A SOCILOGICAL APPROACH TO 'FAITH AND ORDER'
METHODS FOR REACHING UNITY

by

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# LIST OF CONTENTS

## ABBREVIATIONS AND EXPLANATIONS

## PREFACE

### I: INTRODUCTION

1. OUTLINE HISTORY OF FAITH & ORDER
2. TERMINOLOGY
   - The Term 'Faith & Order'
   - Other Terms
3. THE PLACE OF THIS STUDY

### II: THE PROBLEM FACING FAITH & ORDER

1. SPIRITUAL UNITY
   - Given Unity
   - Invisible and Visible
   - Spiritual Unity and Doctrinal Expression
2. PRACTICAL CONSENSUS
   - An End of Ideology
   - Values
3. 'DISTINCTIVE WITNESS'
   - The Importance of 'Distinctive Witness'
   - The Fear of Relativism
   - Identity
   - The Conference Effect
4. KAIROS
5. CONCLUSION

### III: A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH

1. THE APPROACH OF BERGER AND LUCKMANN
   - 'Idealist' and 'Positivist'
   - The Social Construction of Reality
   - Religious Legitimation
2. FAILINGS OF BERGER AND LUCKMANN'S APPROACH
   - The Study of 'Theory'
   - Change
3. COGNITIVE DISSONANCE FOR FAITH & ORDER PARTICIPANTS
   - Unity and Relevance
   - The Reduction of Dissonance
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IV:</td>
<td>EXPLANATORY ACCOUNT: UNITY AND DIVISION</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:</td>
<td>SECULARIZATION AND ECUMENICAL ACTIVITY</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Context of Statistics of Decline</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Connection with Ecumenical Activity</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:</td>
<td>PLURALISM AND THEOLOGY</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional and Individual Legitimations</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theology</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Religious Professionals</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:</td>
<td>ORGANIZATIONAL CONVERGENCE</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:</td>
<td>CULTURAL CONVERGENCE AND INTERNATIONALISM</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:</td>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V:</td>
<td>DESCRIPTIVE ACCOUNT: ATTEMPTS TO UNITE</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:</td>
<td>THE PIONEER PERIOD</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Idea</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preparations for Lausanne</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lausanne</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preparations for Edinburgh</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Edinburgh</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Unity Idea</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Influence of Anglicans</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:</td>
<td>THE COMMISSION</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Amsterdam and Lund</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evanston and New Delhi</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Montreal and after Montreal</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Developments in the Unity Idea</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Place of Theologians and of Theology</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Role of the Staff</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:</td>
<td>CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI:</td>
<td>THE LEGITIMATION OF UNITY</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:</td>
<td>ESSENTIALS</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Meaning of 'Essentials'</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Essentials in Faith &amp; Order</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relevance and Tolerable Diversity</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:</td>
<td>'NEW UNDERSTANDING'</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:</td>
<td>METHODS FOR REACHING UNITY</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'Ideal Type'</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII:</td>
<td>SYNTHETIC METHOD</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:</td>
<td>IDEAL TYPE</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3: INTRODUCTION OF THE METHOD ......................................................... 239
4: CRITICISMS .................................................................................... 242
5: FIRST EXAMPLE: SECTION I AT MONTREAL, 1963 ......................... 244
6: SECOND EXAMPLE: 'CREATION, NEW CREATION AND THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH' ..................................... 249
7: THIRD EXAMPLE: 'SPIRIT, ORDER AND ORGANIZATION' ............... 254
8: CONCLUSION .................................................................................. 258

X: THE REALIZATION OF UNITY ......................................................... 263

1: THE QUESTION OF EFFECT ............................................................ 263
   Church Unions ................................................................................. 264
   Other Forms of Unity ................................................................... 267
   Assessment .................................................................................. 268
2: GENERAL CONCLUSIONS ............................................................... 270
3: COMMENT ..................................................................................... 281

APPENDIX ONE: LIST OF CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS .................. 289
APPENDIX TWO: LIST OF SOME PARTICIPANTS MENTIONED ............... 290

BIBLIOGRAPHY .................................................................................... 293
a: Faith & Order Papers Cited ............................................................. 293
b: General Bibliography ................................................................... 297
c: Archive Material Cited ................................................................. 303
ABBREVIATIONS AND EXPLANATIONS

In the Text and Notes

Faith & Order : 'Faith and Order'
Life & Work : 'Life and Work'
WCC : The World Council of Churches

NOTE: Mention of 'Edinburgh' or 'the Edinburgh Conference' generally refers to the Second World Conference on Faith & Order at Edinburgh in 1937 (and not to the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910).

In the Notes

Official Reports of Faith & Order conferences:

La : Lausanne 1927
Ed : Edinburgh 1937
Lu : Lund 1952
Mo : Montreal 1963

Official Reports of WCC assemblies:

Am : Amsterdam 1948
Ev : Evanston 1954
ND : New Delhi 1961
Up : Uppsala 1968

Other Abbreviations:

ER : Ecumenical Review
FO Arch : Papers in the Faith & Order boxes in the archives of the WCC library in Geneva. Where boxes have a title, this is given.
FOC 1 etc. : Faith & Order papers, Second Series, from 1948.

NOTE: The date in brackets after the FO or FOC number refers, in the case of meeting reports, to the date of the meeting, and not to the date of the report's publication. Thus: FOC 44 (1964).

MRCC : Minutes and Reports of meetings of the Central Committee of the WCC.
transl. : English translation.
PREFACE

Material for this dissertation has been gathered largely from the literature of the Faith & Order movement. I have also been given a number of interviews, and have attended meetings of the Faith & Order Working Committee and WCC Central Committee. Attendance at meetings was more for their structure and atmosphere than for their content, as they fell outside the period studied here. I am grateful to the Burney Fund's electors for making possible two lengthy visits to Geneva and one to Utrecht.

I would like to thank the Librarian and Staff at the WCC Library for their assistance; also the Staff of the Faith & Order Secretariat, who showed friendly consideration when I bothered them. Many people have helped in conversation and in clearing up particular points. For more extended assistance, I would like to thank: The Rev. P. R. Abrecht; Dr E. C. Blake; Dr E. R. Hardy; Professor A. Headlam-Morley; The Rev. A. H. van den Heuvel; Canon D. E. Jenkins; Professor G. W. H. Lampe; Dr G. F. Moede; Canon D. M. Paton; Dr N. Pittenger; Dr K. Raiser; The Rt Rev. P. C. Rodger; Dr B. Sjollema; The Rev. S. W. Sykes; The Rt Rev. O. S. Tomkins; Professor T. F. Torrance; Dr L. Vischer; Dr W. A. Visser't Hooft; Dr H.-R. Weber.

I am very grateful to my two supervisors, Professor D. M. MacKinnon and Mr G. A. K. Howes, for all the excellent guidance they have given.

The dissertation in its entirety is my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration.

1 October 1973
I: INTRODUCTION

This study deals with attempts made by the Faith & Order movement to realize its idea of unity in the years up to 1967. Faith & Order has tried to agree on a conception of what unity is and to discover ways of working towards it. A solution cannot be said to have been reached, but in the endeavours to reach one, certain methods have been developed; these will be discussed from a sociological perspective, considering Faith & Order primarily as a social phenomenon. More specifically, the approach draws on the sociology of knowledge: it is an examination of the way in which the idea of unity held by the participants in the movement has interacted with the social 'reality' with which they have been faced and which has conditioned their response.

In Chapter II the problem facing Faith & Order is considered. In order to work towards the realization of an agreed conception of unity, it has been found necessary to take into account levels other than the 'spiritual' and the 'practical'. Although unity on these levels may provide impetus for 'true unity', the movement was founded because of a conviction that they are not alone sufficient: that agreement on matters of faith and order is also necessary. However, in approaching this level, the various distinctive commitments of Christians are encountered; it has been integral to the purpose of the movement that these should be respected and discussed. The problem can then be seen as lying in the attempt to reduce the tension between two
elements: on the one hand a conception of unity, and on the other, a situation between churches and among Christians which does not accord with this conception. Simplified, it is the tension between an 'idea' and a 'situation'.

A theoretical basis from which to examine attempts to resolve or reduce this tension is developed in Chapter III. The theories of Berger and Luckmann concerning the social construction of reality (the dialectic between subjective and objective reality) are discussed, and then extended with the aid of Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance. In this way a framework is provided with which not only to view the broad development of Faith & Order's attempts to solve its problem, but also to examine particular methods and changes in method.

Using a sociology of knowledge perspective, the next two chapters look at the circumstances in which the Faith & Order movement has grown. First (Chapter IV) the approach is explanatory: seeing the movement's growth in the light of certain social and religious trends which have contributed to a situation of tension between unity and division. Then (Chapter V) aspects of the history of Faith & Order are traced with a view to understanding what factors have been of particular importance to the participants in their efforts to solve the problem facing them.

Some options open in the performance of this task are explored in Chapter VI: various ways in which a change towards unity may be justified and explained. In examining the methods which have in fact been used, three 'ideal type'
stages are distinguished in the next three chapters: the 'synthetic', 'Christological' and 'contextual' methods for reaching unity.

The final chapter, which is on 'the realization of unity', starts with a consideration of whether Faith & Order has had any effect in promoting unity. General conclusions are then drawn and comments made on aspects of the movement's work. It is concluded that an understanding of Faith & Order method must take into account both the social-structural constraints on the movement and the participants' own understanding of their mandate. The whole can be seen as a dialectic between an idea which participants have seen as their peculiar responsibility and a situation which they have attempted to change.

1: OUTLINE HISTORY OF FAITH & ORDER

In 1910, the General Synod of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the USA appointed a Commission to promote a conference on questions of faith and order. The intention was thus to have an unprecedented type of conference: one where delegates of churches would discuss 'faith', which has almost invariably been interpreted as the articulated beliefs of Christians, and 'order', that is ministry, sacraments, worship and discipline: the way in which it is believed that churches should be 'ordered'. This special purpose was retained and served to distinguish the movement from other ecumenical organizations and particularly from the Life & Work movement, which was concerned with the
1 'In process of formation' was included in its title to express the WCC's provisional nature until it had been officially constituted.

application of Christianity to social, economic and political life, and with which Faith & Order eventually joined to form the WCC.

The original Commission's main purpose was to persuade Christians all over the world that a conference should be held, and by 1920 there was sufficient support to have a preliminary meeting in Geneva. This then set up a Continuation Committee which took over the Commission's duties and appointed other committees to make conference arrangements.

Eventually the conference met in Lausanne in 1927 and appointed another Continuation Committee to carry on its work. This met yearly, except in 1932 and 1933 when there was a shortage of funds. It set up a Theological Committee in 1929, later called 'Commission I'. After the first Commission had reported on 'The Doctrine of Grace' in 1931, three further Commissions were appointed which worked from 1934 until the next conference in Edinburgh in 1937. Edinburgh set up a further Continuation Committee which appointed three more Commissions; these worked, with interruptions on account of the war, until the third conference in Lund in 1952.

In 1948 the World Council of Churches, which had been 'in process of formation' since 1938, was finally formed at the Amsterdam Assembly. Between assemblies, its work was carried on by a Central Committee. From this time, Faith & Order's Continuation Committee became the Commission on Faith & Order of the WCC and was therefore involved not only in its own conferences but also in WCC assemblies.
1 There is a fuller chronological list of meetings in Appendix I. Outside the period here being studied, there was a WCC assembly at Uppsala (1968) and a meeting of the Faith & Order Commission at Louvain (1971).

Thus the Lund Conference in 1952 was followed by the Evanston Assembly in 1954 and the New Delhi Assembly in 1961. During the years between 1952 and its next conference at Montreal in 1963, the Faith & Order Commission (confusingly) set up Theological and Study Commissions; these reported to the conference on various subjects. The Faith & Order Commission met every three years during this period, the executive function being carried out by a Working Committee which met yearly.

This arrangement was continued after 1963, but the experience at Montreal joined other factors to persuade many that there would be no further world conferences, so more emphasis was put on meetings of the Commission. There were meetings at Aarhus in 1964 and at Bristol in 1967. Since Montreal, Faith & Order studies have no longer been carried on under the title of 'Commissions'; instead a variety of 'Study Groups' have been set up, often on a regional basis.

To sum up the main types of meeting which will be mentioned in the text and notes:

1920-1948: Preliminary meeting at Geneva (1920).
World conferences on Faith & Order: Lausanne (1927) and Edinburgh (1937).
Meetings of the Continuation Committees.
Meetings of the Theological Committee and Commissions.

Meetings of the Faith & Order Commission.
Meetings of the Faith & Order Working Committee.
Meetings of Theological and Study Commissions and of Study Groups.
Meetings of the WCC Central Committee.

The 1920 Geneva meeting was attended by 140 delegates from churches and it set up a Continuation Committee of twenty. World conferences have had between three and five hundred participants; most of these were official delegates but there were also groups such as consultants and 'youth'. After the Lausanne and Edinburgh Conferences, Continuation Committee attendance averaged about fifty. The figure was similar for the Commission after Lund, but at Aarhus and Bristol there were about ninety full participants. Working Committee attendance has averaged about twenty.

The pre-Edinburgh Theological Committee and Commissions numbered about twelve theologians each, with others providing papers and assistance. After Edinburgh, however, the Commissions averaged about thirty members. In the work leading up to Montreal, the number fell again to about twelve in each group and this has also been so of the many Study Groups since Montreal.

2: TERMINOLOGY

The Term 'Faith & Order'

Many participate in Faith & Order work in its various
Lu, p. 15.


aspects and they vary greatly in their degree of commitment to it; the movement is not a tight, unified group. There are a variety of people who come together for a number of reasons, but primarily because they wish the unity of the Church to be made manifest and they believe that this implies the study of matters of faith and order. As expressed in the Lund Conference's 'Word to the Churches', delegates had come

"to study together what measure of unity in matters of faith, church order and worship exists among our Churches and how we may move towards the fuller unity God wills for us."

This being so, what is meant when, for instance, certain intentions are imputed to 'Faith & Order'? The only answer to this question is that an attempt is made to understand the actions of participants at a particular time. It is not necessary to posit some form of group mind or 'collective consciousness' in order to study aspects of Faith & Order's history. But it is notable that the participants themselves have been conscious, sometimes acutely so, of their role as a group. They frequently refer to themselves as a body with particular values, traditions and goals. And certain groups or individuals assume representative functions; it is often only a small number of people who have a decisive influence on the course of the movement. For this reason, the 'unanimous' findings of a conference have not necessarily been given greater importance in this study than the statements of individuals. The status of the various documents and statements has to be assessed in the light of the way in which they were arrived at and the way in which they were
received. It is in conclusions drawn from attempts to understand such developments that Faith & Order can be referred to as having an identity of its own.

Other Terms

Some of the other terms in this study are defined at the time of their use, but there are three which should be clarified at this stage. The term 'method' is used to describe the means employed in the pursuit of a particular end; here, 'method' generally describes the means which the Faith & Order movement has employed to pursue the end of 'unity'. Thus it may cover, for example, both the 'method of conference' and the theological methods used within a group or conference. To separate such aspects of method by the use of different terms might obscure the fact that they are often closely related. Thus a theological method which emphasizes diversity and empirical assumptions is unlikely to proceed by means of world conferences, but will tend instead to use local study groups.

