

# 3

## UNITY AND MISSION

# In the perspective of the unity of mankind

### 1. Background

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

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

In explaining the background of the decision by Faith and Order at Aarhus in 1964 to start a study project on this relationship, he pointed out that the impulse for this study came from New Delhi via Mexico City. This was also the reason why this study would overlap with the study of the CWME started in connection with the concept of the cosmic kingship of Christ, viz. "The finality of Christ in an age of universal history."<sup>2</sup> This theological link should furthermore be seen against the background of its socio-political context, which is described by Newbigin as follows: "The growth of what may be called a secular ecumenism, a widespread sense among men of all races that the human family is one and that everything which in practice denies this is an offence against God, has led many Christians to feel that the real task for our day is to manifest the unity of mankind rather than to manifest the unity of the Church."<sup>3</sup> It is clear, therefore, that there was a link between, even a logical development from, the unity and mission of the Church in the light of the cosmic kingship of Christ, and the unity and mission of the Church in the perspective of the unity of mankind. A closer examination of this second phase of the interrelationship between unity and mission is therefore called for.

## 2. Preliminary Developments of the Study Project

### 2.1 Aarhus

As has already been mentioned above, the study of the relationship between the unity of the Church and the unity of mankind started with the study project on "The nature of unity" which was decided on by Faith and Order at its meeting at Aarhus in 1964. At this meeting, the goal of the proposed study was sketched briefly in the following words: "The Church is challenged to show forth its unity not only in communion with God through Jesus Christ, but also by sharing in the travail by which the whole creation is finally brought into communion with God."<sup>4</sup> The influence of the cosmic Christology of New Delhi is quite clear (bringing the whole creation, i.e. the cosmos, into communion with God). The resulting shift of the focus in mission to the focal points of social and political action (see above p. 25), is also reflected in the statement ("sharing in the travail of the whole creation").

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

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

## *2.2 Developments after Aarhus*

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

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

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

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

### 3. Uppsala

#### 3.1 Background

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 3.3 *Influence on mission: humanization*

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

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

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

Humanization, therefore, was not meant to be defined or discussed apart from Christ; instead, it meant attaining that genuine humanity which became real only in and through the life, death and resurrection of the new man, Jesus Christ. Living as we do in the penultimate dispensation, it is of course impossible ever to attain that unity of mankind and that true humanization. "There is here an enduring tension which will not be resolved until the promise is fulfilled of a new heaven and a new earth. Until that day, we have to accept the fact that we do not fully know how to embody in the life of the nations and communities of our time the unity which God wills. There is only one foundation for human unity – the new man, Jesus Christ. But what we build on that foundation will be tested by fire, and may not pass the test."<sup>25</sup> From these quotations it must be quite clear that humanization was *not* humanism, as it was thoroughly Christocentric; that humanization could in no way be contrasted to or set over against redemption, as it could only be achieved in the new man Jesus Christ; and that humanization was not a this-worldly utopianism, as there was to be an ordeal of fire by which our deeds in this world be tested.

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

### 3.2 *From Uppsala to Bangkok*

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### 4. Bangkok

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

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

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

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

Christian lands of Europe, North America and Australasia. This debate is totally futile when we look at this one world in which we are living. Our one world is in reality a world which is profoundly divided politically, economically and racially. This is the context in which Christ's words quoted above are uttered."<sup>32</sup> One cannot but detect a certain sense of disillusionment with the "unity of mankind" in this statement. This was certainly not only an isolated point of view: nowhere else in the discussions or reports of sections or individual speakers does the Uppsala concept of unity, viz. unity in the perspective of the (universal) unity of mankind, play a direct role in the formulation of the concept of mission.

The one concept that grew out of this study on the unity of the Church and did play a decisive role in the concept of mission operative at Bangkok, was *humanization*. This could be seen e.g. in the report of Section III, according to which the aim of mission was "to call men to God's salvation in Jesus Christ; to help them grow in faith and in their knowledge of Christ in whom God reveals and restores to us *our true humanity, our identity as men and women created in his image*; to invite them to let themselves be constantly re-created in this image, in an eschatological community which is committed to man's struggle for liberation, unity, justice, peace and the fulness of life"<sup>33</sup> (i.e. genuine humanity).

As has been pointed out above (para. 3.1, 3.3), humanization was closely linked to, sometimes even defined in terms of, catholicity. As Bangkok took over from Uppsala the *humanization* theme to describe the mission of the Church, it was therefore to be expected that *catholicity* should also play a significant role. This can be illustrated e.g. in the report of Section III, where the local church (which received more attention at Bangkok than at any other meeting of the WCC since New Delhi)<sup>34</sup> is related to the universal Church by means of "agents of catholicity": "The more free and the more local the church is allowed to become in its mission the more it will need the 'agents of catholicity' that God provides. We choose two of these: a) Persons set aside for ministries in the church as a whole represent the wholeness of the church to each congregation, group or cell. b) A Christian from outside — who may be a new immigrant, a foreign student, a lay man or woman from abroad temporarily employed in the country, or a missionary from another church — also represents the catholicity of the church and the wholeness of the world and prevents the church from becoming self-sufficient and inward-looking. Churches that have a long tradition of 'sending' their missionaries elsewhere need to take deliberate steps to accustom their members to the idea that without the presence and wit-

ness of the foreigner they themselves are deficient. For these reasons we urge all member churches of the WCC to explore more urgently the various ways in which the sending and receiving of missionaries may become completely mutual and international, a universal enrichment of the church for its mission in all six continents."<sup>3 5</sup>

