itself. However, even if the world is not drawn to it, its mission would still have been accomplished. It is a moot point whether the world is taken seriously if such an attitude prevails. Is it not possible that this point of view is mainly the result of (a) the minority position of many Orthodox churches in countries where

they originally were state churches; and (b) the *diaspora* condition of the Orthodox churches in the West?

6. Conclusion

By the time of the WCC Assembly at Nairobi in 1975 there were signs that the Orthodox churches were becoming more actively involved in ecumenical discussions on unity and mission. One of the important signs is to be found in the reaction of the Russian Orthodox Church (which was probably representative of Orthodox reaction in general) to Bangkok.²⁶ This is to be regarded as part of the general rediscovery of the Orthodox missionary *ethos* taking place at that time and admirably presented later in *Martyria/Mission*. Zaphiris is therefore correct in pointing out that Orthodox participation in Nairobi was different from their participation in previous ecumenical gatherings: "Diese neue Art und Weise der Mitarbeit der Orthodoxen Kirche in der ÖRK (i.e. at Nairobi – W.S.) entspricht völlig dem Geist ihrer Eingliederung als volle Mitglieder und nicht dem Status eines einfachen Beobachters. Als ein existenzielles Glied des ÖRK begnügt sie sich nicht mehr damit, den eigenen Glauben durch Sondererklärungen ihrer Delegierten darzulegen, bzw. die offiziellen Berichte der Vollversammlungen abzulehnen."²⁷ It is appropriate, therefore, now to turn to another important event in the ecumenical discussions on unity and mission: the WCC assembly at Nairobi.

Notes

1. It is very important to bear in mind that there is no single Orthodox church (comparable to the Roman Catholic church), but that all Orthodox churches are autocephalous and autonomous. For a brief and clear discussion of the structure of Orthodox churches, see Briar, I. (ed.): *Martyria/Mission*, pp. 75–76; cf. also Meyendorff, J.: *The Orthodox Church*, pp. 142–189.
2. The Ecumenical Patriarch is considered as first in rank among the Orthodox hierarchy, but his position is not analogous to that of the Pope. The encyclical can be found in Patelos, C. (ed.): *The Orthodox church in the ecumenical movement*, pp. 40–43.
3. Cf. the speech on the proposed integration made by the Bishop of San Francisco at the meeting of the Central Committee of the WCC at Rhodes (1959): "(Orthodox theologians) are afraid that integration brings into the ecumeni-

cal principles of the World Council of Churches itself an ecclesiological change into a principle which is the root of the World Council.... accepting integration we of course must warn our Protestant Christian brethren that this integration will not only be a trial for us, but also a trial for them and for the whole Christian ecumenical spirit of freedom and thought.... The freedom of each member of the World Council of Churches is not only the freedom to join the World Council and to dwell in it, but also to leave the Council in the moment when the inner truth of our faith and religious conscience requires it." WCC Archives, Joint Committee WCC/IMC.

4. Statement of the Orthodox delegates at the Faith and Order meeting, Lund, 1952, as quoted by Patelos, C. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 89.
5. Metropolitan Meliton: "The re-encounter of the Eastern and the Western Church", in *ER*, vol. 17, 1965, p. 306.
6. Quoted in Patelos, C. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 95.
7. The WCC cannot be considered as such a genuine ecumenical council, as "it does not itself possess anything of the nature and marks of a Church, and therefore has no ecclesiological substance", and because the Roman Catholic Church is not a member of it — cf. Meliton: *op. cit.*, pp. 305–306.
8. Nissiotis, N.: "The witness and the service of Eastern Orthodoxy to the one undivided Church", in Patelos, C. (ed.): *op. cit.*, pp. 231–232. Cf. also Bobrinskoy, B.: "The continuity of the Church and Orthodoxy", in *ER*, vol. 16, 1963–64, pp. 514–515.
9. Quoted in Patelos, C. (ed.): *op. cit.*, pp. 232–233.
10. Declaration of the Ecumenical Patriarchate on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the WCC, as quoted by Patelos, C. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 63.
11. Archimandrite Cyril Argenti in a speech on Christian unity at the Nairobi Assembly of the WCC in 1975, as quoted by Patelos, C. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 345. Cf. also Bobrinskoy, B.: *op. cit.*, pp. 515–516.
12. Report *Unity and Mission*, Consultation on "Confessing Christ Today", Bucharest, 1974, as quoted by Patelos, C. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 105.
13. This is not to deny the proud record of evangelization of large parts of the world, particularly of Asia, by the Orthodox churches. (Brief surveys of the history of Orthodox mission in unevangelized areas can be found in Zernov, N.: *op. cit.*, pp. 47–50, and Bria, I. (ed.): *op. cit.*, pp. 21–23). Even where Orthodox churches were founded in new areas, however, the main emphasis was on drawing the outside world in towards the Church, and not the other way round (i.e. the lure of "heathen lands far, far away" continually drawing the Church out into the world).
14. Nissiotis, N.A.: *Die Theologie der Ostkirche im ökumenischen Dialog*, p. 195.
15. Bria, I. (ed.): *Martyria/Mission*, p. 4. Cf. also pp. 8–9.
16. Bria, I. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 7.
17. This document can be found in Bria, I. (ed.): *op. cit.*, pp. 231–234.
18. Report "The Bible and Liturgical life", as quoted by Bria, I. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 235.
19. Bria, I. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 68. Cf. also Schmemmann's clear definition in Schmemmann, A.: *Church, World, Mission*, p. 30.

20. Nissiotis, N.A.: *op. cit.*, p. 197.
21. Nissiotis in a speech at New Delhi, as quoted by Patelos, C. (ed.): *op. cit.*, pp. 240–241.
22. Report *Unity and Mission*, Consultation on "Confessing Christ Today", Bucharest, 1974, as quoted in Patelos, C. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 106.
23. Schmemmann, A.: *Church, World, Mission*, pp. 212–214.
24. Nissiotis, N.A.: *op. cit.*, p. 207.
25. Nissiotis, N.A.: *op. cit.*, pp. 153–154. Cf. also Schmemmann, A.: *op. cit.*, pp. 38–39.
26. This message was published in *IRM*, Vol. 63, No. 249, pp. 125–129.
27. Zaphiris, C.: "Die Teilnahme der Orthodoxen Kirche an der fünften Vollversammlung des Ökumenischen Rates der Kirchen in Nairobi", in *OR*, 25. Jahrgang, Heft 2, 1976, p. 273.

7

UNITY AND MISSION

The road ahead

On the eve of the Fifth Assembly of the WCC at Nairobi in 1975, various commentators pointed to the fact that a new atmosphere reigned in ecumenical discussions on unity and mission. This new atmosphere could be attributed to various causes. So, for example, Dr. E. Castro, director of CWME, wrote in an editorial in *IRM*: "The Congress on World Evangelization, held in July 1974 in Lausanne, Switzerland, and the Synod of Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church on the Evangelization of the Modern World, held in October 1974, have created a new atmosphere for conversation among Christians on evangelism. Over the last several years we have gone through a trying period. Polarization has consumed so much human energy, so many hours of discussion, has created so many wounds in the body of Christ, that we must confess very humbly the sin of our inability to understand each other..... we are now called to listen to each other humbly, to learn from one another, to recognize our common convictions and to confess before the world our common Christian faith."¹

According to Beyerhaus, the changed atmosphere was brought about by three factors: the flourishing of the evangelical point of view, culminating in Lausanne, 1974; the reaction of the Orthodox churches to Bangkok, and their more active participation in ecumenical discussions; and a more hesitant attitude in the Roman Catholic Church towards the WCC.² There seemed to have been a fairly clear expectation, therefore, of a new direction at Nairobi.