The two other terms are 'ecumenical' and 'church'. 'Ecumenical' is used here in the general contemporary sense of that which relates to the search for the unity of Christians. The word 'Church' refers to the universal Church as in 'the doctrine of the Church' or 'Christ's Church on earth'. It is also used as a proper name for a particular body of Christians: thus 'the Church of Sweden'. All other senses are covered by 'church'; this is used in a broad sense to refer to an organized body
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of Christians.

3: THE PLACE OF THIS STUDY

There are many passing references to Faith & Order method in the literature of the movement, but there have been no extended studies of its development. In the early period there were several short comments, but these were largely on the style of conferences and were aimed at persuading the cautious to participate. Epting's Ein Gespräch beginnt is a thorough account of the movement's beginnings, but it only covers the period up until 1920.  

In the 1950s there were increasing references to method, most of them semi-political; their purpose was to justify a 'new method' over against an old one. There were, however, some 'outside' studies at this time, such as Thils' Histoire Doctrinale, but this is largely a compendium of Faith & Order 'findings' and deals with method only in passing.  

More recently, as Faith & Order has come to recognize the complexity of the problem facing it, so there have been more careful considerations of method. Vischer touches on the subject in his Documentary History, but the best treatment is Schlink's Some Considerations on Methods. However, this is very brief and it does not deal with the social context of developments in method. A longer treatment is the recent paper on Reflections on the Methods of Faith and Order Study. This is more aware of social context, but its main concern is with the problems arising from the 1971
1 R. Lee, 'The Organizational Dilemma in American Protestantism' in H. Cleveland and H. D. Lasswell (eds), Ethics and Bigness (New York, 1962), p. 188.

Louvain experiment in what has been termed 'inter-contextual' method.

The particular form of this study is determined by its dual aim: both an application of Berger and Luckmann's sociology of knowledge approach and the clarification of Faith & Order methods and changes of method in its attempts to apply its 'idea'. The intention is not to give an exhaustive account of every Faith & Order study. Rather, it is to understand the behaviour of the participants in their efforts to reduce the tension between their conceptions of unity and their knowledge of the situation facing them.

This is therefore to use one perspective among others. There are many alternatives; for example, the framework of 'bureaucracy' could have been used to trace in Faith & Order what has been called the trend from doxology to theology to sociology. The study could have concentrated on the impact of secular thought on ecclesiastical life, or it could have tried to indicate all the references to method in the history of the movement. The approach adopted here is, however, in some degree, both a reaction against the apparent a priori reduction of ecumenical activity to the status of a dependent variable, on the one hand, and against the reduction of it to the status of a free-floating theological exercise, on the other. The objection is to the adoption of theoretical frameworks which exclude the possibility of considering much of the data. Some sociological approaches have seen ecumenical activity only as the dying paroxysms of institutional religion, while other studies have treated Faith & Order statements as
A comparison of B. R. Wilson, Religion in Secular Society (London, 1966) with some studies of Faith & Order in the WCC library (particularly those by Roman Catholics - Thilo's Histoire Doctrinale ... is an early example) demonstrates the two extremes.

1 If they had almost infallible status and a validity, if not for all time, then at least until the next statement. While both of these types of approach are useful for particular purposes, the contention here is that they do not provide such a satisfactory theoretical framework for the study of Faith & Order method.
1 The proposition 'True unity is organic' is of course synthetic, not analytic. The term 'organic unity' has expressed Faith & Order's aim from the beginning - see, for example, the account of the 1913 meeting when it was accepted as 'the ideal which all Christians should have in their thoughts and prayers' - FO 24 (1913), p. 46. Only of late (since 1960) have more widespread doubts been expressed on this. The question of what the term means is a complex one and it has undoubtedly been understood differently by different people. For instance, various degrees of 'organization' may be implied. What appears clear is that the term refers to a full form of union beyond 'mere federation' or intercommunion, that is, with the newly created body demands and receiving greater allegiance than the parts from which it has been created.

2 This raises the question of what is 'essential' for unity; see below, Chapter VI.

II: THE PROBLEM FACING FAITH & ORDER

Critics of ecumenical ideals have often underestimated the depth of conviction that has possessed many who have given their energies to the pursuit of unity, and the strength of their belief that the unity of the Church is of the very essence of the Christian faith. But what is the nature of this unity and how is it to be realized? Limited co-operation in the allocation of aid would satisfy few as being true unity. Again, an assertion that common faith in Christ was sufficient indication of unity would not meet with general agreement.

To put this differently, Christian life is experienced on a number of levels, and many would hold that unity on one level does not necessarily imply that there is (or that there can be) unity on others. If the aim is 'true unity' or, as it has frequently been expressed in Faith & Order, 'organic unity', it may be believed that account must be taken of levels other than the spiritual and the practical. 1

Yet much of the impetus towards more 'difficult' forms of unity comes from the achievement of 'easier' forms. Christians who 'feel' united in Christ or who co-operate in practice, often wish to go further. Faith & Order was founded in the conviction that true unity entails agreement in matters of faith and order, and it was thus committed to working on a level at which many difficulties are encountered. 2 To take an extreme example, the Orthodox Churches have frequently expressed their spiritual unity with other Christians and have promoted the idea of
Christian co-operation; yet their conception of unity in faith and order involves agreement on "the total, dogmatic Faith of the early, undivided Church without either subtraction or alteration" and on episcopal succession from the Apostles: characteristics which they insist have only been preserved in the Orthodox Churches.¹ This could be called the Orthodox 'distinctive witness' for it is what they hold to be essential for true unity. Other churches also have more or less clearly formulated their 'distinctive witness'.

The problem for Faith & Order rests on the fact that, in their particular search for unity, these commitments have to be taken seriously. The task is to make manifest the unity which is the object of so much enthusiasm, yet without offending against the distinctive beliefs of groups of Christians. The problem has been that of reducing or resolving the tension between the conception of unity articulated by Faith & Order and the divided state of the churches. Thus, if unity is understood as the meeting of a truly ecumenical Council which shall include the Orthodox, but the Orthodox refuse to participate in loyalty to their distinctive conception of what an ecumenical Council should be, unity has not been achieved. A 'distinctive witness' legitimates continued disunity.

In this chapter, the problem facing Faith & Order will be considered first in relation to 'spiritual' and 'practical' unity and then in an examination of what is meant by 'distinctive witness'.
I: SPIRITUAL UNITY

Given Unity

The unity in faith experienced by Christians was called 'given unity' at the Amsterdam Assembly. The meaning of this phrase has never been worked out in detail. It was intended to indicate the unity which Christians had been given in Christ and which drew them together through the work of the Holy Spirit. In spite of deep divisions, they felt united in a sense and 'given unity' was the term used to describe this. Indeed it was unity in Christ which made them conscious of their differences.

Although the phrase 'given unity' was different from that employed at earlier Faith & Order meetings, some sense of what Christians already had in common had been expressed on many occasions. Thus the phrase 'inner unity' was used at the 1920 Geneva meeting, indicating the unity which comes from devotion to the same Lord. Similar convictions had found expression at Lausanne, particularly in the report on The Church's Common Confession of Faith. And, in his opening sermon at Edinburgh, Temple said:

"Let us never forget that, though the purpose of our meeting is to consider the causes of our divisions, yet what makes possible our meeting is our unity. Those who have nothing in common do not deplore their estrangement. It is because we are one in allegiance to one Lord that we seek and hope for the way of manifesting that unity in our witness to Him before the world."

After the WCC had been formed, statements about it, particularly the Central Committee's 1950 'Toronto Statement', attempted to convey what membership in it signified. 'Given
1 Statement on the ecclesiological significance of the WCC: 'The Church, the Churches and the World Council of Churches' in Vischer, A Documentary History ..., pp. 167-76; p. 176.

2 W. A. Visser't Hooft, The Pressure of Our Common Calling (London, 1959), pp. 83-90. Written when 'churchly' unity was a popular Faith & Order expression - see below, pp. 121-2. Visser't Hooft experienced the 'rediscovery of the Church' in the 1930s: "I belong to the generation which has discovered the importance of visible unity, and which reacted strongly against earlier generations which had said that invisible unity was enough": Interview.

unity' had been partially realized. Members had discovered "a very real unity" and could say

"We praise God for this foretaste of the unity of His People and continue hopefully with the work to which he has called us together."¹

The will to realize 'given unity' has been a common theme in Faith & Order work, particularly in the period after the Lund Conference.

Invisible and Visible

Those who have stressed the 'given unity' of Christians have often emphasized that it is not enough. Thus Visser't Hooft, in discussing the verse John 17:23 (Jesus' prayer that all believers may become perfectly one) says that unity is not

"a Platonic idea or a fine sentiment hid in the souls of the faithful, which does not find concrete expression in their common life and common witness."

The 'vertical' unity in Christ must (he says) be extended 'horizontally', not only in action, speech, worship and common prayer, but also in the 'churchly' unity of faith and order. But this in turn is only a stage towards the full eschatological unity of all in Christ.²

What this is attempting to guard against is any pietist 'spiritualizing' of the Church. Such attacks often criticize the 'docetism' of a so-called purely spiritual conception of unity. Docetism was the name applied to various tendencies in the Early Church towards treating the concrete, suffering, human reality of Christ as in some sense 'mere appearance'. But the term is extended to refer to any tendency to
By E. Schlink: NO, p. 134. Schlink was a prominent participant, especially in the 1950s. For other references by him to 'docetism' see Lu, p. 159 and The Coming Christ and the Coming Church, p. 9. Another who used the term was K. R. Bridston, a Faith & Order Secretary: FOC 31 (1960), p. 6 and 'Faith and Order 1960', Lutheran World, vol. vii (1960), p. 312.

Critics of this distinction may still use the term 'invisible Church' but this refers to 'departed saints' and not to the faithful on earth. This led to confusion at Lausanne, when it was at first thought that the Orthodox (who use the term in the former sense) agreed with the Lutherans (who often use it in the latter sense): see F. A. Iremonger, William Temple (London, 1948), pp. 400-1. E. Brunner's Misunderstandings of the Church (transl. London, 1952) is an example of support of an 'invisible' unity.

S. Cadman, an American Congregationalist: La, p. 115 and p. 126. The view on theory is quoted from Goethe's Faust, Pt I.

depreciate public or objective expressions of the Christian faith. Thus the fuller statement of the nature of unity at the New Delhi Assembly was welcomed as a stage in overcoming "ecclesiological docetism".1

Similar criticisms are brought against the Reformation distinction between the 'invisible' and the 'visible' Church.2 Some have held that the true Church is in essence an invisible body (because man is saved and made a member of the Church by faith) and that little emphasis need therefore be put on its visible manifestations.

Spiritual Unity and Doctrinal Expression

If, as one of the speakers concluded at Lausanne, it is believed that the Church's "chief glory consists of regenerate souls who are the living stones built into her spiritual fabric" and that

"All theory, my friend, is gray,
But green is life's bright golden tree"3

then certainly there is an incentive to worship, to meet together and to co-operate, but the institutional divisions of the churches and their doctrinal disagreements do not seem to merit much attention, failing as they do to touch the true Church which is of the spirit.

The pietist and (in some cases) the mystic believe that they have a means of escape from letter and organization which kill, by means of an inner life of the spirit. They often suppose that they can transcend the intellectual and cultural relativities inevitably involved in doctrinal formulation. For, in Otto's words, it is held that
"there are ... strong primal impulses working in the human soul which as such are completely unaffected by differences of climate, of geographical position or of race". ¹

Such is the religious experience to which the many advocates of 'universal faith' or 'perennial religion' appeal, referring to it on occasion as the "vivid and personal confrontation with the splendor and the love of God". Intellectual reflection makes controversy, but on the personal and spiritual level is found truth: "The traditions evolve. Men's faith varies. God endures." ²

So men have sought to avoid those objective formulations of faith which are open to analysis and to adopt another way of knowing, freed from the world of rational debate. ³ Such attitudes are sometimes branded epistemologically as fideistic, seeking as they seem to do, a kind of immunity to all critical scrutiny.

But, as Smart has pointed out, there is no sharp dichotomy between spiritual and doctrinal. All doctrinal statements have an 'open texture' not only because it is the partially-understood which is communicated, but also because "the language of expression needs, if it is to be commonly adopted in the form of doctrines and their attendant rituals, a certain looseness to accommodate the spiritual reactions of different individuals." ⁴

The more mystical language is "almost unintelligible and certainly a little bizarre, when it appears in the environment of academic debate and metaphysical argumentation."

Yet there are (in Smart's language) "more realistic" forms
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Yet there are (in Smart's language) "more realistic" forms
which are less speculative and which express a religious position without being divorced from everyday life.\footnote{1}

Theological statements are said to 'point beyond themselves' to the mystery of God. Thus they have a built-in inadequacy. Particular statements are made in particular contexts, yet strive to escape from them. But the statements' necessary imprecision makes them often both paradoxical and ambiguous. Thus various interpretations may be given to any one expression, and what has meaning for one person or church may be meaningless for others. This point was made by W. Stählin at the 1936 Continuation Committee meeting:

"The main question is not how far we can overcome differences and come to one mind, but how far it is part of God's providential ordering that we should acknowledge as a mark of our human finitude the fact that we can only interpret the central truth from different sides."\footnote{2}

He was calling for recognition of the complementary nature of various expressions of a reality which eludes definition. Somewhat in the manner of the 'conceits' of the Metaphysical Poets, it may be seen as necessary to 'strike together' two or more very different statements of belief in order to come nearer to the truth. Thus, in his plea for "convictions on all sides" in the Church of South India, E. J. Palmer could say:

"We have ... thought our convictions and those of others to be mutually incompatible. But in the form in which they exist in God's mind they fit together like the bits of a mortise."\footnote{3}

One way of explaining past disagreement or making
possible future agreement is thus to point to the insufficiency of any doctrinal formulation; it is a divine truth which is expressed, so a new formula may be no more inadequate than the one it seeks to replace. So Schleiermacher, when he suggested the formula

"There is a single divine fore-ordination, according to which the totality of the new creation is called into being out of the general mass of the human race"

to reconcile Reformed and Lutheran traditions on predestination, added that it "expresses nothing real" unless it is seen in relation to each individual in the light of the high-priestly dignity of Christ.¹

Any agreement in a Faith & Order document assumes this character to some extent. And it is easier to achieve agreement when a statement can make use of the inadequacy of words to express a divine truth, without appearing to ignore any 'distinctive witness'. As the Chairman of the committee to draft a closing affirmation pointed out at Edinburgh,

"thanks to the subject being neither politics, economics, nor even theology, we are able to present a unanimous draft."²

The difficulty is to balance the denotary and the connotatory sense of words in statements of what is considered essential for unity. Any theological phrase is open to charges of compromise or ambiguity:

"'Ambiguity' itself means an indecision as to what you mean, an intention to mean several things, a probability that one or other or both of two things has been meant, and the fact that a statement has several meanings."³

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1 It is possible that success in arriving at joint statements has in part been a consequence of the use of English as the drafting language. This point has been made (in interviews) by some WCC Staff whose native language is not English, but who are impressed by its capacity for imprecision when compared with the alternatives: French and German. Faith & Order's 'professional drafters' have often been English-speaking: Temple, D. S. Tomkins, and at present, J. Deschner.

2 FOC 38 (1963), p. 28: report of the N. American Section on 'Christ and the Church'.


Criticisms of 'ecumenese' or 'conference English' may merely be criticisms of style, but if they refer to ambiguity, what is generally being said is that a particular statement masks a disagreement on 'essentials'.

