REFORMED/ROMAN CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE

TOWARDS A COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHURCH:

REFORMED *I* ROMAN CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE:
SECOND PHASE (1984-1990)

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INTRODUCTION

1. As representatives of the Reformed Churches and of the Roman Catholic Church, we have carried on a dialogue whose purpose has been to deepen mutual understanding and to foster the eventual reconciliation of our two communities. Our conversations have been officially sponsored by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. We have met in Rome, Italy (1984), Kappel-am-Albis, Switzerland (1985), Venice, Italy (1986), Cartigny, Switzerland (1987) and Ariccia, Italy (1988). This report emerged out of these encounters. Joint sub-committees met in Geneva (1989 and 1990) to take into account further suggestions of the Commission for the report and to prepare it for publication.

2. An earlier phase of this dialogue took place under the same sponsorship between 1970 and 1977. That series of conversations produced a report entitled *The Presence of Christ in Church and World* (PCCW), which gave attention to issues such as: the relationship of Christ to the Church, the Church as a teaching authority, the Eucharist, and the ministry. These earlier conversation discovered considerable common ground, but left open questions pertaining to such matters as authority, order, and Church discipline. During approximately these same years representatives of the Lutheran World Federation joined Reformed and Roman Catholic participants in a trilateral dialogue to produce a report titled *The Theology of Marriage and the Problem of Mixed Marriages* *.

3. In this second phase of dialogue just completed we have concentrated more directly on the doctrine of the Church. Certain ccclesiological issues touched upon in the earlier conversations are further treated. Building on this previous work, we have now gone deeper into the realm of ecclesiology, bringing important aspects of this subject into bilateral conversations for the first time. In this way, we have sought further to clarify the common ground between our communions as well as to identify our remaining differences. We hope these results will encourage further steps toward common testimony and joint ecumenical action.

4. We have discovered anew that the Roman Catholic Church and the Reformed Churches are bound by manifold ties. Both communions confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, affirm the Trinitarian faith of the apostolic Church through the ages, and observe the one Baptism into the threefold Name. In recent years Reformed and Roman Catholic Christians have begun, in many places and at many different levels, to share the experience of fellowship and to seek fuller communion in truth and love for the sake of our common service of Jesus Christ in the world. Our churches share more common ground than previously we were able to sec.

5. Yet we have also realized anew that there remain disagreements and divergences between us. Some of these have emerged in the course of this dialogue and have been tackled head-on. Others have been perceived, but left for substantive treatment in future dialogue.

6. Our communions are called to live and witness together to the fullest extent possible now, and to work together toward future reconciliation. The common ground we share compels us to be open toward one another, and to aspire to that communion into which the Spirit seeks to lead us. Each communion is bound in conscience to bear witness to the way in which it understands the gospel, the Church, and the relationship between them, but at the same time to bear this witness in dialogue and mutual support. As we articulate our differing positions in love, we arc challenged to a deeper fidelity to Jesus Christ.

7. This report presents the results of our dialogue in four chapters. Chapter I recalls the sixteenth-century Reformation and recounts the path taken by each comunion since that time. The new openness of ecumenical relationships has helped us to see our respective histories in new perspectives. and to clarify our relationships today. A new assessment of our common ground and of our disagreements is now possible; we are moving closer to being able to write our histories together.

* Both reports can be found in Harding Meyer and Lukas Vischer , Editors , *Growth in Agreement : Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level,* New York /Ramsey : Paulist Press , and Geneva : World Council of Churches, 1984, pp. 433-463 and 277-306 respectively.

8. The existence of this common ground gives us a context for discussing what remains controversial. Thus its content needs careful consideration. Chapter II seeks to accomplish this. This chapter focuses upon two areas of fundamental agreement: that our Lord Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and humankind, and that we receive justification by grace through faith. It follows that together we also confess the Church as the community of all who are called, redeemed and sanctified through the one mediator.

9. A complete ecclesiology was beyond our scope in this phase of dialogue. But it seemed especially important to reconsider the relation between the Gospel and the Church in its ministerial and instrumental roles. Chapter III takes up this question and carries it through a series of topics: the Church as creatura verbi and the Church as sacrament of grace; continuity and discontinuity in Church history; the question of Church structure and the ordering of ministry. Certain convergences are set forth, and the remaining issues noted for future consideration.

10. Finally, Chapter IV sketches some ways forward. Our churches meet in many settings. In ways appropriate to each situation we may (1) take specific steps to deepen our existing fellowship; (2) address issues in such a way as to come closer to a reconciliation of memories; (3) find arenas for common witness, and (4) consider the nature of the unity we seek.

1 1. The Dialogue Commission offers this report to its sponsors in the hope that it may encourage us all to work for the unity of Christians which we believe is Gods will.

CHAPTER 1

TOWARD A RECONCILIATION OF MEMORIES

1.1. WHENCE HAVE WE COME?

12. Whence have our communions come? What paths have they followed — together and apart, interacting, reacting, and going their separate ways — over 450 years to reach where they are today? This first chapter consists of accounts, written with consultation bv each delegation, of our respective histories in relation to one another, as we see them now after five years of annual dialogues.

13. Today, in the late twentieth century, our churches are not the same dialogue partners they were even a generation ago, let alone in the sixteenth century. In the past, we tended to read our histories both selectively and polemically. To some extent, we still do. We see the events through which we have lived through confessionallv biased eyes. The present reality of our churches is explained and justified by these readings of the past. Yet we are beginning to be able to transcend these limitations (a) by our common use of the results of objective scholarly inquiry and (b) by the dialogue our churches have had with each other in this consultation and elsewhere.

14. Historical scholarship today has not only produced fresh evidence concerning our respective roles in the Reformation and its aftermath. It also brings us together in broad agreement about sources, methods of inquiry and warrants for drawing conclusions. A new measure of objectivity has become possible. If we still inevitably interpret and select, at least we arc aware that we do, and what that fact means as we strive for greater objectivity and more balanced judgement.

15. The method used in our present dialogue has also deepened our shared historical understanding. We first drafted our respective parts of this chapter separately. Reading and reviewing these drafts together we learned from each other and modified what we had written. We were reminded that over the centuries our forbears had often misunderstood each other's motives and language. We learned that our histories were sometimes a matter of action and reaction, but that at other times we followed separate paths. We occasionally heard each other speak vehemently and felt some of the passions that dictated the course of historical events and still in some ways drive us today.

16. All this has contributed to a certain reassessment of the past. We have begun to dissolve myths about each other, to clear away misunderstandings. We must go on from here, as our conclusion shows, to a *reconciliation* of memories, in which we will begin to share one sense of the past rather than two.

1.2. A REFORMED PERSPECTIVE

1.2.1. *The Ecclesiological Concerns of the Reformers*

17. The sixteenth-century Reformation was a response to a widespread demand for a general renewal

of Church and society. This demand had begun to be heard long before: it grew more insistent in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, led to the emergence of reformed communities such as the earlier Waldensians and the Hussites, and was addressed by several Church councils. In the sixteenth century it resulted in the establishment of the major Protestant churches in various parts of Europe. Thus the unity of the medieval Western Church was shattered not only by the separation between the Protestant Churches and the Sec of Rome, but also by the fact that the Reformation consisted of several reforming movements occurring at different times and places, often in conflict with one another, and leading to the different communions and confes- sional groups we know today.

18. Although the Reformed Churches came to form a movement distinct from the Lutheran Reformation in Germany, they shared the same fundamental concerns: to affirm the sole head- ship of Jesus Christ over the Church; to hear and proclaim the message of the Gospel as the one Word of God which alone brings authentic faith into being; to re-order the life, practice and in- stitutions of the Church in conformity with the Word of God revealed in Scripture. In all this there was no intention of setting up a "new" Church: the aim was to re-form the Church in obedience to God's will revealed in his Word, to restore "the true face of the Church" and, as a necessary part of this process, to depart from ec- clesiastical teachings, institutions, and practices which were held to have distorted the message of the Gospel and obscured the proper nature and calling of the Church. For many complex reasons, there resulted new forms of Church or- ganization with far-reaching social, political and economic ramifications — forms determined on the one hand by the fresh vision of the Church's calling and commission, and on the other hand by rejection of a great deal that had developed in the previous centuries.

19. Among the chief affirmations of early Reformed ecclesiology were:

— The unity and universality of the one true Church, to which those belong whom God has called or will call in Jesus Christ;

— The authority of Jesus Christ governing the Church through the Word in the power of his Spirit;

— The identification of an authentic "visible Church" by reference to the true preaching of the Word and the right administration of the two dominical sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper;

— The importance of a proper Church order, central to which was the office of the ministry of Word and Sacrament and, alongside it, the over- sight exercised by ciders sharing with the mini- sters of the Word in governing the affairs of the Church.

20. As a consequence of these affirmations the Reformers rejected all in the life of the Church which, in their understanding, obscured the unique mediatorship of Jesus Christ and seemed to give to the Church an excessive role alongside him. The emphasis placed in the ensu- ing controversy on the authority of the Church and its hierarchy led them to question the value of episcopal succession as an expression of the continuity of the Church in the apostolic truth through the centuries. Tn particular, they rejected teachings such as the following:

— The appeal to the Church's tradition as an authority equal to Scripture or belonging together with it;

— The universal authority of the Pope;

— The claim that Church Councils constitute an infallible teaching authority;

— The canonical distinction between the of- fice of a bishop and that of any other minister of the Word and Sacraments.

1.2.2. *The Emergence and Spread of the Reformed Churches*

21. It is conceivable that many if not all of the Reformers' goals might have been realized without dividing the Western Church into dif- ferent confessional traditions. Their aims and in- sights could perhaps eventually have been ac- cepted by the entire Church and issued in a com- prehensive, unified Reformation. In fact, this did not happen. The established leadership of the Western Church was not generally prepared to agree to the amendments of doctrine, Church order and practice which the Reformers sought. The Reformers for their part were convinced that nothing less than obedience to God and the truth of the Gospel was at stake, and interpreted resis- tance as unwillingness to undergo conversion and renewal. In addition, the process of reform proceeded at different paces and took different forms in different local and national settings. The result was division and much mutual ex- clusion even among the reformation churches.

22. In this and in the subsequent develop- ment of the Reformed Churches such factors as geography, politics, social and cultural develop- ment played a considerable part. The Reforma- tion took place in a period of radical intellectual, cultural and political upheaval which irreversibly altered the face of Europe and paved the way for the emergence of the modern world. The nascent Reformed Churches of the sixteenth century both contributed to and were moulded by these wider movements. The countries most profoundly in- fluenced by Reformed theology were prominent among those in which, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for better or for worse, the seeds of modern democracy were fostered, new forms of economic order developed, autonomous natural science came to its first great flowering and the demand for religious tolerance became

increasingly insistent. Where it became influencial, the Reformed ethos stimulated commerce, challenged despotisms, encouraged parliamentary government and enhanced national consciousness.

23. In these developments, however, the Reformed Churches showed that they could, in their own ways, fall victim to many of the same faults they criticized in the Roman Catholic Church. They became legitimators of sometimes oppressive political establishments, fell into clericalism, and grew intolerant of minority viewpoints. They were occasionally guilty of condemnations, burnings and banishment, for example in regard to the Anabaptists in Switzerland, acts in many cases typical of their times, but not to be excused on that account. The Reformed also sometimes lent themselves to various forms of national chauvinism, colonialism and racism. At times their criticisms of opponents (and especially of the papacy) grew intemperate even by the standards of an age given to vituperate language.

24. It has been claimed that the heritage and influence of Reformed thought contributed significantly alongside that of Renaissance and later humanism to the shaping of modern Western culture. There is less agreement concerning the exact nature of this modernizing influence. It has been argued that in many respects the Reformation was more a medieval than a modern phenomenon, yet it set processes in motion that had far-reaching influence. Even the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century can properly be seen as owing much to these impulses, albeit in largely secularized form. So, too, can the rise of modern biblical criticism in the eighteenth century and its rapid development from the nineteenth onwards.

25. The Reformed Churches themselves could not but be affected by all these direct and indirect outworkings of the Renaissance and the Reformation. It must be admitted that they have displayed — especially up to the middle of the nineteenth century, but on occasion also since then as well — a tendency to divide and subdivide on matters of theological or ecclesiological principle. Rationalism, in the guise of a tendency to frame theology in tightly deductive systems, exacerbated this tendency. At times, rationalism gave rise in some Reformed Churches to movements which even questioned such fundamental dogmatic convictions as the Trinity and the divinity of Jesus Christ. Another source of diversity lay in varying conceptions of proper church order, e.g., whether the government of the Church should be synodal, congregational or episcopal.

26. The family of Reformed Churches has continued to grow and spread up to the present. The expansion of the Reformed family is primarily due to the missionary movement of the last two centuries. In 1875, the Alliance of Reformed Churches was founded as a rallying point for the worldwide Reformed and Presbyterian family. In 1970, it was widened to include the Congregational churches as well. The World Alliance of Reformed Churches counts today about 170 member churches. The majority of the member churches of the Alliance are to be found in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Pacific. Moreover, the last century has witnessed major efforts towards reunion within the Reformed family, and since 1918 various Reformed Churches have entered transconfessional unions. Among the member churches of the Alliance there are today also some 16 united churches, from the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren (1918) to the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom (1981). At the same time it has also become increasingly more aware of the challenge to search after a fuller ecumenical unity. It is mindful of the abiding heritage of the Reformation, but at the same time of the common calling of all Christians today to confess and hold aloft that to which all adhere and in which all believe, namely the Good News of Jesus Christ, "the one Word of God which we have to hear and obey in life and in death" (Theological Declaration of Barmen, 1934).

