

FAITH AND ORDER AT LOUVAIN

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FOR MORE than fifty years the Faith and Order movement has been bringing together qualified churchmen and theologians from many Christian traditions to collaborate on those questions of doctrine and polity that underlie the present divisions among the churches. In 1948, when the World Council of Churches came into being, Faith and Order became a Commission of that Council. The meetings of the Faith and Order Commission, which have taken place every three or four years since 1951,¹ provide a privileged observation post from which to survey current trends in ecumenism in many nations and communions. The latest gathering, held at Louvain in Belgium from August 2 to 13, 1971, had been carefully planned more than a year in advance by the Working Committee under the chairmanship of Prof. J. Robert Nelson of Boston and by the Faith and Order Secretariat directed by Rev. Lukas Vischer at Geneva. In attendance were some 115 Commission members, including twenty proxies, and a considerable number of staff, consultants, invited guests, and journalists.

Meeting for the first time since the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Uppsala in 1968, the Commission had to consider its response to the new trend toward greater secular involvement to which Uppsala had given added impetus. The Working Committee accordingly selected as the main theme for the Louvain meeting "The Unity of the Church and the Unity of Mankind." This theme was introduced by Prof. John Meyendorff, then acting chairman (and now chairman) of the Commission, at a plenary session on August 3. The main theme was discussed in five Sections, each of which met seven times, from August 4 to 9, and then debated in several plenary sessions from August 10 to 12. In addition to the main theme, the Louvain meeting considered a number of Faith and Order reports that had been requested by previous meetings and completed since the last meeting of the Commission at Bristol in 1967. These reports were reviewed by five Committees, each of which met six times from August 4 to 10. Each of these Committees presented its reports for general

¹ Thus far Faith and Order has held four World Conferences: Lausanne (1927), Edinburgh (1937), Lund (1952), and Montreal (1963). Faith and Order Commission meetings have been held as follows: Clarens, South Africa, 1951; Chicago, 1954; New Haven, 1957; St. Andrew's, Scotland, 1960; Aarhus, Denmark, 1964; Bristol, 1967; and Louvain, 1971. There are no present plans for any future World Conference on Faith and Order. The next meeting of the Commission is planned for 1974.

discussion at the plenary sessions from August 10 to 12. Finally, the Louvain meeting gave some attention to miscellaneous items of business and debated the future of Faith and Order and the probable place of the Commission in the projected restructuring of the World Council of Churches.²

The Louvain meeting is of special interest to Roman Catholics because it was the first attended by Catholics as members. Six of the eight Roman Catholic members were present, and a seventh was represented by a proxy. The Commission for the first time assembled at a Roman Catholic institution, the Jesuit scholasticate at Heverlee in the outskirts of Louvain. This spacious house, built some fifteen years ago to accommodate a very large religious community, proved admirably suited for a meeting of this kind. The refectory, classrooms, auditorium, and chapel were put to excellent use, as was also the bar in the basement.

The meeting was hosted by a "Comité de Patronage" headed by His Eminence, Cardinal Léon-Joseph Suenens, Archbishop of Malines-Brussels. On the evening of August 2, Cardinal Suenens shared the platform with a Dutch Protestant layman, Max Kohnstamm: they gave the two opening addresses. In addition, Cardinal Suenens was principal concelebrant at the Mass on Sunday, August 8, and delivered on that occasion a memorable homily. A committee of hospitality, headed by the noted Catholic ecumenist Monsignor Gustave Thils of the Louvain University faculty, made the Commission members and staff feel perfectly at home. Thus the general atmosphere of the meeting was auspicious for the initial participation of the Roman Catholic Church.

In the following pages an effort will be made to summarize the main achievements of the meeting under three main headings: (1) the work of the five Committees; (2) the response to the main theme (including the work of the five Sections); (3) the discussions concerning the proposed restructuring of the World Council and the future role of Faith and Order.

THE FIVE COMMITTEES

The five Committees occupied themselves primarily with new Faith and Order studies that had been commissioned by previous meetings. These Committees had no official titles or clearly delineated spheres

² The documents of the Louvain meeting are to be printed in English as a volume in the series *Faith and Order Papers*, published by the World Council of Churches in Geneva. A French edition will appear in *Istina* and a German edition as a *Beiheft zur ökumenischen Rundschau*.

of competence. The distribution of labor among them was governed by practical considerations, such as the necessity of equalizing the work load, rather than by abstract theological principles.

Committee I may be said to have concentrated chiefly on doctrinal norms. Its first task was to review a mimeographed report on "The Authority of the Bible" that had been completed in May 1971, as a follow-up on a study "The Significance of the Hermeneutical Problem for the Ecumenical Movement," previously accepted by the Bristol meeting.³ The new report recognized that the concept of authority is today all too easily associated with the demand for blind obedience. As against this view, it declared that authority must be understood "as a testimony which is to be accepted in freedom, not as overwhelming force but as a gateway to freedom." Rejecting the common view that the Bible is to be regarded as authoritative because it is known to be inspired, the report adopted the view that the Bible establishes its own authority, and proves what may be called its own inspiration, through the powerful and salutary impact of its message.

Committee I expressed general approval of the handling of the questions of inspiration, authority, and interpretation in the new report, and noted with satisfaction that this report registered important agreements transcending the confessional differences among Roman Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox. While cautiously accepting the idea of "special activity of the Holy Spirit in the formation of the New Testament witness," the Committee stated that in the opinion of many of its members the term "inspiration" should be avoided. The Committee strongly recommended that further study should be made of three points: the diversity of interpretations within the New Testament, the contemporary significance of the Old Testament, and the continuing identity of the gospel amid the successive variety of interpretations in Church history.

At a plenary session the Commission gratefully accepted the report on the authority of the Bible and the response of Committee I. One Commission member, Dr. Ellen Flesseman-van Leer of the Netherlands Reformed Church, expressed positive enthusiasm. The World Council, she remarked, is suspected by many Continental Protestants of not sufficiently respecting the biblical basis of the Christian faith,

³This earlier study, authorized by the Aarhus meeting of 1964, is printed in *New Directions in Faith and Order* (Faith and Order Paper no. 50; Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1968) pp. 32-41. For a further stage of development, see James Barr, "The Authority of the Bible: A Study Outline," *Ecumenical Review* 21, no. 2 (April 1969) 135-66. The text of the report discussed at Louvain appears in *Ecumenical Review* 23, no. 4 (Oct. 1971) 419-37.

and the current report could do much to offset that suspicion. One Anglican layman objected that the report was regressive since it failed to advert to the inseparability of Scripture and tradition, previously recognized by the Faith and Order Conference at Montreal. The veteran Orthodox ecumenist, Georges Florovsky, added to this the criticism that the report and the reaction of Committee I practically dismissed the concept of inspiration. An American Protestant, however, replied that the biblical notion of *theopneustia* is much richer and more flexible than the modern theological notion of inspiration. Two American Catholics found the report and the comments of Committee I overburdened with heavy Germanicisms. Terms such as *Sachmitte* (material center) and *Beziehungsmittle* (relational center), they felt, are not particularly enlightening to the non-Teutonic mind.

Committee I had a second assignment more exciting perhaps than the well-worn theme of biblical authority. It was asked to consider the suggestion of the Working Committee that the members of the churches should attempt, in the next few years, to formulate a common expression of their faith as Christians, and in this way "to give an account of the hope that is in them" (cf. 1 Pt 3:15). Delivering the report of the Secretariat on August 3, Lukas Vischer elaborated at some length on the advantages he saw in such a project. In his closing paragraphs he asserted:

The ecumenical movement has sometimes been described as a process of "re-reception." What the individual Churches have recognized as the truth is now "received" and appropriated by them all. The attempt to give a common account of the Gospel would be even more than this process of appropriation. It would also make possible the growth of a common tradition, and this perhaps is the surest way to reach the unity we all seek. This unity is today still hidden and obscured by our sin. It can become visible only by conversion, but perhaps we should not be too quick in locating the sin which blocks the way to unity with those who cling to their confessional heritage. Of course, blindness of this kind exists.

But I would repeat that the sin which really obscures our unity in Christ is the loss of the passion to express our hope, that indifferent shrug of the shoulders, that boredom which always calls for the stimulus of a counterbalancing excitement, that somewhat cynical criticism of others for their lack of renewal without paying the price of renewal oneself.

Accepting the recommendations of the Working Committee, Committee I declared that in their judgment it is imperative for the future work of Faith and Order that members of the churches attempt to give account of that which they as Christians have received together and are charged to offer. As grounds for this conviction they gave three

reasons, condensed from Dr. Vischer's report: first, to avoid the danger of cutting off the ecumenical dialogue before reaching the point of being able to speak in common; secondly, to manifest the fundamental coherence among the partial results already achieved in Faith and Order studies; and thirdly, to bear common witness to the good news of Christ as needed by the contemporary world.