Faith & Order endorses the spiritual unity of Christians yet it seeks to avoid the theological and ecclesiological indifferentism to which such unity might lead. In the words of one theological Commission: "God cannot be 'bound' by ... words, creeds, rites, and ministries. On the other hand, we should not so press this point that the Church becomes a community with no identifying structures possessing historical continuity."

2: PRACTICAL CONSENSUS

The above discussion was concerned with Faith & Order's task of building on the spiritual unity of Christians, yet not allowing recognition of this unity to become an excuse for a lack of interest in theology and in visible unity. There is a similar problem over practical Christian cooperation. The report of the Life & Work movement's Stockholm Conference said in 1925: "Leaving for the time our differences in Faith and Order, our aim has been to secure united practical action in Christian Life and Work."

It is true that in the 1930s this separation was found to be difficult, but this was in a particular situation of adversity, when it was discovered that solidarity necessitated theological expression. At other times, Christians have found it quite possible to co-operate 'as if' they agreed doctrinally and have indeed advocated such action.
The original form of this phrase was W. Kapler's 'Doctrine divides, service unites': used in 1922 to support the separation of the conferences of Faith & Order and Life & Work (at that time being planned for 1925).

D. Bell, *The End of Ideology* (New York, 1964), e.g. p. 373.

as a way of responding to challenges in the world without being held up by intransigence over 'minor' points of doctrine, or by theological wrangling at conferences. In certain circumstances it has been found that the spirit unites and service unites but that doctrine divides. 1

An End of Ideology

The justification for joint action without theoretical elaboration is often found in the belief that the theoreticians are taking too long to agree or that their disagreements are irrelevant to the task in hand. In the latter case the assumption is that there are very good reasons for taking a particular course of action, and that 'values' or 'ideology' can be disregarded. There is unity in 'praxis', in finding joint solutions to the problems which the world offers.

A useful illustration of this can be found in Bell's *The End of Ideology*. 2 Writing in 1964, he held that the nineteenth-century ideological debates had been exhausted and had become relativized in the 1950s. Instead of losing emotional energy on such arguments or on religion, there was a new basis for co-operation and a "rough consensus among intellectuals on political issues". He thought that most enlightened men would approve of a plan devised by impartial and reasonable experts. They could be free of values because the decision as to what should be done did not need values; it emerged from the given facts of the situation.

Similarly it is held that there can be co-operation on one level while there is still disagreement on another:
not so much an 'end of ideology' as a suspension or ignorance of it. Such an approach requires some basic agreement, for instance on the 'quality of human being', but does not elaborate. Thus an orthodox Marxist and an orthodox Christian would disagree, but more liberal proponents might find co-operation possible. The 'pure' Marxist would see Christianity as an illusion whereby the attention of the oppressed is deflected from serious engagement with the realities of their situation. Marx and Engels called Christian socialism the holy water with which the priest consecrates the heartburning of the aristocrat; for them the religious had no part in constructing the future. The Christian in his turn would see the Marxist as guilty of sinful overconfidence in his own ability to change the world and to diagnose history. But if, as MacIntyre has pointed out, the original content is modified and a more general moralized version both of Marxism and of Christianity is developed, dialogue and co-operation become possible.¹ The point here is not to fix on the reasons why both have developed a form of 'utopian socialism' (although MacIntyre suggests some) but to appreciate that when this is done there is often common interest where there was formerly none. What is true of Marxists and Christians is true a fortiori of different groups of Christians.

Christian activism is often justified as 'getting on with the job while the theologians talk'; in fact it is a cruder form of Life & Work's original programme. There is a search for a minimum essential agreement and a stress on

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2 For example, Dr A. Brash, Chairman of the WCC Programme Unit on Justice and Service and the Director of Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service, expressed this view in conversation. This demonstrates the ease with which 'radical theology' can be married to action rather than on doctrine. On this basis man is called to make use of his potential, his creative powers and his reason, in solving the practical problems of the world and moving towards some goal under the guidance of God: a variation of what is often called 'humanism'. Thus Morris, in his criticism of the churches and of the ecumenical movement, finds himself neutral where unity schemes are concerned: "the only unity the modern world possesses is functional". He adds that it is not God who is dead but theology; what is important is the "humanely useful".1

Attitudes of this sort have had some popularity in the WCC. Co-operation in the solution of practical human problems was the cause for which the Council 'in process of formation' grew in the 1940s and a large part of its work has continued to be focussed on such concerns as inter-church aid and development. For the young, the ecumenical movement has often meant work camps and joint projects; there has been more emphasis on action and practical problems than on theological matters. Such concentration is justified in broad humanitarian-Christian terms and may be coupled with a conviction that this is where theology is 'really being done'.2

Such thinking may encourage the belief that it is not to each other but to the world that theologians must look in their search for unity. This is commended in the hope that doctrinal unity will emerge as a by-product from joint engagement in the tasks of the world. This demonstrates...
belief in a 'practical consensus'. If the ecumenical movement is thought to speak less about relations among churches than about relations between churches and the world, then the world has a certain right to 'write the agenda'.

The similarity between this state of affairs and the 'end of ideology' thesis is marked. Solutions are not deduced from an 'ideology'; rather, they emerge from common confrontation of the problems of mankind.

**Values**

The general reaction to this sort of pragmatism sometimes takes the form of an assertion of the need for 'values'; the view that decisions arise out of situations in the manner described is rejected. In T. S. Eliot's words, the feeling is that "to exist in amity people need something more in common than a dance step or a universal mastery of Ford cars." Simey, in *Social Science and Social Purpose*, makes a detailed attack on Bell's *The End of Ideology* and on any possibility of a positivist escape from values. He argues that Weber's concept of 'value-freedom' has been misused and that the agreements it was hoped to reach from such a starting-point have not materialized. In order for men to live as moral beings, Simey says that they must have a choice of values. To claim that a system of ultimate beliefs becomes less necessary as factual knowledge is extended, is wrong, for such knowledge merely provides the basis on which more intelligent decisions may be made.

*Faith & Order* is similarly dedicated to the level of
values'. A not unrepresentative remark from a prominent participant characterized exclusively practical co-operation of the churches as "an industrial combine floated on hot air". But ever since the formation of the WCC (and to a lesser extent before this) Faith & Order has been aware that its role has not been accepted as spectacular. A comparison of the interest shown in the Montreal Conference with that shown in the 'Church and Society' Conference on 'Christians in the Technical and Social Revolution of our Time', illustrates Faith & Order's secondary position in this respect. As there is unity in seeing 'practical' issues as important and this unity crosses old lines of doctrinal division, there is here a source of inspiration for theological discussion. But Faith & Order has not always succeeded in harnessing it; their special concerns are often ignored in the urgent attempt to confront the world.

Faith & Order is thus faced with the question of its true role, which is related to the question 'what is theology?'. It may give a comparatively exclusive answer to this as it did in the earlier years. Such an answer implies dissociation from the immediate concerns of 'the world' and, although considered irrelevant by many, the pursuit of 'pure' traditional interests according to its own criteria of relevance. Or it can let the world 'write the agenda' to a greater or lesser extent. On the whole, the trend has been towards the latter course. After Montreal, the relationship between the doctrines of redemption and


2 The latter conference was in Geneva (1966). See below, Appendix 1.
creation became a prime concern: what a member of the Working Committee called "the clearer realization of the complexities of contemporary theological issues in relation to the world at large".  

3: 'DISTINCTIVE WITNESS'
The Importance of 'Distinctive Witness'

Unity in spirit and action cut across traditional Christian divisions. Such a department of the WCC as 'Inter-Church Aid' can rely on this unity and does not have to solve the doctrinal problems which appear to prevent 'organic' unity, although it may think that it is contributing to their solution in an indirect manner. But Faith & Order cannot avoid some 'distinctive witness' commitments. Its 'mandate' points clearly to its concern with relations between churches, with the objective manifestation of unity and with the study of faith, order and worship in their relation to unity.

Both Christians as a whole and separate churches have always been conscious of their 'marks of difference', the marks by which one group is distinguished from another. Thus baptism is accepted by most churches as a mark or 'distinctive' for all Christians and its acceptance as such is not an ecumenical problem. Only when the questions of the age at which it is to be administered and the qualifications of the catechumen, are raised, does the 'distinctive witness' of particular churches become apparent, as in the controversy over whether there should be baptism only of
Such a divergence was well illustrated in a correspondence in The Times in Sept. 1967 after an article 'A Layman's view of Christian Unity' had expressed impatience.

If one view is then seen as excluding another and the disagreement is on an important point, then unity has not been achieved. Many individuals in the churches concerned may not be very confessionally minded but it is those who are who must be satisfied. If this is not done the result may not be unity but a further division created in order to preserve 'sacred traditions' or 'historic principles'.

Whatever else may be done to the concept 'unity', it cannot convincingly be unilaterally declared. The 'progressively' minded may point to the dangers of an introverted confessionalism and the doctrinally conservative may fear a polite relativism, yet it is the latter who are of crucial importance for they are needed in a united Church. What the advocates of unity seek to prevent is a new split between themselves and the conservatives; a division between what the latter might call 'trimmers' and 'men of principle'.

It is often remarked that disagreements do not now run along the old lines of division - for example, concerning attitudes to scripture. This is true and may be an encouragement (only partial, however, for there is then the need for a 'contemporary' as well as a 'classical' ecumenism), but it still leaves the more traditional concerns to be dealt with and it is often these which make up the 'distinctives' of a church's identity. And to say that there is no bar to unity once the disagreements within a particular church have become as great as those between churches is to be sociologically naive; for this is to overlook the depths
at which a church's identity is experienced. Once a unity has been formed, it can often contain greater differences within itself than can be approved in uniting with others.

The distinctive commitments of the churches constitute both the material for unity and the hindrance to it, so it is not surprising that Faith & Order's attitude to them is somewhat ambivalent. The movement can afford to stress issues which are not too divisive in order to manifest what unity there is, because it does not itself sponsor actual negotiations. It can therefore avoid some of the more controversial subjects. This may explain the fact that, whereas the doctrine of the ministry has been the central concern of many union negotiations, there are periods when it has been left aside by Faith & Order. The whole spectrum of positions meet in its discussions whereas union negotiations are more restricted and pragmatic. 'Order' provides the main thread of continuity in many bodies (at least in the view of the ordained) and a change of this may seem to involve a change in a whole organizational identity which is deeply confirmed by belief and culture. Thus the very reason why negotiations appear to spend so inordinate a time in dealing with questions of ministry can explain why Faith & Order has at times avoided it. The former are trying to solve a difficult problem; the latter is endeavouring both to solve problems and to demonstrate the unity of a wide range of Christians.

The Fear of Relativism

At the end of the book A History of the Ecumenical
Movement 1517-1948 the question is asked "why so little positive achievement has followed on so much devoted effort". One answer given is that

"periods of advance through comparative disregard of dogmatic difficulties have been followed by periods marked by a resurgence of confessional precision. Doctrinal rigidity has intervened to check movements towards union which, from the point of view of confessional correctness, would involve lax and timid compromises at the expense of truth."\(^1\)

The question often asked by Christians is whether, once a start in the direction of unity is made, the process can ever end until all articulate positions have become meaningless. The fear is of indifferentism and eclecticism: of what an article in The Tablet once called "theological cafeterias".\(^2\)

This was Knox's point in his satirical piece (written in his Anglican days) Reunion all Round, which was a "plea for the Inclusion within the Church of England of all Mahometans, Jews, Buddhists, Brahmins, Papists, and Atheists" on the ground that all beliefs are equally true. In his proposed Church

"nobody will be expected to recite the whole Creed, but only such Clauses as he finds relish in; it being anticipated that, with good Fortune, a large congregation will usually manage to recite the whole Formula between them."\(^3\)

Knox was pointing out that whenever there is any change there is the possibility of losing a part of the truth.

The truth, for a religious body, is of particular significance; this is the aim to which its existence is dedicated and any one 'truth' may be assumed to have been

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The Bishop of Willesden in a letter to The Times, 13th July 1968.

On social and cultural factors see below, pp. 204-7.


given by God. Changes of commitment are therefore particularly difficult to make, and there is opposition to those who "seek to achieve unity at the cost of ignoring the givenness of Christian truth". There is fear of an alien institution, negotiated impersonally, and destructive of exactly that truth which is most precious. The many assurances that 'unity does not mean uniformity' and that 'each brings his own identity to a united Church' have frequently been unconvinging.

Identity

The identity of a body of Christians is not something which is readily defined, as Faith & Order has discovered. In the early years it was generally assumed that if church leaders agreed on doctrinal matters, then there was no barrier to unity. But, with experience, it was appreciated that there were other levels to be investigated. From 1937 the less obviously theological dimensions of life were labelled 'non-theological factors', and it was later suggested that the claim to 'historic principles' and 'sacred traditions' often conceals corporate pride and the fear of loss of face. Political, social and psychological factors were blamed for continuing disunity.

Much of this had been said by H. R. Niebuhr in his The Social Sources of Denominationalism, where he examined the churches' acceptance of cultural divisions. He advocated only a "reasonable adjustment to social conditions" and saw a solution through the hearts of the peace-makers: "The road to unity is the road to repentance". This reasoning was
pleasing to ecumenical enthusiasts, for it gave suggestions for future work and an explanation of past failure. There was hesitation, however, in drawing the further conclusion: namely, that all Christian beliefs, whether for unity or division, are socially conditioned.  

The appreciation of a notion of 'identity' gradually convinced Faith & Order that it must broaden its scope to take into account the fact that Christian life has many interrelated levels and that it may be whole 'identities' which are unwilling to unite. Not only does this imply a method of work which is capable of approaching more levels than the doctrinal in isolation; it also implies a recognition that different levels may respond at different rates. For instance, doctrinal agreement on a particular issue may not be reached at the same time as a more diffuse 'consensus fidelium'.

The Conference Effect

'Distinctive witness' commitments are made more prominent by an effect which ecumenical participation has on some churches, or at least on their delegates. The effect is to strengthen a distinctive position which will legitimate a church in the eyes of others with whom it is 'in dialogue'. Writing on confessional associations (e.g. 'Reformed' or 'Lutheran'), Visser't Hooft sees the ecumenical movement as forcing all to reflect on the significance of their heritages and therefore to ask: "What can our confessional family contribute to the wider ecumenical family? What is the basic truth for which it must stand at all cost?"
2. 1 Corinthians 12 (on the diversity of gifts) is the usual text for such convictions.
3. Vischer, *A Documentary History* ..., p. 175; there are numerous similar assurances in Faith & Order documents.

The 'conference effect' is noticeable when the answer to this question is not entirely clear. There is then a tendency either to find something on which to take a stand, or to lay greater stress on beliefs already held. The position reached, according to the standards of ecumenical method and manners, has to be respected by others. In the words of Henderson,

"it is ... one of the faults of the Ecumenical Movement that it urges churches which have largely shed their nuttiness to take seriously the nuttiness of those which have not".\(^1\)

In an environment where the variety of gifts of the Spirit is frequently stressed and where each is expected to bring a contribution to the whole, it becomes important for each to have a contribution to bring.\(^2\)

This tendency was particularly noticeable in the early, more exploratory, period. And once the WCC was formed, its own ecclesiological significance was expressed with great caution. As the Toronto statement spelled out in detail, membership of the WCC did not imply that it merited any ecclesiological recognition. There was a place for all; the "positive affirmation of each Church's faith is to be welcomed".\(^3\) Thus a particular 'distinctive witness' often assumes a totemic significance. The result may not be a will to unite; rather it may be an increased loyalty to the riches of a particular ecclesiastical heritage.