27. In pursuing its theological task the World Alliance of Reformed Churches draws on the resources supplied by the rich tradition of Reformed theology through the centuries from Zwingli and Calvin and their contemporary Reformers to such figures of the recent past as Karl Barth, Josef Hromadka and Reinhold Niebuhr. Il also stands in the heritage of witness reflected in the confessions of the Reformed churches from the 16th century onwards and seeks to continue that witness faithfully today. It does not do so, however, in the spirit of a narrow traditionalist Reformed confessionalism. Rather, it is open ecumenically and concerned to face contemporary and future social, cultural and ethical challenges. The contribution of Reformed theology to todays churches does not consist merely in the maintenance of theological traditions or in the preservation of ecclesiastical institutions for their own sake, but in being what Karl Barth called "the modest, free, critical and happy science" *(Evangelical Theology,* ch. 1), which enquires into the reality of God in relation to us human beings individually and in community in the light of Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, 'God with us'.

1.2.3. *Contemporary Reformed Attitudes Toward the Roman Catholic Church*

28. Before the Second Vatican Council, with notable exceptions, the general Reformed view was that the Roman Catholic Church had not faced the

the real challenge of the Reformation and remained essentially "unrelormed". This conviction was reinforced in the modern era on the doctrinal level by the definitions of the dogmas of Papal infallibility (1870), the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary (1854) and her Bodily Assumption (1950). In practical terms, the same conviction grew from the experience of Reformed minorities in countries dominated by Roman Catholicism. Up to this day the memory of the persecution of Reformed minorities plays a significant role. The development of the two traditions largely in isolation — even when alongside each other* in the same country — increased the inclination of Reformed Christians and churches to view the Roman Catholic Church in terms of its reaction against the Reformation, and reinforced negative attitudes toward Roman Catholic teaching, piety and practice.

29. Signs of a change in perspective began to appear in the nineteenth century, but remained sporadic. Contacts increased and the desire for a new mutual understanding became more apparent in the twentieth century, not least as an offshoot of the active role played bv many Reformed Churches from the beginnings of the ecumenical movement. But it is really only since the pontificate of John XXIII and the events surrounding the Second Vatican Council that a genuinely new atmosphere has developed between the Reformed and the Roman Catholic Churches. The presence of Reformed observers at the Council and an other occasions since, the experience of ecumenical contact, shared activity, worship and dialogue at many different levels from the local congregation to international commissions, and increasing cooperation and collaboration between Reformed and Roman Catholic scholars in work of exegetical, historical, systematic and practical theology — all this has helped to break down misunderstandings and caricatures of the present-day reality of the Roman Catholic Church. In particular, these developments have helped the Reformed to appreciate the seriousness with which the Roman Catholic Church has placed the Word of God at the centre of its life, not least in modern liturgical reforms.

30. In general it can be said today that a process of reassessment and re-evaluation of the Roman Catholic Church has been taking place among the Reformed Churches in the last decades, though not proceeding at the same pace everywhere. There are within the Reformed family those whose attitude to the Roman Catholic Church remains essentially negative: some because they remain to be convinced that the modern development of the Roman Catholic Church has really addressed the issues of the Reformation, and others because they have been largely untouched by the ecumenical exchanges of recent times and have therefore not been challenged or encouraged to reconsider their traditional stance. But this is only one part of the picture. Others in the Reformed tradition have sought to engage in a fresh constructive and critical evaluation both of the contemporary teaching and practice of the Roman Catholic Church and of the classical controverted issues.

31. There is on the Reformed side an increasing sense that while the Reformation was at the time theologically and historically necessary, the division of the Western Church should not be accepted as the last word; that it is at best one-sided to read that history as if all the truth lay on the side of the Reformers and none at all on the side of their opponents and critics within the Roman Catholic camp; that there have been both in the more remote and more recent past many positive developments in the Roman Catholic Church itself; that the situation today presents new challenges for Christian witness and service which ought so far as possible to be answered together rather than in separation; and — perhaps most important of all — that Reformed Christians are called to search together with their Roman Catholic separated brothers and sisters for the unity which Christ wills for his Church, both in terms of contemporary witness and in terms of reconsidering traditional disagreements. Theological dialogue, joint working groups on doctrinal and ethical issues and programmes of joint action undertaken by some Reformed Churches together with the Roman Catholic Church in recent years — all these reflect this new climate, witness to a new and more positive evaluation of the Roman Catholic Church as an ecumenical partner, and hold out hope of further increase in mutual understanding in the future.

32. This is not to say that all problems between Reformed and Roman Catholic Churches have already been resolved; it is to say that a search for solutions is under way, and being undertaken together by both sides. One question requiring further consideration is whether our two traditions from their separation in the sixteenth century onwards need still to be seen as mutually exclusive. Or can they not rather be seen as reconciliable? Can we not look upon each other as partners in a search for full communion? In that search we may be led to discover complementary aspects in our two traditions, to combine appreciation for the questions and insights of the Reformers with recognition that the Reformed can also learn from the Roman Catholic Church, and to realize that Reformed and Roman Catholics need each other in their attempt to be more faithful to the Gospel. Those who have begun to think in this way arc attempting to reconcile their heritage as heirs of the Reformation with their experience of fellowship with and learning from their sisters and brothers

in the Roman Catholic Church. They are asking: Can our common faith set the questions which have divided and in part still divide us in a wider horizon of reconciliation?

1.3. A Roman Catholic Perspective

1.3.1. *Ecclesiological and Reforming Concerns of Roman Catholics at the Time of the Reformation*

33. What was the condition of the Western Church on the eve of the Reformation? Contemporaries found much to criticize. So have subsequent historians. Indeed, one of the most striking characteristics of the age was the vehemence of its rhetoric against certain abuses. Efforts were of course being made to change things for the belter. Reform within the Catholic Church was undertaken in an urgent and more systematic way, however, only after the Council of Trent (1545-63) began to address it. But by that time the Protestant Reformation was already well established and underway.

34. Especially denounced at that time were the venality and political and military involvements of some of the Popes and members of the Curia; the absence of bishops from their dioceses, their often ostentatious wealth and neglect of pastoral duties; the ignorance of many of the lower clergy; the often scandalous lives of clergy including bishops and certain popes; the disedifving rivalry among the religious orders; pastoral malpractice through misleading teaching about the efficacy of certain rites and rituals; the irrelevance and aridity of theological speculation in the universities and the presence of these same defects in the pulpit; the lack of any organized catechesis for the laity; a popular piety based to a large extent on superstitious practices. Judgement on the Church just before the Reformation has, therefore, been severe — and justly so.

35. Efforts at reform remained sporadic, uncoordinated or confined to restricted segments of society. Among these efforts was the Observantist movement in the mendicant orders, which sought to restore the simplicity of their original inspiration. Furthermore a reform of the diocesan clergy in Spain was well under way by 1517. The Humanist movement encouraged a reform of theology and ministry that would depend more directly on biblical texts; it advocated a reform of education for both clergy and laity, and proposed an ideal of piety that insisted upon greater interiority and simplicity in religious practice. In the early stages of the Reformation the urgency of the situation was reflected also in the attempts of Pope Adrian VI (1522-23) to implement reform in the Curia and elsewhere. The very vehemence with which abuses were denounced in some sectors of Church and society indicates, moreover, a deepened religious sensitivity. In such a perspective the great leaders of both the Reformation and the Catholic Reform must be seen as products of the concerns of the age into which they were born and, to that extent, in continuity with those concerns and. indeed, with each other.

36. How, then, can we explain the resistance met by the proposals of reformers like Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin? It is at this point that their discontinuity with previous efforts at reform emerges. While those earlier efforts concentrated on discipline, education, pastoral practice and similar matters, Luther addressed himself first and foremost to doctrine, as later did Zwingli and Calvin. Many people, and not only theologians, were taken by surprise and were unwilling to accept this sudden shift to reform of doctrine and especially Luthers emphasis on the doctrine of justification. They were shocked by the implication that the Church had for centuries been in error about the true meaning of the Gospel. Moreover. Luther's case was soon embroiled in a thicket of personal and theological rivalries and of imperial-papal politics, so that fair procedures and the serenity required for docility to the Spirit were tragically and almost irretrievably compromised at the opening moment. At practically that same moment a vituperative rhetoric from both sides began to dominate theological exchanges.

37. In such an atmosphere the demands and proposals of the Reformers were often also misunderstood by Catholics, and then just as often distorted into caricatures. Direct access to their writings was at best piecemeal, at worst thought unnecessary. This meant that almost without exception the centrality and dramatically evangelical nature of the issue of justification for the Reformers was not grasped. Very few Catholics really understood that for the Reformers what was at stake was not simply this or that doctrine, practice or institution, but the very Gospel itself. Thus, for Catholics "reform" continued to be conceived in pre-Reformation terms as addressing disciplinary and pastoral issues in their established form. They understood their engagement with the Reformation as refuting its "doctrinal errors".

38. In Catholic circles attention turned more or less immediately to ccclesiological issues. Up to the time of the Reformation, reflection on the Church had fallen into two main categories. The first consisted of polemical and apologetical works dealing with church order that arose out of conflicts between popes and either bishops or secular leaders. The argumentation was juridical and political. These works which provided a ready-made, though theologically and biblically inadequate, defence of certain church institutions, were then utilised against the Reformers.

39. The second consisted of assumptions that were more properly theological in nature, but that had become embedded in writings and practice in a much less systematic way. These assumptions were, however, broadly operative in the minds of many persons and they must be taken into account if we are to understand Catholic resistance to the Reformation. Some of these assumptions and the conclusions drawn from them were as follows:

— Christ founded the Church, establishing it on the Apostles who are the basis of the episcopal order of ministry and authority in the Church. In this order the bishop of Rome had more than primacy of honour, though the precise nature, extent and function of this primacy was much debated.

Therefore the proposals of the Reformers concerning church order appeared to be an attack on the apostolic foundation of the Church.

— Christ promised unity for the Church. Consensus in doctrine, extending through the ages, was a hallmark of the Spirits work and a sign of Christs unfailing presence in the Church.

Therefore the turmoil accompanying the Reformation and the conflict among some of the Reformers themselves were taken as proof positive that the Spirit of God was not at work among them.

— Although the Church lived under Scripture, the Church was chronologically prior to the writings of the New Testament and had recognised since earliest times that it itself as a community, especially when assembled in Council, was the authoritative interpreter of the divine Word.

In contrast, the Reformers seemed to arrogate to themselves the right to interpret Scripture in a way at variance with the continuing tradition of the community, and they did not seem to provide any warrant for their interpretation that was necessarily grounded in the community.

— Bishops held primary responsibility for church polity.

In contrast, Luther, Zwingli and the English reformers appeared to deliver the Church into the hands of secular princes and magistrates, thus threatening to reduce the Church to a mere instrument of secular politics.

1.3.2. *The Council of Trent and the Roman Catholic Reform*

40. Within only a few years after the beginning of the Reformation, the seriousness of the crisis had become apparent to many. Less apparent were the means to address it effectively. Particularly from Germany, however, there soon came the cry for a council. Pope Paul III convoked the Council of Trent in December 1945. By that time — a full generation after Luther's 95 Theses — positions had become so hardened and embittered that reconciliation was, humanly speaking, impossible. Responsibility for the long delay in convocation must be ascribed in part to the complex political situation and to the ambivalent or obstructionist attitudes of some Protestant leaders, but lies principally with the fearful, vacillating and self-serving policies of Pope Clement VII (1523-34). By the time Trent began its work Zwingli had died (1531), Luther had less than a year to live, and other Reformers (such as Calvin) were already utterly convinced that Rome was unwilling to undertake the profound reform they wanted.

41. The Council of Trent was destined to last, with long periods of interruption, over eighteen years, finally concluding in December 1563. Attempts to have Protestants participate failed for a number of reasons, with the result that membership in the council was restricted to Catholics. This fact indicated that the religious divisions were already deep and widespread. In a situation like this, the course of the council almost perforce helped confirm and sharpen the divisions, just as the various Protestant Confessions of Faith had done and would continue to do.

42. Trent addressed both doctrinal and disciplinary issues. Among its doctrinal decrees, the most fully discussed and the most earnestly researched was the Decree on Justification, approved in 1547. The complaint of Luther and others that the Church in its actual practice taught a Pelagian doctrine of justification was taken by the principal authors of the Decree with utmost seriousness. Every effort was made to avoid formulations that would fall into that heresy, yet considerable care was also exercised to insist on some measure of human responsibility, under grace, in the process of salvation. In its other doctrinal decrees, Trent gave an extraordinary amount of attention to the sacraments because they were perceived as falling under special attack.