1. Nairobi – A New Direction?

1.1 *The concept of unity*

At Nairobi *unity* was the subject of Section II: "What unity requires". In a kind of paraphrase of the assembly theme: "Jesus Christ frees and unites", the report of Section II remarked on unity in general: "We have learned to know him (i.e. God) better as the one who frees us for unity in himself and as the one who unites us in his freedom. He himself precedes both the freedom for which he sets us free and the unity which binds us together."³ In an attempt to define the goal of visible unity more specifically, *conciliar fellowship* was chosen as the key-word. This term has already been used at Louvain (1971), and was defined more fully at the Salamanca Consultation (1973). Section II at Nairobi followed Salamanca in defining *conciliar fellowship* thus: "The one Church is to be envisioned as a conciliar fellowship of local churches 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."⁴

In an attempt to clarify further what was meant by *conciliar fellowship*, it was stated at Nairobi that "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 churches 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..... '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' It is because the unity of the Church is grounded in the

divine triunity 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.”⁵

The following important characteristics can be pointed out in the concept of unity at Nairobi:

1.1.1 The unity of the Church is firmly grounded in the unity of the triune God. Because of this, it is not monolithic unity, but the unity in diversity of a fellowship of churches.

1.1.2 The emphasis in this concept of unity falls more strongly on the local church than on the universal church.

1.1.3 The focal point(s) in conciliar fellowship is in the Church rather than in the world.⁶

1.1.4 Conciliar fellowship is not necessarily attained in a rigidly structured institution. It is rather attained in “charismatic events” worked in the Church by the Holy Spirit (as e.g. those in Acts 15).⁷

1.2 The mission of the Church

1.2.1 Various commentators point out, sometimes with an undeniable sense of surprise, that the world mission of the Church occupied a central, even a dominant, position in the discussions at Nairobi. In the words of Vischer, “Bekenntnis, Bekennen, Verkündigung des Evangeliums und Evangelisation standen ohne Zweifel im Mittelpunkt der Fünften Vollversammlung.”⁸ It was in this spirit that Bishop M. Arias, in his plenary address, “recalled the missionary origins of the Ecumenical Movement, and confessed that we have not always been faithful to this calling or to the priority it implies, though he also insisted that we could ‘acclaim and affirm the missionary and evangelistic potential’ of the programmes of the WCC.”⁹ In the light of the central position of mission in these discussions, it was to be expected that a close interrelationship should exist between unity and mission. Thus the report of Section II: “What unity requires”, stated clearly that “we must say that the purpose for which we are called to unity is ‘that the world may believe’. A quest for unity which is not set in the context of Christ’s promise to draw all people to himself would be false.”¹⁰

1.2.2 Nairobi stated the essential place of the witnessing community in mission clearly and emphatically.¹¹ In other words, the Church occupied a central place in discussions about common witness, the encounter with people of various faiths and ideologies, social and political involvement, etc. In the words of Vischer, "Die Vollversammlung als Ganze war ein Ruf nach neuer stärkender Gemeinschaft. Wenn von Kirche die Rede war, wurde nicht in erster Linie gegen die Kirche als überholte und wirkungslos gewordene Institution zu Felde gezogen..... Es ging um die Kirche als Gemeinschaft, als Ort, an dem der Glaube entsteht und gelebt wird; der Boden, aus dem die erforderlichen Früchte wachsen können, die Quelle für die Vitalität, die für das Zeugnis unerlässlich ist."¹² Both unity (as conciliar fellowship – see p. 106 above) and mission were therefore defined more clearly at Nairobi in terms of the Church.

1.2.3 Because of the emphasis on the witnessing community (the Church), the tension between Church and world was reflected more clearly at Nairobi. Thus the report of Section III stated, "We are all agreed that the *skandalon* (stumbling block) of the gospel will always be with us. While we do seek wider community with people of other faiths, cultures and ideologies, we do not think there will ever be a time in history when the tension will be resolved between belief in Jesus Christ and unbelief. It is a tension that divides the Church from the world. It is a tension which also goes through each Christian disciple, as each is unable to say that his or her faith in Jesus Christ is perfect There is great urgency for seeking a community beyond our own..... We must seek the wider community, without compromising the true *skandalon* of the gospel."¹³ The Church was therefore seen as having a distinct and enduring mission in the world.

1.2.4 The influence of unity in diversity, of unity at a local rather than on a universal level, was clearly reflected in a concept of mission which left much more room for contextual nuances and different emphases. Thus it could be stated in the report of Section I, "We affirm the necessity of confessing Christ as specifically as possible with regard to our own cultural settings 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..... There is great diversity in our confessions of Christ.... we believe that it is part of the mystery of Christ that even as we confess him in different ways it is he who draws us together."¹⁴

1.3 Evaluation

Nairobi was different. That is the unanimous judgement of such experienced ecumenical commentators as among others Warren,¹⁵ Newbigin,¹⁶ Beyerhaus¹⁷ and Van den Heuvel.¹⁸ They all remark on the difference between the Nairobi Assembly and previous meetings and assemblies of the WCC, especially those of Uppsala and Bangkok. In Chapters 2 and 3 we pointed out a certain line of development in thinking about unity and mission in the WCC from New Delhi to Bangkok. These (and other) commentators agree, however, that Nairobi cannot be seen as simply a logical extension along that line. Why was Nairobi different, and in which aspects did the difference reveal itself?

1.3.1 The socio-political context of Nairobi 1975 was vastly different from that of Uppsala 1968 in particular, but also Bangkok 1972–73. In 1968 man still harboured the fervent and apparently realistic hope that the world could be changed. It seemed possible to solve the problems of poverty, hunger and injustice by way of development aid. But between 1968 and 1975 came the student unrest in Europe, the Yom Kippur war, the oil crisis. The hope that conditions could be radically changed by way of development, was shattered. That is why "the character, the 'mood', of the Nairobi documents is quite different from that of the Uppsala ones. The note of sometimes rapturous hope still clearly evident in 1968 is missing in 1975. Sobriety and bewilderment are more characteristic of Nairobi. The Section reports reflect the far-reaching global changes and crises of the period between the two assemblies..... The real caesura in world history – heralded by the oil crisis and by the publications of the Club of Rome – is the survival crisis. Here we see the decisive change."¹⁹

1.3.2 The theological context of Nairobi was also different. The influence of evangelicals and of the Roman Catholic Church was already noticeable before the assembly (see pp. 105–106 above). It was also the unanimous opinion of commentators after the assembly, however, that the theological context of Nairobi was profoundly influenced by the contribution of evangelicals, by theological developments in the Roman Catholic Church (especially the Synod of Bishops of 1974), and the involvement of the Orthodox churches.²⁰ For this reason, Newbigin could state that "at the Fifth Assembly in Nairobi a statement was accepted on *Confessing Christ Today* which brought together in a genuine wholeness the different emphases of 'evangelicals' on personal conversion, of 'ecumenicals' on cultural and political liberation, and of Orthodox on

the witness of the eucharistic community.”²¹ And Scheele concluded, ”In aller Unterschiedenheit bekunden die Dokumente aus Lausanne, Nairobi und Rom ein erstaunliches, erfreuliches und im besten Sinne des Wortes erbauliches gemeinsames Zeugnis vom einen Evangelium Jesu Christi.”²² Different theological emphases on unity and mission were thus drawn together at and around Nairobi, creating a different theological climate.