When the Committee report was taken up at the plenary meeting, some disagreement was expressed about the extent to which such a common account should reflect the doubts and controversies present within the Church today. The original draft submitted by Committee I stated that the account of faith might be indifferently addressed to Christians and non-Christians; "for we cannot really uphold a clear distinction between members of the Church and those who are not, because believers themselves are constantly faced with the problem of doubt." This sentence was vehemently attacked by several speakers, especially two Greek Orthodox theologians, and was accordingly expunged. The resulting document, however, was considered too complacent and triumphalistic by some of the Latin Americans, especially by a young Evangelical minister from Havana, who asserted that the Church, challenged by the modern world, would do better to make a humble confession of its sins and confusion.

Committee II dealt with two other study documents. One of these, entitled "Catholicity and Apostolicity,"⁴ had been completed in 1970 by a Joint Theological Commission on the initiative of the Joint Working Group of the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. The Joint Commission consisted of nine World Council theologians (Protestant, Anglican, and Orthodox) and nine Roman Catholics. The document composed by the Joint Commission, very open in its approach, had marked a distinct advance beyond the traditional Roman Catholic conception of apostolicity, but before publication the report was heavily revised in the light of Orthodox concerns. In its reaction to the final document, Committee II called it "an important step forward in the relationship between the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church," but observed that "because of its origin its usefulness for wider Faith and Order studies is limited." Asking that concern for catholicity and apostolicity be included within the total program of Faith and Order, the Committee called for wider and more penetrating studies giving due attention to issues such as the place of the local church in the universal Church, the relationship of catholicity and apostolicity to the mission

⁴Text in *Ecumenical Review* 22, no. 1 (Jan. 1970) 51-69; also in *One in Christ* 6, no. 3 (1970), and in *Irenikon*, 1970, no. 2.

of the Church, and the problem of the Church's identity through change.

The other document considered by Committee II was a Faith and Order study on "Worship Today"⁵ that had arisen out of the discussions at Uppsala on "The Worship of God in a Secular Age." The study, based on a consultation held at Geneva from September 8 to 13, 1969, concentrated on the difficult problems. It stated that the crisis of worship cannot be solved by "reforms," which are generally regressive, but only by creativity, and that thus we must face the question "how we can once again acquire valid symbols." Committee II found that this 1969 report "does reflect the complexity of the present situation" and observed that the crisis of worship cannot be overcome in isolation from the other problems facing the Commission. For the future, it recommended that "the Faith and Order Secretariat should collect from many churches and areas examples of forms and styles of worship which are proving especially creative and enriching in relation to the life and activity of the Church in the contemporary world."

Another assignment of Committee II was to give further consideration to the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which the Faith and Order Secretariat prepares annually in close co-operation with the Vatican Secretariat for Unity. Dr. Vischer, in his initial report for the Secretariat, asked how the Week could be made into a more vital form of celebration and avoid becoming a mere matter of routine. "The aim of the Week," he suggested, "is no longer exclusively the prayer that God should make the impenetrable walls of our confessional divisions transparent. It must be seen as an opportunity for self-examination on the part of the congregations for a common *révision de vie*."

These remarks of Vischer, at a plenary session on August 3, elicited from the floor a response from an Indian theologian to the effect that there is today more need than ever for expectant prayer that God may change the mentality of people in the Church and thus act to bring Christians together. At a later general session an Anglican bishop remarked that the Week of Prayer has great importance in reminding us that unity is God's gift. The Week of Prayer, he urged, ought not to be consumed with panels and discussions, as it sometimes the case.

With regard to the Week of Prayer, Committee II simply asked the Joint Working Group, in its planning, to keep in mind the variety of local situations throughout the world, and to consider the fact that in some areas other means of expression than traditional prayer may now be found more meaningful. The Committee report said nothing directly about possible changes in the dates of the Week of Prayer. In his

⁵Text in *Study Encounter* 6, no. 3 (1970) 129-41.

presentation of the report to the plenary session, Dom Emmanuel Lanne, O.S.B., observed, in response to a question, that it might be proper for the churches in a given nation or region to adjust the dates according to regional needs and preferences.

Committee II completed its work by making some observations on the general conduct of the study program of Faith and Order. Hitherto, it remarked, these studies have relied too much on the academic tradition of the West; more participation should now be sought from nonacademic personnel and from the communities of the Third World. The Committee also warned that "Faith and Order studies need to be limited and adequately focused in order to avoid the program between two meetings of the Commission becoming too diverse." In view of the many studies requested by the Louvain meeting, the Working Committee may find it difficult to carry out this last suggestion.

Finally, Committee II had some suggestions for the more effective dissemination of Faith and Order studies. It urged that greater use be made of regional and national councils of churches as channels for Faith and Order communication. In an earlier general session Max Thurian of the Taizé Community had protested that the fine results of Faith and Order studies have far too little impact on the actual life of the churches.

Committee III reviewed three recent Faith and Order study papers. The first of these, a mimeographed report on "Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist," grew out of a study conducted from 1967 to 1970 and concerned itself chiefly with describing the doctrine and practices of the various churches with respect to baptism. The Committee commended this study to the churches for study and response, and particularly applauded the conception of Christian initiation "as a single process occurring over a variable period of time." This idea, however, evoked some misgivings in the general session. The prominent German Lutheran ecumenist Edmund Schlink pointed out that initiation reaches a certain completeness in baptism, and the American Lutheran W. H. Lazareth added that baptism ought not to be portrayed as a mere means to something else, namely, the Eucharist. The mutual recognition of baptism by the various churches, he added, should be seen as an important ecumenical advance in its own right and not as just a step toward intercommunion.

Secondly, Committee III reviewed a paper "Beyond Intercommunion" that had been prepared in 1969 at the request of the Uppsala Assembly.⁶ This report concerned itself to a great extent with clarifications of terminology and with putting questions to the churches. It concluded, however, on a strong note:

⁶Text in *Study Encounter* 5, no. 3 (1969) 94-114.

We . . . have been led to see that the natural outcome of the involvement of almost all sectors of Christendom in the modern ecumenical movement, the recent lifting of certain long-standing anathemata and the growing extent of theological agreement must be the restoration of communion in a single ecclesial fellowship. We cannot be satisfied with less if we are to move along the ecumenical way at the speed Christ demands and are effectively to set ourselves to following up his other and no less urgent work in our contemporary world.

Committee III warmly accepted this report and asked that it be referred to the churches for study and response. In a declaration on intercommunion, later accepted by the plenary session, Committee III asserted:

We urge church authorities, each in their own way and in line with their own ecumenical commitments, to work towards full eucharistic communion and meanwhile to consider adapting their eucharistic disciplines, so as to allow the appropriate ecumenical advance at this time—e.g. by extending admission to communion under certain circumstances.

This statement naturally attracted considerable attention at the general session. It was strongly supported by many Protestants, including Frère Max Thurian. The Greek Orthodox were critical, but several Russian Orthodox speakers, including John Meyendorff, declared that they could accept the statement as applicable to those Western churches which could see their way clear to mutual altar fellowship. The only Roman Catholic speaker who addressed himself to the point in the plenary session, Samuel Rayan, S.J., of India, expressed his agreement with the sense of the declaration. In his opening address Cardinal Suenens had already called upon the churches to be particularly attentive to the impatience of young people regarding intercommunion and to make "concrete and practical progress" in this matter.⁷

Thirdly, Committee III addressed itself to a rather lengthy mimeo-

⁷ At the Mass on Sunday, August 8, the following note was written on the program: "It is with great joy that we welcome you on the occasion of our eucharistic celebration of this Sunday, August 8th, 1971, at Heverlee-Leuven. Since the actual state of the ecumenical evolution does not yet permit us to communicate together at the same table of the Lord, we shall offer our sorrow so that the Lord may accelerate the day when all Christians will be able to manifest their reconciliation among themselves in Christ and will bring to the world the visible sign of their fraternal love, shown and experienced in the same communion of faith, hope, and charity." In the original French, the last sentence began with the more ambiguous words "Si l'état actuel de notre évolution oecuménique . . ." A few Protestants, probably not recognized as such by the celebrants distributing Communion, presented themselves at the altar and were given the Eucharist.

graphed report on "The Ordained Ministry" prepared between 1967 and 1970 as a follow-up to a study on "Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Ministry" that had been commissioned by the Aarhus meeting in 1964. This report dealt very perspicaciously with the problem of ordination in the perspectives of Roman Catholic as well as Protestant and Orthodox thinking. In a key passage it declared (p. 5):

Ordination confers an authority (*exousia*) which is not that of the minister himself, but which demonstrates the authority of God received by the community; it also ratifies and manifests the fact that the minister is called and sent by God. But ordination is not the giving of a "thing" or a "possession" or even an "office" *tout simple*; it arises from and results in a personal, existential relationship with the Holy Spirit, and it inseparably binds the ordained person with the aforementioned community; it is the sign and instrument of Christ in this community.