The unity of mankind ("the wholeness of the world") and the universality of the Church's mission in six continents, were thus considered aspects of the mission of the local church, which give specific expression to the catholicity of Church and mission. It cannot be argued, therefore, that in relation to mission the concept of the unity of the Church in the perspective of the unity of mankind was to mean the creation of a universal, uniform and humanistic world community. Mission was rather seen at Bangkok as working towards creating conditions for the realization of genuine humanity, based on the manhood of Jesus Christ, in "liberation, unity, justice, peace and the fulness of life" in the local context. In this process the universality (catholicity) of the Church and the unity of mankind should constantly be kept in view in order to prevent the local church from becoming "self-sufficient and inward-looking". What was to be sought for, was therefore "a mature relationship between churches. Basic to such a relationship is mutual commitment to participate in Christ's mission in the world. A precondition for this is that each church involved in the relationship should have a clear realization of its own identity. This cannot be found in isolation, however, for it is only in relationship with others that we discover our selves."<sup>3 6</sup>

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

## 5. Evaluation

5.1 As has been pointed out above (paragraph 3.2), the WCC attempted throughout to articulate the theological basis for studying the unity of the Church in the perspective of the unity of mankind. That there is such a theological basis to this relationship, seems in our opinion to be undeniable. This theological basis is founded especially in the world-embracing missionary vocation of the Church, according to which the new universal community of the Spirit, which came into being at Pentecost, has to be established across *all* man-made boundaries to the ends of the earth.<sup>3 7</sup> The rediscovery of the cosmic dimensions of the kingship of Christ also forced on the Church the question about its relationship to

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 6. Conclusion

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

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

## Notes

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

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

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

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

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

# 4

## UNITY AND MISSION

# The voice of Rome

### 1. Background

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

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

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

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

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

## 2. Vatican II

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

### 2.1 *The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Another important shift in the Roman Catholic view of the Church became apparent in the fact that of all the biblical images which could be used to describe the Church, the one which received far and away the strongest emphasis (as evidenced in the fact that a whole chapter of the Constitution, Chapter 3, was devoted to it), was that of the Church as the people of God. Previously the Church had in fact been described nearly exclusively in terms of the hierarchy, especially the Pope (*ubi Papa, ibi ecclesia!*). Vatican II, however, attempted to view the Church from the view-point of the people of God, in which all share equally in grace and the love of God and all are called equally to sanctification.<sup>1 2</sup> This was bound to influence both the concept of unity as well as that of mission. As truth and sanctification were also present outside the Roman Catholic Church, it became possible to accept baptized Christians officially as brothers and sisters in Christ (although separated from the chair of Peter and therefore in imperfect communion and fellowship). Non-Catholics could therefore not simply be regarded as objects of mission like all non-Christians, as had previously been the case (see pp. 57-58 above) and this opened the way to a different/new concept of mission, which was to be reflected in the strong emphasis on the need for the unity of *all* Christians for the sake of mission (which will be dealt with in the discussion of the Decree on Ecumenism).<sup>1 3</sup>

## 2.2 *The Decree on Ecumenism*

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

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

The interrelationship between unity and mission, so strongly present in ecumenical discussions since 1961 (cf. Chapter 2 and 3 of this study), was also emphasized in the Decree. Thus it was stated in the first paragraph that "... almost everyone (i.e. every Christian) though in different ways, longs that there may be one visible Church of God, a Church truly universal and sent forth to the whole world that the world may be converted to the gospel and so be saved, to the glory of God."<sup>15</sup> This united witness was also laid on the Church (including the Roman Catholic Church) as an obligation: "Before the whole world, let all Christians profess their faith in God, one and three, in the incarnate Son of God, our Redeemer and Lord. United in their efforts, and with mutual respect, let them bear witness to our common hope, which does not play us false."<sup>16</sup> The new way of thinking about, and new impulse in working for, the unity of the Church, was thus reflected in such a forceful way in this interrelationship that, as Schlink pointed out, the calling to unity and mission in fact appeared almost parallel and equal responsibilities of the people of God.<sup>17</sup>

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

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

verts was described as one of the obligations of missionaries: "The ecumenical spirit too should be nurtured in the neophytes. They should rightly consider that the brethren who believe in Christ are Christ's disciples, reborn in baptism, sharers with the People of God in very many riches. Insofar as religious conditions allow, ecumenical activity should be furthered in such a way that without any appearance of indifference or of unwarranted intermingling on the one hand, or of unhealthy rivalry on the other, Catholics can co-operate in a brotherly spirit with their separated brethren, according to the norms of the Decree on Ecumenism ..... They can collaborate in social and in technical projects as well as in cultural and religious ones. Let them work together especially for the sake of Christ, their common Lord. Let his Name be the bond that unites them! This co-operation should be undertaken not only among private persons, but also, according to the judgment of the local Ordinary, among Churches or ecclesial Communities and their enterprises."<sup>21</sup>

