On the eve of the Fifth Assembly of the WCC at Nairobi in 1975, various commentators pointed to the fact that a new atmosphere reigned in ecumenical discussions on unity and mission. This new atmosphere could be attributed to various causes. So, for example, Dr. E. Castro, director of CWME, wrote in an editorial in *IRM*: "The Congress on World Evangelization, held in July 1974 in Lausanne, Switzerland, and the Synod of Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church on the Evangelization of the Modern World, held in October 1974, have created a new atmosphere for conversation among Christians on evangelism. Over the last several years we have gone through a trying period. Polarization has consumed so much human energy, so many hours of discussion, has created so many wounds in the body of Christ, that we must confess very humbly the sin of our inability to understand each other..... we are now called to listen to each other humbly, to learn from one another, to recognize our common convictions and to confess before the world our common Christian faith."
According to Beyerhaus, the changed atmosphere was brought about by three factors: the flourishing of the evangelical point of view, culminating in Lausanne, 1974; the reaction of the Orthodox churches to Bangkok, and their more active participation in ecumenical discussions; and a more hesitant attitude in the Roman Catholic Church towards the WCC. There seemed to have been a fairly clear expectation, therefore, of a new direction at Nairobi.

1. Nairobi — A New Direction?

1.1 The concept of unity

At Nairobi unity was the subject of Section II: "What unity requires". In a kind of paraphrase of the assembly theme: "Jesus Christ frees and unites", the report of Section II remarked on unity in general: "We have learned to know him (i.e. God) better as the one who frees us for unity in himself and as the one who unites us in his freedom. He himself precedes both the freedom for which he sets us free and the unity which binds us together." In an attempt to define the goal of visible unity more specifically, conciliar fellowship was chosen as the key-word. This term has already been used at Louvain (1971), and was defined more fully at the Salamanca Consultation (1973). Section II at Nairobi followed Salamanca in defining conciliar fellowship thus: "The one Church is to be envisioned as a conciliar fellowship of local churches themselves truly united. In this conciliar fellowship, each local church possesses, in communion with the others, the fullness of catholicity, witnesses to the same apostolic faith, and therefore recognizes the others as belonging to the same Church of Christ and guided by the same Spirit." In an attempt to clarify further what was meant by conciliar fellowship, it was stated at Nairobi that "the term is intended to describe an aspect of the life of the one undivided Church at all levels. In the first place, it expresses the unity of churches separated by distance, culture and time, a unity which is publicly manifested when the representatives of these local churches gather together for a common meeting. It also refers to a quality of life within each local church; it underlines the fact that true unity is not monolithic, does not override the special gifts given to each member and to each local church, but rather cherishes and protects them..... True conciliarity is the reflection in the life of the Church of the triune being of God. It is that unity for which Christ prayed when he asked the Father that his disciples might be one as the Father and the Son are one' ..... It is because the unity of the Church is grounded in the
divine triunity that we can speak of diversity in the Church as something to be not only admitted but actively desired. Since Christ died and rose for all and his Church is to be the sign of the coming unity of humankind, it must be open to women and men of every nation and culture, of every time and place, of every sort of ability and disability.\textsuperscript{5}

The following important characteristics can be pointed out in the concept of unity at Nairobi:

1.1.1 The unity of the Church is firmly grounded in the unity of the triune God. Because of this, it is not monolithic unity, but the unity in diversity of a fellowship of churches.

1.1.2 The emphasis in this concept of unity falls more strongly on the local church than on the universal church.

1.1.3 The focal point(s) in conciliar fellowship is in the Church rather than in the world.\textsuperscript{6}

1.1.4 Conciliar fellowship is not necessarily attained in a rigidly structured institution. It is rather attained in "charismatic events" worked in the Church by the Holy Spirit (as e.g. those in Acts 15).\textsuperscript{7}

1.2 The mission of the Church

1.2.1 Various commentators point out, sometimes with an undeniable sense of surprise, that the world mission of the Church occupied a central, even a dominant, position in the discussions at Nairobi. In the words of Vischer, "Bekenntnis, Bekennen, Verkündigung des Evangeliums und Evangelisation standen ohne Zweifel im Mittelpunkt der Fünften Vollversammlung."\textsuperscript{8} It was in this spirit that Bishop M. Arias, in his plenary address, "recalled the missionary origins of the Ecumenical Movement, and confessed that we have not always been faithful to this calling or to the priority it implies, though he also insisted that we could 'acclaim and affirm the missionary and evangelistic potential' of the programmes of the WCC."\textsuperscript{9} In the light of the central position of mission in these discussions, it was to be expected that a close interrelationship should exist between unity and mission. Thus the report of Section II: "What unity requires", stated clearly that "we must say that the purpose for which we are called to unity is 'that the world may believe'. A quest for unity which is not set in the context of Christ's promise to draw all people to himself would be false."\textsuperscript{10}
1.2.2 Nairobi stated the essential place of the witnessing community in mission clearly and emphatically. In other words, the Church occupied a central place in discussions about common witness, the encounter with people of various faiths and ideologies, social and political involvement, etc. In the words of Vischer, "Die Vollversammlung als Ganze war ein Ruf nach neuer stärkender Gemeinschaft. Wenn von Kirche die Rede war, wurde nicht in erster Linie gegen die Kirche als überholte und wirkungslos gewordene Institution zu Felde gezogen..... Es ging ..... um die Kirche als Gemeinschaft, als Ort, an dem der Glaube entsteht und gelebt wird; der Boden, aus dem die erforderlichen Früchte wachsen können, die Quelle für die Vitalität, die für das Zeugnis unerlässlich ist." Both unity (as conciliar fellowship — see p. 106 above) and mission were therefore defined more clearly at Nairobi in terms of the Church.