The Committee noted with satisfaction the emerging measure of common understanding reflected in this report. "This demonstrates that nearly all churches give some recognition to ministries other than their own, and a promising basis is also provided for progress towards mutual recognition of ministry." The Committee further noted the need for continuing study of many sensitive points such as the nature and embodiment of apostolic succession within the Church, the personal and spiritual life of the minister (including the questions of marriage and celibacy), the ministry of women (with particular reference to ordination), and the implications of possible ordination for a limited term. All of these issues are obviously of great interest to Roman Catholics, especially since the question of priestly ministry was a focal theme for the Synod of Bishops in October 1971.

Committee IV reviewed two other recent studies. One was a paper on "Common Witness and Proselytism" prepared by a Joint Theological Commission set up by the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches.⁸ The other was a Faith and Order study on the Council of Chalcedon prepared in 1969 in response to a decision taken at the Bristol meeting of 1967. Both studies are of special interest to Roman Catholics and Orthodox, and represent at least partial agreements between them. Committee IV, in recommending that the Faith and Order Commission should receive these reports, suggested several minor revisions.

More importantly for the future of ecumenical Christianity, Committee IV addressed itself to the proposal of the Uppsala Assembly to "work for a time when a genuinely universal council may once more

⁸ Text in *Ecumenical Review* 23, no. 1 (Jan. 1971) 9-20.

speak for all Christians and lead the way into the future.”⁹ The Committee Report on “Conciliarity and the Future of the Ecumenical Movement,” drafted under the able leadership of Bishop Lesslie Newbigin of the Church of South India, is undoubtedly one of the major accomplishments of the Louvain meeting. It speaks of conciliarity as a characteristic of the life of the Christian Church in all ages and at various levels and calls upon all confessional families to test their existing life against the concept of true conciliarity. “The central fact in true conciliarity is this active presence and work of the Holy Spirit. A council is a true council if the Holy Spirit directs and inspires it, even if it is not universal; and a universally representative body of Christians would not become a true council if the Spirit did not guide it.” It is significant, and perhaps surprising, that no Roman Catholic voice was raised, at least in the general sessions, to challenge this very nonjuridical conception of an ecumenical council.

While reaffirming the stand taken at Toronto regarding the lack of binding authority of the World Council over its member churches, Committee IV noted that the existence of the World Council had somewhat modified the situation over the past twenty-one years, so that by now “certain of the elements of true conciliarity have begun to appear, even if only in a very preliminary way, in the life of the Council.” In conclusion, this statement called for the development of fellowship both within the World Council of Churches and between the World Council and other agencies such as the Vatican Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity, in order that “the growth of true conciliarity may be fostered and the way prepared for a genuinely universal council.”¹⁰

After some debate and criticism in the plenary session, the statement of Committee IV on Conciliarity was referred to the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches and to the Faith and Order

⁹ From the Report of Section I of the Uppsala Assembly; text in *The Uppsala Report*, ed. Norman Goodall (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1968) p. 17.

¹⁰ The idea of a council of reunion between Protestants and Catholics was a cherished dream of many sixteenth-century churchmen. In 1562 Diego Lainez, S.J., papal theologian at the Council of Trent, wrote to the French Huguenot leader, Prince Louis Condé de Bourbon, strongly recommending such a council: “The Council [of Trent] being free and having to treat the matter of reform from its very roots, it seems that the heads of the new Churches in France and Germany and other countries should go to the Council, so that besides helping with their experience of reform, they might discuss their controversial teachings; and the Holy Spirit, author of true peace and union (just as in other Councils He was present in the midst of those gathered in His name and brought about harmony in great controversial matters regarding the faith), might be hoped to be present in this Council and harmonize the differences that exist.” This little-known letter, buried in *Lainii monumenta* 8, 788-90, was rescued from oblivion by C. J. McNaspy, S.J., in an article “An Ecumenical ‘If,’” *America* 124, no. 25 (June 26, 1971) 655-56.

Working Committee for further study. If taken seriously by these bodies (as presumably it will be),¹¹ this document may eventually prove a landmark on the way to a major council of reconciliation, at least in the West. Whether such a council would be acceptable to the Orthodox is somewhat doubtful. One Greek Orthodox theologian, no doubt more rigid than most of his fellow churchmen, asserted in a general session that according to his church a genuine council presupposes the unity of the Church as something already achieved. "How could essentially divided churches," he asked, "be led by the Holy Spirit to take infallible decisions?"

Committee V occupied itself with Church Union Negotiations and Bilateral Conversations, especially in the light of the recommendations of the Consultation on Church Union Negotiations held at Limuru, Kenya, in April 1970.¹² In the work of this Committee a certain tension developed between a predominantly English-speaking Protestant and Anglican majority, who were eager for regional union through structural merger, and a more confessionally oriented minority (including some Roman Catholics and some Protestants of the Lutheran and Reformed traditions) who showed more interest in gradual *rapprochement* through bilateral conversations on the world level. The first draft of this Committee's report would have favored union negotiations over bilaterals, but this draft was heavily revised. The final report of Committee V, adopted without serious objection by the Commission in plenary session, was a balanced statement encouraging both church union negotiations and bilaterals.

With regard to union negotiations, the Committee took note of a certain feeling of weariness and discouragement. To offset this the statement declared:

It is the profound conviction of many that this is a moment of supreme urgency, of an opportunity that may not long remain. The Commission calls upon those involved in negotiations and the churches who have appointed them not to grow weary in well doing but with firm resolution and responsible speed to carry to a successful conclusion the work of opening the way for a more effective fulfillment of God's mission in his world.

Commission members who are also involved in the Consultation on Church Union in the United States, such as Paul Crow (a member of

¹¹ According to the *Ecumenical Courier* 30, no. 3 (July-Sept. 1971) 2, the World Council of Churches Executive Committee has already decided to pass on the Conciliarity Report to the Central Committee at its meeting in the Netherlands next August.

¹² The report and papers of this consultation have been published in *Mid-Stream* (Indianapolis, Ind.) 9, nos. 2-3, Winter-Spring [1971].

Committee V), were understandably pleased by the willingness of Faith and Order to put an apparent blessing on recent efforts to develop a plan for the Church of Christ Uniting.

Besides reaffirming Faith and Order's traditional interest in church union negotiations, Committee V acknowledged the value of bilateral conversations, which may be especially helpful, it was observed, in focusing on specific issues dividing two traditions and in keeping alive the universal dimension of the ecumenical dialogue.¹³ Rev. Richmond Smith, a Scottish member of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, pointed out in committee that organic union often tends to isolate the uniting churches within a given region. Later in a general session he made an eloquent plea for bilaterals on the world level as an aid to solving interconfessional conflicts that would, for emotional reasons, prove intractable in a local situation. This insight, he added, had been suggested to him by Cardinal Willebrands of the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.

Committee V, however, did not give indiscriminate approval to bilateral conversations. They might be inept, said the report, under certain circumstances: for example, "when they serve as an excuse for evading a more committed participation in the search for unity."

In what may prove to have been an important step, Committee V indicated some dissatisfaction with the customary identification of organic union with structural merger. It called for deeper studies, following up on the New Delhi statement of 1961, regarding "the purpose and nature of the unity we seek, and the means of manifesting it." In particular the Commission called for "a clarification and theological evaluation of actual concepts of unity and models of union, and a delineation of emerging new concepts and models." Such a study was felt to be necessary since not all churches today conceive of the ultimate union of Christians in the same way. "United churches" on the South India model are only one type of union, in many ways different from the "pluriform unity" cherished in the Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions. Some ecumenists, as the report noted, look upon mutual recognition of affirmations of faith, sacraments, and ministries, and upon "pulpit and altar fellowship" as the most promising steps toward unity. In addition to these rather explicit

¹³ In view of the evident importance of the bilateral conversations for the future of the ecumenical movement, the Conference of Secretaries of World Confessional Families in June 1970 called for a study of these conversations, and this is presently being conducted by Dr. Günther Gassmann and Dr. Nils Ehrenström. A preliminary report by these authors was made available at the Louvain meeting. In the same connection it is noteworthy that the Catholic Theological Society of America, at its June 1971 meeting, commissioned a study of the Bilateral Ecumenical Consultations between Roman Catholics and various Protestant and Orthodox churches in the United States.

theories of union, still other models would seem to be at least implicitly operative on the unofficial level, including the spontaneous activities of lay Christians who may be somewhat casually related to official church bodies. "All these [models of union] need to be assessed," said the Commission, "in practice as well as in theory."