The two main sociological studies of this phenomenon are Lee's and Berger's. In Lee's analysis (which is of the American situation) he calls those groups which put
The Social Sources of Church Unity (New York, 1960), especially Chapter VIII. Lee uses 'denomination' in the sense commonly employed in sociology: a religious body which neither makes universal claims nor is it characterized by sectarian exclusiveness.

2 P. L. Berger, 'A Market Model for the Analysis of Ecumenicity', Social Research, vol. xxx (1963), pp. 77-93. 'Comity' is defined by Lee as the "cooperative effort of Protestants to meet the total religious needs of a given locality": Lee, The Social Sources ..., p. 169.


Berger approaches the problem in two places. In A Market Model for the analysis of Ecumenicity, he gives a 'market' account of the conduct of American denominations, banding together to rationalize competition in the pluralistic religious situation (through 'comity') and to satisfy middle-class consumers. A standardized product is arrived at, but denominational differences are still functional in providing 'marginal differentiation', which satisfies slight variations in taste and provides a reason for remaining in the market at all. Berger therefore criticizes Lee for seeing denominationalism as 'countervailing movements'. His thesis is that the increase in church unity springs in considerable measure from growing cultural unity and he therefore seeks reasons why certain movements of 'denominationalism' go against this trend. He gives some reasons and points out that denominational consciousness increases as they develop 'sales organizations'. But he also argues that this development does not always inhibit ecumenical activity, for much ecumenical work is done by the very denominations which appear to be most conscious of their distinctive positions. He concludes that the relationship of denominationalism to ecumenism is antithetical in some cases but not in others.

Although the 'market model' has some uses, Berger has tried to make it too inclusive. He has not only paid little great stress on their distinctive positions, 'countervailing movements'.

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2 P. L. Berger, 'A Market Model for the Analysis of Ecumenicity', Social Research, vol. xxx (1963), pp. 77-93. 'Comity' is defined by Lee as the "cooperative effort of Protestants to meet the total religious needs of a given locality": Lee, The Social Sources ..., p. 169.

great stress on their distinctive positions, 'countervailing movements'. His thesis is that the increase in church unity springs in considerable measure from growing cultural unity and he therefore seeks reasons why certain movements of 'denominationalism' go against this trend. He gives some reasons and points out that denominational consciousness increases as they develop 'sales organizations'. But he also argues that this development does not always inhibit ecumenical activity, for much ecumenical work is done by the very denominations which appear to be most conscious of their distinctive positions. He concludes that the relationship of denominationalism to ecumenism is antithetical in some cases but not in others.

Berger approaches the problem in two places. In A Market Model for the analysis of Ecumenicity, he gives a 'market' account of the conduct of American denominations, banding together to rationalize competition in the pluralistic religious situation (through 'comity') and to satisfy middle-class consumers. A standardized product is arrived at, but denominational differences are still functional in providing 'marginal differentiation', which satisfies slight variations in taste and provides a reason for remaining in the market at all. Berger therefore criticizes Lee for seeing denominationalism as 'countervailing', returning to this criticism in The Social Reality of Religion, where he no longer restricts his model to the American situation.

Although the 'market model' has some uses, Berger has tried to make it too inclusive. He has not only paid little


...attention to Lee's qualification to his theory (namely that denominationalism is not always anti-ecumenical); he has also underestimated what he calls the 'product loyalty' of church members. The reason for these failings seems to be that Berger has simply carried over an analysis which he once held to have little application outside the 'pluralistic free market' of the USA and applied it to 'ecumenicity' in general without alteration.¹ Paradoxically it is Lee's analysis (of the American situation) which best describes the situation for Faith & Order, while Berger's (which is supposed to have general application) is too much conditioned by his wish for a neat 'market model' and by the peculiarities of its American origin.

The strain which ecumenical participation puts on the legitimating beliefs of religious bodies means that their members have, at times, the power to organize a 'countervailing movement', which not only holds up ecumenical activity which would otherwise have occurred, but may also prove disfunctional from a 'market' point of view.

4: KAIROS

Faith & Order is faced with the tension between the idea of unity and the fact of 'countervailing movements' and it has developed methods for reducing this tension. But it is not surprising that those who want unity and believe it to be an important truth, wish to accelerate the process. If unity is God's will for his Church, if it is urgent that his will should quickly be manifested,
and if the present time is particularly suitable, then there can be said to be an opportunity which must not be allowed to pass: a 'kairos' for unity, in the light of which distinctive positions must be seen. If there has been a tension between 'unity' and 'truth', but it is then affirmed that visible unity is part of the truth of the Gospel itself, it is possible that lesser truths might have to be assimilated to this new state of affairs.

At first it was thought that this might come about through a natural process of reconciliation. As Brent, the early Faith & Order leader, said at the 1920 Geneva meeting,

"We cannot destroy the purpose of God. We may delay it, we may for the time being frustrate it, but eventually He will bring about that glorious day for which the human heart is hungry."

This statement implied that unity is God's will, that it must be realized in due time and that those opposing it are only conducting a holding operation. And in 1933 the Continuation Committee was able to say that Faith & Order had been created in order to perish:

"with that final reconciliation of disagreements for which we work and pray, the Lausanne movement will first sing 'Laus Deo' and then 'Nunc Dimittis'."

In later years hope of reconciliation diminished and the idea of sacrifice in the cause of unity became more popular. This fitted in with the new method of the 1950s, designed (as it was) to get behind traditional views and to work from the central unity in Christ. It was then
thought that the realization of given unity might sanction an eschatological suspension of confessionalism so that a breakthrough could be made:

"what are the elements in our own tradition, separating us from others, which can not be justified in the light of the judgement to come?" 1

Alternatively it might be possible to 'hold over' some contributions for the united Church of the future. Indeed Hodgson suggested this possibility as a solution to the problems associated with the notion of 'apostolic succession':

"In this interim period of disorganization between the disruption of the past and the reunion of the future, [God] wills us to recognize the equality of His sacramental activity in episcopal and non-episcopal bodies alike." 2

One reason for the change in the 1950s was the difficulty of retaining enthusiasm once the original impetus had been lost. It is necessary for a 'movement' to feel that it is progressing - that the 'kairos' is now. There have been frequent references in Faith & Order to 'turning points', 'breakthroughs' and 'responsible risk'. 3 Since 1963, however, with greater emphasis on diversity, less certainty of aim, and growing appreciation of the complexity of Faith & Order's problem, there have been less indications of urgency.

5: CONCLUSION

The affirmation of a 'kairos' is a way of trying to push Faith & Order's problem towards a solution. In this chapter the problem has been discussed. The movement has
some interest in the theological relativism to which the advocates of spiritual unity and practical consensus tend. If all 'distinctive witness' positions were set fast and seen as mutually exclusive, there would be no scope for Faith & Order.

But it is important also to appreciate the limits of this interest in relativism. Not only is Faith & Order's task defined as a theological one (and whatever devalues theology detracts from the point of this task), but it is also true that its whole purpose is to arrive at a common conception of unity and to work towards its realization. Neither 'spiritual' nor 'practical' unity will alone be generally accepted as 'true unity'.

The movement was founded in the conviction that 'spiritual' and 'practical' unity are not enough, although they are a start on the road to true unity. This conviction means that Faith & Order must deal with the 'distinctive witness' stands of Christians; its central problem has been that of reducing or resolving the tension between an idea of unity and a situation of division. If there were agreement on the nature of unity and on the fact that Christians had reached unity, the problem would have been solved.
III: A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH

The task facing Faith & Order has been described as the resolution or reduction of the tension between a conception of unity and a situation of division. The aim of this chapter is to develop a theoretical framework for a sociological study of the attempts to perform this task.

To do this, it must be asked what sort of situation is to be studied: what are the characteristics of the history of Faith & Order's attempts to solve its problem which might suggest the most adequate theoretical approach.

First, it is the history of efforts to put into effect an 'idea'. A group gathered which believed in the truth of a particular proposition, namely that Christians should be united. There has been an interaction between an 'idea' and a situation. The situation has largely been that of the divisions of the churches, but these divisions are set in a wider context.

Secondly, unity has been sought in faith and order. This has been seen as implying a specialized approach: different from that pursued at first by other movements such as Life & Work, and subsequently by other departments within the WCC. The material with which Faith & Order has worked has largely been that of 'theology' in a fairly academic sense of that term. It has been to 'Christian theory', to the beliefs which have legitimated the unity and separation of Christians, that attention has primarily been directed.
These two characteristics: the dialectic between an idea and a situation, and the theoretical nature of the material with which Faith & Order has worked, are important considerations in the discussion of an adequate sociological perspective. The contention here is that the sociology of knowledge frame of reference set out in the work of Berger and Luckmann, provides an illuminating approach.¹

1: THE APPROACH OF BERGER AND LUCKMANN

'Idealist' and 'Positivist'

Berger and Luckmann in their book The Social Construction of Reality and Berger in his The Social Reality of Religion claim to have made possible a form of theoretical synthesis of Weberian and Durkheimian sociological approaches without losing the fundamental intention of either.² It is useful to look at what this claim amounts to.

Weber's work is characterized by study of what could be called 'events of consciousness'. He said that "Both for sociology in its present sense, and for history, the object of cognition is the subjective meaning-complex of action".³ Weber endeavoured to understand human intentions, to grasp feelings and beliefs, not through any effort to become the person he was concerned with or enter mysteriously into his experience (as in the use of intuition or empathy), but by an attempt at an explanatory interpretative understanding of the meaning of behaviour, a method which he termed 'verstehen'. Weber called this "rational understanding of motivation, which consists in placing the act in an
intelligible and more inclusive context of meaning."\(^1\)

His emphasis in study was on individuals as opposed to collectivities; his aim was to reach explanations of the social actions of individuals in terms of the meanings to the individuals themselves. The sociologist makes 'ideal' (or 'ideal type') extrapolations from cultural history (such as 'capitalism' or 'rationality') and uses these to frame hypotheses. Individual motives are the basis from which Weber starts. His is a non-positivist method, which looks for the norms and rules acknowledged by individuals engaged in meaningful action. Importance is given to ideals and ideas (to the order of values being used) as much as to material interests; the aim is to understand men in society. This could be described as a form of 'existential psychology'; emphasis is on what gives an action meaning in a particular situation.

Weber's method for investigating conscious goal-seeking behaviour was to seek 'adequate' reasons why a particular explanation might be seen as probable:

"A correct causal interpretation of a concrete course of action is arrived at when the overt action and the motive have both been correctly apprehended and at the same time their relation has become meaningfully comprehensible".\(^2\)

This approach has since been called the search for 'contingently sufficient conditions', that is the conditions which account for the difference between the 'event' confronting one and the state of affairs which one would otherwise be observing.\(^3\) In an explanation, 'ideas' may be seen as causes or as consequences: as leading to

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2. Ibid., p. 99.

2 'Value-free' is here used in the narrow Weberian sense of avoiding, in sociological study, the standards by which the social scientist himself judges conduct, and in the sense of not indulging in deliberate misrepresentations such as might come about in the confusion of propaganda and investigation. Selection of subject-matter and method implies 'values' in a wider sense. See W. G. Runciman, A Critique of Max Weber's Philosophy of Social Science (Cambridge, 1972), p. 59.

empirically discernible changes in the social structure, or as dependent on the social structure. In the best-known example, the interpretation put on certain Calvinist beliefs was seen by Weber as the contingently sufficient condition for behaviour which stimulated capitalism. As Weber has been paraphrased: "it is enough for us to know that things would have been different"¹ - different, that is, had the Calvinist beliefs not been professed and acted on.

Weber cannot be described as an 'idealist'. Sociology was for him a matter of discovery, not of artistic intuition; he avoided the idealistic distortions which can come from a disregard for the sense in which man is socially constrained. This he did by agreeing with the 'positivists' that the social sciences must be value-free and causal.² And the verification of his methods came through observation of what happens: through quantitative appraisal, or if that was impossible, comparison.

But Weber's work has been used to draw 'idealist' conclusions, by concentration on 'verstehen' without the checks mentioned. Thus Winch in his The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy sees statistics as perhaps giving added powers of prediction, but as in no way increasing the understanding. To understand the meaning of actions, the rules which are being followed must be understood; he does not add, as Weber does, that this must be accompanied by an investigation of how in practice rules are, or are not, 'obeyed'. This is the
'idealistic' extreme extracted from Weber's writings and justified by such anti-positivist statements as:

"A Christian would strenuously deny that the baptism rites of his faith were really the same in character as the acts of a pagan sprinkling lustral water or letting sacrificial blood."^1

In this, Winch was explicitly criticizing Durkheim, who represents the opposite extreme.

Durkheim was unashamedly positivistic:

"We must ... consider social phenomena in themselves as distinct from the consciously formed representations of them in the mind; we must study them objectively as external things, for it is this character that they present to us."^2

Durkheim was of course aware of innovating and of intentional action; yet he sought 'more profound causes' unperceived by consciousness. He saw the ideas of participants as often misguided and confusing and therefore looked to statistical rates as his sources. An example of this is the study of suicide. On individual attitudes, he said:

"Their occasionally important role in the premeditation of suicide is no proof of being a causal one. Human deliberations, in fact, so far as reflective consciousness affects them are often only purely formal, with no object but confirmation of a resolve previously formed for reasons unknown to consciousness."^3

There are so many superficial causes and motives that one has to look deeper, at statistical rates and at the nature of societies themselves. The rate is what matters and its explanation is sociological. Individual motive is then little more than 'obedience' to the rate. Again on suicide:
Durkheim, *Suicide*, p. 299.


"each social group really has a collective inclination for the act, quite its own, and the source of all individual inclination, rather than the result."1

Durkheim said that he wanted to free men by showing them the constraints upon them; it is not surprising that he was accused of putting them in chains.

Durkheim was concerned with stability and generalized 'truths', while Weber was interested in change and particular significance. Criticisms are predictable; Weberians are accused of idealism and of reliance on speculation; of blindness to broad trends, to unconscious motives and to the unintended consequences of human action; of subjectivism and relativism, reducing the social to the individual.

Durkheim, on the other hand, is accused of reifying collective concepts; of unintentionally reaching a metaphysical result in his law-like propositions and of seeing the individual as a sort of abstraction from the social.

Berger and Luckmann claim that these two sociological approaches are not mutually exclusive and indeed that they can be combined. They are thus in agreement with MacIntyre, who has said that to accept a dichotomy between Winch's approach and that of Durkheim is to miss "the contrast ... between those cases in which the relation of social structure to individuals may be correctly characterized in terms of control or constraint and those in which it may not."2

MacIntyre adds that:

"Attention to intentions, motives and reasons must precede attention to causes; description in terms of the agent's concepts and beliefs must precede description in terms of
our concepts and beliefs.  

If use is made of the term 'description' for the former, more 'idealistic' position, and of the term 'explanation' for the latter, more 'positivist' one (which gives priority to the categories of the observer), this is a plea for a combination of description and explanation.  

This is an important point. Both in the case of Winch and of Durkheim, an essential theoretical contribution is made; but it is made in such a way as to exclude a necessary part of a sociological account. Because a restricted theoretical approach to the distinctiveness of social life has been arrived at, only a partial account of actual cases is given. A sociological study of the course of an 'idea' requires a theory which combines both perspectives.