1.2.3 Because of the emphasis on the witnessing community (the Church), the tension between Church and world was reflected more clearly at Nairobi. Thus the report of Section III stated, "We are all agreed that the skandalon (stumbling block) of the gospel will always be with us. While we do seek wider community with people of other faiths, cultures and ideologies, we do not think there will ever be a time in history when the tension will be resolved between belief in Jesus Christ and unbelief. It is a tension that divides the Church from the world. It is a tension which also goes through each Christian disciple, as each is unable to say that his or her faith in Jesus Christ is perfect ..... There is great urgency for seeking a community beyond our own..... We must seek the wider community, without compromising the true skandalon of the gospel." The Church was therefore seen as having a distinct and enduring mission in the world.

1.2.4 The influence of unity in diversity, of unity at a local rather than on a universal level, was clearly reflected in a concept of mission which left much more room for contextual nuances and different emphases. Thus it could be stated in the report of Section I, "We affirm the necessity of confessing Christ as specifically as possible with regard to our own cultural settings ..... We have found this confession of Christ out of our various cultural contexts to be not only a mutually inspiring, but also a mutually corrective exchange..... There is great diversity in our confessions of Christ.... we believe that it is part of the mystery of Christ that even as we confess him in different ways it is he who draws us together."
1.3 Evaluation

Nairobi was different. That is the unanimous judgement of such experienced ecumenical commentators as among others Warren, Newbigin, Beyerhaus and Van den Heuvel. They all remark on the difference between the Nairobi Assembly and previous meetings and assemblies of the WCC, especially those of Uppsala and Bangkok. In Chapters 2 and 3 we pointed out a certain line of development in thinking about unity and mission in the WCC from New Delhi to Bangkok. These (and other) commentators agree, however, that Nairobi cannot be seen as simply a logical extension along that line. Why was Nairobi different, and in which aspects did the difference reveal itself?

1.3.1 The socio-political context of Nairobi 1975 was vastly different from that of Uppsala 1968 in particular, but also Bangkok 1972–73. In 1968 man still harboured the fervent and apparently realistic hope that the world could be changed. It seemed possible to solve the problems of poverty, hunger and injustice by way of development aid. But between 1968 and 1975 came the student unrest in Europe, the Yom Kippur war, the oil crisis. The hope that conditions could be radically changed by way of development, was shattered. That is why ”the character, the ’mood’, of the Nairobi documents is quite different from that of the Uppsala ones. The note of sometimes rapturous hope still clearly evident in 1968 is missing in 1975. Sobriety and bewilderment are more characteristic of Nairobi. The Section reports reflect the far-reaching global changes and crises of the period between the two assemblies...... The real caesura in world history — heralded by the oil crisis and by the publications of the Club of Rome — is the survival crisis. Here we see the decisive change.”

1.3.2 The theological context of Nairobi was also different. The influence of evangelicals and of the Roman Catholic Church was already noticeable before the assembly (see pp. 105–106 above). It was also the unanimous opinion of commentators after the assembly, however, that the theological context of Nairobi was profoundly influenced by the contribution of evangelicals, by theological developments in the Roman Catholic Church (especially the Synod of Bishops of 1974), and the involvement of the Orthodox churches. For this reason, Newbigin could state that ”at the Fifth Assembly in Nairobi a statement was accepted on Confessing Christ Today which brought together in a genuine wholeness the different emphases of ’evangelicals’ on personal conversion, of ’ecumenicals’ on cultural and political liberation, and of Orthodox on
the witness of the eucharistic community.” And Scheele concluded, “In aller Unterschiedenheit bekunden die Dokumente aus Lausanne, Nairobi und Rom ein erstaunliches, erfreuliches und im besten Sinne des Wortes erbauliches gemeinsames Zeugnis vom einen Evangelium Jesu Christi.” Different theological emphases on unity and mission were thus drawn together at and around Nairobi, creating a different theological climate.

1.3.3 Nairobi emphasized unity on the local as well as the universal level. Not since New Delhi had unity at the local level been emphasized so clearly. There the nature of unity was described in a well-known statement as “the unity of all in each place”, in other words with strong emphasis on the local level. Subsequent discussions on unity, however, were dominated by strongly universal(istic) concepts of unity (the cosmic kingship of Christ; the unity of the Church and the unity of mankind). For this reason, the New Delhi statement of the unity of all in each place never really figured prominently in ecumenical discussions after 1961. At Nairobi, however, in describing unity as conciliar fellowship, the necessary emphasis on both the local and the universal was clearly articulated once more: “The one Church is to be envisioned as a conciliar fellowship of local churches themselves truly united...... it expresses the unity of a church separated by distance, culture and time, a unity which is publicly manifested when the representatives of these local churches gather together for a common meeting.” This understanding of unity left greater room for unity in diversity, and revealed similarities with the concepts of unity of the evangelicals and the (fellowship of!) Orthodox churches.

A Church united in such a way, is called to mission (witness) at various levels: local as well as regional and universal. As stated above (p. 108), this left greater scope for contextual nuances and different emphases in mission. This had not been as clearly present in the concept of mission from New Delhi to Uppsala, where the mission of the Church, under the influence of the concepts of universal unity, was described more in universal categories. The scope for greater diversity in emphases was doubtless influenced in part by the impetus from Lausanne and Rome, 1974. For this reason, one may say that the report of Section I at Nairobi provided at least the foundation for a new, comprehensive statement of the missionary responsibility of the whole Church in the world today.
various concerns of the ecumenical movement. "Im Hinblick..... hat Nairobi integriert und stabilisiert. Das war möglich aufgrund leichter Kurskorrekturen unter Beibehaltung der ökumenischen Marschrichtung im ganzen und aufgrund einer deutlicheren Differenzierung und Nuancierung bisher nur sehr allgemein formulierter und deshalb missverständlicher Grundsätze und Vorhaben. Das hat zu Klärungen geführt. Diese betreffen in erster Linie den Stellenwert von Evangelisation und Mission in der Ökumene, das Verhältnis von gesellschaftlichem Engagement und christologischer Orientierung sowie das Mass der Erwartung im Dialog mit anderen Religionen und Ideologien." In paragraphs 1.2.1 and 1.2.2 the central place of the mission of the witnessing community in the discussions at Nairobi was pointed out. This happened without in any way weakening the equally important place of the pursuit of the unity of the Church. Nairobi had greater success, therefore, in maintaining the true and essential (= belonging to the essence) relationship between the unity and catholicity of the Church, and its apostolicity. It seems probable that the contribution of evangelicals (with their particular emphasis on evangelization) and the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches (with their emphasis on the unity and the catholicity of the Church) was reflected in the more balanced ecclesiology of Nairobi.