Finally, in a series of detailed recommendations, the Commission passed on to the Working Committee a number of proposals of Committee V having to do with sponsoring or co-ordinating church union negotiations, bilateral and multilateral conversations, and asked that the staff of Faith and Order be expanded to make this feasible.

Summarizing the work of the five Committees, one may say that Faith and Order continues to pursue, patiently but fruitfully, its original aim of overcoming the divisions among Christian churches in doctrine and in polity. The most dramatic new developments registered by Louvain would seem to be the still inchoative recommendations concerning a common account of faith and the movement toward a more ecclesial type of conciliarity. The many new studies requested at Louvain will surely tax the time and resources of the staff. As additional funds are sought, it may be necessary to find new ways of convincing the member churches of the utility of Faith and Order studies for the more effective discharge of the Church's mission. Qualified personnel may perhaps be found through the assistance of privately sponsored ecumenical institutes. In one important intervention, Prof. Paul Minear of the Ecumenical Institute for Advanced Theological Study at Jerusalem offered the services of his institute for co-operation in studies requested by the Faith and Order Commission. Other ecumenical institutes will doubtless be inspired to make similar offers.

PRESENTATION OF THE MAIN THEME

The main theme of the Louvain meeting, "Unity of the Church—Unity of Mankind," was not arbitrarily or hastily chosen. It grew naturally and gradually out of pressures inherent in Faith and Order and in other ecumenical thinking that go back quite a number of years. Already at Bristol in 1967 the Commission on Faith and Order raised the question "What is the function of the Church in relation to the unifying purpose of God for the world? What . . . is the relation of the churches' quest for unity among themselves to the hope for the unity of mankind?"¹⁴ The urgency of these questions appeared still more clearly when the Uppsala Report declared in 1968:

The Church is bold in speaking of itself as the sign of the coming unity of mankind. However well founded the claim, the world hears it skeptically,

¹⁴ *New Directions in Faith and Order*, pp. 131-32.

and points to "secular catholicities" of its own. For secular society has produced instruments of conciliation and unification which often seem more effective than the Church itself. To the outsider, the churches often seem remote and irrelevant, and busy to the point of tediousness with their own concerns. The churches need a new openness to the world in its aspirations, its achievements, its restlessness and its despair.¹⁵

The theme was further prepared by a Study document¹⁶ which elicited numerous comments by members of the Commission.¹⁷ As a result the Working Committee concluded in the summer of 1970 that the "Unity of the Church—Unity of Mankind" would be the best choice for the Louvain meeting. The theme was intended to raise these questions: What is meant by the unity of mankind? What is meant by the unity of the Church? And how are the two unities related to each other?

At the August 1970 meeting of the Working Committee, Prof. John Deschner of Southern Methodist University maintained that the theme selected for Louvain signalized the entrance of Faith and Order into a new phase of its existence.¹⁸ The Commission, he declared, had in the years between Edinburgh (1937) and Montreal (1963) paid too little attention to the secular context of church unity. The theme, according to Deschner, was double-pronged; it demanded consideration of a two-way relationship. First, what is the secular import of church unity—in other words, what does the unity of the Church mean for "the race problem, the poverty problem, the generation problem, . . . the problem of man-woman relations, the problem of revolution and social justice?" Secondly it must be asked, what is the ecclesial significance of corporate Christian responses to the secular, such as Christian peace organizations, Christian caucuses for racial justice, ecumenical cadres in the ghettos, and the like? Presumably the Louvain meeting was expected to throw light on questions such as these.

The main theme was treated at Louvain in many different ways. The two opening addresses on the evening of August 2 dealt with it. Cardinal Suenens made the point that while the Church can never reduce itself to a pure agency of social service, it must constantly preach the reforms demanded by the values of the kingdom of God and in this way contribute to the universal communion of mankind.

¹⁵ *The Uppsala Report*, p. 17.

¹⁶ Text in *Study Encounter* 5, no. 4 (1969) 163-78.

¹⁷ See *ibid.*, pp. 178-81; also *Study Encounter* 7, no. 2 (1971) 1-12.

¹⁸ J. Deschner, "After Fifty Years—What Are the Present and Future Tasks of the Faith and Order Movement?" *Minutes of the Meeting of the Working Committee, 1970, Crêt-Bérard, Switzerland* (Faith and Order Paper no. 57; Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1970) pp. 40-48.

He added that the unity of mankind, like that of the Church, must be pluralistic and open to inner complementarity. "Here too the Holy Spirit appears as the very heart of ecumenism. He is the author of the Christian's identity; He is the author of the multiplicity of gifts. He makes the diversity an enrichment of the unity; for in Him the reconciliation of the one and the many is achieved."

Max Kohnstamm, Vice President of the Action Committee for the United States of Europe, like Cardinal Suenens, took the occasion of his address on the evening of August 2 to reflect on the main theme. The unity of mankind, he pointed out, is unquestionably in the making, but the danger is that it will be a unity of enslaving interdependence. "Yes, for decades ahead it will be a unity of hatred, convulsion, injustice, and violence. Community will be perceptible only in faith." Under this unity of constraint man will be threatened by the abyss of meaninglessness. From the secular point of view, the great contribution that the Church can make, according to Kohnstamm, is to keep open the possibility of dialogue, to help men see situations through one another's eyes—in short, to meet one another. "May the Church therefore be *pontifex*—not only to build bridges in order that *homo politicus* may meet *homo politicus* and be allowed to take part in the madly slow process of community-building, but above all, in order that man may meet his neighbor and thus become aware that life receives meaning through meeting the other." Through hope and love, especially in encountering the Totally Other, man may be able to find enough meaning to make the constraints of world-wide interdependence bearable. Kohnstamm's address was clear and cogent, if somewhat depressing, and it is regrettable that the dynamics of the meeting did not permit the audience to react to the challenges he presented.

The formal introduction to the main theme was given on August 3 by the then acting chairman of Faith and Order, John Meyendorff. His outlook, highly theological in emphasis, contrasted sharply with the more "horizontal" or humanistic approach favored by Uppsala and by the remarks of Deschner quoted above. The so-called secular categories, Meyendorff observed, were undeniably decisive in shaping much of the ecumenism of the "iconoclastic years" since Montreal. During the 1960's, he charged, "what Faith and Order represents was largely overshadowed by noisy talk about various social causes, most of them justified and valuable, but still peripheral to the main issue of the Christian faith—the ultimate and eternal destiny of man." Implicitly attacking the intercontextual method advocated by Deschner, Meyendorff complained that "Modern secularists, rejecting the idea that the Church has a God-given structure, think that it must learn from the world how to make the world better." In place of every false social

utopianism, Meyendorff pleaded for a return to a "Eucharist-centered eschatology" as the best point of departure for the Church's involvement in the service of the world. Faith and Order, he argued, must see as its principal *raison d'être* to help the Church become itself once again.

Meyendorff's address, as he himself explained, was intended to be a personal statement rather than a balanced "presidential address." It invited an equally personal response, and received this from an Argentinian Methodist, Prof. José Miguez-Bonino, who gave the first of two prepared reactions. Miguez-Bonino concentrated on the question whether it is possible for theology to take a starting point outside of the actual historical situation in which the theologian finds himself. The claim to transcend the actual context, Miguez-Bonino contended, succeeds only in suppressing our consciousness of the conditioned character of our categories and commitments, thereby rendering these all the more insidious. "Is not the prophetic message precisely that there is no 'Eucharist' outside the scope of the conditions of justice and faithfulness in terms of which God has covenanted with his people? And, in turn, whenever we start discussing unity from within the context defined by these questions, are we not immediately plunged in the world of ideologies, secular categories, involvement, conflict, and tension?" Any pretense of transcending these conditions clouds the real issues, and results in a false conservatism that retreats from the struggles of history into an "absolute" that fails to touch reality at any point.

A second prepared reaction, by the Presbyterian John Gatu from Kenya, remarked that Meyendorff was too simplistic in his interpretation of Montreal and too severe in his strictures on Uppsala, a conference that succeeded remarkably well in speaking to the concerns of the Third World.

In the ensuing discussion many speakers arrayed themselves against Meyendorff. The Cuban Evangelical pastor Israel Batista seconded Miguez-Bonino's criticisms. Meyendorff, he declared, speaks in very dualistic terms, opposing theology to anthropology. The problem today is rather to incarnate theology and thus to move from theology to anthropology—a movement already begun in the New Testament, which incarnates the divine in the world and its struggles.