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

## 2.4 *Evaluation of Vatican II*

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

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

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

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

It seems as if this underlying divergence in the view of the Church at Vatican II sprang from difficulties in expressing the relationship between an "invisible" Church, coinciding with the one true Church of Christ, and our empirical, divided, "visible" churches. For a long time, according to Roman Catholic ecclesiology, the empirical Roman Catholic Church *did* coincide with the Church of Christ. Now this viewpoint could no longer be maintained. The result was the above-mentioned apparent divergence of views on the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Christ, and consequently between the Roman Catholic Church and other churches. Yet it was exactly this hesitancy and apparent divergence which revealed the important change in the Roman Catholic Church. Since Vatican II, it was no longer possible for the Roman Catholic Church to be "a church issuing a monologue from Rome" — the Roman Catholic Church admitted that it needed the other churches and communities to function properly as a Church of Christ.<sup>2 3</sup> Consequently the ecumenical calling of the Roman Catholic Church could no longer be defined simply in terms of a call to "return" to Rome.

Although this new view of the Church expressed by Vatican II can be regarded as representing an important change in Roman Catholic ecclesiology, it also must be admitted that this presented difficulties to many Protestants. In the light of such a long history of suspicion and mistrust because of their having been regarded as heretics and schismatics, they tended to think that the apparent concessions were introduced simply to facilitate what still was the actual desire of Rome, viz. their return to "the fold from which they never should have strayed."<sup>2 4</sup> Such thinking does not appear to characterize the official Roman Catholic position. It

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

theological thinking is obvious.

The missionary nature of the Church both as people of God (the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) and according to the Decree on Ecumenism, was best reflected in the image of a "pilgrim Church" moving towards Christ.<sup>3,4</sup> This revealed a strong similarity with the concept of the missionary nature of the Church according to Uppsala. The comprehensive concept of mission on the basis of the cosmic kingship of Christ also revealed this similarity. These examples are not cited in order to arrive at any value-judgment, but simply to point out the existence of this growing convergence in ecumenical theological thinking about unity and mission — a factor which seems to be of special importance in relation to the Nairobi Assembly of the WCC. It will therefore be discussed more extensively in Chapter 6.

### 2.5 Conclusion

Events in the Roman Catholic Church during the period covered by this study were completely dominated by Vatican II. Having examined some of its documents, this seems indeed to have been the case. In concluding the discussion of Vatican II, however, one important fact needs still to be pointed out, viz. that Vatican II should not be considered the final word of the Roman Catholic Church about the ecumenical movement. It was rather the beginning of a new era of ecumenical development. "Thus the ecumenical future, on the basis of the ecumenism decree, is an open future. What direction the future takes depends not only on what Catholics do with the decree, but on how Protestants respond to it as well."<sup>3,5</sup> With this in mind, developments in the Roman Catholic Church after Vatican II are now discussed briefly.

## 3. Developments after Vatican II

### 3.1 General

It is quite understandable that in a church as big as the Roman Catholic Church it will take some time for the decisions and spirit of Vatican II to permeate to all levels of the church. That is why the comment of Shehan is quite appropriate in this respect: "It was a sense of continuity which inspired the saying, 'The king is dead; long live the king.' A similar sense would justify the statement, 'The Council is over; the Council has just begun'."<sup>3,6</sup> This continuing development in the Roman Catholic Church will be traced by way of various relevant documents, meetings

and commentaries. One of the first developments which warrants attention is the report on "Common witness and proselytism" issued by the Joint Working Group of the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC in 1970. The report stated: "Christians cannot remain divided in their witness. Any situations where contact and co-operation between churches are refused must be regarded as abnormal." Churches should however not be satisfied with common witness only, for "the more the need of common witness is grasped, the more apparent does it become that there is need to find complete agreement on faith – one of the essential purposes of the ecumenical movement."<sup>3 7</sup> The most important consequences of this report for the subject of this study are:

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

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

### 3.2 *The Synod of Bishops in 1974*

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

The following aspects of the Declaration approved by the Synod are of particular importance for our study:<sup>3 8</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### 4. Evaluation

##### *4.1 A new self-understanding in the Roman Catholic Church*

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

##### *4.2 Varying degrees of progress*

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

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

#### *4.3 The influence of a mutual history of suspicion and mistrust*

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

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

which mutual progress towards unity and common witness could begin.

#### 4.4 *The final problem*

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

#### 5. Conclusion

In the evaluation at the end of Chapter 1, it was stated that it would not be possible to return to a pre-ecumenical era in mission after the integration of the IMC and the WCC. In the same way, it is clear in the light of Vatican II and subsequent developments, that Rome is firmly established as a "partner" in ecumenical discussions on unity and mission. This has also become a reality from which there is no turning back. The next chapter deals with the other important "partner" in ecumenical discussions not dealt with so far – the evangelicals.

#### Notes

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

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