1.3.3 Nairobi emphasized unity on the local as well as the universal level. Not since New Delhi had unity at the local level been emphasized so clearly. There the nature of unity was described in a well-known statement as ”the unity of all in each place”,²³ in other words with strong emphasis on the local level. Subsequent discussions on unity, however, were dominated by strongly *universal(istic)* concepts of unity (the *cosmic* kingship of Christ; the unity of the Church and the unity of *mankind*). For this reason, the New Delhi statement of the unity of all in each place never really figured prominently in ecumenical discussions after 1961. At Nairobi, however, in describing unity as conciliar fellowship, the necessary emphasis on *both* the local *and* the universal was clearly articulated once more: ”The one Church is to be envisioned as a conciliar fellowship of local churches themselves truly united..... it expresses the unity of a 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.”²⁴ This understanding of unity left greater room for unity in diversity, and revealed similarities with the concepts of unity of the evangelicals and the (fellowship of!) Orthodox churches.

A Church united in such a way, is called to mission (witness) at various levels: local as well as regional and universal.²⁵ As stated above (p. 108), this left greater scope for contextual nuances and different emphases in mission. This had not been as clearly present in the concept of mission from New Delhi to Uppsala, where the mission of the Church, under the influence of the concepts of universal unity, was described more in universal categories. The scope for greater diversity in emphases was doubtless influenced in part by the impetus from Lausanne and Rome, 1974. For this reason, one may say that the report of Section I at Nairobi provided at least the foundation for a new, comprehensive statement of the missionary responsibility of the whole Church in the world today.²⁶

1.3.4 Nairobi revealed greater balance and stability between the

various concerns of the ecumenical movement. "Im Hinblick..... hat Nairobi integriert und stabilisiert. Das war möglich aufgrund leichter Kurskorrekturen unter Beibehaltung der ökumenischen Marschrichtung im ganzen und aufgrund einer deutlicheren Differenzierung und Nuancierung bisher nur sehr allgemein formulierter und deshalb missverständlicher Grundsätze und Vorhaben. Das hat zu Klärungen geführt. Diese betreffen in erster Linie den Stellenwert von Evangelisation und Mission in der Ökumene, das Verhältnis von gesellschaftlichem Engagement und christologischer Orientierung sowie das Mass der Erwartung im Dialog mit anderen Religionen und Ideologien."²⁷ In paragraphs 1.2.1 and 1.2.2 the central place of the mission of the witnessing community in the discussions at Nairobi was pointed out. This happened without in any way weakening the equally important place of the pursuit of the unity of the Church. Nairobi had greater success, therefore, in maintaining the true and essential (= belonging to the essence) relationship between the unity and catholicity of the Church, and its apostolicity. It seems probable that the contribution of evangelicals (with their particular emphasis on evangelization) and the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches (with their emphasis on the unity and the catholicity of the Church) was reflected in the more balanced ecclesiology of Nairobi.

1.4 Conclusion

The heading of this section of the study, viz. *Nairobi – a new direction?* ends with a question-mark. As has been pointed out above, Nairobi provided a number of new impulses on unity and mission. It is, however, still a moot point whether these new impulses and signs of convergence do in fact imply that a new direction has been taken. It is certainly true that Nairobi indicated the possibility of such a new direction.²⁸ But only time can tell whether a real integration of the thinking on unity and mission of the various main streams in the ecumenical movement took place at Nairobi, or whether it was no more than a truce. "Die Dokumente der drei Weltkonferenzen (Lausanne, Rom und Nairobi) der Christenheit lassen also erkennen, dass durchaus noch nicht alle Differenzen überwunden sind. Sie haben allerdings ein unterschiedliches Gewicht. Im wesentlichen haben die Kirchen sich jedoch in der Erkenntnis ihrer Aufgabe und der gemeinsamen Basis einander ganz entscheidend genähert Es ist daher zu hoffen, dass die Zeit vorbei ist, die das Volk Gottes gerade an seiner wichtigsten Aufgabe, der Mission, zu zerreißen drohte, um derentwillen es von Gott berufen wurde und *ein* Volk ist (1 Petr. 2, 9)."²⁹

2. Guidelines for the Future

Having described and evaluated the development of the interrelationship between unity and mission in ecumenical discussions from 1961 to 1975, the question remains whether it is possible to develop some guidelines for the future. This is to be attempted in two sections: firstly by pointing out some general guidelines for the whole Church, and then by concentrating on the specific context of the Church in South Africa.

2.1 General

2.1.1 The interrelationship between unity and mission. This study has shown an undeniable reciprocal influence at work between underlying concepts of the unity of the Church and its mission. Yet, as is clear from the divergence of views on this interrelationship in various streams of the ecumenical movement, from the problems left unresolved at various stages, and from the tentative nature of the convergence at Nairobi, a firm theological integration of thinking on the unity of the Church and its mission, representative of a truly ecumenical understanding of this interrelationship, has yet to take place. Some of the most important problems which will have to be faced if such an integration is to occur, are discussed below.

2.1.1.1 The fundamental theological integration of unity and mission calls for a critical rethinking of ecclesiology. For it is only in terms of *the Church* that this interrelationship can find its proper theological expression. No one church or group of churches can claim to have succeeded in giving unity and mission this proper theological expression, mostly because their various ecclesiologies are all determined by traditions which developed in isolation, with specific contextual emphases. This problem can be (and to a certain extent has been) overcome by way of comparative ecclesiology in an ecumenical context (as e.g. in Faith and Order). Comparative ecclesiology in itself, though, does not provide the tools for a sufficiently radical critique of the various traditional ecclesiologies. This can only be provided by an appeal to the source beyond ecclesiology, namely Christ. It implies, therefore, an appeal to Scripture.

In the historical development of various ecclesiological traditions, however, a specific *use* of Scripture has generally also acquired a normative value. Comparative ecclesiology can help in exposing these different ways of using Scripture and their important (often unacknowledged) rôles in the various traditions. Even when this has happened, there is still no simple way to determine the implications of the original event

(Christ) for our ecclesiology. This is so because since the times of the New Testament the source himself has been attested to in various ways and in different terms.³⁰ For this reason, real ecumenical consensus on an appeal to the source in Christian tradition has always been arrived at only by way of an agonizing struggle together with *all* God's people, because Christ is present among us only in the form of a body, a community of believers. The history of the ecumenical movement in the twentieth century, especially since 1961, attests very clearly to a consensus in the Body of Christ on the subject of unity and mission that "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."³¹

This consensus now has to find concrete ecclesiological expression in such a way that striving for the unity of the Church becomes at the same time *in itself* a witness to Christ, while the mission of the Church embodies at the same time *in itself* the obligation to draw all Christ's people together. It is this essential (=belonging to the very essence of) ecclesiological integration of unity and mission that has yet to take place.