Meyendorff, in his reply to the objections, explained that he had striven to be emphatic and provocative in order to present a clear and definite challenge. He reminded his critics, however, that he had not asked for a theology centered only on God, but for an anthropology that sees man as essentially theocentric. Although necessarily ordered

to God, man is not always in communion with God; thus no pantheistic identification between God and man is permissible. As regards the Eucharist, Meyendorff explained that it does give a new starting point insofar as it is a gift of God rather than a mere product of man. The gift is always offered, and provides an occasion for both enjoyment and repentance to those who celebrate. The world always remains an area where Christian responsibility must be exercised.

The papers of Suenens, Kohnstamm, and Meyendorff, together with the preparatory documentation summarized in the last few pages, set the stage for what might have begun immediately as a fascinating debate. But at this point the meeting shifted gears. Beginning on the morning of August 4, the participants were split up into five Sections, each of which was asked to consider the main theme of the conference in relationship to its own area.

THE FIVE SECTIONS

The idea of discussing the main theme at Louvain in five Sections was an experiment which, in the intentions of the planners, was to be critically evaluated at the end of the conference. Each of the five Sections had approximately thirty participants and met seven times for a total of about seventeen hours. The topics for the Sections were extremely vast, even when one makes allowance for the fact that these were to be treated, in theory, only in relationship to the main theme and on the basis of the actual experience of the participants. The Sections had no precisely set agenda nor were they asked to submit any group report or consensus statement to the plenary sessions. It is therefore difficult to summarize the achievements of the Section meetings.

Section I, which met under the joint chairmanship of Max Thurian, William Lazareth, and B.-D. Dupuy, had as its theme "The Unity of the Church and the Struggle for Justice in Society." The discussion concentrated chiefly on the tension between the Church's mandate to involve itself in the struggle for social justice and its transcendence of all particular social orders. In general, the Eastern traditions found it extremely difficult to understand, let alone share, what most Christians from the Western and Third Worlds consider to be a major evangelical concern for the total welfare of mankind on earth. In a recommendation to the Commission, this Section asked for further studies to clarify the complementary commitments of Christians both to the uniqueness of the Church's mission and to the varied social responsibilities arising from the situations in which they find themselves. "If the Church is truly the promise and sign of the coming unity of mankind, then contemporary Christians must be enabled to live this truth in ways that preserve

ecclesial authenticity amid even more intensive involvements for human emancipation which are potential sources of conflict." Members of this Section generally seemed to be agreed that solidarity with the oppressed is part of the essence of Christian faith, since the same Christ is present both in the poor and in the Eucharist. When the two presences of Christ become unduly separated, the Church ceases to be a sign of God's justice and runs the risk of becoming a countersign.

Section II, chaired by Raymond E. Brown, S.S., of New York City and Rev. John Mbiti of Kampala, Uganda,¹⁹ was asked to deal with "The Unity of the Church and the Encounter with Living Faiths." This theme was obviously pertinent inasmuch as Christianity, in its particularity, often appears as a divisive force, especially in the newly emerging nations of Asia and Africa. After a wide-ranging discussion of the nature and purposes of dialogue in general and interfaith dialogue in particular, the discussants addressed themselves to the question whether Christian faith tends to erect barriers or bonds between Christian and non-Christian. Only one participant, a Greek Orthodox professor, seemed disposed to deny that non-Christians could attain salvation in their own religions. Many members of the Section took the position that Christianity attunes us to God's creative, revealing, and redemptive presence to all men, and frees us to be receptive to the insights of all traditions rather than to cling anxiously to our own traditional ways of thinking and speaking. It was recognized, of course, that the Christian message is not separable from the particularity of Jesus as a Jew who interpreted His life in Jewish terms. But it was added that in Jesus the universal springs from the particular. Eschatologically, just as Adam is not a Jew, so too Jesus, as the last Adam, opens the new humanity to all. The kingdom of God is universal, and wherever its marks appear we can, in faith, perceive the workings of the risen Christ.

Section II concluded by recommending for further study these questions: What is the nature of God's activity in the faiths of other men? Is this activity salvific? Is it revelatory?

Section III, directed by Prof. Miguez-Bonino of Argentina and Bishop Josiah Kiriba of Tanzania, devoted its attention to "The Unity of the Church and the Struggle against Racism." Everyone present, including the one American Negro, Dr. John Satterwhite, seemed to favor integration. Three basic questions emerged in the discussion: the question of Church discipline, the question of identity, and the question of power. On the first question, the group struggled with the problem how to extirpate racism from the churches. Discipline, it was urged, is a neces-

¹⁹ Technically this Section had three chairmen, but the third, Rev. J.-P. Lee-Woolf, acted as secretary for the Section meetings.

sary form of church life; it is a form of teaching with authority. Some speakers urged that racists should by some means be excluded from the Eucharist. Turning to the question of identity, the group heard a report by Dr. Satterwhite on "Black Theology in the United States." The group as a whole seems to have taken the view that at some points of history a people must express and preserve its particular identity, but at another point it becomes appropriate to transcend one's particularity and to pass through a process of death and rebirth in order to identify with the larger community. Addressing itself to the question of power, Section III came to the conclusion that the structures of the Church must be adapted to correspond to the demands of the social situation. Some groups must be stripped of their excessive power and others must be allowed to acquire power that they presently lack.

Section IV, under the direction of Miss Christian Howard, Dean Walter G. Muelder, and Prof. Donald Mathers, took up "The Unity of the Church and the Handicapped in Society" as its assigned topic. Since there were not enough volunteers for this Section, some had to be drafted. As the discussion proceeded, however, enthusiasm grew. The problem of the handicapped was seen to bring to a focus many deeply felt but unspoken concerns about evil, suffering, and human limitations. It raised the question of the limits of technology and of the Church's power to speak an effective word of comfort to those for whom it can, in material terms, do nothing. Bishop Newbiggin summed up the spirit of this Section when, in one of the final plenary sessions, he spoke of the conversion he had himself experienced as a young man. Interested primarily in politics, he found himself in close contact with two very poor families living together in a single room, with two of their members dying of cancer. What do I as a political scientist, asked the young Newbiggin, have to say to them as individuals? The Cross, he discovered, while calling us to protest to the limit against injustice and oppression, also summons us, at the point where that limit is reached, to accept God's will for us in faith and trust. The question of the handicapped, Newbiggin remarked, arises at the ultimate boundary where technology fails and where the text "power is made perfect in weakness" becomes central.

The written report on the handicapped submitted by Section IV to the Commission, one of the finest results of Louvain, pointed out that the problem of the handicapped is increasing, both because modern technological society renders marginal many who could have lived a normal life in a simpler world and because, on the other hand, modern medicine assures the survival of many who in an earlier period would have died. The temptation of contemporary society is to isolate and exclude the old and the disabled. The Church has an inescapable mission

to dispel men's fear of the handicapped and the diseased and to replace this with love and acceptance. The handicapped, according to the report, have much to teach us about how the resources of divine power can gain entry into our lives through the humble recognition of human weakness. Instead of treating the handicapped as mere objects of our charity, we must find ways to integrate them actively into our churches and our society.

When the results of the discussions on the handicapped were presented at the general sessions, it became apparent that this group had raised, in an even more pointed way, some of the same issues that came up in the sections on social justice and racism. All three sections recognized the Church's responsibility to identify with the oppressed, to make them participants in the processes of society, and yet to dispose them, when necessary, to accept the Cross. Jesus Himself was disempowered and marginalized in His own society, and yet through death He was received into the fulness of life and power. As one speaker remarked at a plenary meeting, the Church itself is being marginalized by modern technological society. Thus all who are committed to the Church are being driven, willingly or reluctantly, into the position of the powerless and the socially handicapped.

Section V, under the direction of Prof. J. D. McCaughey, Prof. H. H. Wolf, and Prof. Roger Mehl, concerned itself with "The Unity of the Church and Differences in Culture." This Section grappled with many of the familiar dilemmas regarding the involvement of the Church in particular cultures and its task of transcending all particularism. It was asked with some urgency whether the Church, faced by the new cultural forms imposed by technology, can or should separate itself from the traditional imagery and terminology of its biblical and ancient tradition. Some feared that such a shift would involve an excessive risk of replacing Christianity with some new faith; others maintained that the unity of faith is "diachronic" and therefore capable of binding together all who believe from Abraham to the end of time. Generally speaking, the Orthodox displayed greater confidence in the cultures in which they lived, and saw the possibility of a harmonious synthesis between Christian faith and human culture. Protestants, on the other hand, were inclined to stress the necessary distance that Christianity must maintain from any culture or civil religion. The former school stressed the Incarnation; the latter, the Cross and Resurrection. Following upon a systematic summary of the problems given by Edmund Schlink in the Section meeting, many accepted the idea that Christianity should seek to observe a dialectical relationship of "constructive detachment" from every culture. The Christian must, of course, live within a given culture,

but he must avoid all enslavement to cultural forms. Harmony and peace with the established order should evidently not be purchased at the price of surrendering the Church's mandate to impregnate the total life of society with the values of the gospel—a consideration dear to the hearts of many Western Christians, especially perhaps the Protestants.