43. The Council of Trent was animated bv the conviction that it had the special guidance of the Spirit, and it considered itself to be the special vehicle of the continuing action of Christ in the Church. Trents explicit emphasis on the continuity of the Church in practice, doctrine and structure with the Apostolic Age was more pronounced than in any previous council. This emphasis prevented serious consideration of most of the changes the Reformers found to be required by their reading of the New Testament. At the council a certain reciprocity of Word and Church was taken for granted as given and witnessed in both the early and contemporary Church. The Council, unlike the Reformers, ascribed apostolic authority to certain "traditions", although it refrained from providing a list of them.

44. Trent was notably concerned not to condemn any doctrinal position held by "Catholic

theologians", and, although it never mentioned a single Reformer by name, it condemned what it thought were Protestant errors. Its decrees must, therefore, be interpreted with great caution. For several reasons, including the wide range of opinions in the Council, Trent made practically no direct and explicit pronouncements about the ecclesiological disputes then raging. However, the very fact that the Council took place was itself an expression of the self-understanding of the Church.

45. In its decrees "concerning reform", Trent articulated its presumptions in generally juridical terms. It meant these decrees, however, to serve better ministerial practice and more effective care of souls. In reaffirming traditional structures, Trent at the same time undertook a certain redefinition of some of them. Perhaps the most sweeping, though implicit, ecclesiological redefinition in the Council and during that era was that the Church was primarily a *pastoral* institution. Trent sought especially to direct bishops to a properly pastoral appreciation of their office. It assigned to them the preaching of the Word as their principal task, an assignment taken with the utmost seriousness by many post-Tridentine bishops, following the example set by Charles Borromeo and others.

46. Although Trent had given the greatest importance to the responsibility of bishops to proclaim the Word of God (cf. Sessio XXIV, 1 1 Nov. 1563, can IV de Reformatione; COD (1973) p. 763), the doctrine of the sacrament of Order, promulgated a few months sooner in the same year, did not provide any place for the ministry of the Word, so much was the Council worried about defending the doctrine of sacraments (Sessio XXIII, 15 July 1563, De Ordine, COD (1973), pp. 742 ss.). This fact masks what was actually happening in Catholicism at the time and for several centuries thereafter. In fact, the ministry of the Word was vigorously pursued, not so much because of the criticism of the Reformers as because in this regard the same reforming ideals impelled both Protestants and Catholics even though much Catholic preaching may not have been biblical in a sense that the Reformed could recognize.

47. This development in the ministry of the Word illustrates the fact that Catholic Reform in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was much broader than the Council of Trent and cannot be simply equated with it. That Reform promoted, among many other things, a great flowering of spiritualities and cultivation of religious experience, a vast programme of catechesis, extensive systems of schools for laitv and clergy, as well as other new forms of ministry and evangelisation. Impressive though the Reform was in so many ways, however, it was not without its failures and false steps. For instance: many earlier abuses like the ncpotistic practices of the papal court and the seignorial style of the episcopacy seemed little affected for the better; the various inquisitions had terribly deleterious effects resulting from repressive measures that included confiscation of goods, banishments and executions. The reading of the Bible in the vernacular, although not always forbidden to laity (contrary to that which is often asserted), was subject nevertheless to some extremely strict conditions which in practice discouraged the laity. Those who were educated were able to read in Latin, as did the clergy, but those who would read it in the vernacular were often considered suspect. Moreover, the doctrinal and disciplinary decrees of Trent itself often came to be interpreted with a rigor and a partisanship the council did not intend.

1.3.3. *From Trent to the Present*

48. Post-Tridentinc partisanship was manifested in various ways, not the least of which was the manner of stressing divergent understandings of the Church. For example, when Roman Catholic apologists focused on the notes of the Church — *one, holy, catholic and apostolic* — Catholic positions were presented in ways intended to refute the ecclesiological claims of their Protestant contemporaries as well as to convey what Roman Catholics believed about the Church. Thus, in contrast to the diversity of Protestant movements, Roman Catholics were united in one, visible Church under the pope; where the Reformers championed justification by faith alone, Roman Catholics maintained also the role of good works in sanctification (in being made holy) and insisted on the grace conveyed by a worthy reception of the Sacraments; where the ncwlv formed Protestant churches had broken with the apostolic succession of the universal Church, the Roman Catholic Church had retained the threefold apostolic ministry of episcopate, presbyterate and diaconate; where the Reformers relied on their individual interpretation of Scripture, Roman Catholics claimed to preserve the entirety of catholic doctrine transmitted from Christ through the ages.

49. Such one-sided argumentation (which has generally been abandoned by Roman Catholic theologians since Vatican 11) was apologetically successful — if not in convincing Protestants — at least in assuring Roman Catholics that theirs was the one and only true Church of Jesus Christ. Moreover, post-Tridentine apologetics capitalised on the divisiveness within Protestantism in contrast to the organic unity of Roman Catholicism. At the same time, Post-Tridentine Catholicism became ever more juridical in its approach to a wide range of issues and ecclesiology increasingly institution oriented and papally centered.

50. This " pyramidal " ecclesiology , which emerged in the context of rising nationalism, received considerable reinforcement in the nineteenth century when both the spiritual prerogatives and the political power of papacy were subject to repeated attacks. Many ecclesiologists hastened to defend both the spiritual independence and the doctrinal authority of the popes. Simultaneously, on the popular level, the pope was considered the symbol of Roman Catholic unity, his slightest command a matter of unquestioning obedience. In the eyes of many, both within and outside the Roman Catholic Church, papal centrism appeared to have been absolutised by the First Vatican Council's teaching on the Primacy and Infallible Teaching Authority of the Roman Pontiff". Due to the adjournment of the Council shortly after this definition , Vatican I did not have sufficient opportunity to take up the broader ecclesiological issues in the schema *De Ecclesia* that was propo- sed for consideration, but never adopted.

51. In fact, the teaching of the First Vatican Council in this regard is much more nuanced than either its ultramontane proponents or its anti-papal opponents seem to have realized. For example, Vatican I did *not* teach that "the pope is infallible" — as is popularly imagined. Rather it taught that the pope can, under carefully specified and limited circumstances, officially exercise the infallibility divinely given to the Church as a whole, in order to decide questions of faith and morals for the Universal Church.

52. Forces already then at work have had profound effects on the Catholic Church in the twentieth century, influencing ecclesiology as well. Renewal movements relating to biblical studies, liturgy, theology, pastoral concerns, ecumenism, and other factors, paved the way for the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Influenced also by the ecumenical movement, this Council's rich presentation of the Church in *Lumen Gentium* differed significantly from apologetical approaches to the past. Concentrating not just on institutional aspects, but on basic biblical and patristic insights on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* re-emphasized, among other themes, the notion of the Church as the People of God and as a communion. All members of the People of God, it said, participate, even if in different ways, in the life of Christ and in his role as prophet, priest and king *(LG* 9-13). The Council described the dimensions of collegiality in which the bishops of the whole world live in communion with one another and with the pope, the head of the episcopal college. While reiterating again the primacy of the Bishop of Rome, the Council made clear that the bishops also " exercise their own proper authority for the good of their faithful, indeed even for the good of the whole Church " *(LG* 22). In focusing on an ecclesiology of communion, the Council was also able to give fresh insights on relations already existing, despite separations, with Christians of other churches and ecclesial communities — a real, though imperfect communion that exists because of baptism *(Unitatis Redintegratio,* 22).

53. As already seen, Catholics agree that there was need for reform in the Church in the sixteenth century, and acknowledge the fact that Church authorities did not undertake the reform which might have prevented the tragic divisions that took place. At the same time the Roman Catholic Church has never agreed with some of the steps taken by the Reformers relating to their separation from the Roman Catholic Communion, nor with certain theological positions that developed in Reformed communities, and seeks dialogue with the Reformed on those issues. The various ways in which reform and renewal have taken place within the Catholic Church since the sixteenth century illustrate resources that existed for bringing renewal from within. Thus while the Council of Trent came too late to avoid divisions, it clarified Catholic doctrine and introduced reforms which have had lasting effects in the Church. The birth of new religious orders from the sixteenth century' to the twentieth, and the renewal of older religious orders, gave fresh impulses to missionary activity. From the sixteenth century, evangelization has increased. Catholic missionaries, sometimes at the cost of their lives, brought the Gospel to lands where it had never been heard before. In traditionally Christian countries, other groups emphasized apostolates of service to the poor and of education of the young, or the renewal of contemplative life. Movements of lay spirituality and Catholic action have flourished, especially in the twentieth century, along with movements for liturgical, biblical and pastoral renewal. Such developments and many others paved the way for the significant reform and renewal brought about in the Catholic Church through the Second Vatican Council which continues to be implemented in the Church today.

I.3.4. *Contemporary Roman Catholic Attitudes toward the Reformed Churches*

54. The ecumenical experience of Roman Catholics also gradually increased, sometimes intentionally through such efforts as the week of prayer for Christian Unity, and sometimes circumstantially as in the experiences of World War II, when Christians from different churches suffered and died together as prisoners and refugees . While such shared experiences helped to develop the ecumenical climate in which Vatican II met, even the most prophetic could not have predicted that the Council would provide what turned out to be a pervasive reorientation in Roman Catholic liturgy and life, theology and thought.

55. Prior to Vatican 11, the attitude of most Roman Catholics towards Protestants in general, and members of Reformed Churches in particular, was negative, though the degree of negativity ranged from overt hostility in some places to guarded acceptance in others. Friendship between members of the two traditions tended to be based on family, business, and social relationships, in which religious differences were frequently left undiscussed. Genuine theological dialogue, though not unknown, was comparatively rare; more common were polemical exchanges in which Roman Catholics criticised and sometimes caricatured the history, doctrine and worship of their Protestant "adversaries".

56. Roman Catholic negativity towards the Reformed churches had a number of intertwined bases. On the ecclesiastical level, the most obvious focus of contention was the Reformed rejection of the episcopacy and the papacy that was also sometimes expressed in terms that Roman Catholics found extremely offensive. Another cause of opposition was the fact that the Reformed principle *of sola scriptlira* resulted in a repudiation of many Roman Catholic teachings and practices, such as the sacrifice of the Mass, Marian devotions, and the earning of indulgences.

57. These religious differences were further intensified by social, economic, and political disparities. In areas where Roman Catholics were a minority, they frequently felt themselves oppressed by members of the " Protestant Establishment". The separate and frequently antagonistic development of the Reformed and Roman Catholic communities tended to perpetuate stereotypes and, in some cases, still continues to impede dialogue even today.

58. Although there were some instances of ecumenical dialogue between Reformed and Roman Catholic theologians prior to the Second Vatican Council, it was the Council that provided the significant breakthrough for overcoming the long-standing antagonism in Reformed-Roman Catholic relationships. While the Council primarily aimed al achieving an *aggiomamento* within the Roman Catholic Church, the presence of observers from other Christian communions, including Reformed Churches, was a constant reminder that ecclesial reform and renewal are not only internal concerns, but have ecumenical implications as well.

59. In particular, *Unitatis Redintegratio* noted that the churches and communities coming from the Reformation "are bound to the Catholic Church by an especially close relationship as a result of the long span of earlier centuries when Christian people lived together in ecclesiastical communion" (19). It recognized that the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as a means of salvation (3). The Council encouraged Catholics to work for the reunion of all Christians through ecumenical dialogue, a disavowal of prejudices, and co-operation on projects of mutual concern. Instead of repeating the polemical accusations that charged Protestant Christians with the sin of separation, the Council acknowledged them as "separated brethren" *(fratres seiuncti),* justified by their faith through baptism, who reverence the written Word of God, share in the life of grace, receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit, celebrate Christs death and resurrection when they gather for the Lords Supper, and witness to Christ through the moral uprightness of their lives, through their works of charity, and their efforts for justice and peace in the world.

60. During the years since Vatican II, this process of reconciliation has been carried on in different ways and at various levels — local, national, regional, international. For example, Reformed and Roman Catholics have prayed together, have been involved in theological dialogue at various levels; they have joined in producing bible translations; they have collaborated on a variety of projects of social concern, economic justice and political witness. At the international level, the efforts of the dialogue co-sponsored by the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches were recognised by Pope John Paul II in a letter to Dr. James McCord, President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, on the occasion of its General Council in Ottawa, in July, 1982:

> The wav upon which we have embarked together is without return, we can only move forward, that is why we strive to manifest unity more perfectly and more visibly, just as God wants it for all those who believe in him. (Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, *Information Sendee,* 51 (1983) p. 30).

61. In the scholarly world, these efforts at reconciliation have been accompanied by new interpretations of Reformation history and theology. For example, Roman Catholic theologians today generally acknowledge that many of the issues raised by the Reformers urgently needed to be faced and resolved. Similarly, Roman Catholic historians, while not agreeing with all aspects of their thought, have become more sympathetic to Zwingli and to Calvin, no longer seeing them chiefly as rebels against ecclesial authority, but as reformers who felt obliged by their understanding of the Gospel to continue their efforts to reform the Church at all costs. The "zeal that animated these two outstanding religious personalities of Swiss history" was favorably noted by Pope John Paul II on the occasion of his pastoral visit to the Catholic Church of Switzerland in 1984:

> The legacy of the thought and ethical convictions particular to each of these two men continues to be forcefully and dynamically present in various parts of Christianity. On the one hand, we cannot forget that the work of their reform remains a permanent challenge among us and makes our ecclesiastical division always present; but on the other hand, no one can deny that elements of the theology and spirituality of each of them maintain deep ties between us. (Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, *Information Service* 55 (1984) p. 47).