1.4 Conclusion

The heading of this section of the study, viz. Nairobi – a new direction? ends with a question-mark. As has been pointed out above, Nairobi provided a number of new impulses on unity and mission. It is, however, still a moot point whether these new impulses and signs of convergence do in fact imply that a new direction has been taken. It is certainly true that Nairobi indicated the possibility of such a new direction. But only time can tell whether a real integration of the thinking on unity and mission of the various main streams in the ecumenical movement took place at Nairobi, or whether it was no more than a truce. "Die Dokumente der drei Weltkonferenzen (Lausanne, Rom und Nairobi) der Christenheit lassen also erkennen, dass durchaus noch nicht alle Differenzen überwunden sind. Sie haben allerdings ein unterschiedliches Gewicht. Im wesentlichen haben die Kirchen sich jedoch in der Erkenntnis ihrer Aufgabe und der gemeinsamen Basis einander ganz entscheidend genähert..... Es ist daher zu hoffen, dass die Zeit vorbei ist, die das Volk Gottes gerade an seiner wichtigsten Aufgabe, der Mission, zu zerreissen drohte, um derentwillen es von Gott berufen wurde und ein Volk ist (1 Petr. 2, 9)."
2. **Guidelines for the Future**

Having described and evaluated the development of the interrelationship between unity and mission in ecumenical discussions from 1961 to 1975, the question remains whether it is possible to develop some guidelines for the future. This is to be attempted in two sections: firstly by pointing out some general guidelines for the whole Church, and then by concentrating on the specific context of the Church in South Africa.

### 2.1 General

#### 2.1.1 The interrelationship between unity and mission

This study has shown an undeniable reciprocal influence at work between underlying concepts of the unity of the Church and its mission. Yet, as is clear from the divergence of views on this interrelationship in various streams of the ecumenical movement, from the problems left unresolved at various stages, and from the tentative nature of the convergence at Nairobi, a firm theological integration of thinking on the unity of the Church and its mission, representative of a truly ecumenical understanding of this interrelationship, has yet to take place. Some of the most important problems which will have to be faced if such an integration is to occur, are discussed below.

#### 2.1.1.1 The fundamental theological integration of unity and mission

The fundamental theological integration of unity and mission calls for a critical rethinking of ecclesiology. For it is only in terms of the Church that this interrelationship can find its proper theological expression. No one church or group of churches can claim to have succeeded in giving unity and mission this proper theological expression, mostly because their various ecclesiologies are all determined by traditions which developed in isolation, with specific contextual emphases. This problem can be (and to a certain extent has been) overcome by way of comparative ecclesiology in an ecumenical context (as e.g. in Faith and Order). Comparative ecclesiology in itself, though, does not provide the tools for a sufficiently radical critique of the various traditional ecclesiologies. This can only be provided by an appeal to the source beyond ecclesiology, namely Christ. It implies, therefore, an appeal to Scripture.

In the historical development of various ecclesiological traditions, however, a specific use of Scripture has generally also acquired a normative value. Comparative ecclesiology can help in exposing these different ways of using Scripture and their important (often unacknowledged) roles in the various traditions. Even when this has happened, there is still no simple way to determine the implications of the original event.
(Christ) for our ecclesiology. This is so because since the times of the New Testament the source himself has been attested to in various ways and in different terms. For this reason, real ecumenical consensus on an appeal to the source in Christian tradition has always been arrived at only by way of an agonizing struggle together with all God’s people, because Christ is present among us only in the form of a body, a community of believers. The history of the ecumenical movement in the twentieth century, especially since 1961, attests very clearly to a consensus in the Body of Christ on the subject of unity and mission that "the obligation to take the Gospel to the whole world, and the obligation to draw all Christ’s people together, both rest upon Christ’s whole work and are indissolubly connected. Every attempt to separate these tasks violates the wholeness of Christ’s ministry to the world.”

This consensus now has to find concrete ecclesiological expression in such a way that striving for the unity of the Church becomes at the same time in itself a witness to Christ, while the mission of the Church embodies at the same time in itself the obligation to draw all Christ’s people together. It is this essential (=belonging to the very essence of) ecclesiological integration of unity and mission that has yet to take place.

2.1.1.2 An attempt at such an integration must deal with the right relationship between the catholicity of the Church and its apostolicity, as the ecclesiological context within which the unity of the Church and its mission is to find concrete expression. The embodiment of this relationship posed a problem for the ecumenical movement from the time of Edinburgh in 1910. Because the ecumenical impulse came to the Protestant churches involved in the ecumenical movement via their mission work, the ecumenical movement was right from the start characterized by an awareness of the urgency of practical co-operation. Unity was therefore generally regarded first of all as a practical necessity for the sake of the mission of the Church. The focus of ecclesiological attention was therefore on the apostolicity of the Church, which was related to its catholicity mostly in a pragmatic way. As the churches carried out their apostolic responsibility in greater unity, however, they also grew into a greater awareness of their essential catholicity (cf. the development of Faith and Order). Consequently attempts were made towards a more fundamental theological integration of these two "marks" of the Church. The integration of the IMC and the WCC was an important step in this process of development in ecumenical ecclesiology.

So far, though, the organized ecumenical movement has not succeeded
in establishing the right relationship. It was pointed out in Chapter 3, paragraph 5.7, that within the WCC apostolicity has tended to lose its distinctive nature and to become simply a function of catholicity. Evangelicals, on the other hand, tended to subordinate catholicity completely to apostolicity (Chapter 3, paragraph 3.2.2). With the more active participation of the Roman Catholic Church in the ecumenical movement after Vatican II, an important new dimension has been added to the development. The Roman Catholic Church has always been conscious of its catholic nature, and Roman Catholic missions have always been regarded as the mission of the one, catholic church of Rome. Roman Catholic ecclesiology, therefore, had greater success in giving concrete expression to the catholicity and apostolicity of the Church in their essential relationship. In this respect Roman Catholic ecclesiology can therefore provide a very important contribution to a truly ecumenical ecclesiology of the Church united in and for mission, drawing together all Christ’s people, and reflecting in its life the wholeness of man and mankind.