Turning briefly to the question of the unity of mankind, Section V noted that whereas the historical and traditional cultures have been a factor making for diversity, the contemporary scientific technological culture tends to overrun all regional differences and to impose a uniform pattern that increasingly dominates the whole of life. This uniformity has provoked protest movements and countercultures. The extent to which the Church itself should become a counterculture and identify itself with these movements of revolt would appear to deserve greater attention than Section V was able to devote to it.

The Section meetings were tiring, but many found them more stimulating than the five Committees. They gave the members an opportunity to see each other in spontaneous vibrant exchanges on sharply divisive issues. The participants in these discussions proved to be able and articulate members of their own churches but, with few exceptions, not authorities on the points under debate. A small group of specialists could have rather easily produced more significant statements on many of the issues, such as the encounter of living faiths, than did the Sections at Louvain. The vastness and complexity of the themes, many of which have been previously treated in major conferences, left little possibility of making new advances, except possibly in Section IV. The Sections served for the mutual edification and interest of the discussants. The main result intended from them was the contribution they were expected to make to the handling of the main theme in the plenary sessions of the last three days. To this final phase of the Louvain meeting we must now turn our attention.

RETURN TO THE MAIN THEME

After the Section meetings from August 4 to 9, the Commission returned on August 10 to a renewed discussion of the main theme in plenary sessions. This phase of the meeting was introduced by a panel on August 10 with Prof. John Deschner of Southern Methodist University, Fr. Joseph Ratzinger of the Catholic Theological Faculty, Regensburg, and Fr. Paul Verghese of the Syrian Orthodox Church, Kerala.

Deschner approached the main theme especially from the perspectives of Sections III and IV. The considerations of both these Sections, in his view, strongly confirmed the value of an intercontextual and interdisciplinary approach to Faith and Order questions. Racism, he as-

serted, is a point at which the disunity of mankind intrudes into the Church and compels the Church to sharpen its vision of the unity of mankind for which it stands. A strong and diversified Church unity provides the kind of context in which liberation of the oppressed can be sought without prejudice to universal human reconciliation. Thus the unity of the Church and the unity of mankind form the dual context in which the problem of racism has to be worked out.

So too, according to Deschner, the handicapped through their helplessness and suffering provide an occasion whereby the Church can better understand its mission, and renew its understanding of holiness as one of its essential notes. The Church can thus be helped to develop a theology in which the rich and the poor are seen as each having gifts for the other. Such a theology, he added, "is fully as important as a theology of development for the WCC's understanding of the unity of mankind."

The interdisciplinary method, Deschner concluded, holds great promise for the churches in their quest for unity, but for this promise to be realized the Commission must make better use of nontheological disciplines in its studies and meetings.

Deschner's analysis precipitated in the ensuing session an intense discussion of the method to be adopted in Faith and Order. Miguez-Bonino observed that in the Section meetings too little use had been made of sociopolitical and ideological analysis with regard to questions of technology and cultural diversity. Batista agreed, asserting that from a Latin American point of view it was ideological to interpret the unity of mankind in terms of religion and culture. Muelder declared that while interdisciplinary language had been used in many of the papers at the meeting, there was a danger of mixing precise theological reasoning with imprecise and merely popular social science. What is difficult is to find scholars who can adequately command several disciplines. D. D. Williams from New York added that philosophy should be given greater emphasis in Faith and Order discussions, since process philosophy, for example, specialized in dealing with identity and change—questions which had repeatedly come up in the course of the Louvain meeting.

Referring to Deschner's treatment of the race question, Satterwhite observed that "black theology" reflects black experience and endeavors to create sensitivity in the white community regarding the use of power to keep the blacks down. The goal of black theology, he observed, is not separatism but the ultimate unity of the Church and of mankind.

The second presentation on August 10 was given by Ratzinger, who spoke to the main theme from the perspectives of Section V. Theology and the Church today, he observed, must maintain themselves on

two fronts as they encounter both the historically developed cultures of particular peoples and the single technological culture which is presently overlaying these. With regard to the traditional cultures, Ratzinger accepted the idea that faith must again and again be retranslated into new forms of thought and life as well as new vocabularies. But this process raises the peril that essentials may be sacrificed. "How in each case can the right combination of firm rootage and openness, of concretion and universalism be found?"

Turning then to the question of technology, Ratzinger reflected a mood similar to that of Max Kohnstamm's opening address. Technological communication, he asserted, encourages a positivistic style of thinking and leaves no room for discourse about the deeper questions of philosophy and of value. This constitutes a threat both to the unity of the Church and to the unity of mankind. Regarding the Church in our day he declared:

With this historical process faith also has lost its language, or it speaks no more than a special language, which is understood only within Christianity but outwardly is scarcely comprehended any more. Within particular churches, this process has also led to language difficulties between different groups which confront each other across almost insuperable barriers. Is the Church in the technological world really condemned to be speechless, to a pluralism without communication, to the ghetto? Does she have possibilities to express her unity anew, and thus to make a contribution to the unity of mankind? If uniform formulae are no longer possible, where are the standards by which the inner unity of the unlike can be recognized?

With respect to the unity of mankind, technology presents a similar challenge. At the close of his talk Ratzinger put this very strongly:

The world-wide protest of youth, in spite of the questionableness of many of its forms, is ultimately grounded here, in an uprising against a science which gives itself out as value-free, but hands man over to a valueless existence and in so doing destroys him. The technological world which begins by making faith speechless, thus turns into a direct question to faith: By what standards can true humanity be measured? The development of a political ethic poses an urgent task, in which the search for the unity of the Church and for the unity of mankind pass immediately over into each other.

In response to questions from the panel, Ratzinger added that the ancient cultures and the non-Christian religions, along with Christianity, are called in question by modern technology. Christianity is actually in a better position than these other systems to defend itself, since it can interpret the meaning of history and reveal the true nature of the

unity of man. This constitutes a task and an opportunity for the Church today.

In interventions from the floor, one speaker took the view that since pluriformity is a blessing it would be a mistake to hanker after a human unity secured by a single philosophy; another observed that technological civilization offers many new possibilities of speech and should not be dismissed as a pure curse.

The third panelist on August 10, Fr. Paul Verghese, addressed the main theme primarily in terms of the problematic of Sections I and II. His paper consisted of a series of questions. For example: "How does sin in the form of personal and institutional group egoism function both in the Church and in mankind to protect false and closed identities and structures?" Implicitly he seemed to be calling upon the Church to overcome its fear of loss of identity and its attachment to its own traditional structures. He asked also for a wider sharing of power so that it might be exercised in a participatory way even by the outsiders—the poor, the aged, the handicapped, and the oppressed. The Church, he also suggested, must encourage creative groups who are seeking to pioneer new forms of ministry, and must take care not to force such leaders into isolation or exclusion.

In an exchange between Deschner and Verghese the question of the limits of protest was clearly raised. Deschner took the position that the struggle for liberation must take place within structures for which we can all accept responsibility, whereas Verghese maintained that if one acknowledges limits while protesting, the protest loses its bite. Following up Deschner's line of questioning, Ratzinger asked Verghese how one could decide under what conditions rejection of a challenge is proof of egoism. Verghese seemed to assume that any lack of openness was sinful, whereas Ratzinger held that the question of truth or content must at this point become decisive.

Verghese's suggestions regarding the redistribution of power provoked some reaction in discussion from the floor. A Ceylonese theologian protested that the Church must answer the questions of the world not in the world's language but in that of the gospel. Jesus talks of the denial of self, service, and poverty. Several other speakers followed this up by saying that the Church must not seek to become a power structure but must seek to present a new dimension to piety and mysticism, renewing man's eschatological hope. The Church must have the courage to say, as Jesus did, "Blessed are the poor."

The consideration of the main theme was concluded on August 11 and 12 with the help of a new proposed document entitled "Questions for Further Study." This document, intended to reflect the sense of

the discussions at Louvain, was divided into three parts. In Part 1 it summarized several criticisms of the formulation "Unity of the Church—Unity of Mankind." The first major criticism was that the use of the same term "unity" to describe both seemed to imply that the unity of the Church is a model or replica of world unity, whereas in fact the unity of a voluntary and grace-given society such as the Church is altogether unique. Secondly, it was objected that the formula seemed to erect a static opposition between Church and world, and failed to indicate the dynamic relationship between them. In particular, the formula failed to suggest that the Church's mission toward the world was to mediate God's saving presence. As several speakers remarked, the Church was concerned not so much for the unity of the world as for its salvation; for there can be unity in slavery and sin.