1.4. Conclusion

62. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, these reviews of our respective histories, even when sketched so briefly, have shown us "whence we have come", so that we can better understand where we are — so that we can better understand what yet needs to be done in reassessing our past. We see more clearly how our respective self-understandings have been so largely formed by confessional historiographies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These differing self-interpretations have, in turn, fostered the establishment of whole sets of different values, symbols, assumptions and institutions — in a word, different religious and ecclesial cultures. The result is that today, as in the past, the same words, even the same biblical expressions, are sometimes received and understood by us in quite different ways.

63. The very recognition that this is the case marks important progress in our attempt to rid our memories of significant resentments and misconceptions. We need to set ourselves more diligently, however, to the task of reconciling these memories, bv writing together the story of what happened in the sixteenth century, with attention not only to the clash of convictions over doctrine and church order, but with attention also as to how in the aftermath our two churches articulated their respective understandings into institutions, culture and the daily lives of believers. But, above all, for the ways in which our divisions have caused a scandal, and been an obstacle to the preaching of the Gospel, we need to ask forgiveness of Christ and of each other.

Chapter 2

OUR COMMON CONFESSION OF FAITH

2.1. Our Lord Jesus Christ: The only Mediator between God and Humankind

64. Before moving on to matters which are still points of disagreement and divergence between our churches, we as a Dialogue Commission propose to confess together our faith in Christ. We give this affirmation of faith the title "confession" even though it is neither a confession in the ecclesial sense nor a complete statement of faith. We do so because we are convinced that the importance of what we are able to say together merits such a title.

65. We make this confession of faith, wishing to manifest publicly our desire to re-examine the reasons which brought about our separation in the past and to assess whether or not they are still of such a nature as to justify our division. Jesus Christ, in whose name our forbears separated themselves from one another, is also the one who unites us in a community of forgiveness and of kinship. We wish to voice our conviction that what unites us as Christians is more important, more essential, than that which separates us as Roman Catholics and Reformed. Even if full communion is not yet granted us, we cannot define our relations to each other simply in terms of separation and division.

66. We make this confession, moreover, mindful of this world of ours, so as to give common witness before it. With respect for all who seek God. however God is named for them, or even if for them God cannot as yet be named, we wish to speak the Good News of salvation brought in Jesus Christ by God seeking out humankind. In that Good News we Christians already find our reconciliation and the strength to work for the fuller reconciliation of all with God and with each other.

67. This confession involves on our part the recognition of the authority of the Scriptures, as these have been identified by the early church, to whose teaching we desire to remain obedient. We recall what was said on this subject in the report of the first phase of our dialogue *(The Presence of Christ in Church and World,* 25-33). In the same way we recognize together in the teaching of the ancient Church, the force of a *norma normata,* i.e., an authority which is subject to the authority of the Scripture, and we desire to maintain that teaching in its purity. The teaching of the Church ought to be an authentic explanation of the Trinitarian and christological affirmations of the

early confessions of faith and the early councils (cf. on this subject, PCCW, 34-38).

2.1.1. *Christ, Mediator and Reconciler*

68. Before all humankind, our sisters and brothers, we announce the death of the Lord (cf. 1 *Cor* 11: 26) and proclaim his resurrection from the dead (cf. *Rom* 10:9; *Acts* 2:32; 3:15). In that mystery of death and resurrection we confess the event which saves humanity, that is, liberates it from the distress in which it is imprisoned by sin and establishes it in communion of life with God. That event reveals *who God is, who we are and who Christ is* as meditator between God and humankind.

69. *a)* God is the One who "chose us (in Christ) before the foundation of the world... He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ" *(Eph* 1:4-5), * a God of tenderness and mercy, who wills not the death of the sinner, but rather that the sinner should be converted and live. God is the One who has loved us unto death: indeed, in the person of Jesus Christ, God himself died on the Cross for, "in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself" (2 *Cor* 5:19). But this was not the “death of God" proclaimed in recent times: it was the death of the Just One fallen into the hands of evil persons, and faithful to his mission to the end. Jesus died a death which is a victory over the death which touches all. God’s omnipotence is revealed in the deepest weakness of human nature, assumed in solidarity with us. If the death of Jesus is the work of sinners, God from all eternity has made it one with the design of salvation, accomplishing that life giving work by raising Jesus from the dead. Placed at the heart of human violence, Jesus by his love has transformed the work of death into the work of life.

b) The death and resurrection of Jesus also reveal to us who we are: not merely creatures who are object of God’s benevolence, but also human beings capable of sin, historically imprisoned in the bonds of a sin which is our curse. From the beginning we hid ourselves from God, and this is why God is hidden from us. Il is not that God is distant and inaccessible, but that we reject the God who is loo near and too explicit. This awareness of alienation and exile in the midst of faith we call sin. We recognise that there is a betrayal of God's trust in us and that Gods heart is saddened by our separation. From this condition we cannot free ourselves by our own strength. This is why the need and expectation of a mediator are central to the Old Covenant, where the law, sacrifices, prophecies, wisdom are wavs of mediating between a living God and a humanity subject to sin and death. But none of these paths fully reach the goal. Because of sin, the law intended for life judges, condemns and leads to death. Substitute sacrifices are endlessly repeated. Prophecies lag, bide their time, fall silent. Wisdom remains an ideal. In Jesus, the unique mediator, in his death and resurrection, we are radically freed from this situation: the way of true life is opened to us anew.

c) The death and resurrection of Jesus finally reveal who Jesus himself is, the one mediator between God and humanity, that is, the One who comes to reconcile us with God. This is why we accept together the confession of faith of the New Testament. “For there is one God, and there is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all" (1 *Tim* 2:5-6). We confess that "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" *(Acts* 4:12).

70. Mediation and reconciliation have been embodied and located, named and personified in Jesus of Nazareth — whence it was thought at that time nothing good could come —, condemned and executed at Jerusalem — which God has since David's time identified as the place of God's peace —, resurrected by the power of God and placed at God’s right hand. This is the news, still surprising and overwhelming, which constitutes the Gospel; of this the Church is the beneficiary and the herald.

71. We therefore confess together that Christ, established as Mediator, achieves our reconciliation in all its dimensions: God reconciling humanity, human beings reconciled with each other; and humanity reconciled with God.

— On the one hand, indeed, in and through Jesus Christ we have reconciliation with God. For "every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" *(Jas* 1:17). For “all this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself..." (2 *Cor* 5:18); "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses" *(Eph* 1:7).

— On the other hand, in and through Jesus Christ, we have reconciliation among ourselves, “For he is our peace, who has made us both one". In his flesh he “has broken down the dividing wall of hostility... that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near" *(Eph* 2:14-17). The vertical and horizontal dimensions of reconciliation are interdependent: just as hostility is the consequence and sign of separation from God, so

* Biblical Quotations are taken brom the Common Bible: the *Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version, containing the Old and New Testaments with the Apocrypha /Deuterocanonical Books: An Ecumenical Edition,* New York, Glasgow, London. Toronto, Sydney, Auckland: Collins: 1973.

reconciliation in peace among human beings is the fruit and sign of reconciliation with God. From Christ wc receive the gift of recon- ciliation which aims to extend to all. To this we witness together in faith.

— Finally, thanks to Jesus Christ, Jews and Gentiles "both have access in one Spirit to the Father" *(Eph* 2:18). In and through Christ we can offer ourselves "as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is ... spiritual worship"

12:1). For he "gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" *(Eph* 5:2). Jesus, the Christ, marks the end of condemnation bv the law, because he is "...our righteousness and sanctification and redemption " (1 *Cor* 1:30); he marks the end of the sacrifices of the law because "he entered once for all into the holy place, taking... his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption " *(Heb* 9:12); Christ marks the end of waiting on prophecies because he fulfils all that was written of him "...in the Law of Moses, and the prophets and the psalms " (cf. *Lk* 24:44); Christ marks the end of the anonymity of wisdom, for he himself is the "wisdom of God" *(1 Cor* 1:24).

72. Wc confess together that just as God is unique, the Mediator and Reconciler between God and humankind is unique and that the fullness of reconciliation is entire and perfect in him. Nothing and nobody could replace or duplicate, complete or in any way add to the unique mediation accomplished "once for all" *(Heb* 9:12) by Christ, "mediator of a new covenant" *(Heb* 9:15; cf. 8:6 and 12:24). This mediation is still present and active in the person of the risen Christ who "is able for all lime to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them" (*Heb* 7:25).

2.1.2. *The Work of Christ Reveals That He is the Son Within the Trinity*

73. In his life and in his death Jesus is revealed as the Son par excellence of God, the One who alone knows the Father and whom the Father alone knows (cf. *Mt* 1 1:27), who can address himself to God saying "Abba, Father" *(Mk* 14:36). Thus in the light of Jesus' resurrection and exaltation Christians have confessed that he has been made Christ and Lord (cf. *Acts* 2:36) and that he is the one to whom are applied the words of the Psalm: "Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee" *(Acts* 13:33; cf. *Heb* 1:5). He is, then, this One whom God has sent us (cf. *Gal* 4:4); he who "though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross" *(Phil* 2:6-8). This is why with the Church of every age, we confess Jesus Christ as at once true God and true human being, at once one with God and joined in solidarity with humankind, not an intermediary between God and humanity but a genuine Mediator, able to bring together God and humanity in immediate communion. His reconciling mediation opens up for us a vision of his mediation in creation: he is "the first-born of all creation; for in him al J things were created, in heaven and on earth... all things were created through him and for him" *(Col* 1:15-16). He is the Word and "all things were made through him" *(Jn* 1:3). The mediation of Christ has thus a cosmic universality: it is directed towards the transformation of our world in God.

74. Finally, the work of Jesus, the Son, reveals to us the role of the Spirit of God who is common to him and to the Father: it reveals to us that God is Triune.

75. The Holy Spirit is present and active throughout the history of salvation. In the life of Jesus the Spirit intervenes at all the decisive moments: Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit (cf. *Lk* 1:35; *Mt* 1:20); the Spirit descended on him at his baptism *(Lk 3:22);* he was filled with the Holy Spirit *(Lk* 4:1); he accomplished his ministry with the power of the Spirit *(Lk* 4:14). He proclaimed that the prophecy of the book of Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me" (61:1) was fulfilled in him *(Lk* 4:17-21). He rejoiced in the Holy Spirit *(Lk* 10,21). No one had ever possessed the Spirit as he did, "not by measure" *(Jn* 3:34). Still more, it is he who promises to send the Spirit *(Jn* 14:26; 16:7) and invokes the Spirit on his own disciples after the resurrection *(Jn* 20:22), because his death had been an act of "giving up" the Spirit to God and at the same time an act of "transmission of the Spirit" *(Jn* 19:30). In turn God raises him up and gives him the Spirit, so that he might spread the Spirit among us (cf. *Acts* 2:32-33). By the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the Holy Spirit becomes the common gift of the Father and the Son to humanity.

76. Just as the Spirit came upon Jesus at the moment of his baptism, so the Spirit descends upon the disciples gathered in the upper room *(Acts* 2:1-12) and on the Gentiles who listen to the word *(Acts* 10:44-48). These three closely-linked "Pentecosts" belong to the foundation of the Church and make it the "Temple of the Spirit". Thus the design pursued from the beginning by God the Creator and Saviour — to bring into being a people — is accomplished.

2.2. JUSTIFICATION BY GRACE, THROUGH FAITH

77. Because we believe in Christ, the one Mediator between God and humankind, we believe that we are justified by the grace which comes from him, by means of faith which is a

living and life-giving faith. Wc recognize that our justification is a totally gratuitous work accomplished by God in Christ. Wc confess that the acceptance in faith of justification is itself a gift of grace. By the grace of faith we recognize in Jesus of Nazareth, established Christ and Lord by his resurrection, the one who saves us and brings us into communion of life with God. To rely for salvation on anything other than faith, would be to diminish the fullness accomplished and offered in Jesus Christ. Rather than completing the Gospel, it would weaken it.

78. To speak in this W'ay of our justification and reconciliation with God is to sav that faith is above all a reception *(Roni* 5:1-2): it is received and in turn it gives thanks for grace. The raising to life, by God alone, of Jesus Christ, put to death by all, is the eschatological event which defines faith as reception of a gift of God, not as any human work *(Eph* 2:8-10). We receive from Christ our justification, that is our pardon, our liberation, our life with God. Bv faith, we are liberated from our presumption that we can somehow save ourselves; by faith, we are comforted in spite of our terror of losing ourselves. We arc set at liberty to open ourselves to the sanctification which God wills for us.

79. The person justified by the free gift of faith, i.e. by a faith embraced with a freedom restored to its fullness, can henceforth live according to righteousness. The person who has received grace is called to bear fruits worthy of that grace. Justification makes him or her an "heir of God, co-heir with Christ" *(Rom* 8:17). The one who has freely received is committed to gratitude and service. This is not a new form of bondage but a new way forward. And so, justification by faith brings with it the gift of sanctification, which can grow continuously as it creates life, justice and liberty. Jesus Christ, the one mediator between God and humankind, is also the unique way which leads toward pleasing God. Faith receives freely and bears testimony actively, as it works itself out through love *(Gal* 5:6).