In this respect Nairobi provided signs of a greater Roman Catholic influence on the concepts of unity and mission in the ecumenical movement (see pp. 109–110 above). A greater and more direct Roman Catholic involvement in the organized ecumenical movement is still necessary, however. Some of the problems preventing the Roman Catholic Church from such an involvement were pointed out in Chapter 4 (paragraph 4.4). For the organized ecumenical movement, which was traditionally strongly Protestant in character (especially in its missionary sector), it will require openness and gracious humility to assimilate this essential Roman Catholic corrective. After Nairobi the possibility at least exists. The mission of the one Church of Christ requires that it be developed in earnest.

2.1.1.3 The relationship between word and sacrament is also in need of theological integration in ecumenical thinking on the interrelationship between unity and mission. In general terms, this will mean an integration of, on the one hand, Protestant (word) and, on the other hand, Orthodox and (to a lesser extent) Roman Catholic (sacrament) emphases. The Protestant missionary movement out of which the organized ecumenical movement grew, was primarily concerned with the Word and its true proclamation in the world. It can be said, therefore, that the Protestant emphasis in ecumenical thinking on unity and mission was essentially kerygmatic in nature. This kerygma can be determined by a strong concern for the prophetic calling of the Church (the WCC in general),
or it can be more concerned with the evangelistic calling of the Church (evangelicals in general). Yet basically both positions centre on the kerygma, and both consider the unity of the Church especially in terms of its relationship to this kerygmic responsibility. Orthodox and (to a lesser extent) Roman Catholic thinking on the interrelationship between unity and mission, though, is generally much more concerned with the sacramental, liturgical responsibility of the Church in the world. Through the sacrament (especially the Eucharist) the way must be opened for the saving of the world by participation in the life of the incarnate Son of God himself. Because the division of the churches, especially at the altar where the Eucharist is celebrated, creates an obstacle in the way of carrying out this liturgical responsibility of the Church, unity has to be striven for.

As a result of the important rôle of Protestant missions in the growth of the organized ecumenical movement, the interrelationship between unity and mission has so far been dominated by this kerygmic emphasis. These emphases are essentially complementary in nature, however. The content of the Gospel, of both word and sacrament, the well-spring of both kerygma and leitourgia, is the incarnate Christ, the Word-became-flesh, the sacrifice acceptable to God. For this reason the kerygmic witness of the Church will only be credible to the world, and sustainable in the world, if it springs from the depths of a living eucharistic fellowship united in the service of God in the world (the liturgy after the Liturgy). On the other hand, the liturgical function of the Church will only remain relevant to the world if it leads to, and is borne by, prophetic witness to the world. Both these emphases, on kerygma and leitourgia, on word and sacrament, must characterize the mission of the one Church of Christ. The firstfruits of such an integration could be detected at Nairobi, but on the whole it is still a task facing the ecumenical movement on the road ahead, with such a degree of urgency that it requires immediate attention.

2.1.1.4 There is need for a clearer and more consistent interaction between unity at the local and at the universal level. Developments in thinking on unity and mission in the ecumenical movement from New Delhi 1961 until Bangkok in 1973 were dominated by concepts of unity on a universal level. There was not always a conscious effort to translate the consequences of these concepts of unity expressed in universal terms, into the situations of the churches at the local level, in terms of relevant (and attainable) programmes for churches which had to carry out their mission together in a certain place. Nairobi placed greater emphasis on
the necessary interaction between unity on the local and on the universal level, with its concept of unity as conciliar fellowship. The ecumenical movement would do well in future years not to (appear to) be so exclusively concerned with concepts of unity at a universal level, but rather to channel this energy into the challenge for the local churches to reflect in their life and mission on a local level the remarkable degree of unity already achieved on a universal level (as e.g. in the accepted statements on baptism, the Eucharist and the ministry).

2.1.2 The ecumenical/evangelical controversy about unity and mission. The growing divergence in theological thinking since 1961 between the so-called ecumenical and evangelical groups has often been focussed especially on the interrelationship between unity and mission. It is even assumed sometimes, that the sole concern of ecumenicals is with unity, while the sole concern of evangelicals is with mission/evangelism (the very labels used to describe the two groups reflect this assumption). It should be clear from this study that such an assumption is a gross over-simplification. Yet it remains true that it was often exactly the attempts of the ecumenical movement to give better expression to the interrelationship between unity and mission that caused the greatest controversy between the two groups. Having studied the development since 1961 in the thinking of ecumenicals and evangelicals on the interrelationship between unity and mission, it may be asked whether the divergence should necessarily be regarded as an inevitable polarization, or whether the signs of a growing convergence at Nairobi can be developed into comprehensive agreement. It is our conviction that such an agreement is urgently necessary (a) because the ecumenical and evangelical points of view are complementary in important respects (cf. p. 85 above), and (b) because the essential theological and ecclesiological integration (cf. pp. 112-113 above) demands it. Some of the most important themes which will have to be raised, and possible guidelines for dealing with them, are discussed below.

