

In recent years there has been a rapid growth in cooperation between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches. Joint studies and projects were initially still regarded as the exception and only proposed rather tentatively but joint planning has increasingly become the rule. A marked extension of cooperation to many new areas of activity followed the adoption of the first official report in 1966. This cooperation is now so varied and extensive that it would be difficult to give a complete survey.

The cooperation stimulated by the Joint Working Group forms only a limited section of the total field of ecumenical collaboration, and one which cannot be isolated from the work of the ecumenical movement as a whole. The present report, however, is restricted to the specific responsibilities of the Joint Working Group and deals with what has been achieved since the second official report, published in 1967.

I. The Faith and Worship of the Churches

a) *The Commission on Faith and Order*

Roman Catholic theologians have increasingly participated as observer-consultants in the studies undertaken by the Commission both at a regional level and at a world level. A notable step forward was registered following the second official report in 1967. With the agreement of the Roman Catholic Church, the Uppsala Assembly of the World Council of Churches invited nine Roman Catholic theologians to become members of the Commission on Faith and Order. Among current studies in the general framework of Faith and Order the following examples may be cited:

1. *Studies on the Authority of the Bible*

The 1967 report had stressed the importance of this theme. A document prepared by the Faith and Order Commission is now being studied by a number of regional groups, most of which have Roman Catholic members. Roman Catholic faculties and other similar centres have displayed special interest in the subject. At least three of the groups at work are predominantly Roman Catholic in membership (in Spain, France and Germany).

2. *Worship Studies*

The World Council of Churches was invited to send observers to the meetings of the council set up to implement the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. Official links between this council and the Faith and Order Commission were established in the spring of 1968. It became clear in the discussions that even in this field joint study of many questions is possible.

In the course of the sixth and seventh meetings of the Joint Working Group, in December 1967 and May 1968, much time was devoted to the problem

of intercommunion. The Joint Working Group looked at the theological and liturgical aspects of intercommunion. In December 1968 it decided to suspend its work in this field although keeping the subject on its agenda, since the Faith and Order Commission (now enlarged to include the participation of Roman Catholic theologians) was initiating a study of intercommunion. (A provisional study paper has since been published with the title "Beyond Intercommunion: On the Way to Communion in the Eucharist", in *Study Encounter*, Vol. V, No. 3, 1969, pp. 94 ff.).

b) *Joint Theological Commission on Catholicity and Apostolicity*

The second official report described the membership and first meeting of this Joint Theological Commission, which has pursued its work in two further meetings. The results of its discussions so far have been summarized in a report already published in French and English. This document seeks to define the two terms "catholicity" and "apostolicity" with a view to establishing the areas of agreement which could provide a starting point for future ecclesiological studies within the ecumenical movement. It also tries to determine which theological problems are in most urgent need of attention in view of the rapid development of both the ecumenical movement and theology, and the consequences of this development in the life of the churches.

With only fourteen members, the Commission could hardly claim to represent the whole spectrum of confessional traditions and theological trends. A much wider circle of theologians was therefore consulted before the document was given in its final form.

At its meeting in May 1970, the Joint Working Group agreed to adopt the report and recommended its publication.² It was hoped that this would ensure that the document was circulated in colleges, ecumenical groups and institutions, the Faith and Order Commission, National Christian Councils, ecumenical and theological commissions of Episcopal Conferences and other similar bodies.

In August 1970 a consultation was held to draft a list of questions raised in the discussions to which the Faith and Order Commission should give priority in its future work. This 1970 consultation also prepared recommendations for presentation to the meeting of the Faith and Order Commission at Louvain in August 1971.

c) *The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity*

The team of representatives of the Faith and Order Commission and of the Roman Catholic centres working in this field was set up in accordance

² See Appendix III. The text has been published in *Ir-enikon*, 1970, pp. 163 to 200 and in *One in Christ*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 1970, pp. 452, 482.

with the recommendations made by the joint consultation held in October 1966, referred to in the second official report of the Joint Working Group. This team has met regularly since. As a result it has been possible to plan the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity jointly. The consequence has been a far greater measure of cooperation and common prayer in the actual celebration of the Week than ever before.

d) *The Date of Easter*

The Joint Working Group recognized in its second official report that there was no easy or speedy way to solid agreement between all the churches on the date of Easter.

To bring this agreement nearer, a consultation was organized by the Faith and Order Commission at the Orthodox Centre at Chambésy, Geneva, from March 16-20, 1970. Three Roman Catholic observer-consultants participated in the consultation, representing the Secretariat for Christian Unity.

The consultation felt that there were two possibilities:

1) *Either* to fix Easter on the Sunday following the first full moon after the spring equinox (employing the Gregorian calendar, which takes March 21 as the spring equinox and adopts scientific astronomical methods to determine full moon). This solution would respect the ancient rule as adopted by the Council of Nicea.