The second part of this document dealt with methodology. The inter-contextual approach, it asserted, requires interdisciplinary studies. This raises the entire question as to how secular experts are to be brought into fruitful dialogue with theologians. In what way, it was asked, do biblical theology and Eucharistic life "provide criteria for the critical evaluation and selective appropriation of insights from other disciplines, which also form part of the one truth of God"?

In Part 3 this proposal listed six issues for further exploration in connection with the main theme. These included topics such as conflict and community, racism, power and powerlessness, and the relationship of Christianity to the other religions. The Working Committee of Faith and Order was requested by the document to integrate and re-group these studies and to envisage the proper procedure.

Valuable though the long discussion of the main theme had been, it did not meet with universal satisfaction. At the final day of Louvain, the veteran French Protestant ecumenist Roger Mehl, speaking from the floor, asserted that interdisciplinarity is fruitful only when each of the disciplines retains its own proper identity. In its treatment of the main theme, he maintained, Faith and Order had as yet failed to say anything specifically theological beyond what other sections of the World Council of Churches could say or had already said. Faith and Order, he pleaded, should first of all pursue its own task vigorously, in order then to engage in helpful dialogue with other bodies and other disciplines.

Similar misgivings were intimated in the report, just summarized, on "Questions for Further Study." In a significant paragraph it put the question: "Refreshing and stimulating as the main theme has been, does it not leave aside some of the traditional questions to the periphery of Faith and Order, questions which relate more directly to the divisions

between the three main traditions (Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox), such as the Eucharist and the Ministry? Could we also come at the theme of the Unity of Mankind from the perspective of the Eucharist and the Ministry?"

While a helpful process of mutual exhortation and education had occurred, the Louvain meeting did not seem to achieve any new level of corporate insight regarding the main theme. At the end it could only list what would seem to be rather obvious questions. As compared with the relatively manageable and traditional themes taken up by the five Committees, the themes proposed for the five Sections and for the meeting as a whole proved too vast to be tractable, at least by the Faith and Order members and experts who were on hand.

THE FUTURE OF FAITH AND ORDER

The Louvain meeting carried on its deliberations with a keen realization that Faith and Order faces an uncertain future, especially in view of the fact that the purposes and structure of the World Council of Churches are being progressively revised.

The present Constitution of the World Council describes as its first function "to carry on the work of the world movements of Faith and Order and Life and Work and of the International Missionary Council."²⁰ The Faith and Order Commission, whose existence long antedates that of the World Council, remains to this day one of the major structural entities within the Council. But with the accession of more and more new organizations—including that of the World Council on Christian Education, effective Jan. 1, 1972—the World Council has found it increasingly inappropriate to define its functions and organize its departments in terms of the previous bodies which it incorporates. In place of this historical mode of self-identification, many have suggested an articulation of finalities and specializations based on the present possibilities and activities of the Council. Since the Uppsala Assembly the World Council Committee on Structures has come forth with far-reaching recommendations to this effect. According to the final report of this Committee, presented to the Central Committee of the World Council at the Addis Ababa meeting in January 1971, the Constitution of the World Council should be amended so that its first function would become: "to keep before the churches the goal of unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship and to foster the progressive manifestation of this unity and the expression in worship of our common life in Christ." The sixth function of the World Council would then become: "to carry on the work of the world movements for Faith and Order and Life and

²⁰ *The Uppsala Report*, p. 467.

Work and of the International Missionary Council [and the World Council on Christian Education].”

A special Committee of Faith and Order, prior to the Louvain meeting, considered these constitutional changes, and recommended that the first function and purpose be expressed rather as follows: “to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and in common life in Christ and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe.” This recommendation was debated at Louvain on August 11 and met with general approval except that one speaker felt that the word “advance” might possibly be misread as though it were a noun in apposition with “goal” rather than a verb in apposition with “call.”

The Committee on Structure further recommended the discontinuance of the present Divisions of the World Council of Churches and the substitution of three Program Units, to be entitled respectively: Faith and Witness, Justice and Service, and Education and Communication. Program Unit I in this division is foreseen as including the following four subunits: The Commission on Faith and Order, The Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, The Working Group on Church and Society, The Working Group on Dialogue with Men of Other Living Faiths and Ideologies. Under this restructuring of the World Council, the Commission on Faith and Order would cease to be regulated by its own Constitution. Instead it would have a set of by-laws enacted by the Central Committee or Assembly of the World Council of Churches.

At the discussion on Structure at Louvain on August 11, several Greek Orthodox speakers, reiterating the stand taken by the Greek Orthodox at the Working Committee meeting the previous year, strongly urged that Faith and Order should not be reduced to the status of a subunit within Faith and Witness. Several other speakers expressed hesitations about an arrangement in which Faith and Order would have only by-laws and would not have the power even to change its own by-laws. It will be the task of the Working Committee to take further action, at its own discretion, by proposing modifications to the proposed restructuring of the World Council of Churches. Final action on the constitutional change and on the proposed new structure cannot be taken until the next meeting of the Assembly of the World Council in 1975.

The proposed structural changes, especially when viewed in the light of the main theme chosen for the Louvain meeting, gave rise to a widespread impression that Faith and Order may be surrendering its relative autonomy and merging its concerns with those of the World Council as a whole. At the very beginning of the Louvain meeting, the chairman of the Working Committee, J. Robert Nelson, adverted to the

widespread apprehension that Faith and Order might be forsaking its primary interest in the unity of the Church. He responded that in view of the intense preoccupation of many Christians with the fracturing of mankind, the theme of Church unity today has to be considered in relationship to the total unity of the human family.

Speaking immediately after Nelson on the afternoon of August 2, Eugene Carson Blake, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, alluded to the same apprehensions:

At Uppsala, at Canterbury, and at Addis Ababa there have been voices reflecting the widespread fear among the constituency of the member churches of the Council alleging that in recent years it has set a new course away from traditional and essential interest in faith in God and the unity of the Church towards an over-preoccupation with ethical action programs in the world.

Again and again official spokesmen for the Council have insisted that this is not the case and have shown, descriptively, historically and logically that it is wrong to impale the Council on the horns of this false dilemma. But however eloquently various ones of us have made the point—for example, Dr. Visser 't Hooft at Uppsala—the concern within the constituency has not been fully satisfied. Sharp critics of the ecumenical movement and worried friends continue to repeat the same charges.

Blake's address, however, gave little comfort to the dissatisfied constituency of which he spoke. He seemed to accord little autonomy to Faith and Order and its traditional concerns. The task of the World Council, he asserted, "is essentially one interdependent work." He requested Faith and Order "as a commission to throw light upon the whole life and program of the World Council of Churches which can shine only out of the kind of academic and theological competence which you possess." Rejecting the dichotomy between activist programs and theological reflection, he expressed the hope that at Louvain "your own traditional Faith and Order work will be enriched by the insights that do not so easily penetrate the scholar's study, but arise out of the struggles in the arena of the world by those who make their primary witness to Christ in action and in existential decision."

Lukas Vischer, delivering the Report of the Secretariat on August 3, likewise spoke in favor of widening the concerns of Faith and Order. "Unity," he declared, "cannot be established by patiently dealing with the confessional differences between the churches until these have been eventually cleared up and overcome. Theological dialogue of this kind cannot be the only method in our time and perhaps not even the main method. The churches have been driven together by the need to come to grips with the changes of our times." Later in the same address he warned that the traditional concern of the Faith and Order Commis-

sion with the theme of unity "leads it too easily to an unhealthy concentration on ecclesiology."

These statements by high officers in the World Council and in Faith and Order indicate that the present leadership would encourage the Commission to concentrate less narrowly on the traditional doctrinal and ecclesiological concerns of the movement, and to view these themes in the larger context of the total needs of mankind for liberation, healing, and development. This change of perspective would clearly call for the kind of intercontextual method described, for example, in the remarks of Deschner to which reference has been made earlier in this article.