2.1.1.2 An attempt at such an integration must deal with the right relationship between the catholicity of the Church and its apostolicity,³² as the ecclesiological context within which the unity of the Church and its mission is to find concrete expression. The embodiment of this relationship posed a problem for the ecumenical movement from the time of Edinburgh in 1910. Because the ecumenical impulse came to the Protestant churches involved in the ecumenical movement via their mission work, the ecumenical movement was right from the start characterized by an awareness of the urgency of practical co-operation. Unity was therefore generally regarded first of all as a practical necessity for the sake of the mission of the Church. The focus of ecclesiological attention was therefore on the apostolicity of the Church, which was related to its catholicity mostly in a pragmatic way. As the churches carried out their apostolic responsibility in greater unity, however, they also grew into a greater awareness of their essential catholicity (cf. the development of Faith and Order). Consequently attempts were made towards a more fundamental theological integration of these two "marks" of the Church. The integration of the IMC and the WCC was an important step in this process of development in ecumenical ecclesiology.

So far, though, the organized ecumenical movement has not succeeded

in establishing the right relationship. It was pointed out in Chapter 3, paragraph 5.7, that within the WCC apostolicity has tended to lose its distinctive nature and to become simply a function of catholicity. Evangelicals, on the other hand, tended to subordinate catholicity completely to apostolicity (Chapter 3, paragraph 3.2.2). With the more active participation of the Roman Catholic Church in the ecumenical movement after Vatican II, an important new dimension has been added to the development. The Roman Catholic Church has always been conscious of its catholic nature, and Roman Catholic missions have always been regarded as the mission of the one, catholic church of Rome. Roman Catholic ecclesiology, therefore, had greater success in giving concrete expression to the catholicity and apostolicity of the Church in their essential relationship. In this respect Roman Catholic ecclesiology can therefore provide a very important contribution to a truly ecumenical ecclesiology of the Church united in and for mission, drawing together all Christ's people, and reflecting in its life the wholeness of man and mankind.

In this respect Nairobi provided signs of a greater Roman Catholic influence on the concepts of unity and mission in the ecumenical movement (see pp. 109–110 above). A greater and more direct Roman Catholic involvement in the organized ecumenical movement is still necessary, however. Some of the problems preventing the Roman Catholic Church from such an involvement were pointed out in Chapter 4 (paragraph 4.4). For the organized ecumenical movement, which was traditionally strongly Protestant in character (especially in its missionary sector), it will require openness and gracious humility to assimilate this essential Roman Catholic corrective. After Nairobi the possibility at least exists. The mission of the one Church of Christ requires that it be developed in earnest.

2.1.1.3 The relationship between word and sacrament is also in need of theological integration in ecumenical thinking on the interrelationship between unity and mission. In general terms, this will mean an integration of, on the one hand, Protestant (word), and, on the other hand, Orthodox and (to a lesser extent) Roman Catholic (sacrament) emphases. The Protestant missionary movement out of which the organized ecumenical movement grew, was primarily concerned with the *Word* and its true proclamation in the world. It can be said, therefore, that the Protestant emphasis in ecumenical thinking on unity and mission was essentially *kerygmatic* in nature. This *kerygma* can be determined by a strong concern for the prophetic calling of the Church (the WCC in general),

or it can be more concerned with the evangelistic calling of the Church (evangelicals in general). Yet basically both positions centre on the *kerygma*, and both consider the unity of the Church especially in terms of its relationship to this kerygmatic responsibility. Orthodox and (to a lesser extent) Roman Catholic thinking on the interrelationship between unity and mission, though, is generally much more concerned with the sacramental, *liturgical* responsibility of the Church in the world. Through the sacrament (especially the Eucharist) the way must be opened for the saving of the world by participation in the life of the incarnate Son of God himself. Because the division of the churches, especially at the altar where the Eucharist is celebrated, creates an obstacle in the way of carrying out this liturgical responsibility of the Church, unity has to be striven for.

As a result of the important rôle of Protestant missions in the growth of the organized ecumenical movement, the interrelationship between unity and mission has so far been dominated by this kerygmatic emphasis. These emphases are essentially complementary in nature, however. The content of the Gospel, of both word and sacrament, the well-spring of both *kerygma* and *leitourgia*, is the incarnate Christ, the Word-became-flesh, the sacrifice acceptable to God. For this reason the kerygmatic witness of the Church will only be credible to the world, and sustainable in the world, if it springs from the depths of a living eucharistic fellowship united in the service of God in the world (the liturgy after the Liturgy). On the other hand, the liturgical function of the Church will only remain relevant to the world if it leads to, and is borne by, prophetic witness to the world. Both these emphases, on *kerygma* and *leitourgia*, on word and sacrament, must characterize the mission of the one Church of Christ. The firstfruits of such an integration could be detected at Nairobi, but on the whole it is still a task facing the ecumenical movement on the road ahead, with such a degree of urgency that it requires immediate attention.

2.1.1.4 There is need for a clearer and more consistent interaction between unity at the local and at the universal level. Developments in thinking on unity and mission in the ecumenical movement from New Delhi 1961 until Bangkok in 1973 were dominated by concepts of unity on a universal level. There was not always a conscious effort to translate the consequences of these concepts of unity expressed in universal terms, into the situations of the churches at the local level, in terms of relevant (and attainable) programmes for churches which had to carry out their mission together in a certain place. Nairobi placed greater emphasis on

the necessary interaction between unity on the local and on the universal level, with its concept of unity as conciliar fellowship. The ecumenical movement would do well in future years not to (appear to) be so exclusively concerned with concepts of unity at a universal level, but rather to channel this energy into the challenge for the local churches to reflect in their life and mission on a local level the remarkable degree of unity already achieved on a universal level (as e.g. in the accepted statements on baptism, the Eucharist and the ministry).

2.1.2 The ecumenical/evangelical controversy about unity and mission. The growing divergence in theological thinking since 1961 between the so-called ecumenical and evangelical groups has often been focussed especially on the interrelationship between unity and mission. It is even assumed sometimes, that the sole concern of ecumenicals is with unity, while the sole concern of evangelicals is with mission/evangelism (the very labels used to describe the two groups reflect this assumption). It should be clear from this study that such an assumption is a gross over-simplification. Yet it remains true that it was often exactly the attempts of the ecumenical movement to give better expression to the interrelationship between unity and mission that caused the greatest controversy between the two groups.³³ Having studied the development since 1961 in the thinking of ecumenicals *and* evangelicals on the interrelationship between unity and mission, it may be asked whether the divergence should necessarily be regarded as an inevitable polarization, or whether the signs of a growing convergence at Nairobi can be developed into comprehensive agreement. It is our conviction that such an agreement is urgently necessary (a) because the ecumenical and evangelical points of view are complementary in important respects (cf. p. 85 above), and (b) because the essential theological and ecclesiological integration (cf. pp. 112–113 above) demands it. Some of the most important themes which will have to be raised, and possible guidelines for dealing with them, are discussed below.