2.3. THE CALLING OF THE CHURCH: ITS ROLE. IN JUSTIFICATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

80. Together w'e confess the Church, for there is no justification in isolation. All justification takes place in the community of believers, or is ordered toward the gathering of such a community. Fundamental for us all is the presence of Christ in the Church, considered simultaneously as both a reality of grace and a concrete community in time and space. Christ himself acts in the Church in the proclamation of the Word, in the celebration of the sacraments, in prayer and in intercession for the world. This presence and this action are enabled and empowered by the Spirit, by whom Christ calls to unite human beings to himself, to express his reality through them, to associate them in the mystery of his self-offering for them.

81. The Church's calling is set within the triune God's eternal plan of salvation for humankind. In this sense, the Church is already present at creation *(Col* 1:15-18). It is present in the history of humankind: "the Church from Abel", as it was called in the ancient Church. It is also present at the Covenant declared to Abraham, from which the chosen people w'ould come. Even more, the Church is present at the establishment of the People of the covenant. Through the law and the prophets, God calls this people and prepares them for a communion which will be accomplished at the sending of Emmanuel, "God with us" (cf. *Mt* 1:23). The novelty introduced by the incarnation of the Word does not call into question the continuity of the history of salvation. Nor does it call into question the significance of the interventions of that same Word and Spirit in the course of the Old Testament revelation. For God has not rejected this people *(Rom* 11:1). The continued existence of the chosen people is an integral part of the history of salvation.

82. Nevertheless we believe that the coming of Christ, the Word incarnate, brings with it a radical change in the situation of the world in the sight of God. Henceforth the divine gift which God has made in Jesus Christ is irreversible and definitive. On God's side, salvation is accomplished and is offered to all. The presence of God has become inward among believers *(Jer* 31:33; *Ezek* 36:26) in a new fashion, by the Holy Spirit which conforms them to the image of Jesus Christ. At the same time, Gods presence becomes universal; it is not limited to one people but is offered to all humanity called to be gathered together by Christ in the Spirit.

83. This is why wc believe that the people of God gathered together by the death and resurrection of Christ does not live solely by the promise. Henceforth it lives also by the gift already received through the mystery of the event of Jesus, Christ and Lord, who has sent his Spirit. We therefore con1ess Jesus Christ as the founda- tion of the Church (1 *Cor* 3:11).

84. The inauguration of the Church takes place in time and in stages related to the unfolding of the Christ-event. These stages, closely related as they are, are three in number:

a) There is, first, the missionary activity of Jesus "in the days of his flesh" *(Heb* 5:7): his preaching of the Kingdom, w'hich presupposes the promises of the Old Testament, and his mighty works; the invitation to believe in him and the call to conversion addressed to all; the gathering of the disciples, men and women *(Lk* 8:1-3)

and the appointment of the group of Twelve *(Mk* 3:13-19); the change of Simon's name to Peter *(Mi* 16:18) and the role which is assigned to him in the circle of the disciples *(Lk* 22:31-32).

b) The second stage is Jesus' celebration of the Last Supper with these same disciples as a memorial (*Lk* 22:14-20) of the giving of his life for all; his death on the Cross, by which he accomplished the salvation of all *(Jn* 12:32);the resurrection of Jesus which gathers the scattered community of the disciples. The risen Christ for forty days leads his followers into a forty days leads his followers into a more more profound faith *(Acts* 1:2-3);in leaving them he gives them the command to baptise *(Mt* 28:18), to preach repentance and forgiveness, and to bear witness to him *(Lk* 24:47-48).

c) The third stage is the sending of the Spirit upon the community of one hundred and twenty gathered on the day of Pentecost *(Acts* 2, 2-4). The disciples are sent out to Israelites and to Gentiles, as is shown by the gift of the Spirit to the Gentiles *(Acts* 10:44) which may be called a "new Pentecost". Thus the Church is founded once for all, fully constituted and equipped for its universal vocation in the world and for its eschatological destiny. This gift of the Spirit is the firstfruits. The Spirit's work of renewal and gathering will be fully achieved and manifested only when Christ returns in glory.

85. The Church is called into being as a community of men and women to share in the salvific activity of Christ Jesus. He has reconciled them to God, freed them from sin and redeemed them from evil. 'They are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" *(Rom* 3:24).

86. The justification of Jesus' disciples, sinful individuals freely justified bv grace without any merit on their part, has been one of the constitutive experiences of the Christian faith since the foundation of the Church. Justification by grace through faith is given us in the Church. This is not to say that the Church exercises a mediation complementary to that of Christ, or that it is clothed with a power independent of the gift of grace. The Church is at once the place, the instrument, and the minister chosen by God to make heard Christs word and to celebrate the sacraments in God's name throughout the centuries. When the Church faithfully preaches the word of salvation and celebrates the sacraments, obeying the command of the Lord and invoking the power of the Spirit, it is sure of being heard, for it carries out in its ministry the action of Christ himself.

87. The ministerial and instrumental role of the Church in the proclamation of the Gospel and in the celebration of the sacraments in no way infringes the sovereign liberty God. If God chooses to act through the Church for the salvation of believers, this does not restrict saving grace to these means. The sovereign freedom of God can always call anyone to salvation independently of such actions. But it is true to say that Gods call is always related to the Church, in that God's call always has as its purpose the building up of the Church which is the Bodv of Christ *(1 Cor* 12:27-*28; Eph* 1:22-23) (cf. N. 101).

88. This common confession of the Church, of its vocation and of its role in justification by grace through faith, provides a positive context for a study of some of the questions which still divide us in our respective understandings of the relationship between Christ's Gospel and the Church as a community existing in the world.

CHAPTER 3

THE CHURCH WE CONFESS AND OUR DIVISIONS IN HISTORY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

89. The difficulties which still separate our communions arise largely from our different understandings of the relationship between that which we confess, on the one hand, concerning the origin and the vocation of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church in God's plan of salvation and, on the other hand, the forms of its historical existence. Our two communions regard themselves as belonging to the Una Sancta, but differ in their understanding of that belonging.

90. In addressing this subject, we must move beyond comparative ecclesiology. Our method requires us both to say what we can together and to recognize without ambiguity that which cannot yet be the object of consensus.

91. This implies a double challenge. There are, first, *differences* of perspective such that we find in the position of the partner a complementary point of view or a different accent on a single commonly held truth. In opening ourselves to the partner's critique we can learn to express our own views in a more balanced way and perhaps find a common frame of reference for understanding each other.

92. Secondly, however, some of our positions seem simply to *diverge.* They appear mutually incompatible or incommensurable. That leaves us, for the present at least, with no choice but to agree to disagree, while seeking clarity about the nature of our disagreements. We find, among other things, that we disagree about what issues are serious enough to be church-dividing. Questions which, from the Roman Catholic side, arc obstacles to full communion arc not necessarily so from the perspective of the Reformed, and vice-vcrsa. This does not dispense us from the responsibility of searching for reconciliation across even the most apparently insurmountable barriers. In the meantime we respect each other, and we are grateful for the measure of community that is possible between us.

93. In this Report we do not treat the whole range of ecclesiological issues. We prefer to highlight three particular arenas of discussion because of what is at stake in them and because of the light they can cast on the way to a fuller consensus. We shall deal, first, with two conceptions of the Church which, though different, we consider potentially complementary. We then deal with two areas of apparent divergence or incompatibility: our views of continuity and discontinuity in Church history, and of the Church's visibility and ministerial order.

3.2. TWO CONCEPTIONS OF THE CHURCH

94. We have already affirmed the ministerial and instrumental role of the Church in the proclamation of the Gospel and the celebration of the sacraments (NN. 85-86). Word and sacrament alike are of the very nature of the Church. They also provide us with two different conceptions for understanding the Church and the way in which it fulfils its ministerial and instrumental role, the first, more "Reformed", the second, more " Roman Catholic".

3.2.1. *The Church as "Creatura Verbi"*

95. The Church existing as a community in history has been understood and described in the Reformed tradition as *creatura verbi,* as "the creation of the Word". God is eternally Word as well as Spirit; bv Gods Word and Spirit all things were created; reconciliation and renewal are the work of the same God, by the same Word and Spirit.

96. God's Word in history has taken a threefold form. Primarily it is the Word made flesh: Jesus Christ, incarnate, crucified and risen. Then it is the Word as spoken in God's history with God's people and recorded in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as testimony to Jesus Christ. Third, it is the Word as heard and proclaimed in the preaching, witness and action of the Church. The third form depends upon and is bound to the second, through which it has access to the first, the Word incarnate in Jesus Christ. This is why the Reformed tradition has insisted so emphatically that the preaching, teaching, and witness of the Church through the centuries — the Church's dogma and tradition — are always to be subordinated to the testimony of the Bible, that Scripture rather than Tradition is "the word of God written" and "the only infallible rule of faith and practice". Scripture is the control by which the Church's proclamation must be governed if that proclamation is to witness authentically to Gods Word in Jesus Christ and to be "the Word proclaimed". For the Word of God is one consistent word: The Word of judgement and mercy, the Gospel of reconciliation, the announcing of the Reign of God. It is a Word alive as Jesus Christ himself is alive: it is a Word calling to be heard, answered and reechoed; it is a Word claiming response, obedience and commitment as the Word of grace which evokes and empowers authentic faith.

97. The Church depends upon this word — the Word incarnate, the Word written, the Word preached — in at least three ways.

— the Church is founded upon the Word of God

— the Church is kept in being as the Church by the Word of God

— the Church continually depends upon the Word of God for its inspiration, strength and renewal.

98. In each of these aspects, the Word and Spirit of God work together, for it is the power of the Spirit that enables the hearing of the Word and the response of faith. The Word and Spirit of God together establish, preserve and guide the community of the Church in and through human history. The Church, like faith itself, is brought into being by the hearing of God's Word in the power of God's Spirit; it lives *ex auditu,* by hearing.

99. This emphasis upon hearing the Word of God has been of central importance in Reformed theology since the 16°' century'. This is why the Reformed have stressed "the true preaching of the Word" together with "the right dispensing of the sacraments according to the institution of Jesus Christ" as a decisive "mark of the true Church". Behind this emphasis lies a keen awareness of the way in which the Old Testament proclaimed "the Word of the Lord", of the New Testament recognition of Jesus Christ as "the Word who was in the beginning with God" — and of the new sense in the 16" century that the Bible is a living, contemporary Word with which the Church's leaching and order, as these had come to develop, were by no means always in harmony. Against the appeal to continuity, custom and institution, the Reformed appealed to the living

voice of the living God as the essential and decisive factor by which the Church must live, if it will live at all: the Church, as *creatura verbi.*

100. Thus far, our exposition has been relatively traditional and familiar. But despite the intended organic relationship between Word and Church, the Reformed tradition has not always held it steadily in view. It has sometimes inclined to verbalism, to the reduction of the Gospel to doctrine, of the divine Word incarnate in Jesus Christ to theological theory. Proclamation of the Word has been seen simply as an external mark of the Church rather than intrinsic to it; the Church itself regarded more as the place where Scripture is interpreted than as a community living from the Word. Such understandings fall short of the full meaning of *creatura verbi* as describing the nature and calling of the Church.

101. The Church is the creation of the Word because the Word itself is Gods creative Word of grace by which we are justified and renewed. The Church is the human community shaped and ruled by that grace; it is the community of grace, called to let "this mind be among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus..." *(Phil* 2:5). The community of faith is thus not merely the community in which the gospel is preached; by its hearing and responding to the Word of grace, the community itself becomes a medium of confession, its faith a "sign" or "token" to the world; it is itself a part of the world transformed by being addressed and renewed by the Word of God.

3.2.2. *The Church as "Sacrament of Grace "*

102. Even before Vatican II, many Roman Catholic theologians described the Church as a "sacrament", because this term is associated with the biblical term "mystery". Such a sacramental description highlights the comparison between what the Church is and what is enacted in the celebration of the sacraments. The adoption of this term bv the Second Vatican Council *(Lumen Gentium* I, I) for speaking of the Church has made this usage almost a commonplace in Roman Catholic thought.

103. The Second Vatican Council described the Church, because of its relationship with Christ, as "a kind of sacrament, or sign of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all humankind" *(Lumen Gentium* 1). The Church is described as the "universal sacrament of salvation" *(Lumen Gentium* 48; *Gaudium el Spes* 45; *Ad Gentes* 1), the "visible sacrament of this saving unity" *(Lumen Gentium* 9), the "wondrous sacrament" *(Sacrosanctum Concilium* 5). In some cases the conciliar text indicates the deep roots of this conception of the Church in patristic thinking, by referring to some expressions of Cyprian who speaks of ecclesial unity as a sacrament *(LG* 9 and *SC* 26). It then directly applies these formulas to the Church in extending the dynamic of their meaning. At the same time, it refers to a prayer in the Roman Missal before the restoration of Holy Week, which affirms that "from the side of Christ on the cross there came forth the wondrous sacrament which is the whole Church " *(SC* 5).