The Social Construction of Reality

Berger and Luckmann try to achieve such a combination through a phenomenological account of the role of knowledge in society. They are therefore committed to what is sometimes called 'action theory' as opposed to 'systems theory'.

In Silverman's words,

"The Systems approach tends to regard behaviour as a reflection of the characteristics of a social system containing a series of impersonal processes which are external to actors and constrain them. In emphasizing that action derives from the meanings that men attach to their own and each other's acts, the Action frame of reference argues that man is constrained by the way in which he socially constructs reality."

But Berger and Luckmann's is 'action theory' of a particular sort, for it holds that, through its combination of Weberian
and Durkheimian approaches, it can examine the sense in which 'systems theory' is correct in talking of social constraint while not relying on its wider assumptions (for instance about the relationship between parts in a system).  

Berger and Luckmann's investigation of what they call the social construction of reality in everyday life is concerned with society in two aspects: as objective and as subjective reality. The former aspect is that of the structure of society, which is a human creation but which is 'objectivated' so that it becomes an independent, external fact set over against man: an objective reality. The social order is an ongoing human creation, but it attains the character of objectivity. Man produces a world which he is capable of experiencing as other than a human creation. With repetition of 'objectivations', human actions are institutionalized; there come to be set ways of acting which narrow the field of choice: 'this is how things are done'. And in order to 'protect' and order institutions, they are legitimated; they are given a cognitive and normative covering to explain and justify them. These are 'definitions of reality' which constitute knowledge about society and can be transmitted without reconstructing the original process of formation; there is in fact a tradition of experience which can be taught. The individual comes to know what is real and to have a certain world view which accords with the roles that society assigns to him. In a pluralist society,
1 Berger and Luckmann, The Social Construction ..., p. 79.


However, there are competing world views (there is competition to provide meaning), which means both that there are special problems of legitimation for groups supporting a particular world view, and that there is a large degree of choice for the individual.

The other aspect is that of society as subjective reality. Each individual becomes a member of a society; he is socialized, a process by which reality becomes internal to him. He comes to know facts and to have a certain view of the world, a view largely shared by others to whom he refers for support. If this view of reality becomes untenable to him, he may be 'converted' to another, a process which is more likely when there are many competing world views and the plausibility of each is therefore lowered. An identity is thus formed by social processes and modified through social relations; it is a phenomenon which emerges from the dialectic between individual and society.

This brings out the most important point: that the account relies on a dialectical understanding of society - a dialectic between subjective and objective reality, between subjective 'definitions of reality' and structural realities. "Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product."¹ There is no assumption of one causal direction. The direction of causal efficacy is an empirical and not a conceptual question.² There is no 'history of ideas' isolated from general history; the relationship between 'ideas' and
1 Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction ..., p. 145. See also N. Elias, 'Sociology of Knowledge I', *Sociology*, vol. v (1971), where he stresses the fact that knowledge is not a 'truth' in the consciousness but that it develops in relation to social situations and must not be analyzed statically; e.g. p. 156. Models such as 'the mind proposes, the culture disposes' miss the essential point (the dialectic), for it may be the culture which 'proposes'.


Social processes is a dialectical one:

"It is correct to say that theories are concocted in order to legitimate already existing social institutions. But it also happens that social institutions are changed in order to bring them into conformity with already existing theories, that is, to make them more 'legitimate'."

And the conclusion is that sociology should pursue

"a systematic accounting of the dialectical relation between the structural realities and the human enterprise of constructing reality - in history."

Religious Legitimation

An important aspect of this account for the purposes of the present study is Berger and Luckmann's discussion of 'legitimation'. They call human products 'objectivations'; the reality of everyday life is filled with objectivations, with indices of people's subjective processes, whether as words or as other 'objects'. But words are a special case of objectivation, for they are intended to serve as an index of subjective meaning. They can be detached from their immediate context, for words are capable of being the repository for great accumulations of meaning and experience which they can preserve and transmit. Language objectifies a variety of experiences; it serves to make them 'present'. But it is also used to transcend the reality of everyday life and present another reality (such as that of a dream or a religious experience) in terms which have meaning in everyday life. In this case, the words perform a symbolic function.

Objectivations, with repetition, are institutionalized. There come to be particular ways of doing and saying things,
The 'need' for meaning is basic to Berger and Luckmann's theory; their approach is therefore ultimately functionalist: see Berger, The Social Reality ..., p. 19: man builds worlds because he biologically needs to. The authors do not explain why some adopt a religious world view and others do not.

Luckmann equates the need with religion itself: The Invisible Religion, p. 49: religion for him is "the transcendence of biological nature by the human organism". Berger's substantive definition of religion is, however, being used in this study.

In order to explain and justify them to those who do not understand their meaning, institutions require legitimation. Their original sense may not be readily available; institutions may therefore be given a protective covering of cognitive and normative interpretation. There is then a logic given to the objectivations of the social world; legitimations are statements of 'what's what'. They make objectively available and subjectively plausible an institutional reality. The purpose is integration: so that not only the institutional order as a whole should make sense to the individual, but also that his own biography should be given meaning.

Legitimation, the process of explanation and justification, is done at various levels. Thus the institution of the family may be legitimated not only by facts about the family, but by theories of it. And there may be attempts at general theory: at integration of all meaning, encompassing the whole institutional order.

All this could be summed up by saying that man produces a 'world', a culture in terms of which he lives and through which he must find meaning. Man impose order on experience; they come to have a world view. This is the point at which religious belief can be mentioned, for in religion a
1 Religion, for the purposes here, is defined as the human enterprise by which a 'definition of reality' is arrived at which is not only held to belong to the 'nature of things', but is also related to a mysterious power - other than man yet affecting him: see Berger, The Social Reality ..., p. 26.


But the essential dialectic must be remembered with religious 'definitions of reality' as with others. The dialectical relationship between social structure and 'theory' is central to Berger and Luckmann's approach. The need for legitimations arises in social life but they are not necessarily a mere 'reflection' of that life. As W. I. Thomas put it: "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences." Legitimations may make changes in the social structure desirable (to bring it 'into line') just as changes in social structure may make legitimations appear less plausible. Thus, in this study, Faith & Order's 'definition of reality' (what its participants know to be true), which it tries to 'realize', is examined in its relation with certain 'structural realities': an objective situation in which the state of the churches is of primary significance.
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Berger, The Social Reality ..., p. 32.


1 Religious 'definitions of reality' are thus theories of a particular sort, legitimations by means of which experience can be seen as objectively ordered and subjectively meaningful: "Religion legitimates so effectively because it relates the precarious reality constructions of empirical societies with ultimate reality." 2

Thus the family may be said to be divinely instituted, the king to rule by divine right, and church unity to be God's will.

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1 This difficulty is one aspect of a wider one, namely that Berger and Luckmann work on a very general level; their theories are consequently difficult to 'tie down' and apply.


The approach owes much to A. Schutz, who used the 'common-sense' world as a datum from which to judge analysis in social science: see his comments on the 'problem of rationality in science' in Collected Papers, Vol. II (The Hague, the social world' in *Social Construction of Reality* is in fact concerned with 'theory' of one form or another, particularly in the

2: FAILINGS OF BERGER AND LUCKMANN'S APPROACH

Having described an 'action' framework with which to approach Faith & Order's methods for reaching unity, the characteristics mentioned at the start of this chapter must be returned to: the need for a theory which can be used to clarify the dialectic between the 'unity' idea and the situation facing Faith & Order and which at the same time is suited to analysis of religious 'theory'.

Although it is held that the framework outlined is broadly suitable, there are two difficulties which must be met. The first is that Berger and Luckmann appear to have reservations about the study of 'theory'. The second and more important problem is that the precise details of the dialectic are not worked out; Berger and Luckmann do not deal adequately with what occurs when there is what they call 'asymmetry' between subjective and objective reality.¹

The Study of 'Theory'

Berger and Luckmann see the sociology of knowledge as being concerned with all that passes for knowledge in society. Yet they give little importance to 'theory' on the ground that it is but a small part of this knowledge.²

The emphasis is to be on the 'common-sense world of everyday life' because only a few people are concerned with 'ideas', while everyone has the more basic 'common-sense knowledge'.³ In spite of this statement of intent, much of The Social Construction of Reality is in fact concerned with 'theory' of one form or another, particularly in the
discussion of legitimation. And in Berger's *The Social Reality of Religion* he writes:

"If legitimation always had to consist of theoretically coherent propositions, it would support the social order only for that minority of intellectuals that have such theoretical interests - obviously not a very practical program."¹

But he devotes much of the book to the study of material which can only be called theoretical.

There appear to be three reasons for this contradiction. The first is the wish to react against earlier sociology of knowledge which was primarily concerned with theoretically refined ideas. This reaction is understandable, given the desire to depart from the tradition of Scheler or Mannheim.

What is less understandable, however, is the second reason, which appears to be a general horror of what Berger and Luckmann call 'reification'. This is defined by them as "the apprehension of the products of human activity as if they were something other than human products"² and used to describe the occasions when man 'forgets' that the human world is made by him and can be changed by him. The authors say that

"The analysis of reification is important because it serves as a standing corrective to the reifying propensities of theoretical thought in general and sociological thought in particular."³

The implied criticism of some sociological 'systems theory' is justified, but the general wish for the removal of what Berger and Luckmann call 'obfuscation' can lead to a disregard for the facts of historical continuity and social
constraint: for what one might call the Durkheimian side of the picture. Berger, at least, seems to have visions of a sort of existentialist freedom: a general relativizing of all theories from which man emerges, as it were, fancy-free to face the world.¹ There appears to be an intention to avoid theory because of what theory can do.

The third reason for the contradiction is an underestimation of the relationship between 'theory' and less complex legitimations. Although they point out that theories are in a dialectical relationship with the social structure, Berger and Luckmann assume, on the grounds that some theories have become partially separated from this dialectical relationship, that this is generally so. This means that they miss what is a significant variable when studying 'theory', namely the degree to which it is responsive to changes in the social structure and to which it may itself lead to changes in the social structure. To take an example of importance for the present study, some theologians in recent years have deliberately attempted to make their theories more 'relevant' to the world of everyday life: to make them less intellectual and more 'actualizable'. In their search for 'relevant' legitimations there has been a rapprochement with the world. And, as Robertson has pointed out, there has been a narrowing of the gap between theologians and others, both because more people can be classified as 'intellectuals' and because theologians have been exposed to an increasingly extensive range of educational and sociocultural experience.²


1 The exception to this is the treatment of alternation or conversion: The Social Construction ..., pp. 176-81 and pp. 189-90; but Berger and Luckmann concentrate on the extreme case of 'switching' 'definitions of reality' (see p. 176) and not on their modification.


From the above discussion it can be concluded first, that Berger and Luckmann's suspicion of theory is misguided, and secondly that there is no reason why their sociology of knowledge framework should not be used for the study of legitimations which would have difficulty in passing as 'common-sense knowledge'.

Change

The question of what actually occurs in the dialectic between 'structural realities' and 'definitions of reality' presents a more difficult problem. Berger and Luckmann deal with the way in which legitimations arise and are defended, but not with the way in which discrepancies between subjective and objective reality are reduced. But in this study it is necessary to have a more precise basis on which to examine change; Faith & Order's attempts to resolve or reduce the tension between unity and division involve changes both in its own 'definition of reality' and in the objective reality of the legitimations and the situation of division.

To fill this gap, it is proposed to use Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance: to provide a framework for the examination of the more precise details of Faith & Order's methods for reaching unity.

Festinger's theory is based on the observation that a fundamental motive in attitude formation is the seeking and maintaining of consistency or 'consonance' among cognitive elements, that is among beliefs, knowledge of the environment or knowledge of a person's own actions.
1 See also Rokeach, The Open and the Closed Mind, p. 395: "Each person is somehow motivated to arrange the world of ideas, of people, and of authority in harmonious relations with each other."

2 See Berger and Luckmann, The Social Construction ..., pp. 76-9 and, for an example of an application of this, Berger's discussion of secularization in The Social Reality ..., pp. 126-53.


or feelings. In Berger and Luckmann's terms, Festinger's theory can be used to examine what happens when there is 'asymmetry' between a socially supported subjective 'definition of reality' (such as that of Faith & Order participants) and knowledge of an objective reality exerting constraint. Thus whereas Berger and Luckmann are concerned with the 'wider' dialectic between subjective 'definitions of reality' and an objective reality (the constraining influence of which may not always be obvious to the actor), Festinger concentrates on the way in which this dialectic is worked out on the level of cognitive activity.

For Festinger, if elements are inconsistent or 'dissonant', a person will try to reduce the dissonance and will also avoid situations and information likely to increase it; this is Festinger's basic hypothesis. Elements are responsive to reality as it is perceived; yet they may not always correspond to this reality, and indeed an important reason for the existence of dissonance is when an element is not consonant with knowledge of reality. Two elements are dissonant with each other if they do not fit together, that is if "considering these two alone, the obverse of one element would follow from the other." Thus if a person were in debt and at the same time purchased a new car, the knowledge of these facts, once seen as relevant, would be dissonant.

'Relevance' involves an interpretation of 'follow from' in the above quotation. One element may be seen as following
from another for a number of reasons (for example, religious or cultural), in fact, because of some other cognitive element from which it follows that the two elements are relevant.

If the elements in question are sufficiently important, then there will be action to reduce the dissonance. There are three ways of taking such action. The belief in question may be changed in accordance with the knowledge which creates the dissonance; new knowledge may be obtained in order to increase the consonance between it and the belief; new cognitive elements may be added which make the original dissonant relation appear in a different light.¹

This reduction of dissonance may be made more difficult if the cognitive elements are particularly resistant to change. For instance, if the belief in question is at the time consonant with many other elements, to change it would only create further dissonances. Thus if someone has many cognitive elements which are consonant with the belief that smoking is bad for the health, he is unlikely to change that belief to make it consonant with one new piece of research information. Similar resistance to change will exist if there is a considerable behavioural commitment to a belief, if change would incur pain and loss, or if change is outside the power of the person concerned.

3: COGNITIVE DISSONANCE FOR FAITH & ORDER PARTICIPANTS

In the rest of this chapter the question of how the theory of cognitive dissonance is applicable to the problem
facing Faith & Order will be explored. It is suggested that the most important dissonance for participants in the movement is that between belief in a particular conception of unity as Christians, and the knowledge that Christians are divided. For such participants, the idea of unity (the legitimation of Faith & Order) and the state of the churches (variously legitimated) are in a dissonant relationship. If there were not this dissonance, they would not participate. The reduction of this dissonance has led to modifications both of the idea of 'unity' and of the legitimations and the state of division.

In the words of the Faith & Order rubric for Evanston, there is a tension between "our oneness in Christ and our disunity as Churches".¹ Statements on such a theme are characteristic of Faith & Order meetings and documents; they express the tension which is basic to the work of the movement. Thus Visser't Hooft, in his speech at Lund, asked:

"How can we do full justice to the two apparently contradictory aspects of our present condition, namely that there is a unity in Christ which has been and is being given to us and that we are at the same time still divided from each other? ... It does not help to deny the existence of one of the two sides of the dialectical situation."²

On the one side there is faith which demands unity, and on the other there are divided Christians. The Edinburgh 'Affirmation' contains a typical expression of this:

"We humbly acknowledge that our divisions are contrary to the will of Christ, and we pray God in His mercy to shorten the days of our separation and to guide us by His Spirit
Or again, A. Nygren, a prominent participant, has stressed that the contradiction "between the unity which is grounded in the essence of the Church and what we see in the Church's actual situation ..., has become more and more to be recognized in our generation as a contradiction that must be resolved. This is 'The Ecumenical Problem', which addresses itself to us."