2.1.2.1 An important element in the controversy has been an assumption on the side of evangelicals that they bow unreservedly before the authority of Scripture in formulating their thinking on unity and mission, while ecumenicals do not. Sometimes it is more or less explicitly stated, while at other times it is more an implicit assumption. This appears to be a simplistic and incorrect assumption, as this study has illustrated the ecumenical concern to base their position on solid theological foundations. The real point of difference lies rather in the way of using Scripture and understanding and interpreting its authority in a

specific context. The real concern of ecumenicals for Scripture is perhaps best illustrated in the study programme on "The authority of the Bible", and the final report on this study programme adopted at the meeting of Faith and Order at Louvain in 1971.³⁴

In this report the authority of Scripture was clearly acknowledged; the many problems of an appeal to Scripture in a situation of controversy were honestly stated; and the general principle was reaffirmed that the authoritative message of Scripture for each age could only be discovered in an ecumenical context. An explanation which illustrates much more clearly the real point of controversy with regard to Scripture, is found in the discussion between Berkhof (ecumenical) and Runia (evangelical). According to them, what happens is that both groups accept basic Scriptural pronouncements on e.g. unity and mission. Ecumenicals, however, tend to write certain of these pronouncements in capital letters (e.g. those on *unity*), and others in small letters (e.g. on *witness*). Evangelicals, on the other hand, tend to do just the opposite, viz. write *witness* in capitals and *unity* in small letters.³⁵

If the controversy is to be resolved, it is essential that both groups acknowledge this reality and abandon the false assumption that one group is faithful to Scripture and the other not. This assumption has in the past clouded discussion on the real issue at stake, viz. the *understanding* and *interpretation* of Scripture within a specific context — something which can only be formulated in the community of *all* God's people. Nairobi provided evidence that it is possible for ecumenicals and evangelicals to seek together the authoritative message of Scripture about unity and mission for our day. This must be developed further in a concerted effort and in openness to accept mutual admonition.

2.1.2.2 It is clear from the study that there are various theological differences between the ecumenical and evangelical points of view. There is no simplistic solution to this complex of theological differences, but there appears to be one aspect which might have played an important rôle in the development of all these differences. This concerns the general theological interpretation of Christ's work in history, or, in other words, the relationship between Christ's presence in the Church and in the world. It was pointed out that the integration of the IMC and the WCC more or less coincided with an important shift in theological thinking in general on this subject (see pp. 37–38 above).

In very general terms this shift can be described as a shift from "heils-

geschichtliche" theology (Cullmann *cum suis*) to the theology of the apostolate (Hoekendijk *cum suis*): the Church and its history was no longer considered to be the main focus of God's actions, but rather the world and its history. The theology of the apostolate provided the foundation for the development of ecumenical thinking on unity and mission from the time of New Delhi onward. Evangelicals were not directly involved in this development. Evangelical thinking on unity and mission was therefore not so strongly influenced by the theology of the apostolate, and it can be stated that evangelical thinking is still much more in terms of the "heilsgeschichtliche" theology (the focus on the community of believers where Christ is really at work through his Spirit; a very clear boundary between Church and world). This difference is possibly an important reason why both groups found it difficult to accept the theological basis of the other's thinking.

In recent years, however, the two positions have moved closer together. In the case of ecumenicals it was probably because it was realized that many questions about the relationship between Christ's work in the Church and the world had been left unanswered and merited greater attention. In the case of evangelicals it was probably because the stronger involvement of and with the Third World brought them face to face with the same world problems occupying the attention of ecumenicals, and therefore brought about a rethinking of Christ's work in the world. It seems clear, though, that the function and influence of these basically different theological points of departure call for urgent attention if the ecumenical and evangelical positions on the unity of the Church and its mission are really to be integrated theologically.

2.1.2.3 Another aspect in the ecumenical/evangelical controversy which has to be attended to is the rôle of the concept of unity in truth. At Lausanne this concept was given an important rôle especially in the interrelationship between unity and mission.³⁶ This reflected a general evangelical emphasis that unity is only possible and permissible in truth. Truth therefore functions more or less as a precondition for unity in evangelical thinking, and this truth is generally associated with the evangelical interpretation of Scriptural teaching (see e.g. p. 81 above). Because it is assumed that ecumenicals do not bow unreservedly before the authority of Scripture, the guarantor of truth (see pp. 116–117 above), unity with them in mission is therefore not possible for evangelicals.

It is undoubtedly true that the unity of the Church is not to be sought

at the expense of the truth of the Church's message. Yet ecumenicals would also confirm this basic principle. Again it seems, therefore, that the real cause of the controversy lies in the approach to the principle, not in the acceptance or rejection of the principle itself. In stressing the necessity of truth in its relation to unity, a dichotomy can be created between the two elements, *unity* and *truth*, so that they become separate entities, virtually unrelated to each other. Truth then has to be established first, on its own, before the process of building unity (on the basis of that truth) can begin. This appears to be a tendency inherent in the evangelical approach in general. It is doubtful, however, whether this is the right approach to the unity in truth of the Church. *Both unity and truth* issue from, and have their being in, Christ, the source and original event behind the Church. Therefore, as Neill pointed out, "ultimately there can be no conflict between unity and truth, since it is the God of truth who commands unity, and who commands it in order that his truth may be believed."³⁷

As has already been pointed out on a number of occasions in this study, the authoritative message of the Gospel for our day (truth) can only be formulated together with *all* God's people (i.e. in communion with past tradition but also in communion with all present believers). Both unity and truth can therefore only be attained in constant interrelationship. Neither one can serve as an absolute prerequisite for the other. If this point of view is accepted, unity in mission and mission in unity between ecumenicals and evangelicals is possible; indeed, is imperative so that "God's truth may be seen and may be believed".

2.1.2.4 If the ecumenical/evangelical controversy about unity and mission is to be resolved, there will have to be a greater awareness of – and willingness to admit – the rôle of so-called non-theological factors in the growth of the ecumenical movement and the formulation of theological positions at a specific time. It cannot be denied that the roots of the organized ecumenical movement also lay in the golden age of Western expansionism with its accompanying universalism, in an era in which more or less all international organizations which we know today, had their origin.³⁸ Even Edinburgh 1910 (to which evangelicals often refer as *the* model for the ecumenical movement because of its strong emphasis on world evangelization) cannot be regarded as an expression of a "purely Biblical (theological)" awareness of the necessity of missionary co-operation which grew out of a simple evangelistic fervour. The total context of Western Christendom, colonialism, growing secularism, and awakening Eastern nationalism, contributed towards the origin

and development of the organized ecumenical movement, both in its ecumenical and evangelical "wings".³⁹ In discussions on the authority of Scripture, Christ's presence in Church and world, and on all other theological discussion points, the rôle of non-theological factors (or the context) in the past and present development of the ecumenical movement needs to be acknowledged and assimilated as well if meaningful reconciliation is to take place.

2.1.2.5 The greater involvement and growing influence of churches from the Third World in ecumenical discussions over the last few years, are of special significance for the ecumenical/evangelical controversy. Churches from the Third World are generally not so hesitant about ecumenical co-operation as their confessional counterparts in the First and Second World.⁴⁰ This is probably so because they did not share the bitterness of the history of schisms in the older churches, but also because they experience the imperative of ecumenism much more strongly than the older churches. For them the ecumenical/evangelical controversy is not such a sharply divisive factor — many leading figures from the younger churches are equally at home, and enjoy equal credibility, in both "camps". In the face of the overwhelming social, economic and political problems of the Third World, there is also less difficulty in achieving consensus on the essential mission of the Church in their countries. It can therefore certainly be argued that their strong presence at Lausanne (where $\pm$ 50% of the 2 700 delegates from 150 countries were from the Third World), as well as at Nairobi (where for the first time in the history of the WCC more than 50% of the delegates were from churches in the Third World) was an important influence in the convergence between the ecumenical and evangelical points of view. It seems reasonable to expect that even greater participation of the younger churches will in future be responsible for drawing ecumenical and evangelical thinking on unity and mission still closer together.