104. The application of the category "sacrament" to the Church is doubly analogical. On the one hand, it is analogical w'ith regard to its application to Christ. Christ, indeed, is the primordial sacrament of God in that the Logos became flesh, assuming our humanity. Jesus is the full revelation of grace (cf. *Jn* 1:14) and " the image of the invisible God" *(Col* 1:15), the one who has become "the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him" *(Heb* 5:9). That is why Paul proclaims "the mystery of Christ" *(Col* 4:3). Later on, Augustine, for whom the terms "mystery" and "sacrament" are practically equivalent, writes: "There is no other mystery of God than Christ" *(P.L.* 845). For Saint Thomas the orignal sacraments of our salvation are the "mysteries of the flesh of Christ", in particular, the passion and the resurrection of Christ arc sacraments by reason of their double character of being exemplary sign as well as instrumental and effective cause (cf. *Comp. Theol.* 239; S. *Theol.* III^{a}, Q. 62, art. 5 and primum). Luther made his own this traditional interpretation of Christ: "The Holy Scriptures know only one sacrament, which in Christ the Lord himself" *(Disputatio de fide infusa et acquisita* de 1520 , 18 ; Weimar edition , 6, p. 86). All language concern- ing the sacramentality of the Church, then, must respect the absolute Lordship of Christ over the Church and the sacraments . Christ is the unique foundational sacrament, that is to say, the active and original power of the whole economy of salvation visibly manifested in our world. The Church is a sacrament by the gift of Christ, be- cause it is given to it to be the sign and instru- ment of Christ.

105. In the New Testament the term "mystery" is not directly applied to the Church, although Ephesians 5:32 applies this term to Genesis 2:24 and relates that verse to the relationship between Christ and the Church (and the Latin Vulgate translated "mysterium" as " sacramentum "). The Church then is only a sacrament founded by Christ and entirely dependent on him. Its being and its sacramental acts are the fruit of a free gift received from Christ, a gift in relation to which he remains radically transcendent, but which, however, he commits to the salvation of humankind. That is why, according to the Second Vatican Council, "It is not a vain analogy to compare the Church with the mistery of the Word Incarnate", for its one complex reality is "constituted from both a human aspect and a divine aspect" *(LG* 8). This analogy should not make us forget the radical difference

which remains between Christ and the Church. In particular, the Church is only the spouse and the body of Christ through the gift of the Spirit.

106. On the other hand, the Church is called a sacrament by analogy to the liturgies of Baptism and the Eucharist, which the Greek fathers called "the mysteries", in a sense already analogous to the Pauline *mysterion.* The sacraments arc the gestures and the words which Christ has confided to his Church and to which he has linked the promise of grace bv the gift of his Spirit.

107. In the Church as "sacrament", "a bridge is built between the visible face of creation and the design of God realised in the Covenant" (cf. Groupe des Dombes, *L'Esprit Saint, l'Eglise et les Sacrements,* 23). Or, in a slightly different register, one can also call the Church a "living sign". The terms "sacrament" and "sign" imply coherence and continuity between diverse moments of the economy of salvation; they designate the Church at once as the place of presence and the place of distance; and they depict the Church as instrument and minister of the unique mediation of Christ. Of this unique mediation the Church is the servant, but never either its source or its mistress.

108. As Christ's mediation was carried out visibly in the mystery of his incarnation, life, death and resurrection, so the Church has also been established as visible sign and instrument of this unique mediation across lime and space. The Church is an instrument in Christs hands because it carries out, through the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments and the oversight of communities, a ministry entirely dependent on the Lord, just like a tool in the hand of a worker. So the New Testament describes the ministry of the Church as serving the ministry of Christ. Ministers are "Gods fellow workers" (1 *Cor* 3:9), "servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 *Cor* 4:1), " ministers of a new covenant " (2 *Cor* 3:6), " mini - sters of reconciliation " accomplished by Christ (Cf. 2 *Cor* 5:18) and , more generally "envoys" or "ambassadors for Christ" (2 *Cor* 5: 20).

109. The instrumental ministry of the Church is confided to sinful human beings. It can therefore be disfigured or atrophied, mishandled and exaggerated. But the reality of God's gift always transfigures human failure, and Gods fidelity to the Church continually maintains it, according to the promise *(Mt* 28:20) which sustains it in its mission of salvation across the ages.

110. The Church is thus constituted as a sacrament, an instrument of the unique mediation of Christ, a sign of the efficacious presence of that mediation. The Church is such in that it lives out of the Word, which has engendered it and which it proclaims, and to the extent that it is open and docile to the Spirit that dwells within it. The Paraclete maintains and continually renews the memory of Christ in the Church *(Jn* 14:26; 16:15) until the Savior comes again. This Paraclete accomplishes in the Church the ministry of liberty (2 *Cor* 3:17), of truth *(Jn* 16:13), of sanctification *(Rom* 8:12-13) and of transformation (2 *Cor* 3:18). In this wav, the Church is the bearer of the tradition of the Word, that, is, the sacrament of the Word of God; and bearer of transmission of salvation, that is, the sacrament of Christ and of the Spirit.

111. If the Church is seen in relation to its source, it may be described as the sacrament of God, of Christ, and of the Spirit — as a sacrament of grace. If it is seen in relation to its mission and calling, it may be called the sacrament of the kingdom, or the sacrament of salvation *(Lumen Gentium* 48): "like a sacrament, that is a sign and instrument of intimate union with God and of the unity of the entire human species" *(ibid.* 1).

3.2.3. *Questions and Reflections*

112. We are agreed in recognizing the radical dependence of the Church in receiving the transcendent gift which God makes to it and we recognize that gift as the basis of its activity of service for the salvation of humanity. But we do not yet understand the nature of this salutary activity in the same way. The Reformed commonly allege that Catholics appropriate to the Church the role proper to Christ. Roman Catholics, for their part, commonly accuse the Reformed of holding the Church apart from the work of salvation and of giving up the assurance that Christ is truly present and acting in his Church. Both these views are caricatures, but they can help to focus attention on genuine underlying differences of perspective of which the themes of *creatura verbi* and *sacramentum gratiae* serve as symbols.

113. The two conceptions, "the creation of the Word" and "sacrament of grace", can in fact be seen as expressing the same instrumental reality under different aspects, as complementary to each other or as two sides of the same coin. They can also become the poles of a creative tension between our churches. A particular point at which this tension becomes apparent is reached when it is asked how the questions of the continuity and order of the Church through the ages appear in the light of these two concepts.

3.3. The Contimjty of the Church Throughout the Ages

114. In what sense can it be said that the Church has remained one from generation to generation? This question is of immediate relevance for relations between the Reformed and Roman

Catholic churches because the events leading to the Reformation and resulting in division seem to imply a discontinuity in the life of the one Church.

3.3.1. *Gods Fidelity and Our Sinfulness*

115. Together we believe that God remains faithful to God's promise and never abandons the people he has called into being. "God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 *Cor* 1:9). Such is the ground of our conviction that the Church continues through the ages to carry out the mis- sion it has received until the end of time, because "the powers of death shall not prevail against it" *(Mt* 16:18). Through the Church, Christ who is present with us all days until the end of time (cf. *Mt* 28:20), leads us indefectibly to salvation.

1 16. The continuity of the Church has an origin: it is the sending of the apostles on a mission by Christ, a *sending* which makes them "apostles"; it has a purpose — the *mission,* "apostole", to make disciples of all the nations (cf. *Mt* 28:19). This is why the Church is of its essence apostolic and its ministry is within an apostolic succession. As was said in our preceding document, this succession "requires at once a historical continuity with the original apostles and a contemporary and graciously renewed action of the Holy Spirit " *(PCCW,* 101). Apostolicity is then a living reality which simultaneously keeps the Church in communion with its living source and allows it to renew its youth continually so as to reach the Kingdom.

117. God's fidelity is given to men and women who are part of a long history and who, moreover, are sinners. The Church's response to God's fidelity must be renewed to meet the challenges of various times and cultures. The Church is not worthy of its name if it is not a living and resourceful witness, concretely addressing peoples needs. This is also why the Church's continuity demands that it recognizes itself as *semper reformanda.* The sinfulness of humanity which affects not only members of the Church but also its institutions, is opposed to fidelity to God. If human sinfulness does not put the Church in check, it can nevertheless do grave harm to the Church's mission and witness. The constant need for reform in the Church is recognized. "Christ summons the Church, as it goes on its pilgrim way, to that continual reformation of which it always has need, insofar as it is an institution of human beings here one earth" *(Unitatis Redintegratio*, 6). The Church must then live within a constant dynamic of conversion.

3.3.2. *The Need for Reform and Renewal*

118. We acknowledge that at the time of the Reformation the Church was in urgent need of reform. We recognize that the various strivings for reform were in their profoundest inspiration signs of the work of the Holy Spirit. In the event of the Reformation, the Word of God played a role, that Word which is "living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit" *(Heb* 4:12). Not everything that happened can be attributed to the Word because in the division of the Western Church human sinfulness also played its part. Our common awareness of this summons us to "discern the spirits", i.e., to distinguish in this process the work of human sinfulness from the work of the Spirit. As Roman Catholics and Reformed, we should not seek to justify ourselves here. We must each assume responsibility for our own past and for that part of the sin which was our own.

119. But that is not all. If it is true that "in everything (even sin, one could say) God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose" *(Rom* 8:28), we must then recognize the mysterious design of God which moves toward its accomplishment in spite of our division. Our continual conversion to Christ should make us discover and understand the positive meaning of this event in the life of Christ's Church. It reminds us of the Church's dependence on Christ and the Spirit, who act in it and for it with sovereign liberty. It invites us to recognize new fruits of holiness. It involves us in a Christian striving that impels us to reconcile in our lives complementary aspects of the one Gospel. Reflection on the positive meaning of the Reformation, despite the division, concerns us all, because it is a major event in the history of the Church.

3.3.3. *Questions and Reflections*

120. Nonetheless, as things arc at present, divergences persist between us in our understanding of the continuity of the Church and its visibility. The Reformed churches give first consideration to continuity in the confession of faith and in the teaching of Gospel doctrine. It is in this sense that the Church remains apostolic and the ministers raised up in it by the Spirit form part of the apostolic succession. The Catholic Church, for its part, considers that this apostolicity of faith and preaching as well as that of the administration of the sacraments arc linked to a certain number of visible signs through which the Spirit works, in particular to the apostolic succession of bishops.

121. We both acknowledge the reality of tradition, but we do not give it the same weight. The Reformed see in Holy Scripture the sufficient witness of the Gospel message, a message that "constantly creates the understanding of itself afresh" *(PCCW,* 29) and is the locus of the immediate communication of the truth. This does not imply disregard for tradition as an expression of faithful

communion throughout the centuries. Catholics for their part regard Scripture as the *norma normans* of all doctrine of the faith, but they think that Scripture, the work of the living tradition of the apostolic generation, is in its turn read and interpreted in a living way in an act of uninterrupted transmission which constitutes the tradition of the Church throughout its history. The authority of this living tradition and of the magisterial decisions which mark it from time to time is founded on submission to the message of Scripture. In order to help the people of God be obedient to this message, the Church is led to make interpretative decisions about the meaning of the Gospel (cf. PCCW, 30. 32).

122. Further, we differ in our understanding of the nature of sin in the Church. Undoubtedly we both recognize that, whatever the effect of sin on persons and institutions, the holiness of the preaching of the Word and of the administration of the sacraments endures, because the gift of God to the Church is irrevocable. In this sense the Church is holy, for it is the instrument of that gift of holiness which comes from God. But the Reformed think that Gods fidelity is stronger than our infidelity, than the repeated "errors and resistances to the Word on the part of the Church" *(PCCW,* 42). Hence the Church can experience moments when despite the exemplary witness of individuals its true identity is obscured bv sin beyond recognition. This docs not mean that God abandons the Church, which, for the Reformed, continues in being always and until the end of time. On the Catholic side, it is thought that human sin, even if it goes so far as to mar greatly the signs and institutions of the Church, never nullifies its mission of grace and salvation and never falsifies essentially the proclamation of the truth, because God unfailingly guards the Church "which he has obtained with the blood of his own Son" *(Acts* 20:28). The times of the worst abuses were frequently times in which great sanctity flourished. In other words, we do not think in the same way about the relation of the Church to the Kingdom of God. The Reformed insist more on the promise of a " not-yetCatholics underline more the reality of a gift "already-there".

123. Accordingly, our respective interpretations of the division in the sixteenth century are not the same. The Reformed consider that the Reformation was a rupture with the Catholic "establishment" of the period. This establishment had become greatly corrupted and incapable of responding to an appeal for reform in the sense of a return to the purity of the Gospel and the holiness of the early Church. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the resulting division was a substantial rupture in the continuity of the Church. For Catholics, however, this break struck at the continuity of the tradition derived from the apostles and lived through many centuries. Insofar as the Reformed had broken with the ministerial structure handed down by tradition, they had deeply wounded the apostolicity of their churches. The severity of this judgment is moderated today because ecumenical contacts have made Catholics more aware of the features of authentic Christian identity preserved in those churches.