2) *Or* to choose a fixed Sunday in April. This solution, too, respects the wishes of the Council of Nicea in the sense that the main concern of the Council was to arrive at an agreed date, although, of course, it does not follow the strict letter of the decision usually attributed to the Council.

The consultation expressed its preference for the second alternative and suggested the Sunday following the second Saturday in April, though it had no objection to another Sunday being chosen if this would make the adoption of a common date for Easter possible for all Christians and in particular for all the Orthodox Churches.³

II. Mission and Unity

a) *Common Problems*

Along the lines of the recommendations made in the second official report, an exchange of views took place between representatives of the World Council of Churches, the Secretariat for Christian Unity, the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, and other missionary bodies, in April 1963.

This was followed up in 1969 when six representatives of the World Council of Churches visited a number of the Vatican offices in Rome, particularly those concerned with missions.

Three Roman Catholics from the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, the Secretariat for Christian Unity, and SEDOS (a working party of

various missionary orders) were appointed as consultants to the WCC's Division of World Mission and Evangelism. Roman Catholics have also participated in the work of the Department on Studies in Mission and Evangelism.

In its second official report, the Joint Working Group announced its decision to undertake "a joint study on the subject of proselytism", a question which it had been concerned with for some time. A document was sent to specialists by the World Council of Churches and the Secretariat for Christian Unity with a request for their comments. In May 1968, Roman Catholic experts considered the question from the standpoint of their Church. Next, a joint consultation was held at Arnoldshain, where the document was revised. The work of revision continued during 1969 until the September of that year when a consultation took place at Zagorsk. The document was then modified in the light of comments made at the consultation.

In the course of this work the form in which the question was posed was changed. At first the emphasis had been on distorted forms of evangelism as contrasted with genuine Christian witness. The more the study proceeded the clearer it became that our real task was not simply to eliminate wrong methods of evangelism but rather to reach a position in which it would be possible to bear joint witness, within the limits imposed by our condition as still divided churches.

The final form of the document was submitted to the Joint Working Group at its meeting in May 1970. It was adopted not as a joint declaration but as a study paper for consideration by the churches in their respective local situations. The Joint Working Group recommended its publication as such.⁴

b) *Dialogue with Men of Other Faiths and with Non-Believers*

Contacts with the Secretariat for Non-Believers, mainly in the form of the exchange of observers, became more frequent and regular from 1967 onwards.

For its part, the World Council of Churches organized a consultation at Ajaltoun in the Lebanon in March 1970 which brought together scholars and others experienced in dialogue from the Buddhist, Christian, Hindu and Muslim faiths. Of the twenty-eight Christian participants, six were Roman Catholic. Three Roman Catholics also participated in the consultation in Zurich arranged by the World Council of Churches in May 1970 to study the theological implications of the dialogue between men of living faiths.

c) *Christian Medical Commission*

The second official report of the Joint Working Group in 1967 expressed the desire for the establishment of closer relationships between the various

³ The full text of this report will be found in the *Ecumenical Review*, January 1971.

⁴ « Common Witness and Proselytism ». See Appendix II. The text will be published in the *Ecumenical Review*, January 1971.

church bodies engaged in medical work. In fact the cooperation already existing in this area in many countries makes organized coordination at the world level a matter of some urgency.

From its inception the Christian Medical Commission has worked closely with a number of Catholic hospitals, medical bodies and religious orders.

Three Roman Catholic observers attended the first annual meeting of the Christian Medical Commission in 1968. In June 1969, on the invitation of the Commission, the Secretariat for Christian Unity appointed seven Roman Catholic representatives who were coopted by the Commission as consultants *ad personam*. These seven representatives were coopted not in virtue of their membership of a particular organization but because of their qualifications. They were present at the Commission's second annual meeting. One of the decisions taken at this meeting was to call for the establishment of a joint committee to study possible future forms of Roman Catholic participation in the Christian Medical Commission. This resolution was conveyed to the Division of World Service, the bodies responsible for the Christian Medical Commission on the World Council side. It was also conveyed to the Secretariat for Christian Unity. The resolution was accepted and a joint committee duly set up, which met in Rome on March 23, 1970, in Geneva on June 9, and again in Rome of July 31, 1970. It considered a number of possible forms for cooperation between the Commission and the Roman, Catholic Church. It has submitted a report to the respective authorities and this is now under consideration.

d) *World Christian Handbook*

The call to cooperation between the churches would be greatly helped by the existence of a joint statistical work of reference. Such a reference book is in fact now being compiled and it is hoped that a World Christian Handbook will be published jointly in 1972, giving details of all the churches throughout the world. Conservative evangelicals are cooperating in this project.