2.1.2.1 An important element in the controversy has been an assumption on the side of evangelicals that they bow unreservedly before the authority of Scripture in formulating their thinking on unity and mission, while ecumenicals do not. Sometimes it is more or less explicitly stated, while at other times it is more an implicit assumption. This appears to be a simplistic and incorrect assumption, as this study has illustrated the ecumenical concern to base their position on solid theological foundations. The real point of difference lies rather in the way of using Scripture and understanding and interpreting its authority in a
specific context. The real concern of ecumenicals for Scripture is perhaps best illustrated in the study programme on "The authority of the Bible", and the final report on this study programme adopted at the meeting of Faith and Order at Louvain in 1971.\(^3\)

In this report the authority of Scripture was clearly acknowledged; the many problems of an appeal to Scripture in a situation of controversy were honestly stated; and the general principle was reaffirmed that the authoritative message of Scripture for each age could only be discovered in an ecumenical context. An explanation which illustrates much more clearly the real point of controversy with regard to Scripture, is found in the discussion between Berkhof (ecumenical) and Runia (evangelical). According to them, what happens is that both groups accept basic Scriptural pronouncements on e.g. unity and mission. Ecumenicals, however, tend to write certain of these pronouncements in capital letters (e.g. those on *unity*), and others in small letters (e.g. on *witness*). Evangelicals, on the other hand, tend to do just the opposite, viz. write *witness* in capitals and *unity* in small letters.\(^3\)\(^5\)

If the controversy is to be resolved, it is essential that both groups acknowledge this reality and abandon the false assumption that one group is faithful to Scripture and the other not. This assumption has in the past clouded discussion on the real issue at stake, viz. the understanding and *interpretation* of Scripture within a specific context — something which can only be formulated in the community of all God’s people. Nairobi provided evidence that it is possible for ecumenicals and evangelicals to seek together the authoritative message of Scripture about unity and mission for our day. This must be developed further in a concerted effort and in openness to accept mutual admonition.

2.1.2.2 It is clear from the study that there are various theological differences between the ecumenical and evangelical points of view. There is no simplistic solution to this complex of theological differences, but there appears to be one aspect which might have played an important rôle in the development of all these differences. This concerns the general theological interpretation of Christ’s work in history, or, in other words, the relationship between Christ’s presence in the Church and in the world. It was pointed out that the integration of the IMC and the WCC more or less coincided with an important shift in theological thinking in general on this subject (see pp. 37—38 above).

In very general terms this shift can be described as a shift from "heils-
geschichtliche” theology (Cullmann *cum suis*) to the theology of the apostolate (Hoekendijk *cum suis*): the Church and its history was no longer considered to be the main focus of God’s actions, but rather the world and its history. The theology of the apostolate provided the foundation for the development of ecumenical thinking on unity and mission from the time of New Delhi onward. Evangelicals were not directly involved in this development. Evangelical thinking on unity and mission was therefore not so strongly influenced by the theology of the apostolate, and it can be stated that evangelical thinking is still much more in terms of the ”heilsgeschichtliche” theology (the focus on the community of believers where Christ is really at work through his Spirit; a very clear boundary between Church and world). This difference is possibly an important reason why both groups found it difficult to accept the theological basis of the other’s thinking.

In recent years, however, the two positions have moved closer together. In the case of ecumenicals it was probably because it was realized that many questions about the relationship between Christ’s work in the Church and the world had been left unanswered and merited greater attention. In the case of evangelicals it was probably because the stronger involvement of and with the Third World brought them face to face with the same world problems occupying the attention of ecumenicals, and therefore brought about a rethinking of Christ’s work in the world. It seems clear, though, that the function and influence of these basically different theological points of departure call for urgent attention if the ecumenical and evangelical positions on the unity of the Church and its mission are really to be integrated theologically.

2.1.2.3 Another aspect in the ecumenical/evangelical controversy which has to be attended to is the rôle of the concept of unity in truth. At Lausanne this concept was given an important rôle especially in the interrelationship between unity and mission. This reflected a general evangelical emphasis that unity is only possible and permissible in truth. Truth therefore functions more or less as a precondition for unity in evangelical thinking, and this truth is generally associated with the evangelical interpretation of Scriptural teaching (see e.g. p. 81 above). Because it is assumed that ecumenicals do not bow unreservedly before the authority of Scripture, the guarantor of truth (see pp. 116—117 above), unity with them in mission is therefore not possible for evangelicals.

It is undoubtedly true that the unity of the Church is not to be sought
at the expense of the truth of the Church’s message. Yet ecumenicals would also confirm this basic principle. Again it seems, therefore, that the real cause of the controversy lies in the approach to the principle, not in the acceptance or rejection of the principle itself. In stressing the necessity of truth in its relation to unity, a dichotomy can be created between the two elements, unity and truth, so that they become separate entities, virtually unrelated to each other. Truth then has to be established first, on its own, before the process of building unity (on the basis of that truth) can begin. This appears to be a tendency inherent in the evangelical approach in general. It is doubtful, however, whether this is the right approach to the unity in truth of the Church. Both unity and truth issue from, and have their being in, Christ, the source and original event behind the Church. Therefore, as Neill pointed out, "ultimately there can be no conflict between unity and truth, since it is the God of truth who commands unity, and who commands it in order that his truth may be believed."37

As has already been pointed out on a number of occasions in this study, the authoritative message of the Gospel for our day (truth) can only be formulated together with all God’s people (i.e. in communion with past tradition but also in communion with all present believers). Both unity and truth can therefore only be attained in constant interrelationship. Neither one can serve as an absolute prerequisite for the other. If this point of view is accepted, unity in mission and mission in unity between ecumenicals and evangelicals is possible; indeed, is imperative so that "God’s truth may be seen and may be believed".

2.1.2.4 If the ecumenical/evangelical controversy about unity and mission is to be resolved, there will have to be a greater awareness of — and willingness to admit — the rôle of so-called non-theological factors in the growth of the ecumenical movement and the formulation of theological positions at a specific time. It cannot be denied that the roots of the organized ecumenical movement also lay in the golden age of Western expansionism with its accompanying universalism, in an era in which more or less all international organizations which we know today, had their origin.38 Even Edinburgh 1910 (to which evangelicals often refer as the model for the ecumenical movement because of its strong emphasis on world evangelization) cannot be regarded as an expression of a "purely Biblical (theological)" awareness of the necessity of missionary co-operation which grew out of a simple evangelistic fervour. The total context of Western Christendom, colonialism, growing secularism, and awakening Eastern nationalism, contributed towards the origin
and development of the organized ecumenical movement, both in its ecumenical and evangelical "wings". In discussions on the authority of Scripture, Christ's presence in Church and world, and on all other theological discussion points, the rôle of non-theological factors (or the context) in the past and present development of the ecumenical movement needs to be acknowledged and assimilated as well if meaningful reconciliation is to take place.

