



**UNITY
AND
MISSION**

W.A. SAAYMAN

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UNITY and MISSION

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

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For Cecile

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Preface

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

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

WILLEM SAAYMAN
PRETORIA — MAY 1984

Introduction

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

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

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

sion and the WCC for unity..... From the Edinburgh Conference onwards the IMC has been profoundly concerned about unity. No stronger call for visible reunion has come from any meeting than those which were given by the IMC conferences at Tambaram in 1938 and at Willingen in 1952.... And on the other hand the World Council of Churches has from the beginning concerned itself deeply with the missionary task — as witness the work of the Second Commission at Amsterdam."¹ It is self-evident therefore why the IMC and the WCC from 1948 till 1961 existed "in association with" each other. It is equally clear, though, that this state of affairs could not continue indefinitely. If unity was such a strong concern in the ranks of the IMC, and mission was an equally strong concern in the ranks of the WCC, why should they not be merged into one ecumenical organization, expressing a concern for both unity and mission? Furthermore, such a merger would not only bring organizational benefits, but would give better expression to the intrinsic connectedness of unity and mission in the heart of the Gospel.²

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

2. Growing Controversy

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

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

3. The Relevance of the Study

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

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

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

4. Form, Content and Sources

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

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

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

at Nairobi (1975).¹³

4.3 In a sense Nairobi can be seen as the first meeting of the *churches*, and not only of pioneers of the ecumenical movement.¹⁴

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

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

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

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

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

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

List of abbreviations

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

Notes

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

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

UNITY AND MISSION

I Development of an interrelationship

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

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

1. The encounter between mission and Church

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

1.1 *Edinburgh 1910*

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

These steps had important consequences for the development of the

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

1.2 Jerusalem 1928

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

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

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

1.3 Tambaram 1938

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

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

1.4 Whitby 1947

The Second World War influenced this conference significantly. The

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

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

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

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

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

2. The common search for a new interrelationship

2.1 Amsterdam 1948

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

art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me' (John XVII, 21), and are prepared to move forward, as God guides them, to further unity in Faith, in fellowship, at the table of the Lord, and in united proclamation of the word of life."⁸

In the Message of the Assembly to the churches, the concern for mission in unity was also clearly expressed: "Millions of our fellow-men have never heard it (God's word). As we are met here from many lands, we pray God to stir up his whole Church to make this Gospel known to the whole world, and to call on all men to believe in Christ..... Our coming together to form a World Council will be vain unless Christians and Christian congregations everywhere commit themselves to the Lord of the Church in a new effort to seek together, where they live, to be His witnesses and servants among their neighbours."⁹

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

2.2 *Rolle, 1951*

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

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

The statement expressed clearly the biblical basis for the interrelationship between unity and mission (using here for the first time the term *apostolicity*).^{2 1} Unity and mission both rest upon the completed work of Christ in his cross, resurrection and *parousia*. "Thus the obligation to take the Gospel to the whole world, and the obligation to draw all Christ's people together both rest upon Christ's whole work, and are indissolubly connected. Every attempt to separate these two tasks violates the wholeness of Christ's ministry to the world. Both of them are, in the strict sense of the word, essential to the being of the Church and the fulfilment of its function as the Body of Christ."^{2 2} Several implications for the life of the churches and the ecumenical movement, flowing from this statement of principle, were then pointed out. These included, amongst others, the admonition that any separation between a static, introverted Church, and missionary organizations not based in the life of local congregations, should be eradicated.