III. The Laity

Since the second official report of the Joint Working Group was published, the Third World Congress of the Laity was held in Rome in 1967. Its preparation occasioned several joint consultations and cooperation with a view to giving the Congress an ecumenical character as possible. The churches and Christian confessions, as well as the World Council of Churches, were invited to send consultants. These were in sufficient numbers to have some influence on the discussions of the Congress. The World Council of Churches was consulted in the planning of the programme. One of the closing addresses was entrusted to a consultant and it has already been suggested that in future the Congress might be made into a joint enterprise.

a) *Relations between the Division of Ecumenical Action and the Laity Council*

When the Laity Council was constituted in Rome in 1967, the Joint Working Group suggested that its partner in the World Council of Churches should be the Division of Ecumenical Action. This proposed collaboration was approved by the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Uppsala and by the Laity Council at its first meeting. Several joint consultations followed and the Laity Council sent representatives to meetings of the Committee of the Division of Ecumenical Action.

It is mainly in the field of studies that this collaboration has been developed. The Laity Council was associated with the study "Towards A New Style of Living", drafted in preparation for the Uppsala Assembly, and has also collaborated in the present programme of the Division of Ecumenical Action on "Participation in Change", which is a follow-up to the Uppsala Section VI report "Towards New Styles of Living". The Division of Ecumenical Action will likewise be participating in the symposium which the Laity Council is planning on "Dialogue within the Church". Other fields of joint study have still to be explored.

At its meeting in May 1970, the Joint Working Group invited the Division of Ecumenical Action and the Laity Council to look together at the possible areas of ecumenical collaboration between lay people and also at the problems and concerns of young people. The information obtained in this way will be valuable for current studies on possible forms of cooperation between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches.

The Division of Ecumenical Action sent observer-consultants to the preparatory meetings planning the Pan-African-Madagascan Laity Congress which is to be held in Yaounde in August 1971.

b) *Women's Ecumenical Work*

The establishment of the Laity Council made it possible to put ecumenical cooperation between women on a more permanent basis. In 1968 the small, and more or less unofficial, group formed to continue the work of the 1967 Taizé Conference was replaced by the Women's Ecumenical Liaison Group. This group has a provisional mandate to operate experimentally until 1972. So far it has met three times. One of its decisions has been to undertake a study on "The Image of Woman in the Mass Media".

IV. Social Service and Service to Humanity

a) *SODEPAX*

Collaboration between the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Commission on Justice and Peace developed rapidly, as the second report of the Joint Working Group had hoped it would. The decision was taken to organize a conference on the problem of development. It was held in Beirut from April 21-27, 1968. The aim of the conference

was to formulate common convictions and intentions based on as comprehensive and objective an analysis of the problems as possible. It was also intended to emphasize with some conviction the responsibility for human, social and economic development which accrues primarily to Christians but also to all men. Theologians and church leaders from developed and developing countries, representatives of international organizations and a number of leading experts in the development field took part in these discussions. The conference report was widely circulated and became a major factor in helping to establish cooperation both at the level of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches and in the individual countries.

Since a joint structure was needed to organize a conference of such magnitude, a joint secretariat had been set up in Geneva and Father George Dunne, S.J. appointed secretary with responsibility for organizing the programme. At the end of the conference it became clear that the programme would become even more extensive and that the secretariat should therefore not merely continue but even expand. A more permanent structure was called for and agreed to by both parties on condition that its flexibility and task-centred existence should not be lost sight of. In the first instance joint work was to be planned for a period of only three years, i.e. up to the end of 1971. This would preserve its experimental character and it would still be possible, at the end of this period, to guide cooperation into a different direction or give it a different structural form. But even for this limited period an effective organization was essential. A meeting of the exploratory committee in May 1968 drafted suggestions for a Committee on Society, Development and Peace (SODEPAX). The competent Roman Catholic authorities and the World Council of Churches' Uppsala Assembly approved these proposals in principle. The details were worked out in the following months.

The Rev. Dr. Roy Neehall of Trinidad was appointed associate secretary and in addition three other staff members were appointed with more specialized qualifications. The secretariat is responsible to the two co-presidents and to the SODEPAX Committee, which consists of sixty experts and church representatives. This Committee also has a delegated authority in relation to the two bodies sponsoring SODEPAX. It meets annually, current matters being dealt with by a smaller steering committee which meets more frequently.

Major international consultations have been held: at Cartigny in Switzerland in November 1969 on the theology of development; at Driebergen in Holland in March 1970 on communications media in the service of development and peace; and at Baden in Austria in April 1970 on peace and the international community. A dozen smaller seminars have also been held, notably those in connection with the second development decade and with education for civic action.