The primary dissonance for participants in Faith & Order is between the belief in unity, which they consider to be implied by their Christian faith, and the knowledge of division. But these are only two among a whole complex of cognitive elements. In reducing the primary dissonance, it is necessary to avoid increasing the dissonance between these elements and others. Thus, for instance, a conception of unity must not be decided on, which creates excessive dissonance with an idea of what is 'practicable'. Similarly, church unions cannot be promoted (thus attempting to alter the state of division) in such a way as to create excessive dissonance for participants between their knowledge of this and their understanding of Faith & Order's original 'mandate', its 'definition of reality' which 'protects' and furthers its idea of unity.

Unity and Relevance

In Faith & Order, some of the legitimations of each are relevant to all because the legitimating idea of the movement is 'unity'. Unity is a legitimation of a particular sort, for it is not only a cognitive element of importance to the participants, but it is also the belief which makes

Festinger discusses the factors affecting the magnitude of the dissonance in a social situation in *A Theory ...,* pp. 178-81. The magnitude of the dissonance created by a disagreement depends on the importance of the issue, the extent of the disagreement and on who is disagreeing; see Chapter VI below.

The greater the will for unity in Faith & Order, the greater the dissonance felt:

"increasing the attraction of the members to the group increases the attempts on the part of the members to reduce the dissonance occasioned by the disagreement."¹

Two elements are in a dissonant relationship if, considering these two alone, the obverse of one element would follow from the other. The only reason why, for instance, two separate understandings of the doctrine of the ministry should be in a relationship of dissonance is that they are considered relevant (hence 'follow from'), that is that they should be united in some sense, but in fact are not. The primary dissonance in this case is between belief in a particular conception of unity and the knowledge that these understandings of ministry do not follow from it.

Unity is the legitimating idea for this particular group; it is the will for unity which 'creates' the dissonance. The greater the will for unity, the more important it will be as a cognitive element and the greater the dissonance.²

The Reduction of Dissonance

The greater the dissonance, the greater the pressure to reduce it. Faith & Order was specifically formed to promote unity: to convince Christians of the relevance of a certain idea of unity to their knowledge of the situation of Christians and then to reduce the resulting dissonance. There are three ways open for the reduction of their distinctive legitimations and aspects of their whole situations relevant to each other. The greater some of their distinctive legitimations and aspects of their whole situations relevant to each other. The greater...
Diagram of the Ways of Reducing the Primary Dissonance for Faith & Order Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unity</th>
<th>Knowledge of Division</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a</td>
<td>Add Elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3b</td>
<td>Add Elements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Each element is related to many others. Thus another diagram could be drawn for a dissonant relationship between an idea of unity and (for example) an understanding of what is revealed in the Bible.

1) The first way is to change the legitimation in question in accordance with the information which creates the dissonance. The primary dissonance in Faith & Order's case is between a conception of unity and the knowledge of divisions among Christians. Dissonance could therefore be reduced by changing the conception of unity so that it becomes more consonant with knowledge of the state of the churches. In Berger and Luckmann's terms, this amounts to a change in the 'definition of reality', which is brought into line with knowledge of the objective reality. For example, a stress on a few essentials as sufficient for 'true unity' would mean a reduction in the primary dissonance for the participants. This would also increase the consonance for Faith & Order participants between their conception of unity and the knowledge that some Christians have a much 'easier' conception.

But there are other cognitive elements which might make such a change of the unity idea difficult; while reducing some dissonances, it might create others, making the idea of unity resistant to change. Thus the belief in a more 'realistic' conception of unity (one which is more practically viable) would be dissonant with the knowledge that some would find this unacceptable, namely those who favour visible unity involving a large measure of agreement in faith and in order. There might also be dissonance with the conviction of many that only 'true unity' is sufficient

2 The 1964 Nottingham Conference of the British Council of Churches provides an example of this. It was resolved to work and pray for reunion of member churches by Easter 1980; see 'Unity Begins at Home; A Report from the First British Conference on Faith and Order, Nottingham 1964' (London, 1964), p. 43. When the Standing Conference met to discuss the feasibility of this intention and it became apparent that it was unlikely to be realized, some wanted the date retained as 'symbolic', others wanted it forgotten. See E. L. Mascall, 'Some Reflections on Ecclesiastical Assemblies', *Theology*, vol. lxxxiv (1971), pp. 211-2.
Festinger calls this an "environmental cognitive element": an element which depends on knowledge of the environment: a Theory ..., pp. 19-21.

For the needs of the modern world, so that the Church may be united for mission and action. And there might be dissonance between such a conception of unity and the knowledge that Faith & Order have in the past been committed to a very different course: the behavioural commitment as individuals and as a movement to a particular 'mandate'. Participants may feel committed to a 'difficult' conception of unity and may believe that it accords with God's revealed will.

For these reasons, participants may continue to commit themselves to an 'unrealistic' idea of unity. If the resistance to change of the elements is sufficient, then the dissonance can be tolerated, although the pressure to reduce it will still exist and attempts to do this will be made.

2) The second way of reducing dissonance is the obvious alternative; it is to change the other element in the dissonant relationship, in this case, the knowledge that Christians are divided. If Christians were to be united in accordance with a form of unity which is believed to be right, then the dissonance would be eliminated. The originally dissonant knowledge of 'reality' would become consonant with the belief in unity. As Berger and Luckmann would say, knowledge of the situation has been brought into conformity with Faith & Order's legitimations. And the more Christians approach the ideal of unity, the greater the reduction of dissonance: the more the 'reality' changes
1 The wording of one of the 'Functions' in the Faith & Order Constitution of 1952: Lu, p. 360. The intention was similar before then.

and becomes more consonant with belief in unity. The task is therefore not just to convince churches of the value of unity but also to persuade them to unite.

This is a major part of Faith & Order's work. Although, for ecclesiological reasons, it has had to be careful not to be seen as interfering, it has attempted to influence moves towards unity (if only by trying to create the atmosphere in which they are likely to take place) and has welcomed unions when achieved. It has publicized unions and has studied matters which "cause difficulties and need theological clarification". It has also offered some 'solutions' to problems on which Christians have been divided, for example, concerning the doctrine of grace at Edinburgh or the understanding of tradition at Montreal.

This way of reducing dissonance is resisted by the reluctance of the churches to change. Their whole identities, expressed in 'distinctive witness' positions, may keep their members from facing the change involved in being 'united'. The possibility of union may introduce a host of dissonances for church members; for example, it may be dissonant with their belief in the truth of their 'sacred traditions' or with their knowledge of current financial security.

A reduction in dissonance may also be achieved for Faith & Order participants if an optimistic picture of the situation of the churches is conveyed. If there are announcements of great support or of ever-increasing activity and negotiations, then those who had felt that
the movement was not progressing may be encouraged; their 'knowledge of division' is changed. The resistance to reduction in dissonance lies, in this event, in the increase in the dissonance between the impression given and the 'reality' as it is perceived.

3) The third way of reducing dissonance is to add new cognitive elements. If both the elements in a dissonant relationship are very resistant to change, there is still the possibility of dissonance reduction.

a: The first alternative is to add a 'reconciling' element. The introduction of new legitimations or elements of knowledge may have the effect of reconciling the elements in the original dissonance, by showing that they are more consonant than may at first appear. This is the process which anthropologists have called 'secondary elaboration'; instead of changing a theoretical position which appears to be dissonant with 'reality', other elements are introduced to explain apparently disconfirming evidence. In Berger and Luckmann's terms, there is further legitimating activity to justify and explain a particular 'definition of reality'.

Festinger gives a useful example of the addition of a 'reconciling' element in quoting research about the Ifaluk, a non-literate society. In this culture there is a firm belief that people are 'good'. But this belief is dissonant with the knowledge that young Ifaluk children, for whatever reason, go through a particularly aggressive hostile stage. This dissonance might have been reduced by changing the meaning of 'good' to include
aggression in young children, or by putting the children through a course of remedial training in order to make them 'good'. But these alternatives were not taken up. Instead of changing either of these elements, a third was added, namely a belief in the existence of malevolent ghosts, which enter the children and cause them to do bad things.

In the case of Faith & Order this way would involve neither a change in the conception of unity, nor a change in the knowledge that the churches are divided. Rather, it would entail the adding of new cognitive elements consonant with belief in unity. The conviction behind such a result might be expressed: 'Although unity has not been manifested in the way expected or desirable, belief in it is still justified because ...'. Examples of what might follow the 'because ...' are the belief that churches do not yet know each other well enough, or that it is really 'non-theological factors' which keep them apart.

These are examples of reconciling elements. As Festinger says of interaction in groups:

"The knowledge that some other person, generally like oneself, holds one opinion is dissonant with holding a contrary opinion."\(^1\)

Disagreement within Faith & Order would therefore create dissonance. But this may be reduced by holding that the dissonance is not as great as it may appear because, for example, of the intrusion of 'non-theological factors'.

\(^1\) Festinger, A Theory ... , p. 262.
adding new cognitive elements is to reduce the proportion of dissonant as compared with consonant relations involving a particular element. The effect is to reduce the importance of the existing dissonance.

In Faith & Order's case, this would entail the search for new elements which are consonant with the belief in unity, the effect being to reduce the dissonance between the belief in unity and the knowledge of the divisions of the churches by laying less emphasis on the relationship between these two elements. For example, attention may be diverted to the unity of spirit and action, or particular subjects may be avoided in order that dissonance may not be increased.1 Elements are searched for which are consonant with belief in unity, and those which are dissonant with that belief are avoided. Meetings of Faith & Order may at times be intended to fill participants with enthusiasm for Christian unity (that is to increase dissonance and therefore the pressure to reduce it), but they do not always do this.

This last point indicates an important social dimension of this way of reducing dissonance. In Festinger's words:

"the already existing cognitive dissonance may be reduced in magnitude by communication from those who already agree with the opinion in question, thus adding more cognitive elements consonant with the opinion".2

Faith & Order acts as a 'reference group': a group other than their own church group, to which participants may look in shaping their behaviour and values.3 Membership implies certain values, such as a wish for unity and a belief in

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1 An early example of this would appear to be the 1936 Continuation Committee's avoidance of discussion of the doctrine of the Virgin Mary after this had been suggested by S. Boulgakoff: F0 79, p. 11. There are later examples of avoidance of e.g. 'ministry'.

2 Festinger, A Theory, p. 190.

3 Reference group theory is concerned with the processes through which men relate themselves to groups and refer their behaviour to the values of these groups. Merton points out that men's orientation of themselves to groups other than their own in shaping their behaviour is the distinctive concern of such theory: Social Theory and Social Structure, p. 336.
the importance of matters of faith and order. There is
social support for maintaining a particular 'definition of
reality', and as its validity is not immediately testable,
the role of such support is particularly important. 1

An expansion of this point might suggest that the whole
organized ecumenical movement is not so much a movement
towards unity as a movement to avoid having to unite. One
might hold that it provides a diversion into which the
ecumenical enthusiast can be removed so that things can
continue as before, thus performing a latent function
somewhat akin to that which some monasteries once performed
for religious enthusiasts. The participants have not been
unaware of this possibility. As Visser't Hooft said to
the Lund Conference, he was conscious of the danger that
the WCC might become a narcotic rather than a stimulant. 2

Even if this 'narcotic' function cannot be held
exhaustively to explain Faith & Order, there is little
doubt that both Faith & Order and the WCC have performed
a social function of this sort. From a study of the number
of meetings and conferences, the topics selected and the
nature of the statements and reports which emerge, it can
be concluded that this method of reducing dissonance is
of some importance. If a subject is discussed at a level
of abstraction which is unlikely ever to be useful to the
churches, or if the topic itself is either unimportant to
them or is already agreed, then the main elements in
question will remain unchanged; the belief in a particular
conception of unity and the knowledge that churches are

1 See Festinger, *A Theory ...*, p. 179, where he compares the
influence of social support on a belief in the fragility of
glass (which is easily testable) with its influence on a
belief in reincarnation (which is not). See also S. Schachter,
The Psychology of Affiliation (London, 1959) on joining groups
as a way of evaluating opinions. Also Berger and Luckmann,
The Social Construction ..., e.g. pp. 172-3 on reality-
maintenance.

2 Lu, p. 130: quoting the Archbishop of Canterbury (fisher).
The danger was also pointed out by J. E. L. Newbigin: MRCC
1951, p. 37.
there will be a reduction in the importance of the dissonance between these elements for the participants; ways have been found for avoiding them.

The resistance to the two alternatives for reducing dissonance by adding new cognitive elements derives from the belief that they are ways of 'avoiding the issue', of throwing a sop to Faith & Order's problems, while doing little to solve them. There may then be pressure to concentrate on matters which divide Christians, even though this will increase the dissonance for Faith & Order participants.

4: CONCLUSION

This chapter has set out a theoretical scheme with which to study Faith & Order's attempts to solve the problem facing it: its efforts to reduce or resolve the tension between an idea of unity and a situation of division. It was found that Berger and Luckmann's form of 'action theory' was suitable for general study of the dialectic between 'structural realities' and Faith & Order's 'definition of reality', between 'situation' and 'idea'.

But this does not go far enough towards providing a framework within which to examine what Faith & Order participants in fact do in their specific methods for reaching unity. Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance was therefore introduced. This states that the presence of dissonance gives rise to pressure to reduce it which varies in proportion to the magnitude of the dissonance, and that
He likens the need to reduce dissonance to the need to satisfy hunger: A Theory ..., p. 3. For a similar comment see Berger and Luckmann, The Social Construction ..., pp. 81-2.

There are three major ways in which such dissonance may be reduced. These are first, to change the unity idea, secondly to change the knowledge that there is division, and thirdly to add cognitive elements which are consonant with the idea of unity.

The basic assumption of Festinger's theory is similar to that of Berger and Luckmann. Just as the latter assume a need for man to give meaning to the world, so Festinger bases his theory on the need for consistency between elements forming a view of the world. Berger and Luckmann deal with the dialectic between 'definitions of reality' and 'structural realities'. Festinger deals with a narrower area: with attempts to reduce dissonance between cognitive elements.

In the next two chapters, two accounts will be given which relate to Faith & Order's history: first, a more explanatory account of social developments, and then a more descriptive account of Faith & Order's attempts to realize its unity idea. These chapters together are intended to provide a background for an examination in greater detail of methods for reaching unity.
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IV: EXPLANATORY ACCOUNT: UNITY AND DIVISION

There have been divisions in the Church since the beginning and there have also been 'eirenical' movements. It is true that divisions may not have been of lasting seriousness until the fifth century, but there has always been a role for advocates of unity. However, to call the early attempts 'ecumenical' would be anachronistic, and this would not be for semantic reasons alone; there was a marked difference in the whole climate in which unity was then sought. The efforts of men such as Bucer in the sixteenth century or Dury and Baxter in the seventeenth, were made in a very different context.

It might, for example, be thought that Dury's search for essentials of doctrine and his policy of 'ecclesiastical pacification', show him to be an early example for Faith & Order. But although there are obvious similarities, Dury's story is not only different because his policies always failed (the Lutherans at Uppsala significantly feared that "ancient errors might be upheld under doubtful speeches"); the situation in which he acted and his own conception of his task show that his was a different 'world'.