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

2.3 Willingen 1952

As could be expected (given the interrelated nature of the various sections of the ecumenical movement), Willingen's statement on "The calling of the Church to mission and unity"^{2 3} corresponded in many respects to the Rolle Statement. One of the few notable differences in expressing the theological basis of this interrelationship, was Willingen's affirmation that "the calling of the Church to mission and unity issues from the *nature of God Himself*" (whereas Rolle expressed it more specifically in terms of Christ's work).^{2 4} This difference is quite understandable, however, when seen in the context of Willingen's emphasis on the trinitarian basis of mission, as expressed in the concept of the

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

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

2.4 *Evanston 1954*

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

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

2.5 *Ghana 1958*

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

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

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

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

3. Conclusion

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

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

Notes

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

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

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

2 UNITY AND MISSION

In the light of the cosmic kingship of Christ

1. New Delhi

1.1 *The interrelationship stressed*

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

In the report of the section on Unity as well as that of the section on Witness, this interrelationship was consequently expressly stated. Thus in the report of the section on Unity it was stated, "In the fulfilment of our missionary obedience the call to unity is seen to be imperative, the vision of one Church proclaiming one Gospel to the whole world becomes more vivid and the experience and expression of our given unity more real. There is an inescapable relation between the fulfilment of the Church's missionary obligation and the recovery of her visible unity."² In the same way the report of the section on Witness stressed the interrelationship of this report with the reports on Unity and Service, and continued, "The question of the Church's unity is of vital importance, since the Bible teaches us that the Gospel cannot be authoritatively proclaimed to the world by a disunited Church..... The three themes of unity, witness and service are in the last resort not three but one."³ In the light of this conscious stressing of the interrelationship, it was to be expected that discussions about and decisions on the concept of unity were bound to have a strong influence on the concept of the world mission of the Church. It is against this background, then, that the concept of unity in the discussions at New Delhi must now be examined.

1.2 The concept of unity at New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The influence of Sittler's paper became apparent even in the deliberations and discussions at New Delhi. Honig points out its influence in Devanandan's paper, "Called to Witness", in which he enquired whether proclaiming the Gospel aimed at the complete destruction of all other religions. "Of zullen religies en volken als zodanig in hun eigen aard voortbestaan in de volheid der tijden, 'wanneer God alle dingen samenvat in Christus, beide wat in de hemel en wat op de aarde is', Ef.1:10?"¹¹ Its influence can also be detected in the report of the section on Unity, which stated, "The love of the Father and the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit is the source and goal of the unity which the Triune God wills *for all men and creation*. We believe that we share in this unity in the Church of Jesus Christ, who is before all things and *in whom all things hold together*. In him alone, given by the Father to be Head of the Body, the Church has its true unity..... The Lord who is bringing *all things into full unity at the last* is he who constrains us to seek the unity which he wills for his Church on earth here and now."¹²

1.3 *The influence of this concept on mission*

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

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

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

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

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

1.4 Conclusion

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

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

2. Mexico City

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

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

2.1 *The message of Mexico City*

The changing concept of mission is clearly reflected in the message of Mexico City to the churches. For this reason it is necessary to quote fairly extensively from the message: "We thus affirm that this missionary task is one and demands unity. It is one because the Gospel is one. It is one because in all countries the Churches face the same essential task. It is one because every Christian congregation in all the world is called to show the love of God in Christ, in witness and service to the world at its doors. It demands unity because it is obedience to one Lord, and because we cannot effectively witness to the secularized or to the non-Christian world if we are isolated from one another. We need the gifts God has given to each Church for the witness of the whole Church..... We therefore affirm that this missionary movement now involves Christians in all six continents and in all lands. It must be the common witness of the whole Church, bringing the whole Gospel to the whole world... God's purpose still stands: to sum up all things in Christ. In this hope we dedicate ourselves anew to his mission in the spirit of unity and in humble dependence upon our living Lord."¹⁸

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

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

2.1.2 Although there was no explicit reference to the cosmic Christology of New Delhi, the influence could be clearly noticed in the concept of mission. In general the missionary task of the Church was described in the context of God's acts in the *secular* world. Specifically God's purpose in mission is described as a desire to sum up *all things* in Christ. The influence of the cosmic Christology of New Delhi is very clear in this statement. Newbigin was correct therefore in saying that Mexico City was the continuation of a line started at New Delhi, and taken up especially by Asian theologians.¹⁹

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

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

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

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

3. Evaluation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

to counteract a ghetto-mentality in Church and mission.

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

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

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

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

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

4. Conclusion

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

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

Notes

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

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