124. In the future, our dialogue will need to address such still often divisive questions as the following:

1. Considering the interpretation of our positions given above, what can Reformed and Roman Catholics now say *together* about the reform movements of the sixteenth century — the reasons behind them, the course they took, and the results that came about?
2. Recognizing (because of baptism and other ecclesial factors) that despite continuing divisions a real though imperfect communion already exists between Reformed and Roman Catholic Christians, what implications does this communion have for our understanding of the continuity of the Church?
3. To what extent can we together proclaim the Gospel in an idiom intelligible to our contemporaries, even if we differ in some ways in our understanding of the Apostolic faith?
4. How can we reconcile the freedom of the individual Christian in appropriating the Christian message with the responsibility of the Church for authoritatively teaching that message?

In the past, we have usually answered such questions from our separate ecclcsiological perspectives; in the future, we will need to work out a joint response in dialogue.

3.4. The Visibility and the Ministerial Order of the Church

125. The Reformed and Roman Catholic communions differ in a third way with respect to their understanding of the relation between Gospel and Church. Our divergence here has to do with the role of visible structure, particularly in relation to mission and ministry. We will look first at visibility and invisibility in the Church as such, and then at mission and ministerial order.

3.4.1. *The Church: Visible and Invisible*

126. In the past, Reformed churches have sometimes displayed a tendency not only to distinguish, but also to separate the invisible church, known to God alone, and the visible church, manifest in the world as a community gathered by the Word and Sacrament. In fact, such a distinction is not part of genuine Reformed teaching. We can affirm together the indissoluble link between the invisible and the visible. There exists but one Church of God. It is called into being by the risen Christ, forms "one body", is summoned to "one hope", and acknowledges

"One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all... '' *(Eph* 4:4-6). Christ, through his Spirit, has empowered this Church for a mission and a ministry in the world, and equipped it to call others to the same unity, hope and faith. From its earliest time, it has been provided through God's grace with ministerial means necessary and sufficient for the fulfilment of its mission.

127. The invisible church is the hidden side of the visible, earthly church. The Church is manifest to the world where it is called to share in the Kingdom of God as Gods chosen people. This visible/invisible Church is real as event and institution, wherever and whenever God calls men and women to service.

128. This visible/invisible Church lives in the world as a structured community. Gathered around Word and Sacraments, it is enabled to proclaim Gods Gospel of salvation to the world. Its visible structure is intended to enable the community to serve as an instrument of Christ for the salvation of the world. It thus bears witness to all human beings of the saving activity of God in Jesus Christ. This testimony of the visible/invisible Church often calls it to a confrontation with the world. In such testimony the Church sees itself summoned to praise and glorify God. In all its visible activity its goal is *Soli Deo gloria, ad maiorem Dei gloriam.*

129. We diverge, however, on the matter of the closer identification of the Church with its visible aspects and structure. Roman Catholics maintain that the Church of Christ "subsists" in the Roman Catholic Church *(Lumen Gentium* 8), a formulation adopted at the Second Vatican Council to avoid the exclusive identification of Christ's Church with it. They admit likewise that many "elements" or "attributes" of great value bv which the Church is constituted, are present in the "separated churches and communities" and that these last are "in no wav devoid of significance and value in the mystery of salvation" *(Unitatis Redintegratio* 3). The question is, therefore, to what degree they can recognize that the Church of Christ also exists in the Reformed churches. The Reformed for their part do not understand the Church as reducible to this or that community, hierarchy or institution. They claim to belong to the Church and recognize that others also do. Their chief difficulty is not in extending this recognition to the Roman Catholic Church, but the view that the Roman Catholic Church has of its special relation to the Church of Jesus Christ.

3.4.2. *Mission and Ministerial Order*

130. Catholics and Reformed agree that the order of the Church originates in the Gospel which the risen Christ charged his disciples to proclaim. In this perspective, it is given first in Word and Sacrament: "Go, therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" *(Mt* 28:19-20; cf. *Lk* 24:47-48; *Jn* 20:21b).

131. For those who follow Christ, the Word of God contained in Scripture and proclaimed, lived and interpreted in the Church, is the fundamental and inalienable point of reference for the Church's order. Scripture bears the Word of salvation by which faith is born. Faith leads to Baptism and it is nourished by the celebration of the Lords Supper, the Eucharist.

132. This mission which the risen Christ committed to the "eleven" *(Mt* 28:16) and from which the Church arose, implies that one should distinguish between those who announce the gospel ("you") and those to whom it is proclaimed ("make disciples"). It entails, moreover, a ministry of Word, Sacrament and oversight given by Christ to the Church to be carried out by some of its members for the good of all. This triple function of the ministry equips the Church for its mission in the world.

133. This ministerial order manifests itself above all in the ministry of the Word, i.e. in the preaching of the Gospel, "the word of God which you heard from us" (1 *Thess* 2:13; cf. 2 *Cor* 11:7), the announcing of repentance and forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus *(Lk* 24:47-48), and the proclaiming of him as the one anointed with the Spirit "to preach good news to the poor... to set at liberty those who arc oppressed" *(Lk* 4:18). He who was the preacher of God's Word par excel - lence has thus become the Preached One in the Word carried to the "ends of the earth" *(Acts* 1:8) by his chosen witnesses *(Acts* 10:41-42).

134. The ministerial order also finds expression in the ecclesial rites, traditionally called Sacraments. We believe that in them Christ himself acts through the Spirit among his people. The Church is ordered through Baptism, in which all who believe in Christ are not only washed and signed by the Triune God, but are "built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood" (1 *Pet* 2:5). Similarly, in the Lord's Supper, or the Eucharist, the community of faith, hope and love finds its rallying point: "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" *(1 Cor* 10:17). Such rites along with the Word of God are fruit - ful means of grace for those who believe, and by them the whole people of God is built up and nurtured.

135. This order is further manifest in the ministry of oversight *(episkope),* exercised by Church members for the fidelity, unity, harmony,

growth and discipline of the wayfaring people of God under Christ, who is "the Shepherd and Guardian *(episkopos)"* of all souls (1 *Pet* 2:25). Various " gifts", "services", and "activities", are inspired by God' s Spirit in the Church (1 *Cor* 12:4-6), but all members are called upon to be concerned for that same unity , harmony, and up- building of the Church.

136. Leadership in the New Testament took different forms at various times and places under diverse names (see e.g., *Acts* 1:20-25; 20:17; 28; 1*Cor* 12: 28; *Eph* 4:11-13; *Phil* 1:1; 1 *Tim* 3:1-13; 4:14; 5:3-22; *Tit* 1: 5-9). Paul often refers to him- self as the servant/slave of Jesus Christ". *(Rom* 1:1; *Gal* 1:10; *Phil* 1:1) and as such writes to churches that he has founded as one exercising authority in virtue of the Gospel that he preaches *(1 Thess* 2:9, 13; cf. 1 *Cor* 15:11: "Whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed"). Though we have no direct indication that the communities founded by Paul were presbyterally organized, but only the affirmation of *Acts* 14:23, where Paul, accordin to Luke, appoints presbyters "in every Church", Paul was at least aware of a structure of leadership in some communities to which he wrote: 1 *Thess* 5:12: "respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you"; *Phil* 1:1, greetings are sent to "all the saints in ...Philippi, with the overseers and deacons" *(syn episkopois kai diakonois).* From the various forms of leadership mentioned in the Pastorals there emerged a pattern of *episcopoi,* presbyters and deacons , which became established by the of the second century.

137. This pattern of leadership developed from some New Testament forms, w'hile other (even earlier) New Testament forms did not develop. The spread and theological interpretation of ecclesial leadership in the immediate post New' Testament period must be seen against the background of the wider development of the early Church and its articulation of the faith (see *1 Clem* 40-44, especially 42, 1-2, 4; 44, 1-2; Ignatius of Antioch, *Eph* 2, 1-5; *Magn* 2; Hippolvtus, *Apost. Trad.),* in the course of history some of the functions of such leaders underwent change; even so the ministry of bishops, presbyters and deacons became in the ancient Church the universal pattern of church leadership.

3.5. The Mutual Challenge

138. We have now explored and reflected upon three dimensions of the relation between Gospel and Church. Despite our agreements, there remain divergences between us which deserve further exploration and offer us new challenges.

139. First, on *the question of doctrinal authority in the Church,* the previous report, *The Presence of Christ in Church and World* (24-42), described our agreement concerning the view that wc in large measure share regarding Scripture and its canon. In this area, formerly contested matters have been substantially clarified. This document likewise has identified the core of what still separates us in the interpretation of Scripture, the authority of confessions of faith and of conciliar decisions, and the question o(the infallibility of the Church. These divergences still remain to this day. Among the remaining divergences, the following arc particularly important:

— Both sides emphasize the indefectible character of Spirit guided preaching and leaching that mirrors the Gospel and Holy Scripture. Roman Catholics relate that preaching and teaching to a God-given authority vested in the Church, which, in service to the Word of God in Scripture and Tradition, has been entrusted with authentically interpreting it, and which in distinct cases is assisted by the Holy Spirit to pronounce infallibly on matters of faith and morals. Reformed Christians refer such preaching and teaching ultimately to the supreme authority of the Word of God in Scripture as illuminated by the Holy Spirit.

140. Second, *on the question of the Sacramerits,* in spite of growing convergence, there still exists between us not only a disagreement concerning their number, but also a divergence in our understanding of "Sacrament" and of the competence of the one who ministers. Roman Catholics recognize seven Sacraments, according to the Council of Trent (DS 1601), though they give a major importance to Baptism and Eucharist and recognize in the Eucharist the centre of the sacramental life of the Church. The Reformed Churches recognize Baptism and the Lord's Supper as Sacraments in the ordinary sense, though also recognizing in the laying on of hands "an efficacious sign which initiates and confirms the believer in the ministry conferred" (PCCW, 98). Calvin himself did not object to calling ordination a Sacrament, but he did not count it on a level with Baptism and Eucharist because it was not intended for all Christians *(Institutes* IV: 19,28).

141. Third, the earlier document (PCCW, 98) provides *a common description of ordination,* putting in relief its double reference to the "historical and present action " of Jesus Christ and to "the continual operation of the Holy Spirit". Nevertheless, the nature of ordination still causes difficulty between us. Is the laying-on of hands a sending on a mission, a passing on of a power, or an incorporation into an order? (cf. *Ibid,* 108). On the other hand, can a defect in form put in question or invalidate the ministry as such - or can such a

defect be remedied "by reference to the faith of the Church?" *(ibid.).*

— One further difference concerning the ordained ministry cannot be ignored, especially today. In the Reformed churches as in many other Protestant communions it has become increasingly common in recent decades to ordain women without restriction to the ministry of Word and Sacrament.

142. Fourth, *on the question of how the authority of Christ must be exercised in the Church,* we are in accord that the structure of the ministry is essentially collegial (Compare: PCCW, 102). We agree on the need for *episkope* in the Church, on the local level (for pastoral care in each congregation), on the regional level (for the link of congregations among themselves), and on the universal level (for the guidance of the supranational communion of churches). There is disagreement between us about who is regarded as *episkopos* at these different levels and what is the function or role of the *episkopos.*

a) Catholics insist that the ordained ministry is a gift of God given to persons "set apart" (cf. *Rom* 1:1) in the community. By the sacrament of ordination the minister is united with Christ, the sole High Priest, in a new way which qualifies him to represent Christ in and for the community. The one ordained can act there "in persona Christi"; his ministry is an embassy in the name of Christ in the service of the Word of God (cf. *2 Cor* 3:5). Ordination to the priesthood qualifies one to represent the Church before God, in its offering to the Father through Christ in the Spirit. All of these aspects of this ministry are especially realized in the eucharistic celebration. The ordained ministry thus places the Church in total and current dependence on its unique Lord.

b) Likewise, for Catholics, at the heart of the ministry, ordained in the succession of the Apostles, stands the bishop who continues in the community the preaching of the apostolic faith and the celebration of the sacraments, either in his own right or through his collaborators, the priests and deacons. His role is also to develop a life of harmony within the community *(ho mo thymadon).* The bishop also represents his church before other local churches in the bosom of the universal communion. Charged to maintain and deepen the communion of all the churches among themselves, the bishops, with the Bishop of Rome who presides over the universal communion, form a "college". This "college" is seen as the continuation of the "college" of the apostles among whom Peter was the first. The Bishop of Rome, understood as the successor of Peter, is the prime member of this college and has the authority necessary for the fulfilment of his service on behalf of the unity of the whole Church in apostolic faith and life.

c) Reformed Churches also emphasize the importance of the ordained ministry of Word and Sacrament for the life of the Church (cf. *Eph* 4; 11-16). The Reformed understanding of the ministry is in general more "kerygmatic" than "priestly"; this corresponds to the awareness of the Word of God as the power by which the Church lives. Within this perspective, however, there is a valid sense in which the Reformed minister acts "in the person of Christ" — e.g. in preaching, in dispensing the sacraments, in pastoral care — and also represents the people, in articulating and leading their worship. For this reason Reformed churches approach the preparation and ordination of ministers with great care, emphasizing the need for a proper order and the laying-on of hands by duly ordained ministers.

d) The Reformed stress the collegial exercise of *episkope.* At the local level the responsibility lies with pastors, elders and/or deacons, with a very important role often played by the church meeting. At regional and national levels it is exercised collectively by synods. The same applies, in principle, to the universal level. The Reformed have never given up hope for a universal council based on the authority of the Scriptures. That hope has not yet materialized, though ecumenical world assemblies in our century are an important step towards its fulfilment.

e) The Reformed hold that the sixteenth century brought into being a new form of Church order based on Scripture and a practice of the ancient Church, adapted to the needs of a new situation. Reformed churches today still maintain that pattern and believe it to be legitimate and serviceable in the life of the Church. This does not exclude the possibility of further development in the ecumenical future of the Church.