2.1.2.5 The greater involvement and growing influence of churches from the Third World in ecumenical discussions over the last few years, are of special significance for the ecumenical/evangelical controversy. Churches from the Third World are generally not so hesitant about ecumenical co-operation as their confessional counterparts in the First and Second World. This is probably so because they did not share the bitterness of the history of schisms in the older churches, but also because they experience the imperative of ecumenism much more strongly than the older churches. For them the ecumenical/evangelical controversy is not such a sharply divisive factor — many leading figures from the younger churches are equally at home, and enjoy equal credibility, in both "camps". In the face of the overwhelming social, economic and political problems of the Third World, there is also less difficulty in achieving consensus on the essential mission of the Church in their countries. It can therefore certainly be argued that their strong presence at Lausanne (where ± 50% of the 2 700 delegates from 150 countries were from the Third World), as well as at Nairobi (where for the first time in the history of the WCC more than 50% of the delegates were from churches in the Third World) was an important influence in the convergence between the ecumenical and evangelical points of view. It seems reasonable to expect that even greater participation of the younger churches will in future be responsible for drawing ecumenical and evangelical thinking on unity and mission still closer together.

2.1.2.6 An underlying assumption in the ecumenical/evangelical divergence, not always articulated explicitly, is related to the question whether unity should be visible (organic) or invisible (spiritual). Ecumenicals are often portrayed as being concerned solely with visible unity, the promotion of visible reunion among churches. Evangelicals, on the other hand, seem to reveal a predilection primarily for invisible, spiritual unity, although this spiritual unity can be displayed on occasion at conferences or evangelistic campaigns. A basic mistake is committed when the question of visible/invisible unity is approached on the basis of an either/or scheme. The unity of the Church certainly has an invisible (spiritual)
dimension, as the unity of the Church does not come about only as a result of the visible union of a group of individuals, but exists already in their incorporation into Christ through the Spirit.\footnote{41}

On the other hand, the unity of the Church just as definitely has an organic, visible dimension. The very fact that the Church is the body of Christ calls for its concrete, visible existence in the world and precludes any inclination to vaporise the visible unity of the Church.\footnote{42} A one-sided emphasis on the invisible or spiritual nature of the unity of the Church can, therefore, be nothing but escapism. "The state of separated Christendom seems so abnormal, so contradictory, and so hopeless that it is easy to understand how ways have been sought to justify the unjustifiable. A first evasion is to retreat from the disunited visible Church to an undivided Church. But can the real Church be split up platonically into a visible empirical Church and an invisible ideal one? As we have seen, the real Church is always both in one. And if the visible Church is divided, then so is the invisible one which is identical with it. Can the unity of the Church be merely 'experienced' inwardly, and not also put into practice before the world? We cannot minimize our divisions by superficial spiritualistic-dualistic solutions; we shall make them all the harder to overcome if we do not see how deep they go, if we allow unity to melt away into the invisible."\footnote{43}

Even more important in the context of this study, is the fact that the credibility of the mission of the Church (and ultimately the credibility of the mission of Christ himself) is at stake and calls for visible, demonstrable Church unity (John 17:21). It is clear, therefore, that the divergence of views relating to visible/invisible unity should not be allowed to lead to total polarisation. The ecumenical emphasis on and concern for visible (organic) unity has not been stated in terms of monolithic organizational unity (cf. \textit{conciliar fellowship} at Nairobi). The evangelical emphasis on and concern for spiritual unity acknowledges the necessity of visible unity (cf. the Lausanne Covenant). What is at stake, therefore, is not an essential principle, but complementary emphases which should be integrated in such a way that the invisible, spiritual unity of the Church becomes clearly manifest also in visible, organic Church unity; and that the visible, organic unity of the Church is always based on and nourished by incorporation into Christ through his Spirit.

2.2 \textit{Unity and mission in South Africa}

2.2.1 Most of the problems about the unity of the Church and its mission which are present in the ecumenical movement as a whole, are
also present in South Africa. Yet the situation in South Africa is complicated even further by factors peculiar to South Africa. Two of these are:

2.2.1.1 The confessional (and theological) divisions in the world Church are represented in the Church in South Africa, to such an extent that South Africa has been called the most over-denominationalized mission field in the world. Even more divisions have, however, been created in the life of the Church in South Africa along racial lines. This is a problem for every major South African church. Some have explicit, official division along racial lines (e.g. the Dutch Reformed Church) while in others it is unofficial and implicit (e.g. the so-called "English-speaking" churches).44

2.2.1.2 A very important segment of the Church in South Africa has not been involved in the organized ecumenical movement since 1961. These are the three white Afrikaans churches of Dutch origin, which represent the overwhelming majority of South African whites, and which have great influence in government. This isolation came about especially as a result of the so-called Cottesloe Consultation of the South African member churches of the WCC in December 1960.45 The Nederduitse Gereformeerde (Dutch Reformed) churches of the Cape and Transvaal (at that stage still separate churches) and the Nederlandse Hervormde (Dutch Reformed) church were the only Afrikaans churches which were members of the WCC. The Consultation was a result of the racial unrest which culminated in the events at Sharpeville in March 1960, and was called to discuss the churches’ approach to worsening race relations and accompanying social problems in South Africa.

At the end of the Consultation a statement was issued, to which there was a dramatic response, especially among Afrikaners. According to Lückhoff, five resolutions were especially responsible for the uproar. They dealt with: the rights and responsibilities of the total population (black and white) of South Africa; racially mixed marriages; land tenure and a shared voice in government for blacks; and the political status of the Coloureds.46 What is of special importance in the light of this study, is the strong emphasis on the socio-political responsibility and engagement of the Church — probably a foretaste of the shift in ecumenical theological thinking which was to reveal itself so clearly at New Delhi in 1961 (see pp. 22–23 above). These decisions and their implicit criticism of the political (and ecclesiastical) status quo in South Africa, were subsequently officially rejected by the Afrikaans churches. As a direct result of this event, the three Afrikaans member churches of the WCC in South
Africa withdrew from the WCC. The result is that these churches have not been involved in developments in the fields of unity and mission since the integration of the IMC and the WCC. There is thus an important lack of understanding of these developments. One can indeed state that as a result of the separation and isolation (and the circumstances in which this came about), a strong measure of suspicion has arisen about the ecumenical movement in general.