2.1.2.6 An underlying assumption in the ecumenical/evangelical divergence, not always articulated explicitly, is related to the question whether unity should be visible (organic) or invisible (spiritual). Ecumenicals are often portrayed as being concerned solely with visible unity, the promotion of visible reunion among churches. Evangelicals, on the other hand, seem to reveal a predilection primarily for invisible, spiritual unity, although this spiritual unity can be displayed on occasion at conferences or evangelistic campaigns. A basic mistake is committed when the question of visible/invisible unity is approached on the basis of an either/or scheme. The unity of the Church certainly has an invisible (spiritual)

dimension, as the unity of the Church does not come about only as a result of the visible union of a group of individuals, but exists already in their incorporation into Christ through the Spirit.⁴¹

On the other hand, the unity of the Church just as definitely has an organic, visible dimension. The very fact that the Church is the body of Christ calls for its concrete, visible existence in the world and precludes any inclination to vaporise the visible unity of the Church.⁴² A one-sided emphasis on the invisible or spiritual nature of the unity of the Church can, therefore, be nothing but escapism. "The state of separated Christendom seems so abnormal, so contradictory, and so hopeless that it is easy to understand how ways have been sought to justify the unjustifiable. A first evasion is to retreat from the disunited visible Church to an undivided Church. But can the real Church be split up platonically into a visible empirical Church and an invisible ideal one? As we have seen, the real Church is always both in one. And if the visible Church is divided, then so is the invisible one which is identical with it. Can the unity of the Church be merely 'experienced' inwardly, and not also put into practice before the world? We cannot minimize our divisions by superficial spiritualistic-dualistic solutions; we shall make them all the harder to overcome if we do not see how deep they go, if we allow unity to melt away into the invisible."⁴³

Even more important in the context of this study, is the fact that the credibility of the mission of the Church (and ultimately the credibility of the mission of Christ himself) is at stake and calls for visible, demonstrable Church unity (John 17:21). It is clear, therefore, that the divergence of views relating to visible/invisible unity should not be allowed to lead to total polarisation. The ecumenical emphasis on and concern for visible (organic) unity has not been stated in terms of monolithic organizational unity (cf. *conciliar fellowship* at Nairobi). The evangelical emphasis on and concern for spiritual unity acknowledges the necessity of visible unity (cf. the Lausanne Covenant). What is at stake, therefore, is not an essential principle, but complementary emphases which should be integrated in such a way that the invisible, spiritual unity of the Church becomes clearly manifest also in visible, organic Church unity; and that the visible, organic unity of the Church is always based on and nourished by incorporation into Christ through his Spirit.

2.2 *Unity and mission in South Africa*

2.2.1 Most of the problems about the unity of the Church and its mission which are present in the ecumenical movement as a whole, are

also present in South Africa. Yet the situation in South Africa is complicated even further by factors peculiar to South Africa. Two of these are:

2.2.1.1 The confessional (and theological) divisions in the world Church are represented in the Church in South Africa, to such an extent that South Africa has been called the most over-denominationalized mission field in the world. Even more divisions have, however, been created in the life of the Church in South Africa along racial lines. This is a problem for every major South African church. Some have explicit, official division along racial lines (e.g. the Dutch Reformed Church) while in others it is unofficial and implicit (e.g. the so-called "English-speaking" churches).⁴⁴

2.2.1.2 A very important segment of the Church in South Africa has not been involved in the organized ecumenical movement since 1961. These are the three white Afrikaans churches of Dutch origin, which represent the overwhelming majority of South African whites, and which have great influence in government. This isolation came about especially as a result of the so-called Cottesloe Consultation of the South African member churches of the WCC in December 1960.⁴⁵ The Nederduitse Gereformeerde (Dutch Reformed) churches of the Cape and Transvaal (at that stage still separate churches) and the Nederduitsch Hervormde (Dutch Reformed) church were the only Afrikaans churches which were members of the WCC. The Consultation was a result of the racial unrest which culminated in the events at Sharpeville in March 1960, and was called to discuss the churches' approach to worsening race relations and accompanying social problems in South Africa.

At the end of the Consultation a statement was issued, to which there was a dramatic response, especially among Afrikaners. According to Lückhoff, five resolutions were especially responsible for the uproar. They dealt with: the rights and responsibilities of the total population (black and white) of South Africa; racially mixed marriages; land tenure and a shared voice in government for blacks; and the political status of the Coloureds.⁴⁶ What is of special importance in the light of this study, is the strong emphasis on the socio-political responsibility and engagement of the Church – probably a foretaste of the shift in ecumenical theological thinking which was to reveal itself so clearly at New Delhi in 1961 (see pp. 22–23 above). These decisions and their implicit criticism of the political (and ecclesiastical) *status quo* in South Africa, were subsequently officially rejected by the Afrikaans churches. As a direct result of this event, the three Afrikaans member churches of the WCC in South

Africa withdrew from the WCC. The result is that these churches have not been involved in developments in the fields of unity and mission since the integration of the IMC and the WCC. There is thus an important lack of understanding of these developments. One can indeed state that as a result of the separation and isolation (and the circumstances in which this came about), a strong measure of suspicion has arisen about the ecumenical movement in general.

2.2.2 The problem of the unity of the Church in South Africa, of its mission in the South African context, and of the interrelationship between unity and mission, is an *ecclesiological* problem to an even greater extent than in the ecumenical movement in general. What does it mean to be *the Church* in a society institutionally divided along racial lines? What is the mission of *the Church* in such a situation? These are questions to which no church in South Africa has provided fully satisfactory answers yet. In general it seems as if the Church is simply modelled along the lines of society in general, rather than being a prophetic witness in society to the new humanity inaugurated by Christ in his Church. That may be the main reason why the Church is regarded as irrelevant in many circles in South Africa, especially among young blacks.⁴⁷

The situation therefore calls for an urgent rethinking of ecclesiology by the South African churches among themselves, but also in communion with the world Church. An aspect of the problem which requires special attention is the relationship between the unity and catholicity of the Church, and its apostolicity. There exists in South Africa an even stronger tendency than in the ecumenical movement in general to divorce these essential "marks" of the Church from each other. A South African church which is well known for the wide range of its missionary involvement, is the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). Yet the DRC is also one of the Afrikaans churches which is rigidly separated along racial lines, and which also has practically no involvement in the wider ecumenical movement. A church which emphasizes strongly its apostolicity therefore reveals little awareness of its unity and catholicity.

On the other hand, some of the so-called "English-speaking churches" are actively involved in ecumenical affairs, but are not as actively involved in evangelisation in general. A rethinking of ecclesiology, especially of the relationship between catholicity and apostolicity (the ecclesiological context within which the unity of the Church and its mission is to be embodied), is therefore of special importance in South Africa. For the Church in South Africa to be truly catholic it has to transcend not only

traditional theological divisions, but, much more urgently, it has to transcend racial divisions. It must become clear that it is a contradiction in terms for a church to confess a strong missionary obligation and enthusiasm while not expressing at the same time an equally strong commitment to the unity of the Church and its catholicity (which is of added importance in a racially divided society). It is only a united and truly catholic Church which will be able to carry out the mission of the Church in South Africa.