Although the tide of Christian secularity has subsided somewhat from its high-water mark of 1966-68, the Protestant majority of Faith and Order still seems convinced that the Commission should intensify its involvement in the theology of life and action. The Greek Orthodox seem to be opposed to this trend. The Russian Orthodox, as one may gather from our summary of Meyendorff's opening address at Louvain, have grave doubts about the wisdom of the paths followed by Faith and Order since Montreal. Many Anglicans are at least hesitant. The Roman Catholic position on these issues is not yet clear. Jérôme Hamer, O.P., representing the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, remarked that the many charismatic movements in the world today—not only among the "Jesus people"—are symptomatic of a reaction against the excessive engagement of the churches in questions of social justice without sufficient basis in personal life. Theology without spirituality, he said, runs the risk of becoming sterile. And the spirituality of Faith and Order, he added, should not be limited to the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

On the other hand, one of the Roman Catholic members, Samuel Rayan, S.J., speaking in a panel discussion on the Goals of the Ecumenical Movement on August 8, insisted that "the ecumenical movement must commit itself to the service of needy man." "When . . . search for unitive truth has gone on for some time, and especially when, or if, the search tends to grind to a halt, it is well, it is even necessary, to get busy about the other pole of life, namely love realized in service." To what extent this represents an outlook contrary to that of Hamer is not presently clear. Does the Roman Catholic contingent veer more toward the "vertical" emphasis on faith in God or toward the "horizontal" emphasis on service toward one's fellowmen, or is the Roman Catholic constituency divided within itself? Do the spokesmen of all positions complacently assume that they themselves have achieved the proper balance?

No one at Louvain seemed to deny that there is a legitimate personal Christian concern for peace and justice in the world, and that the ecu-

menical movement, together with the World Council of Churches as an expression of that movement, cannot remain indifferent to that concern. But some seemed to deny that the churches as such should involve themselves in social issues. Even among those who feel that the churches should be involved, there is no agreement about the role of Faith and Order with reference to the social apostolate. Should the Commission continue to regard itself as a specific entity, primarily concerned with word, sacrament, and ministry, or should it become, in effect, the theological arm of the World Council as a whole? If it sticks to its traditional themes, it is in danger of being marginalized in the Council, but if it enlarges the dimensions of its concern, it is threatened with surrendering its proper identity. The other units of the World Council already have at their disposal experts concerned with the theology of development, liberation, peace, and social change. Would they take it well if Faith and Order were to conceive of itself as the theological brain trust of the entire Council? Could Faith and Order responsibly agree to let its agenda be set by other agencies?

Whatever be the correct solution to these questions, the Louvain meeting is memorable for the courage with which the Faith and Order Commission faced the question of its own future. While fully recognizing the seriousness of the issues, the speakers were generally honest, open, and free from corporate egoism. Wishing to help Faith and Order make the best possible contribution to the ecumenical movement, most seemed prepared, if necessary, to allow the Commission to be merged into some larger entity. Those who opposed this course did so on the ground that Faith and Order still has a distinctive and important function which will not be properly discharged unless the Commission retains its autonomy.

Without wishing to imply that any simple answer to these questions can be adequate, I should like to urge, as a matter of personal conviction, that Faith and Order should not allow its program to be dictated by momentary urgencies or concentrate its efforts on tasks that can better be discharged by others. In its original orientation toward Church unity in doctrine and polity, Faith and Order had a well-defined project that is still eminently worth pursuing. During the past fifty years it has accomplished much; it has accumulated a valuable body of experiences and reflections. Much of this could be lost if the Commission, in its search for contemporary relevance, were to adopt new aims and new methods. Certainly the traditional Faith and Order problems need to be seen in relation to the secular concerns of contemporary man, but the problematic should not be so enlarged as to become intractable nor should new vocabularies, disciplines, and outlooks be introduced at a rate that precludes the achievement of consensus. In our generation too

many organizations, both religious and secular, seem to suffer from a suicidal compulsion to denigrate their own past achievements and to chafe at all limitations in method or in scope. Faith and Order would do well, I believe, to adhere to specific and limited goals consonant with its origins and traditions. By seeking to involve itself in all the problems of the world and to speak to every potential audience, the Commission would condemn itself to ultimate frustration. As I have indicated, some of the frustrations felt at Louvain were due to the vast and unmanageable character of the main theme selected for the meeting.

The future contributions of Faith and Order will depend very much on the type of personnel it can muster into service. It has been fortunate in the past few years in having as its director Dr. Lukas Vischer and as the chairman of its Working Committee Prof. J. Robert Nelson, both of whom will continue in office. The election of Fr. John Meyendorff of the Orthodox Church in North America as chairman of Faith and Order promises to bring Orthodox perspectives more centrally into the work of the Commission, although these perspectives only with great difficulty envisage the concrete world of modern man as a proper sphere of Christian involvement.

The present roster of Faith and Order members reflects a delicate balance between dependable churchmanship and theological expertise. The most prominent leaders are professional ecumenists who have been with the movement since the 1950's. The dominant voices are those of English-speaking Protestants, including the Anglicans. The British, in particular, exhibit an invaluable mastery of the arts of ecclesiastical statesmanship and diplomacy. Continental Protestantism still provides a number of distinguished experts in academic theology, able to theorize with erudition and clarity at a high level of abstraction. Africa and especially southern Asia have begun to produce some talented Commission members, whose theological orientations are generally similar to those of their European and American colleagues. Because of the unforeseen absence of several American Negroes, "black theology" was virtually unrepresented at Louvain. The theology of the "new left" was represented, in some degree, only by a few Latin Americans. The Greek and Russian Orthodox representatives at Louvain provided a vigorous counterpoise to the Protestants. Their theology, centered on the Trinity and the Eucharist, notably enriched the meeting. The Greeks, at times, tended to be rigid, shrill, and defensive; the Russians (including especially the French and American expatriates) more supple and positive.

Since Louvain was the first test of Roman Catholic participation, it may be appropriate to end with some observations on this subject. The Roman Catholic Commission members were not very vocal at the

general sessions, and often remained silent on crucial issues being debated by Protestants and Orthodox. This reticence is explained partly by the novelty of the situation, partly by the numerical weakness of the Catholic delegation. Out of about 140 Commission members and staff, only eight are Roman Catholics. Among the 26 members and proxies from the United States at Louvain, only one (Raymond E. Brown) was a Roman Catholic. This tiny representation makes it impossible for Catholics to assume a major role in the direction of the Commission and in the preparation of Faith and Order studies.

Reporting for the Secretariat on August 3, Lukas Vischer commented on the fact that several recent studies, initiated before Roman Catholic entry into the Commission, were authored by joint theological commissions appointed by the Joint Working Group of the World Council and the Roman Catholic Church. Now that Roman Catholics are full members, should joint commissions of this type continue to be set up? Vischer inclined toward a negative response:

Should the theological problems raised by the Roman Catholic Church be dealt with in the future, too, by special commissions? Or can the Commission's program be so arranged as to take in all these problems? In other words, is the Roman Catholic Church to continue to be regarded as a special partner in the ecumenical movement, or has the discussion already shown that the problems arising in the dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church are basically the same as those which arise in the ecumenical movement as a whole? The answer to this question is not obvious. Personally, I hope that special commissions will no longer be necessary and that all problems can be formulated and tackled as common problems. I realize that this would represent a large step forward and would also make heavy demands on all concerned.

After Vischer's presentation, Fr. Hamer, present as liaison officer of the Roman Catholic Church, argued that the superior quality of the two studies produced by the special commissions (those on "Catholicity and Apostolicity" and on "Common Witness and Proselytism") would tell in favor of continuing this type of work. Perhaps Hamer was also conscious that in view of the small percentage of Catholics in the Commission, the Roman Catholic input into studies produced by Faith and Order alone would be disproportionately small.

The question of the relationship of the Roman Catholic Church to Faith and Order is closely interconnected with that of its relationship to the World Council of Churches. As long as the Catholic Church remains outside the World Council, it may be expected to maintain bilateral conversations with the Council on questions of common interest, such as those that have been studied by the Joint Working Group set up in 1965. The difficulty, of course, is that the areas treated by this group

overlap with those being studied in Faith and Order. Thus the membership of the Roman Catholic Church in Faith and Order, taken in conjunction with its nonmembership in the World Council, creates an ambiguous situation that makes for confusion and strain. If the Catholic Church could achieve some permanent form of association with the World Council, perhaps amounting even to membership, these problems would be greatly alleviated.

Further thought has to be given to the process of selecting the Roman Catholic members. Normally the Commission selects the individuals whom it invites to membership. The Vatican Secretariat, however, has insisted that all Roman Catholic members should be nominated by Rome. By and large, the quality of representation has been good, but one wonders about the necessity for this procedural anomaly. It may also be worth noting that Roman Catholics coming from countries where there are few non-Catholics sometimes experience difficulty in becoming strongly committed to the goals and processes of Faith and Order. In the future, it may be hoped, great care will be taken to obtain Roman Catholic members who are well equipped, by background and interest, to enter into the concerns of the movement and to bring to it the perspectives and insights of their own ecclesiastical tradition. The general membership of Faith and Order gives the impression of being highly receptive to whatever Roman Catholics may feel they have to offer for the sake of advancing Christ's work through all the churches. If the Catholic Church takes its commitment to Faith and Order with full seriousness, it may be able to help overcome some of the most painful divisions between the Orthodox and the Protestants and between the prosperous churches of the West and the deprived Christians of the Third World.