2.2.2 The problem of the unity of the Church in South Africa, of its mission in the South African context, and of the interrelationship between unity and mission, is an ecclesiological problem to an even greater extent than in the ecumenical movement in general. What does it mean to be the Church in a society institutionally divided along racial lines? What is the mission of the Church in such a situation? These are questions to which no church in South Africa has provided fully satisfactory answers yet. In general it seems as if the Church is simply modelled along the lines of society in general, rather than being a prophetic witness in society to the new humanity inaugurated by Christ in his Church. That may be the main reason why the Church is regarded as irrelevant in many circles in South Africa, especially among young blacks.47

The situation therefore calls for an urgent rethinking of ecclesiology by the South African churches among themselves, but also in communion with the world Church. An aspect of the problem which requires special attention is the relationship between the unity and catholicity of the Church, and its apostolicity. There exists in South Africa an even stronger tendency than in the ecumenical movement in general to divorce these essential "marks" of the Church from each other. A South African church which is well known for the wide range of its missionary involvement, is the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). Yet the DRC is also one of the Afrikaans churches which is rigidly separated along racial lines, and which also has practically no involvement in the wider ecumenical movement. A church which emphasizes strongly its apostolicity therefore reveals little awareness of its unity and catholicity.

On the other hand, some of the so-called "English-speaking churches" are actively involved in ecumenical affairs, but are not as actively involved in evangelisation in general. A rethinking of ecclesiology, especially of the relationship between catholicity and apostolicity (the ecclesiological context within which the unity of the Church and its mission is to be embodied), is therefore of special importance in South Africa. For the Church in South Africa to be truly catholic it has to transcend not only
traditional theological divisions, but, much more urgently, it has to transcend racial divisions. It must become clear that it is a contradiction in terms for a church to confess a strong missionary obligation and enthusiasm while not expressing at the same time an equally strong commitment to the unity of the Church and its catholicity (which is of added importance in a racially divided society). It is only a united and truly catholic Church which will be able to carry out the mission of the Church in South Africa.

2.2.3 Closely related to this need for rethinking ecclesiology, is the very strong need for an ecumenical (=together with all God’s people) formulation of the authoritative Scriptural message about the unity of the Church and its mission in South Africa. The Cottesloe Consultation provided an opportunity, perhaps the best opportunity to date, for such a common formulation. The fact that such a degree of consensus could be reached on various aspects of the life and work of the Church in South Africa (also on its unity and its mission), seemed to confirm Visser’t Hooft’s statement "dat er iets groots gebeurd was". As has already been mentioned, however, the Cottesloe decisions were eventually totally rejected by the Afrikaans churches (despite the fact that their delegates, who were respected leaders of those churches, had voted overwhelmingly in favour of nearly all the decisions). The two main reasons for the rejection seem to have been:

(a) A widespread conviction among Afrikaner Christians that the implications of the Cottesloe decisions would destroy the identity and nationhood of the Afrikaner. The Afrikaans churches claimed Scriptural justification for the policy of separate development as well as racially separated churches. A policy of integration was therefore not only considered dangerous, but also as having no Scriptural justification.

(b) Cottesloe was regarded as the result of improper meddling in South Africa’s affairs by the WCC, which was widely suspected of theological liberalism and infiltration by communists. The opponents of Cottesloe therefore did not reject its decisions simply on socio-political grounds, but claimed to have justifiable Scriptural objections against them. This intensified the already serious break with the English churches which endorsed the Cottesloe statement, as they were implicitly accused of basing their decisions on unscriptural grounds. Since Cottesloe, the break between Afrikaans en English churches in South Africa intensified to such an extent that Dr J.D. Vorster, Moderator of the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church, could on occasion
state that a common platform was simply impossible.\textsuperscript{54} The Afrikaans churches not only became isolated from most other churches in South Africa, though, but also from the ecumenical movement in general (see pp. 122–123 above).

Theological differences about unity and mission, like the ecumenical/evangelical divergence, are exacerbated by this isolation of an important part of the Church in South Africa from theological developments in the ecumenical movement. This need is further intensified by the widespread popular conviction among white South African Christians that mission can only be directed at blacks, and that the main bearers of the missionary responsibility therefore are and remain the white churches (a conviction originating in the life and practice of the churches, and not so much in their teaching). There is a special need for the churches in South Africa, specifically the white Afrikaans churches, to realize that the truth has been promised to the one, catholic Church, not to any isolated part of it.

A spirit of complacency, as if only (some) South African churches are able to determine the meaning of unity and mission in the unique South African circumstances, therefore finds no Scriptural justification. Even greater and more fervent missionary campaigns are only ways of temporarily avoiding the essential issue: that the authoritative Scriptural message for South Africa, including also the unity of the South African church and its mission, can only be formulated by all God’s people in South Africa, in communion with all his people worldwide. There can be no preconditions (e.g. about unity in truth – see pp. 118–119 above) for this joint venture, for it is only in the unity of all God’s people that his truth becomes clear, and becomes clear so that it may be seen and believed by the people of South Africa.