In addition to international consultations to cla-

rify the churches' motives for social action, a noteworthy aspect of the work of SODEPAX has been its local and regional activity. For example in several African and Asian countries SODEPAX groups have been formed. This advance was stimulated by the ecumenical conference on the churches' role in the development of Asia, held in Tokyo in July 1970. This was jointly organized by SODEPAX and the East Asia Christian Conference (EACC). Within this joint programme, aimed at gathering and making available information about justice, development and peace, and at awakening Christians to a sense of their responsibility in this area, SODEPAX gives special attention to the whole range of questions in the field of education in the widest sense, to the mass media, and to cooperation with people of non-Christian religions and ideologies, as well as with secular institutions.

The question of the continuation of the SODEPAX experiment has, of course, been raised. It was considered at the meeting of the Joint Working Group in May 1970 and at the SODEPAX assembly held at Nemi in Italy in June 1970. There it was suggested that at this present stage SODEPAX had achieved its objectives and that its experimental thrust, its flexibility, and its educational scope might now be continued as part of some wider structure. This question was given added urgency by the World Council of Churches' decision to create a Commission on the Churches' Participation in Development (CCPD). However, after a very full discussion of the matter, it was recommended during the Nemi meeting that SODEPAX should continue its activities for a further period of three years. This recommendation is subject to the approval of the bodies which sponsor SODEPAX. Obviously it is still a matter of urgency that the efforts of both parties in the field of development should be concerted.

b) *Church and Society*

While the joint studies and consultations on social issues between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches are for the most part conducted through SODEPAX, a close collaboration has developed on other problems between the Department on Church and Society, on the one hand, and the Pontifical Commission on Justice and Peace on the other. Four Roman Catholic observers attend meetings of the working committee of Church and Society, which has a total membership of twenty-five. These Roman Catholic observers are chosen by the Secretariat for Christian Unity in consultation with the Pontifical Commission on Justice and Peace.

Out of this has come substantial Roman Catholic participation in the World Council of Churches' new study on "Technology and the Future of Man and Society". Eighteen Roman Catholics took part in an exploratory conference on this theme in 1970 at which there were one hundred and three participants altogether. Four of the Roman Catholic participants were present as observer-consultants, the other fourteen as guest specialists. Collaboration in this

study is expected to grow as the study progresses.

Certain public reactions, especially on the part of business people, to the encyclical *Populorum Progressio* and to the 1966 Church and Society Conference, led to collaboration in another field. A consultation was held in Rotterdam in June 1968 to discuss these Christian statements. It was attended by sixty business people. The consultation was jointly arranged by the Department on Church and Society and the International Christian Union of Business Executives (UNIAPAC), a Roman Catholic body having close but unofficial relationships with Vatican agencies, especially the Pontifical Commission on Justice and Peace.

A second conference was held at Vevey in November 1969 and a third is planned for May 1971 in London.

c) *Service and Aid*

Since 1967, Caritas Internationalis and the WCC Division of Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service have held a third joint consultation. This took place from April 28-30, 1968. This consultation stressed, as the first joint consultation had done, the great variety of ways in which the relief organisations of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches can be of mutual assistance in this field. Above all it emphasized the need for mutual exchange of information, for reciprocal consultation, and for the joint planning and coordination of church appeals.

Clearly the policy of holding such study conferences should continue to be encouraged. Contacts between the various sectors of the WCC Division of Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service and Caritas Internationalis are now normal practice but everywhere the situation needs to be frequently reexamined. The inclusion of specialists in this field

at such study conferences will be the best way of ensuring effective planning of direct cooperation.

In order to ensure wider and more effective cooperation, the Joint Working Group at its meeting in May 1970 "warmly welcomed the proposal of the Division of Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service and Caritas Internationalis to hold a joint conference of representatives of the staff of the various bodies belonging to the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches which are concerned with relief, aid and development, for the purpose of establishing and extending ways and means of planning joint programmes",

V. National and Local Councils of Churches

Speaking at the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva on June 10, 1969, Pope Paul VI mentioned the importance of ecumenical activity at the local level. Since the Roman Catholic Church decided to participate actively in the ecumenical movement, many national and local Christian Councils have invited the Roman Catholic Church to send observers or consultants to their meetings. In some places, the Roman Catholic Church is now a member of the National Christian Council. In a far larger number of cases, the Roman Catholic Church participates in Christian Councils at more than one level, parish, diocesan and provincial. Some of the questions which this development raises concern the Joint Working Group.

In view of the importance of this current development, the Joint Working Group at its meeting in May 1970 asked for a detailed report on the various National Christian Councils and Roman Catholic participation in or collaboration with these Councils to be presented to its next meeting.