If this is so, then the peculiarities of the situation in the present century must be studied. Why has the Faith & Order movement arisen and survived at this time? Why now?

To reply that the movement has arisen because of a sense of the theological scandal of disunity does not answer the question of why the scandal has been so strongly
Till has tried to divide causes into 'theological' and 'non-theological' and gives the "sense of theological scandal" as a purely theological cause: B. Till, The Churches Search for Unity (Harmondsworth, 1972), pp. 31-2. A better account of theological thought in its relation to ecumenical developments is given by Visser't Hooft in Fey, The Ecumenical Advance, pp. 4-6. See also R. Mehl, The Sociology of Protestantism (transl. London, 1970), Chapter XI.

Till, The Churches Search for Unity, p. 29; he is criticizing Wilson's Religion in Secular Society. See also p. 30, where he says that church leaders are "neither as cynical nor as realistic" as Wilson suggests.

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sensed in the twentieth century. The aim of this chapter is to sketch some reasons. The approach is therefore broadly explanatory. The material is the state of the churches and of the societies of which they are part: the 'structural realities' which have constrained Faith & Order and with which its 'definition of reality' has been in a dialectical relationship. The account relates largely to the West, but this is appropriate on account of the great predominance of Western theologians and Western issues in Faith & Order work; 'younger churches' and their ideas have been consistently under-represented.

The developments discussed need not necessarily have been consciously assimilated by the participants themselves. Till, in his criticism of Wilson's contention that ecumenical activity is a response to religious decline, appears to assume that church leaders must actually 'feel' threatened in order to react. He says of the beginning of the ecumenical movement:

"it is doubtful, to say the least, whether the position was at this stage seen and rationalized in the way Wilson suggests."\(^2\)

But this is an excessive limiting of the factors which need to be taken into account. As Durkheim was at pains to prove, social constraint does not necessarily have to be 'seen' to be of effect.

1: SECULARIZATION AND ECUMENICAL ACTIVITY

The most common sociological term for describing religious change in industrial society is 'secularization':
a term which has been the subject of some debate. The problem is that 'secularization' has been used as a blanket expression for describing almost any trend in religion without either defining religion or distinguishing between the aspects of it to which reference is being made. Martin's criticism of the term rests on the observation that the theoretical question of what 'religion' is, has often not been settled before declaring that there has or has not been secularization.¹ Thus the events following the conversion of Constantine might be seen as 'sacralization' by someone using the criterion of religious practice, but 'secularization' by a user of some other conception of what 'true religion' is.

In this study, religion has been defined as the human enterprise by which a 'definition of reality' is arrived at which is not only held to belong to the 'nature of things', but is also related to a mysterious power - other than man, yet affecting him. Secularization can then be defined as the freeing of practices, institutions and beliefs from religious meanings. This does not imply that it is an inevitable process, an inclined historical plane down (or up) which man is travelling.² The provision of evidence for secularization is an empirical problem.

'Secularization' has no causal efficacy of its own. It is a second order construct: a way of describing certain social phenomena, which rests on the claim that religious belief has lost ground and that religious practice has declined. The evidence, at least for the latter trend, is readily available.³ What it shows is a general European


2 H. W. Richardson argues that modern atheism has similarities to that of earlier periods: Theology for a New World (London, 1968), pp. 3-6. See also Robertson, The Sociological Interpretation ..., pp. 240-1.

decline in the religious activities and ceremonies on which figures are kept: church attendance and membership, special religious ceremonies, and such additional figures as Sunday-school attendance. In spite of difficulties of comparison, there is no doubt that the trend is one of decline, especially in Protestant countries but also in Catholic ones. Boulard shows how the decline in participation has broadly followed industrialization and new channels of communication. Even areas of Europe which have traditionally had high church membership figures, often partially on account of their isolation and their need to express national feelings (such as Scotland), have been affected.

The case of America is exceptional and has occupied the attention of many sociologists since Herberg's study Protestant, Catholic, Jew was published in 1955. The problem has been to explain apparent religiosity in a markedly secular society. Herberg linked this with the immigrant experience in America and concluded that being 'Protestant', 'Catholic' or 'Jewish' were acceptable ways of expressing American identity and ideals; the generalized American ethic was clothed in particular religious forms. American churches retained their social role at the cost of an accommodation to secular beliefs and values.¹

With certain reservations over details, many sociologists (of which Berger is one) have found Herberg's to be an adequate explanation of the American situation.² The USA has been secularized, but for particular reasons the trend has applied to religious belief rather than practice.

1 W. Herberg, Protestant, Catholic, Jew, second ed. (New York, 1960). His conclusions rest on observation and on survey information, e.g. the fact that 95% claim to be Protestant, Catholic or Jewish, 83% think that the bible is the revealed word of God, but 95% cannot name any one of the Gospels (Jews, who might not be expected to know, were only 4% of the population when the studies quoted by Herberg were done).

2 e.g. P. L. Berger, The Noise of Solemn Assemblies (New York, 1961); Lee, The Social Sources of Church Unity; MacIntyre, Secularization and Moral Change; T. Parsons 'The Cultural Background of American Religious Organization' in Cleveland and Lasswell, Ethics and Signness, pp. 141-67. There is criticism in C. Y. Glock and R. Stark, Religion and Society in Tension (Chicago, 1965), Chapter V. They argue that, while the "secularized mainline denominations" may attribute little importance to theological differences, "it must not be supposed that the more conservative groups are similarly unconcerned about doctrine": p. 118.
The Context of Statistics of Decline

These conclusions are based on the evidence available, but there is then the further question of what more fundamental changes brought about these trends and of what relationship there is between secularization and ecumenical activity.

The hypothesis which has conventionally been adopted by sociologists (and which has made a considerable impression on believers) is that, as orientation to the world becomes more instrumental with industrial methods and urban living, so God seems less powerful and alternative patterns for understanding the world gain credence. It is said that the main alternative to religion is the adoption of 'rational' legitimations:

"the employment of formally rational procedures of thought and action in certain significant ... sections of the social system."¹

Although individuals often do not have a logic similar to the machines on which they depend, secular and empirical orientations have become an integral part of their social organization.

In this interpretation, industrialization is considered as the 'carrier' of secularization. Instead of an overall Christian world view, there are numerous competing ones. No alternative overall system has been provided and indeed attempts to provide one (a complete 'secularization'), such as that of T. H. Green, have been conspicuous failures. Industrial societies have become more pluralistic. In the nineteenth century, Christians were often defensive and
tended to fix on simple explanations for the poor results of their teaching, such as bad preaching or alcoholism. But more realistic explanations could have been found in the forces of science and nationalism and the new environment of industrialism. The opening of new lands and exposure to new ideas, the social and geographical mobility of Western living, the new power of communications and mass literacy, are seen as providing the context for a 'liberation' from religious meaning.

Thus Christians have come to understand that any traditional social or cognitive conception of Christendom has passed and that this is bound up with fundamental changes in the way society has developed. To build a theological conception of Christendom or to welcome secularization, either as liberating or as 'God's pressure on the Church', does not alter these facts.

The Connection with Ecumenical Activity

The sociological hypothesis described is an attempt to understand the effect of social changes on religion. Although the hypothesis is difficult to verify, it nevertheless has some plausibility, and has made an impact on Christians themselves. Even if the effect of social change has not been quite as the sociological convention would have it, the interpretation itself has had an effect.

The wish to confront a secularized world has often been an explicit motive for ecumenical activity. Many have believed that a united stand is more effective for mission.

In Visser't Hooft's words in 1964:
"All our churches confront an increase seemingly self-sufficient, post-Christian, all of them have to choose between slow a. evangelsm."

And he added that mission and unity belong tog.

is representative of the feeling of many in the movement. They have seen disunity as damaging to th. ability both to survive and to prevent a decline into relativism and moral decay.

This explicit response is the most obvious link between secularization and ecumenical activity. Sociologists have, however, drawn more far-reaching conclusions. Thus Wilson, having set out

"seeking confirmation of the hypothesis that organizations amalgamate when they are weak rather than when they are strong, since alliance means compromise and amendment of commitment", concludes that

"ecumenicalism, even at its most successful is not in itself a revival of religion, nor a reconversion of society. It is the turning in on itself of institutionalized religion, as its hold on the wider social order has diminished." He gives reasons why this link should be made. The churches have ceased to represent distinctive 'protest' movements or to reflect the interests of particular social classes (as they often did in the nineteenth-century 'churches of the disinherited'); with secularization there have been fewer reasons for mutual antipathy and Christian differences seem smaller in the face of common adversity. He also cites the wish of the clergy for social influence and status; they
"All our churches confront an increasingly secularized, seemingly self-sufficient, post-Christian civilization; all of them have to choose between slow death and active evangelism."¹

And he added that mission and unity belong together. This is representative of the feeling of many in the ecumenical movement. They have seen disunity as damaging to the Church's ability both to survive and to prevent a decline into relativism and moral decay.

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are more likely to check their declining authority by contact with (or membership of) large and respectable churches. Ecumenism is thus one of many methods of professional survival in the face of secularization. To these reasons, Wilson adds the desire of churches to rationalize competition and make the best use of resources: the functional rationality of merging.

A similar argument to Wilson's is followed in Currie's study of Methodism in Britain, where he asserts that unity came in response to numerical decline and its effects: "When frontal growth i.e. the acquisition of new membership by the normal processes of recruitment and enrolment, fails, the organization seeks to achieve its goals by lateral growth, i.e. amalgamation with other organizations in possession of resources and membership of their own." 1

Currie supports this theory with figures which show that the branches of Methodism experienced serious decline after 1881 and that, with the exception of one case, the various unions occurred after that date. Much statistical and other evidence is given to show that "Ecumenicalism is not simply born of adversity, but of hope in adversity", and on the basis of more evidence of decline the eventual conclusion is that "the hope that ecumenicalism will be the salvation of Christianity seems illusory". 2

A somewhat different account, this time from the American situation, is given by Lee, who says that the increase in church unity springs in considerable measure from growing cultural unity and that "with increased sharing of nonreligious goals and norms,
1 Lee, The Social Sources ..., p. 86. He set out to "reappraise the insight" of Niebuhr's The Social Sources of Denominationalism" (Lee, p. 7).

2 Herberg, Protestant, Catholic, Jew, p. 94; President Eisenhower.

3 For the laity, professional survival is not at stake and they often want comfort and certainty, while clergy are becoming more 'involved' and ecumenical. See Wilson, Religion in Secular Society, p. 75; Clock and Stark, Religion and Society in Tension, Chapters IV and V; J. Duquesne, La Gauche Du Christ (Paris, 1972), p. 254; J. K. Hadden, The Gathering Storm in the Churches (New York, 1969).

allegiances to distinctive religious doctrines diminish in intensity."¹

As America becomes more pluralist and, in the twentieth century, has come to share a common secularized 'civil religion', so the distinctive positions of the denominations are seen in a different light. Although Lee says that this is true of the majority, there are also 'countervailing movements' outside the ecumenical movement; he considers that these are also closely related to social factors which set them apart. In other words, the secularized mainline denominations support ecumenical work, while those who are isolated for some particular reason, do not.

These studies suggest good reasons why a connection should be made between secularization and ecumenical activity. As influence and numbers decline, so Christians turn to each other. From the account of Herberg, Lee and others it would also appear that America has been a particularly good environment for ecumenical ideas: not so much because of her multiplicity of religious bodies as on account of her social and cultural characteristics. In a country where the President can say:

"Our government makes no sense unless it is founded in a deeply felt religious faith - and I don't care what it is"²

ecumenical ideas are likely to be readily acceptable.

It is important to note, however, that secularization is not a trend with a uniform effect. Whereas some become more accepting of fellow Christians, others, particularly the laity, do not.³ The 'social sources of unity', such as those cited by Wilson or Lee, have to be seen together
with H. R. Niebuhr's 'social sources of denominationalism':

the political, class, racial, geographical and other
divisions which affect Christians. The result is a
situation of tension; there is conditioning for unity
and conditioning for division. This is one aspect of
the 'structural realities' with which Faith & Order's
'definition of reality' is in a dialectical relationship.

2: PLURALISM AND THEOLOGY

This brief summary of the effect of secularization
refers to ecumenical activity in general. More important
for this study, however, is the effect which social
developments have had on the way in which religious
legitimations are held.

It has already been said that modern society is
'pluralist'. In philosophical terms, pluralism is a
system of thought which recognizes more than one ultimate
principle. It is a compromise between a conception of
the world as a collection of separate parts, and one of
the world as a whole to which each part is integral. And
a pluralist political understanding is associational; the
individual's participation in the state is mediated by
a variety of heterogeneous organizations formed with specific
interests in mind, whether religious, political or re-
creational. The aim is often to represent distinct points
of view and to provide security without an excess of
authority. Pluralist theory is worked out in the tension
between a dislike of authoritarian power and the wish to
1 J. N. Figgis, Churches in the Modern State (London, 1913) is an example of the application of such ideas to churches. He held that toleration and mutual criticism purify. p. 119.

2 Luckmann, The Invisible Religion; also in unpublished lectures at Harvard Divinity School in 1970, 'Problems in the Sociology of Religion'. There are similarities in MacIntyre's account in Secularization and Moral Change, particularly in the first lecture on the origin and limits of secularization.

escape the vertigo 'freedom' of radical individualism and relativism. A pluralist society is one with a highly differentiated social structure, such as that of modern society. This supports a number of alternative and co-existing world views.¹

Institutional and Individual Legitimations

A differentiated social structure is accompanied by cognitive pluralism; it is to this relationship that Luckmann has given attention in his discussion of the progressive freeing of sectors of society from religious meaning.² He equates secularization and pluralism in an examination of the way in which legitimations have been articulated.

In a comparatively 'simple society', the field of human experience may be described as having the same frame of reference and this gives a sense of rightness and inevitability to the social structure. Priorities and problems are largely shared and the world view is accessible to all. Legitimations do not require special articulation (there is little need for 'apologetics'); with social structural unity, there is an accompanying ideological unity; if everyone believes something, then its validity is not questioned.

But, with the advent of a social structure in which there is specialization according to function and an increasing diversity of interests, there arise different versions of the world view, so that articulation becomes necessary in competition. There is more systematized thought about particular world views, done by professionals whose
The transition examined by Luckmann can be seen in two dimensions. First, there is 'vertical' articulation of legitimations; in a 'simple society', the world view is diffused and need not be articulated; there is a clear connection between experience and ultimate meaning. In 'modern society', however, the individual is 'offered' meaning in various forms; legitimations are, as it were, more detached.

But there is also a 'horizontal' dimension: the homogeneity of the distribution of legitimations. In a 'simple society', the world view lends significance to life in its totality; it is more or less homogeneously distributed both institutionally and individually. However, once it is more highly articulated, legitimations are 'freed' to be adopted by a particular body such as a church, instead of being the world view for the whole society. This is an important aspect of pluralism: the progressive liberation of sectors of society from the dominance of religious meaning. And this leads to further legitimating activity as an apologetic device; only in this heterogeneous state task is to explain their validity. The transition is to a society where there is what Berger and Luckmann call "competition in the institutional ordering of comprehensive meanings for everyday life". Institutional religion is a specific attempt to articulate meaning and it becomes increasingly separated from other institutions, each with their own legitimations related to their functions (for example, instrumental-scientific).
is 'religion' in a position to be set over against 'society' or to compromise with it. Religion can no longer be assumed as inevitable; it must be marketed.