2.2.3 Closely related to this need for rethinking ecclesiology, is the very strong need for an ecumenical (=together with all God's people) formulation of the authoritative Scriptural message about the unity of the Church and its mission in South Africa. The Cottesloe Consultation provided an opportunity, perhaps the best opportunity to date,⁴⁸ for such a common formulation. The fact that such a degree of consensus⁴⁹ could be reached on various aspects of the life and work of the Church in South Africa (also on its unity and its mission), seemed to confirm Visser't Hooft's statement "dat er iets groots gebeurd was".⁵⁰ As has already been mentioned, however, the Cottesloe decisions were eventually totally rejected by the Afrikaans churches (despite the fact that their delegates, who were respected leaders of those churches, had voted overwhelmingly in favour of nearly all the decisions). The two main reasons for the rejection seem to have been:

(a) A widespread conviction among Afrikaner Christians that the implications of the Cottesloe decisions would destroy the identity and nationhood of the Afrikaner.⁵¹ The Afrikaans churches claimed Scriptural justification for the policy of separate development as well as racially separated churches. A policy of integration was therefore not only considered dangerous, but also as having no Scriptural justification.

(b) Cottesloe was regarded as the result of improper meddling in South Africa's affairs by the WCC, which was widely suspected of theological liberalism and infiltration by communists.⁵² The opponents of Cottesloe therefore did not reject its decisions simply on socio-political grounds, but claimed to have justifiable Scriptural objections against them.⁵³ This intensified the already serious break with the English churches which endorsed the Cottesloe statement, as they were implicitly accused of basing their decisions on unscriptural grounds. Since Cottesloe, the break between Afrikaans en English churches in South Africa intensified to such an extent that Dr J.D. Vorster, Moderator of the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church, could on occasion

state that a common platform was simply impossible.⁵⁴ The Afrikaans churches not only became isolated from most other churches in South Africa, though, but also from the ecumenical movement in general (see pp. 122–123 above).

Theological differences about unity and mission, like the ecumenical/evangelical divergence, are exacerbated by this isolation of an important part of the Church in South Africa from theological developments in the ecumenical movement. This need is further intensified by the widespread popular conviction among white South African Christians that mission can only be directed at blacks, and that the main bearers of the missionary responsibility therefore are and remain the white churches (a conviction originating in the life and practice of the churches, and not so much in their teaching). There is a special need for the churches in South Africa, specifically the white Afrikaans churches, to realize that the truth has been promised to the one, catholic Church, not to any isolated part of it.

A spirit of complacency, as if only (some) South African churches are able to determine the meaning of unity and mission in the unique South African circumstances, therefore finds no Scriptural justification. Even greater and more fervent missionary campaigns are only ways of temporarily avoiding the essential issue: that the authoritative Scriptural message for South Africa, including also the unity of the South African church and its mission, can only be formulated by *all* God's people in South Africa, in communion with all his people worldwide. There can be no preconditions (e.g. about unity in truth – see pp. 118–119 above) for this joint venture, for it is only in the unity of all God's people that his truth becomes clear, and becomes clear so that it may be seen and believed by the people of South Africa.

2.2.4 An integration of the kerygmatic (verbal) and liturgical (sacramental) emphases (see pp. 114–115 above) in thinking about unity and mission is urgently necessary in South Africa. It is specifically the kerygmatic dimension of mission which has become the theological basis for racial separation in some South African churches.⁵⁵ A rediscovery of the liturgical, sacramental dimension of the life and mission of the Church would serve to place the verbal dimension in its proper perspective, and to draw people together in the visible realization that Christ cannot be racially divided. This would require an important adjustment in church life in South Africa. The liturgical, sacramental emphasis, as was pointed out above, is essentially to be found in the non-Protestant

churches (the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches). The South African church, however, has traditionally been overwhelmingly Protestant (even anti-Roman) in character – a character inherited from the fiercely Protestant Dutch and French Huguenot settlers. (The Roman Catholic Church was even for a time forbidden entry into the then Cape Colony). The strongly non-Protestant sacramental emphasis in thinking about the unity of the church in South Africa and its mission, will therefore meet with strong resistance. Still, the missionary credibility of a truly united and catholic Church in South Africa urgently requires that it be attempted.

2.2.5 The visible unity of white and black believers in the Church is of the utmost importance in South Africa. In the words of De Gruchy, there is a "direct connection between the unity of the church and the social situation in South Africa..... To regard the unity of the church largely in spiritual and 'invisible' terms is to misunderstand the teaching of the New Testament, and in the end, to compromise the witness of the church as it struggles against racism and other forces that divide and separate people on the grounds of culture and ethnicity,"^{5 6}

Unfortunately it often happens that the unity of white and black churches in South Africa is seen in precisely spiritual and invisible terms. According to Lückhoff, the Cottesloe decision stressing the visible unity of white and black believers was one of the five important decisions which led to a rejection of the findings of the Consultation by the white Afrikaans churches.^{5 7} In the recent past a stir was caused by decisions of congregations of the white Afrikaans churches not to allow blacks into their churches, even on special occasions.^{5 8} In defence of such decisions it is often stated that Church unity is a spiritual matter, not in need of any "visible demonstrations". This serves to underline the validity of De Gruchy's statement quoted above. The struggle for the visible unity of the Church in South Africa should therefore receive the highest priority. In the specific South African situation, churches whose witness is compromised to such an extent by racial divisions cannot expect to fulfil the mission of Christ – not because "demonstrations" of unity are required, but because the Church *is* and *must be seen to be* one (see pp. 120–121 above). If racial (and other) divisions are allowed to destroy this unity to the extent that the Church has to evade the demand for unity by taking refuge in a platonic, invisible unity, the Church in South Africa cannot expect to enjoy credibility in its mission.

3. Conclusion

A clear outcome of the struggle in the ecumenical movement to gain clarity about the unity and mission of the Church, is the firm inter-relationship between these two essential dimensions of the life and being of the Church. It is clear that unity and mission cannot be related to each other in a primary/secondary capacity. There is no full clarity yet on the ecclesiological expression of this basic relationship. It is clear, however, that the search for the unity of the Church can only be credible if it is *in itself* a witness to Christ. In the same way, the fullness of the mission of the Church demands *in itself* the search for unity. Indeed, in its mission the Church is also seeking to find itself in the world where Christ is at work, with an eye to the day when all things will be perfectly re-established in him (Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:20). In this search, no perfect answers can be expected: formulations of unity will always be preliminary, and the message of Christ will always have to be made relevant anew in the common struggle of the Church to be his faithful and effective witness in the world. Yet the Church is obliged to continue the search, in the firm knowledge that it is impossible to choose in favour of *either* unity *or* mission. The only possible choice for the Church, or any part of the Church, is *for or against both*.

Notes

1. Castro, E.: Editorial in *IRM*, vol. 64, 1975, p. 237.
2. Beyerhaus, P. & Betz, U. (ed.): *Ökumene im Spiegel von Nairobi '75*, pp. 52–60. In his report as moderator of the Central Committee of the WCC to the Nairobi Assembly, M.M. Thomas also pointed out this "striking theological convergence" — cf. Paton, D.M. (ed.): *Breaking barriers. Nairobi 1975*, p. 231.
3. Paton, D.M. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 59.
4. Paton, D.M. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 60.
5. Paton, D.M. (ed.): *op. cit.*, pp. 60–61.
6. Cf. Vischer, L.: *Veränderung der Welt — Bekehrung der Kirchen*, pp. 8–9.
7. Cf. Vischer, L.: *op. cit.*, pp. 91–106.
8. Vischer, L.: *op. cit.*, p. 13. Cf. also Van den Heuvel's opinion in Fiolet, H.A.M. et al: *Das was Nairobi*, p. 22; Von Stieglitz, K: "Das ganze Evangelium für alle Menschen" in *ÖR*, 25. Jahrgang, Heft 2, 1976, p. 170; and Max Warren in (Verkuy, J.): *Zending op weg naar de toekomst*, p. 198.
9. Paton, D.M. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 17.
10. Paton, D.M. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 64.