2.2.4 An integration of the kerygmatic (verbal) and liturgical (sacramental) emphases (see pp. 114–115 above) in thinking about unity and mission is urgently necessary in South Africa. It is specifically the kerygmatic dimension of mission which has become the theological basis for racial separation in some South African churches.\textsuperscript{55} A rediscovery of the liturgical, sacramental dimension of the life and mission of the Church would serve to place the verbal dimension in its proper perspective, and to draw people together in the visible realization that Christ cannot be racially divided. This would require an important adjustment in church life in South Africa. The liturgical, sacramental emphasis, as was pointed out above, is essentially to be found in the non-Protestant
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churches (the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches). The South African church, however, has traditionally been overwhelmingly Protestant (even anti-Roman) in character — a character inherited from the fiercely Protestant Dutch and French Huguenot settlers. (The Roman Catholic Church was even for a time forbidden entry into the then Cape Colony). The strongly non-Protestant sacramental emphasis in thinking about the unity of the church in South Africa and its mission, will therefore meet with strong resistance. Still, the missionary credibility of a truly united and catholic Church in South Africa urgently requires that it be attempted.

2.2.5 The visible unity of white and black believers in the Church is of the utmost importance in South Africa. In the words of De Gruchy, there is a "direct connection between the unity of the church and the social situation in South Africa.... To regard the unity of the church largely in spiritual and 'invisible' terms is to misunderstand the teaching of the New Testament, and in the end, to compromise the witness of the church as it struggles against racism and other forces that divide and separate people on the grounds of culture and ethnicity,"5,6

Unfortunately it often happens that the unity of white and black churches in South Africa is seen in precisely spiritual and invisible terms. According to Lückhoff, the Cottesloe decision stressing the visible unity of white and black believers was one of the five important decisions which led to a rejection of the findings of the Consultation by the white Afrikaans churches.5,7 In the recent past a stir was caused by decisions of congregations of the white Afrikaans churches not to allow blacks into their churches, even on special occasions.5,8 In defence of such decisions it is often stated that Church unity is a spiritual matter, not in need of any "visible demonstrations". This serves to underline the validity of De Gruchy’s statement quoted above. The struggle for the visible unity of the Church in South Africa should therefore receive the highest priority. In the specific South African situation, churches whose witness is compromised to such an extent by racial divisions cannot expect to fulfil the mission of Christ — not because "demonstrations" of unity are required, but because the Church is and must be seen to be one (see pp. 120—121 above). If racial (and other) divisions are allowed to destroy this unity to the extent that the Church has to evade the demand for unity by taking refuge in a platonic, invisible unity, the Church in South Africa cannot expect to enjoy credibility in its mission.
3. Conclusion

A clear outcome of the struggle in the ecumenical movement to gain clarity about the unity and mission of the Church, is the firm inter-relationship between these two essential dimensions of the life and being of the Church. It is clear that unity and mission cannot be related to each other in a primary/secondary capacity. There is no full clarity yet on the ecclesiological expression of this basic relationship. It is clear, however, that the search for the unity of the Church can only be credible if it is in itself a witness to Christ. In the same way, the fullness of the mission of the Church demands in itself the search for unity. Indeed, in its mission the Church is also seeking to find itself in the world where Christ is at work, with an eye to the day when all things will be perfectly re-established in him (Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:20). In this search, no perfect answers can be expected: formulations of unity will always be preliminary, and the message of Christ will always have to be made relevant anew in the common struggle of the Church to be his faithful and effective witness in the world. Yet the Church is obliged to continue the search, in the firm knowledge that it is impossible to choose in favour of either unity or mission. The only possible choice for the Church, or any part of the Church, is for or against both.

Notes

11. As evidenced inter alia by the fact that a separate chapter in the report of Section II (10 paragraphs) was dedicated to the subject of the confessing community — cf. Paton, D.M. (ed.): *op. cit.*, pp. 48–49.


23. (WCC); *The New Delhi Report*, pp. 116 & 118.


25. Cf. the report of Section I: "Confessing Christ Today", especially paragraphs 23, 24, 60, etc.


32. *Apostolicity* can be understood in various ways: (a) the apostolicity of the Church can be understood especially in terms of apostolic succession (as is the case generally in episcopal churches); (b) the apostolicity of the Church can be understood in terms of remaining faithful to the apostles' doctrine
(as is the case generally in churches of the Reformed tradition); (c) the apostolicity of the Church can be understood in terms of the apostolic mission of the Church in the world (the theology of the apostolate). In this study apostolicity is used especially in this latter sense (as has already been pointed out).

33. An obvious example of this is the resistance amongst evangelicals to the integration of the IMC and the WCC, referred to in the Introduction.

34. (WCC): *Faith and Order Louvain 1971, Study reports and documents*.


36. Paragraph 7 of the Lausanne Covenant, dealing with unity and mission, opens with the statement, "We affirm that the church's visible unity in truth is God's purpose".


40. Cf. for example the remarks of Ekollo (from Africa) and Hwang (from Taiwan) at Mexico City about the necessity of ecumenical co-operation, in Orchard, R.K.: *Witness in six continents*, pp. 111–116.


45. An excellent description and evaluation of the Consultation can be found in Lückhoff, A.H.: *Cottesloe*.


49. All decisions had to be approved by at least 80% of the delegates.


53. The validity of these Scriptural objections seems questionable, though, if it is borne in mind that the Dutch Reformed Church adopted a report in 1974 on human relations in South Africa in which quite a number of the decisions (e.g. on the unity of white and black believers, mixed marriages, and the relationship between people of different races) show substantial agreement with the rejected Cottesloe decisions.


55. The DRC, for example, explicitly bases its policy of racially separated churches on the principle that each nation should be able to hear about the great deeds of God in its own language (cf. Acts 2). This principle also determines the policy of racially separated churches of the other Afrikaans churches, while
the Lutheran policy of organizing churches along ethnic lines was also influenced by it.

58. The Dutch Reformed (NG) church decided at its General Synod in 1974 that the Church should in principle be open to believers from any race, but left the practical implementation of this decision in the hands of local congregations. The Nederduitsch Hervormde Church, on the other hand, has an article in its church constitution which prohibits black membership of that church.
A. General


**B. Reports of Assemblies, Councils, Congresses and Study Commissions**


Orchard, R.K. (ed.) *The Ghana Assembly of the International Missionary Council*


C. Unpublished Sources


Torrance, T.F. The predicates of the Church. Unpublished paper, WCC Division of Studies, Commission on Faith and Order. WCC Archives.


D. Magazines, Journals and Periodicals