143. Finally, *we have begun to come to terms with the particularly difficult issue of the structure of ministry required for communion in the universal Church.* The earlier report (PCCW) made allusion to it. Our discussion of the matter has shown how complex the issues involved are and how different the perspectives in which they are seen on both sides. As we pursue the dialogue on the Church's structure and ministry, this theme deserves closer attention.

144. As a programme for future dialogue we suggest the following questions:

— Our interpretations of Scripture are inextricably bound up with our ecclesiological convictions. With what hermeneutical and doctrinal perspectives do we approach the New Testament in the search for guidance on the ordering of the Church in the ecumenical future?

— What significance is there for the Church today in the role assigned to Peter in several central New Testament passages — and in the

way in which that role was interpreted in the ancient Church?

— What is the connexion between the ministry of leadership described in the New Testament (presidents, leaders, bishops, pastors) and in the ancient Church and (a) Roman Catholic bishops, (b) Reformed ministers of Word and Sacraments?

CHAPTER 4

THE WAY FORWARD

145. Our five years of dialogue have convinced us that a new situation now exists between the Roman Catholic Church and the Reformed Churches. It has become apparent that the two confessions share much in common and can, therefore, enter into a living relationship with each other. Encounters in many pails of the world have led to mutual openness and a new understanding. It has become clear that the two sides have much to sav to each other and also much to learn from each other.

146. The common ground that unites our churches is far greater than has usually been assumed. We start from the premise that God has already granted us unity in Christ. It is not for us to create unity, for in Christ it is already given for us. It will become visible in our midst as and when we turn to him in faith and obedience and we realize fully in our churches what he expects from us. We firmly believe that the unifying power of the Holy Spirit must prove stronger than all the separation that has occurred through our human sinfulness. This confirms our conviction that we must work for the ultimate goal of full communion in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship.

147. At the same time, however, our dialogue has shown that certain disagreements in understanding the relationship between the Gospel and the Church have not yet been overcome. It would therefore be unrealistic to suppose that the time has now come for declaring full communion between our churches.

148. But we do believe that the living relationship that has come into being between our churches makes possible a new way of dealing with these divergences. They should not be looked upon primarily as grounds for mutual exclusion, but should rather be seen as terrain for mutual challenge. In ecumenical encounter we can deepen our understanding and our obedience. We can discover in the other the gift of God.

149. "Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" *(Rom* 15:7). On the basis of this appeal of the Apostle Paul, we conclude that the Roman Catholic Church and the Reformed Churches should no longer oppose each other or even simply live side by side. Rather, despite their divergences, they should live for each other in order to be witnesses to Christ. Guided by this mission, they should open themselves to and for each other.

4.1. THE DIVERSITY OF SITUATIONS

150. In some countries, far-reaching agreement has already been achieved. Official dialogues have taken place and, as a general rule, these have led to results similar to those to be found in the present report. In some other countries the churches maintain close relationships and collaborate regularly, reacting together to important problems of public life. But there are also countries where their relations, even today, hardly go beyond occasional and individual contacts. The mistrust inherited from the past has not yet been overcome. Political situations and sociological factors often play an important part in this mistrust. In some places the Roman Catholic and Reformed Churches even find themselves on opposite sides of political conflict. In other places, closer relations arc made more difficult by the numerical size of the partners: whenever a large church finds itself faced with a small minority, a great deal of sensitivity and effort are needed if living relationships are to be established. In many places, the diversity of the Reformed Churches makes interconfessional dialogue and collaboration more complex.

151. We agree that initiatives should be taken to deepen Christian fellowship in each country. We are grateful for the convergences we have found in the dialogue at the international level and believe that these results can serve as a stimulus for the churches in each country. But the desired living relationship cannot be created only by an agreement at the international level. First, according to the Reformed understanding, each member church is responsible for its own confession, its life and its witness; consequently, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches has no binding authority over its member churches.

Secondly, we are convinced that the call for unity must always aim at concrete and lived communion. It is always addressed to “all in each place". But we do believe that the mutual understanding reached in international dialogue should serve as an encouragement to establish more active relations between our churches at the local level.

4.2. Steps Along the Way to Unity

152. We suggest that dialogues between local churches should keep in mind the following steps on the way to unity.

a) Our churches should give expression to mutual recognition of Baptism. In some countries, the Roman Catholic and Reformed Churches have already agreed to accept each other's Baptism fully and without reserve, provided that it has been celebrated in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and with the use of water. We believe that such agreements can and should be made in all places without delay. Such an agreement implies that under no circumstances can there be a repetition of baptism which look place in the other church. Mutual recognition of baptism is to be understood as an expression of the profound communion that Jesus Christ himself establishes among his disciples and which no human failure can ever destroy.

h) Though mutual recognition of Baptism is already possible today, we arc not yet in a position to celebrate the Eucharist or Lord's Supper together. Our different understandings of the relation between the Gospel and the Church also have consequences as regards admission to communion.

The Reformed Churches take the view that, precisely because Christ himself is the host at the table, the Church must not impose any obstacles. All those who have received baptism and love the Lord Jesus Christ are invited to the Lord’s Supper (see the declaration of the World Alliance, Princeton 1954).

The Roman Catholic Church, on the other hand, is convinced that the celebration of the Eucharist is of itself a profession of faith in which the whole Church recognizes and expresses itself. Sharing the Eucharist therefore presupposes agreement with the faith of the Church which celebrates the Eucharist.

This difference in the understanding of Eucharistic sharing must be respected bv both sides. Still, we recall and reaffirm the progress in our common understanding of the Eucharist that has already been made in the first phase of dialogue (PCCW , 67-92). Aspects of the common understanding were summarized in these words, which we repeat again here: "...we gratefully acknowledge that both traditions, Reformed and Roman Catholic, hold to the belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist; and both hold at least that the Eucharist is, among other things:

1) a memorial of the death and resurrection of the Lord;

2) a source of living communion with him in the power of the Spirit (hence the epiclesis in the liturgy), and

3) a source of the eschatological hope for his coming again ” (PCCW, 91).

c) In many countries there has been a rapid rise in the number of confessionallv mixed marriages in recent years. It is not therefore surprising that the problem of a more appropriate way of dealing with this new reality has cropped up time and again in the course of bilateral dialogues. We hold that confessionallv mixed marriages could be seen as an opportunity of encounter between the two traditions, even though some difficulties cannot be denied. We deem it to be important that the two churches should jointly exercise pastoral responsibility for those who live or grow up in confessionallv mixed marriages in a manner which supports the integrity of the conscience of each person and respects their rights. In this respect see also the report of the dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church, the Lutheran World Federation and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches *(The Theology of Marriage and the Problem of Mixed Marriages,* cf. N° 2 above).

4.3. Toward the Reconciliation or Memories

153. In Chapter 1 we tried together to understand our separated histories afresh. Beyond this lies a step not vet taken. From understanding each others memories we must move to a *reconciliation* of the memories of Roman Catholics with those of Reformed Christians, and vice versa. Shared memories, even if painful, may in time become a basis for new mutual bonding and a growing sense of shared identity.

154. This proposal has been made time and again by both Reformed and Roman Catholic authorities. Pope John Paul II formulated it in the following terms: "Remembrance of the events of the past must not restrict the freedom of our present efforts to eliminate the harm that has been triggered by these events. Coming to terms with these memories is one of the main elements of ecumenical progress. It leads to frank recognition of mutual injury and errors in the way the two communities reacted to each other, even though it was the intention of all concerned to bring the Church more into line with the will of the Lord" (Address to the members of the Swiss Evangelical Church Federation, 14 June 1984).

155. Chapter 1 shows how much has been accomplished in this direction. Mention should be

made, for example, of the efforts of Roman Catholic historians to produce a new interpretation of the great Reformers, especially John Calvin, or the attempt of the World Alliance to give a new' overtone to the memories of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. But much yet remains to be done.

156. As illustrations we choose the following:

a) The problem of interpreting the rupture caused bv the Reformation has already been touched on. In addition to the theological reflections already offered, serious historical research needs to be jointly undertaken.

b) We must tackle the problem of the condemnations that the Roman Catholic Church and the Reformed Churches pronounced against each other. The polemics between the churches found expression in mutual anathematizations, and these continue to make themselves felt today. One need only think, for example, of the condemnation of certain Roman Catholic teachings and practices in such Reformed confessions as the Heidelberg Catechism or the Westminster Confession, or the identification of doctrines condemned by the Council of Trent with certain of the teachings of the Reformers. Conscious efforts at theological and historical research will have to be made in order to distinguish the justified concerns of these declarations from the polemical distortions.

c) Particular attention should be paid to the way in which confessional separation was brought to the Americas, Africa, Asia and Oceania. Churches in these areas had no part in originating the separation. It was only through migration or missionary expansion that European divisions were transplanted to these continents. What in actual fact are the reasons for the separate existence of these churches today ? A careful historical analysis might well bring to light new factors of separation which have been added to the inherited confessional differences.

4.4. Common Witness in the World of Today

157. "Living for each other" as churches must also mean "bearing common witness". We take the view that the Roman Catholic Church and the Reformed Churches must make every effort to speak jointly to the men and women of today to whom God desires to communicate Christ's message of salvation.

158. Every opportunity for taking common stands with regard to contemporary issues should be taken and used. Our separation must not prevent us from expressing the agreement we have already achieved in our witnessing. For example, the Roman Catholic Church and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches are wholly agreed that every form of racism is contradictory to the Gospel and must therefore be rejected. In particular, they see apartheid as a system that the Christian Church must condemn if its evangelical credibility is not to be put into jeopardy.

159. Something very similar applies with regard to the witness of the churches on issues of justice, peace and the integrity of Gods creation. The most profound convictions of their faith oblige both churches to render decisive witness in these fields. They would imperil the integrity of their teaching if they failed to give it.

160. We also know, however, that challenges which call for common confession in our day and age also generate new divergences and divisions. These could stress and endanger our still fragile fellowship. It is therefore all the more important that we should continually listen anew together to what the Spirit is saying to the Church today: the Spirit who will lead us to the fullness of the truth.

4.5. What Kind of Unity Do We Seek?

161. Even though we are still far from being able to proclaim full communion, it is important for the relations between our churches that we should have an agreed vision of the ultimate goal that should guide our efforts. This is a question that needs further study. Various concepts of unity have been proposed and deserve attention. But we believe that serious consideration should be given in our Reformed Roman Catholic relationship, and in the ecumenical movement in general, to the description of the "unity we seek", as expressed by the Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Nairobi (1975). This text describes what is called "conciliar fellowship", and goes as follows:

"The one Church is to be envisioned as a conciliar fellowship of local churches which are themselves truly united".

"In this conciliar fellowship each local church possesses, in communion with the others, the fullness of catholicity, witnesses to the same apostolic faith and therefore recognizes the others as belonging to the same Church of Christ and guided by the same Spirit".

"As the New Delhi Assembly pointed out, they are bound together because they have received the same baptism and share in the same eucharist; they recognize each others members and ministries".

"They are one in their common commitment to confess the Gospel of Christ by proclamation and service to the world. To this end, each church aims at maintaining sustained and sustaining relationships with her sister churches, expressed in conciliar gatherings whenever required for the fulfilment of this common calling". (David M. Paton, Editor, *Breaking Barriers, Nairobi, 1975. The Official Report of the Fifth Assembly*

of the World Council of Churches, Nairobi, 23 November — 10 December , 1975 . London ; SPCK , and Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1976, p. 60.

162. We see in the Nairobi declaration a sketch of the way in which organic unity could be structured even at the universal level. The statement does not describe the present state of relations between the churches, but rather serves the purpose, without reference to conciliarist controversies of the past, of articulating a concept and vision of unity toward which Christians can move to overcome their divisions.

163. Some of the features described in this text have since been given further attention within our dialogue and within the broader ecumenical movement. A crucial factor in the description is that each local church "witnesses to the same apostolic faith". Without this there can be no unity. In this report, for example, the second Chapter, "Our Common Confession of Faith", indicates important aspects of the apostolic faith that we can confess together. Basic for unity too is the need to share the same faith in regard to baptism, eucharist and ministry. An important contribution towards achieving this is the document of the Faith & Order Commission on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry,* to which the churches have given their official responses.

164. If the living relationship between our churches is to grow, we must consciously foster regular contact with each other. If each church is to consider Gods gift in the other, each will have to orientate itself towards the other. Inherited problems of doctrine call for further reflection. Newly arising problems (for example, relationships and dialogue with people of other living faiths, or issues raised by the progress of science and technology) must become subjects of frank and open dialogue. The road to unity can be travelled more readily if both communions can learn to listen together to the Word of God and to the questions raised by each other.

165. We pray God to grant us the Spirit to heal wounds, to gather and edify Christ's people, to purify us and to send us into the world anew.

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