11. As evidenced inter alia by the fact that a separate chapter in the report of Section II (10 paragraphs) was dedicated to the subject of the confessing community — cf. Paton, D.M. (ed.): *op. cit.*, pp. 48–49.
12. Vischer, L.: *op. cit.*, pp. 83–84.
13. Paton, D.M. (ed.): *op. cit.*, pp. 73–74.
14. Paton, D.M. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 46.
15. (Verkuyl, J.): *op. cit.*, p. 198.
16. Newbigin, L.: "Nairobi 1975. Ein persönlicher Bericht", in *ÖR*, 25. Jahrgang, Heft 2, 1976, pp. 152–153.
17. Beyerhaus, P. & Betz, U. (ed.): *op. cit.*, p. 39.
18. Van den Heuvel, A.H.: "Ecumenical Diary. The Fifth Assembly at Nairobi", in *ER*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 1976, p. 97.
19. Müller-Fahrenholz, G.: *Unity in today's world*, p. 95.
20. Thus e.g. Beyerhaus in Beyerhaus, P. & Betz, U.: *op. cit.*, pp. 46–47; Newbigin, L.: *op. cit.*, p. 153; Runia, K.: *De Wereldraad in discussie*, p. 69; Scheele, P.W.: "Gemeinsames Zeugnis im Vollzug, Lausanne-Nairobi-Rom", in *ÖR*, 25. Jahrgang, Heft 4, 1976, p. 483; Thaut, R.: "Evangelisation Heute. Ein Vergleich der Dokumente von Lausanne, Rom und Nairobi", in *ÖR*, 26. Jahrgang, Heft 4, 1977, pp. 451–458; Van den Heuvel, A.H.: *op. cit.*, p. 97; Warren in (Verkuyl, J.): *op. cit.*, p. 198; and Zaphiris, C.: "Die Teilnahme der Orthodoxen Kirche an der fünften Vollversammlung des Ökumenischen Rates der Kirchen in Nairobi", in *ÖR*, 25. Jahrgang, Heft 2, 1976, pp. 272–273.
21. Newbigin, L.: "Mission and Missions", in *The Expository Times*, vol. 88, 1976–77, p. 263.
22. Scheele, P.W.: *op. cit.*, p. 483.
23. (WCC); *The New Delhi Report*, pp. 116 & 118.
24. Paton, D.M. (ed.): *op. cit.*, pp. 60–61. Cf. further Vischer's comments on the Nairobi concept of unity as conciliar fellowship in Vischer, L.: *op. cit.*, pp. 92–93.
25. Cf. the report of Section I: "Confessing Christ Today", especially paragraphs 23, 24, 60, etc.
26. Cf. Vischer, L.: *op. cit.*, pp. 28–31.
27. Dapper, H.: *Mission — Glaubensinterpretation — Glaubensrealisation*, p. 54.
28. Cf. Vischer, L.: *op. cit.*, pp. 27–28: "So sieht wohl das Ergebnis etwa folgendermassen aus. Die ökumenische Bewegung steht nach der Vollversammlung von Nairobi vor einer entscheidenden Wahl....".
29. Thaut, R.: *op. cit.*, p. 458.
30. Cf. Lange, E.: *And yet it moves*, pp. 48–49.
31. Nagpur, J.: "New Delhi 1961. The third assembly of the World Council of Churches", in *IRM*, vol. 51, 1962, p. 140.
32. *Apostolicity* can be understood in various ways: (a) the apostolicity of the Church can be understood especially in terms of apostolic succession (as is the case generally in episcopal churches); (b) the apostolicity of the Church can be understood in terms of remaining faithful to the apostles' doctrine

- (as is the case generally in churches of the Reformed tradition); (c) the apostolicity of the Church can be understood in terms of the apostolic mission of the Church in the world (the theology of the apostolate). In this study apostolicity is used especially in this latter sense (as has already been pointed out).
33. An obvious example of this is the resistance amongst evangelicals to the integration of the IMC and the WCC, referred to in the Introduction.
 34. (WCC): *Faith and Order Louvain 1971. Study reports and documents.*
 35. Runia, K.: *op. cit.*, pp. 36–39.
 36. Paragraph 7 of the Lausanne Covenant, dealing with unity and mission, opens with the statement, "We affirm that the church's visible unity in truth is God's purpose".
 37. Neill, S.: *The Church and Christian union*, p. 401.
 38. Cf. Hebly, J.A.: "De oecumenische beweging in wisselend historisch perspectief" in *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift*, Vol. 33, No. 1, 1979, pp. 52–68.
 39. Lange, E.: *op. cit.*, pp. 27–29.
 40. Cf. for example the remarks of Ekollo (from Africa) and Hwang (from Taiwan) at Mexico City about the necessity of ecumenical co-operation, in Orchard, R.K.: *Witness in six continents*, pp. 111–116.
 41. Cf. Küng, H.: *The Church*, p. 273.
 42. Cf. Ridderbos, H.: *Paulus*, p. 440.
 43. Küng, H.: *op. cit.*, p. 281.
 44. Cf. De Gruchy, J.W.: *The Church struggle in South Africa*, pp. 93–94.
 45. An excellent description and evaluation of the Consultation can be found in Lückhoff, A.H.: *Cottesloe*.
 46. Lückhoff, A.H.: *op. cit.*, pp. 153–161.
 47. Cf. De Gruchy, J.W.: *op. cit.*, pp. 179–183.
 48. Cf. Strassberger, E.: *Ecumenism in South Africa*, pp. 235–237; De Gruchy, J.: *op. cit.*, pp. 68–69; Lückhoff, A.H.: *op. cit.*, pp. 170–171.
 49. All decisions had to be approved by at least 80% of the delegates.
 50. Quoted by Lückhoff, A.H.: *op. cit.*, p. 95.
 51. Cf. the decision of the Federal Council of the DRC, quoted in Lückhoff, A.H.: *op. cit.*, p. 130; also Strassberger, E.: *op. cit.*, pp. 233–234.
 52. Cf. Lückhoff, A.H.: *op. cit.*, pp. 129–143; Strassberger, E.: *op. cit.*, pp. 232–233.
 53. The validity of these Scriptural objections seems questionable, though, if it is borne in mind that the Dutch Reformed Church adopted a report in 1974 on human relations in South Africa in which quite a number of the decisions (e.g. on the unity of white and black believers, mixed marriages, and the relationship between people of different races) show substantial agreement with the rejected Cottesloe decisions.
 54. Quoted by Lückhoff, A.H.: *op. cit.*, p. 168.
 55. The DRC, for example, explicitly bases its policy of racially separated churches on the principle that each nation should be able to hear about the great deeds of God in its own language (cf. Acts 2). This principle also determines the policy of racially separated churches of the other Afrikaans churches, while

the Lutheran policy of organizing churches along ethnic lines was also influenced by it.

56. De Gruchy, J.: *op. cit.*, p. 101.
57. Lückhoff, A.H.: *op. cit.*, pp. 154–156.
58. The Dutch Reformed (NG) church decided at its General Synod in 1974 that the Church should in principle be open to believers from any race, but left the practical implementation of this decision in the hands of local congregations. The Nederduitsch Hervormde Church, on the other hand, has an article in its church constitution which prohibits black membership of that church.

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