The implication of this discussion is that theological statements tend not only to be highly articulated and a matter for choice in modern society (the 'vertical' dimension), but also that they have a comparatively restricted social base. They tend to become 'church' legitimations defended by religious professionals and their application to all of life becomes problematic.

Negotiation over legitimations then becomes easier, and the possibility of joining Christian forces in a common attempt to market them to a secular society can be entertained. Doctrinal negotiation and joint mission become more feasible and desirable.

Changes in social structure are related to changes in the way in which legitimations are held. The implications of this for Faith & Order are readily apparent. In Berger's words:

"the phenomenon called 'pluralism' is a social-structural correlate of the secularization of consciousness." Subjectively, man has become uncertain about religious matters; objectively, he is confronted with a wide variety of religious and other reality-defining agencies which compete for his allegiance. Faced with this situation, the individual is in the position of a 'buyer' in a market; his eclectic attitude is grounded in the structure of modern society. 'Fashion' or choice detracts from the idea of
1 Berger, The Social Reality ..., p. 166.


unchangeable verities. The result is that both religious and other world views tend to become privatized in developed societies; religious 'realities' are translated from a frame of reference external to the individual consciousness to a frame of reference that locates them within consciousness.¹

In many of his roles in a pluralist society the individual is anonymous as regards the world view which has meaning for him; the pragmatic legitimations of institutions do not demand to be 'believed'. 'Reality' becomes private and loses the quality of self-evident plausibility. And once 'reality' is open to choice, any particular choice is relativized and less than certain. The choice is between various products, striving for relevance. The paradox for the professionals who maintain a world view in these circumstances is that success may come through compromise (by relating to the 'deep down' as opposed to the 'out there') and yet this very compromise tends to undermine the institution which it may be intended to legitimate, owing to its radical subjectivism.

It is difficult to make this sort of argument historically specific.² The explanation is, however, useful in focussing on the change in the way in which religious legitimations are held when it becomes apparent that they are subject to serious competition, not just among some intellectuals, but in society at large. This is characteristic of modern industrial society; it is a change, the impact of which was not appreciated by the majority of religious professionals until early in the
present century, or, in some cases, until considerably
later.

Once again, however, it must be stressed that the
structural reality is not merely one which conditions all
to unite in faith and order. The trends discussed have
not been uniform in their effect and there are many other
variables in the situation. They may be conducive to
greater ecumenical activity, but what results is a state
of tension. Whereas some are prepared to come to a 'new
understanding' of divisions, others affirm the objectivity
of their 'distinctive witness' positions.

Theology

In a pluralist society, religious legitimations have
come to be held in a different way: a way which is
illuminated by Luckmann's explanation. One result of
this has been that much theology is now conducted on
changed assumptions; from being a largely deductive
discipline, it has become a more tentative and empirical
one.

"Where before the step from premises to conclusions was
brief, simple, and certain, today the steps from data to
interpretation are long, arduous, and, at best, probable.
An empirical science does not demonstrate. It accumulates
information, develops understanding, masters ever more of
its materials, but it does not preclude the uncovering of
further relevant data, the emergence of new insights, the
attainment of a more comprehensive view."

Many now have the experience to which Hromadka referred at
Lund, of having their "dogmatic heresies" tolerated, over-
looked or leniently listened to, while people are concerned
1 Lu, p. 193. Hromadka (a Czech) has been a prominent participant in the ecumenical movement. He tried to find the "place of the Christian Church in a socialist society": Thoughts of a Czech Pastor (transl. London, 1970), p. 114. This made him many enemies, particularly among Americans in the 1950s.


4 Schleiermacher's best-known lectures were addressed to the 'cultered despisers' of religion - addresses On Religion (transl. London, 1893). He saw doctrines as pawns in controversy: the cause of an unpleasant proselytizing spirit.

5 The spirit of the early period is well described in Hromadka, Thoughts of a Czech Pastor, p. 21. See also Chapter V below.

with other matters. As Macquarrie puts it, many traditional questions "seem pretty dead and do not stir us any more"; people "sit rather lightly" to them.

Theologians have increasingly appreciated that theirs is human thinking about God from a particular situation; done with the help of the Holy Spirit and striving towards the truth, but relative nonetheless. Thus McIntyre wrote at the end of his lectures on theological models in Christology: "If models are deliverances of the imagination, we shall be a little reluctant to claim for them immediately the sanctions of faith ... They represent our partial insights, our slow advance from vantage-point to vantage-point." There is general awareness of the lesser importance of some theological disputes; much of theology has become more tentative.

The effects of this changed attitude are most noticeable in the more 'radical' and liberal theology following in the tradition of Schleiermacher: theology which lays little stress on doctrinal objectivity and much on the situation of man. The Protestant liberalism of, for example, the 'social gospel' was a compromise with a culture which was deemed to be attractive and worthy of use as a datum for theological reflection. This optimism, together with the desire for more universal sets of religious principles in order to accommodate and at the same time transcend the diversity of religious orientations, gave some encouragement to the pioneers of Faith & Order.

World War I was the first great shock to this world and so to Protestant liberalism. It was under the shadow
of war that Barth was led to question current theological notions and, in 1918, he wrote his *Commentary on Romans*, stressing the objectivity of God's Word over against the relativity of the human situation. The effect of this took a long time to be felt, particularly in Britain and America. In the latter, the shock to the bourgeois world came more with the Depression and the Second War. And in much of the world in the 1920s there was the strong hope that one war was enough to make for permanent peace. But post-war idealism soon passed in the 1930s and the Barthian stress on objectivity and on faith in Christ alone gained influence rapidly, particularly in relation to the struggle of the 'Confessing Church' in Germany. At the same time there was a 'rediscovery' of the corporate Church: a tight group in which to maintain a particular 'definition of reality' over against the 'modernism' of the 'German Christians'.

Faith & Order's relationship to this change was not a direct one. It was not until the 1950s that it fully discovered the potential in Barthian theology for providing a still point to which faith and order positions could be made relative. The lag was largely for internal reasons: the wish for separation from *Life & Work* (which supported the Confessing Church) and the fact that Faith & Order was already set upon a particular ponderous method of solving the Church's doctrinal problems. The participants were largely 'establishment' theologians and church administrators; the leading thinkers in theology rarely wished to represent
1 Barth and Brunner are the most obvious examples. Brunner did participate briefly but left angrily in 1931: FO 65 (1931), p. 14. See below, p. 175a, note 3.

2 Berger, The Social Reality ..., pp. 163-4. He says that "the turning point can be dated with embarrassing clarity in 1948": the year of currency reform and the beginnings of economic recovery. It was not perhaps as clear as Berger suggests; 1949 was the year of the Wadham College (Oxford) report hailing new agreements on biblical interpretation: A. Richardson and W. Schweitzer (eds.), Biblical Authority For Today (London, 1951).


Their churches on such a body. 1

Paradoxically, when a more Barthian objectivity came to be relevant to Faith & Order's particular needs, the crisis had passed, the world was once again becoming more attractive, and the dominance of what had come to be called 'neo-orthodoxy' began to decline. 2 But at this time Faith & Order once again spent many years pursuing its own special interests until the developments which had been going on in Germany and elsewhere for some time, began to affect them.

These were the developments which at first centred around Bultmann and the question of 'de-mythologizing', and then around such terms as 'secular theology' and 'religionless Christianity'. Theologians began to "set up shop in the realm of personal existence". 3 Whether the recommendations of the theologians behind such slogans were fully accepted or not, 'Barthians' found themselves in a definite minority. Many began to hold the conviction that theology must be done in relation to the modern world and to modern consciousness. This continued what Berger has called the transition from "transcendent ontology" to "immanent anthropology". 4

At first Faith & Order lacked the wish and opportunity to 'catch up' with this trend; they had collected a number of fairly traditional theologians and had made a 'breakthrough' of their own, on the strength of which they had set up long-term Commissions. But a change of personnel and a conference in the early 1960s opened up new possibilities. This is not to say that Faith & Order became
'Bultmannian'. But it did come to do its theology more closely in relation to the world and it began to focus on man.

The significant point here is that, in a pluralist situation, the status and nature of theological statements changes. Theological differences are then held to be of lesser importance; the objectivity of any one legitimation or world view is open to doubt, and there is then little possibility for theologians to enter the realm of 'transcendent ontology'. The new datum becomes 'the world' and 'man'. The neo-orthodox reaction does not fit in with this trend, but it is nevertheless important to note that it also provided a possible datum to which traditional theological positions could be made relative. However, it was a datum which was eventually found to have little use outside a particular situation of opposition to 'the world'.

The 'crisis of theology' has been accompanied by a loss of confidence in the status of theological and doctrinal statements. The crisis has not, however, had a uniform effect on the churches and the situation has been one of tension between 'radicals' and 'conservatives'. This tension is increased within Faith & Order because, although the crisis of theology can facilitate the search for unity, it also lowers the standing of academic theology as such, and it is to the study of this that Faith & Order has largely been dedicated.

The decline in the status of theology is related to the loss of plausibility of traditional religious legitimations.
in a situation of competition, and not to any mysterious transformation in the nature of human consciousness. The change is grounded in the pluralistic structure of modern society.

**Religious Professionals**

The changing attitudes to theology have, not surprisingly, affected theologians and other religious professionals. Indeed there has been questioning as to whether theology is a serious academic discipline at all. The time when there were 'great theologians' appears to have passed, for they can no longer make authoritative pronouncements. There is less certainty and a tendency to participate in 'dialogue' and to call for inter-disciplinary study. Consistent with this is the proclamation of an 'age of the laity'; in a pluralistic situation it is the consumer's needs which are catered for, at least theoretically.

But, although there has been much talk of the role of the laity, the ecumenical movement in general (and Faith & Order in particular) has remained peculiarly clerical. The most plausible explanation for this is that the place of the clergy has changed radically in modern society and that they have looked to each other for support. With many of their traditional moral, social and pastoral roles taken over by 'experts' in other fields, the clergy are often left either with a search for gaps in expert provision, with involvement in some 'cause', or with a concentration on their ritual professional function.

Another activity to which they can devote their efforts
is the ecumenical one. Wilson sees the clergy's wish to retain status and a hold in modern society as having a close relationship with their ecumenical activity:

"The spirit has descended on the waters and brought peace between churchmen of different persuasions only as those churchmen have recognized their essential marginality in modern society."¹

He holds that there has been compromise with secular society under the guise of compromise with other Christians; religious professionals have developed their own shared language and have come to a professional understanding.

This has some application to Faith & Order's situation, particularly on account of the increasing emphasis among clergy on professional specialization. As religion has become more marginal, so formerly dissenting movements have stressed their clergy's professional competence and this has been an incentive for association with the clergy of older churches on terms of equality. 'Unity' has not only been something new to believe in for all the churches, but also a means for justifying academic debate with other professionals.²

3: ORGANIZATIONAL CONVERGENCE

Common 'professionalism' is matched by common tendencies in organization and these are also conducive to ecumenical activity. The demand for administrative rationality, which springs from the attempt to organize finance and investment, welfare, education, missions and other religious commitments in a modern competitive society, has led to a certain
convergence.

Organizational necessities may have considerable effect on the distinctive legitimations of churches. Harrison, in his study of the American Baptist Convention, found that the most extreme views about congregational polity and the leading of the Spirit, were to a large extent neutralized by the pressures of organization. Also Adaptation to the demands of the wider society takes place, although it is not a total transformation. Thompson's conclusion in Bureaucracy and Church Reform (a study of the Church of England) was that, in what seems to be an inevitable process of organization, the character and identity of the church must be taken into account as determining important features of the outcome at every stage.²

This is confirmed by Winter's findings that "Although each faith-community shaped its own pattern of organization according to the dominant principles of its own ethos ... the emerging organizational structures were very similar."³

Berger has used his 'market model' to aid understanding of the dynamics of the co-operation which often follows such convergence.⁴ Once religious allegiance is voluntary, various forms have to be 'marketed' to consumers and great importance is then attached to 'results' such as membership figures. In order to attract customers, rational methods are used. And so, Berger argues, the tendency is to rationalize competition in a market situation because 'free competition' might, for instance, reduce political influence and give Christianity as such a poor image among consumers.

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Co-operation also saves money on necessary commitments like church buildings and theological training. The result is that bodies may merge until they are a viable size and then allocate territories on a 'comity' principle, cooperating through national and regional councils. ¹

Berger's model is an extreme one and is very obviously drawn from the American situation. But it does indicate the connection between rational organization and ecumenical co-operation. Once churches have seen the value of organizing their affairs to meet the problems posed by existence in pluralistic societies, they not only tend to adopt similar structures and to lose some of their distinctive features, but they may also believe that co-operation will lead to better results.

The effect on Faith & Order is twofold. First, those who meet come from similar bodies and have like interests. Secondly (and more important), there is the effect which organizational changes have on legitimations, particularly on those which justify and explain a certain 'order'; order may be modified to adapt to a new situation.²

4: CULTURAL CONVERGENCE AND INTERNATIONALISM

A social development which has particularly affected the international manifestations of the ecumenical movement has been growing cultural similarity, especially in the West, and an increasing international consciousness.

Miegge has suggested some convergent elements in Western society.³ Although he recognizes that structural
unification does not come about without some contradictions, he lists five areas: the tendency to subordinate social life to the exigencies of industrial production; the reduction of economic differences within the West; the concentration of the power of economic decision and the use of state intervention and planning; the unification of the West both to defend itself and to compete with the Soviet bloc; a convergence in internal social and cultural organization. Miegge couples these trends with a convergence in religious thinking and ethics between 'Protestant' and 'Catholic' forms in response to neo-capitalist economic relations.

Miegge's is an international version of Lee's analysis of American ecumenism: that increase in church unity springs in considerable measure from growing cultural unity. He concludes that "It is not surprising that the problem of Christian unity and the trend towards a 'synthesis' of 'Christian values' is of prime concern to the society in which we live in the West."1

It is difficult to make much use of such a general theory, but it does point to some important convergent features of Western life, and provides a basis for considering the religious parallel to growing international consciousness in every field. Economic, scientific and cultural convergence has been accompanied by the mass communications, the increased travel facilities and the economic prosperity which make international organization possible and desirable. And with this there is the impression made by such terms as 'global village': a consciousness that each shares the problems of all.
Together with these factors, the influence of two world wars must be noted as of particular importance in stimulating international activity. After the first war "many believed firmly that a fundamental change had taken place in international relations. From now on there would be a true international order based on law."¹

This was the 'spirit of Geneva', which inspired the League of Nations at the time when Faith & Order was becoming international (1920). Numerous explicit parallels were drawn by churchmen and the 1920 Faith & Order meeting passed a resolution rejoicing at the League's formation.² Many Christian leaders saw the League as a body in need of a soul.³

The response to the second war was more practical, less idealistic. Although the organization of relief did not affect Faith & Order directly, it greatly increased the strength of the WCC, of which Faith & Order was shortly to become part.

When it was officially set up in 1948, the WCC had already been established in Geneva for ten years. In 1964 it moved to modern offices in the 'international area' of the same city, close to the United Nations and the World Health Organization.⁴

The need for high-level co-ordination in the modern world and for a centre to represent their interests ('Rome and Geneva') has meant that the churches have set up an international body with many similarities to its secular equivalents. Faith & Order has been given responsibility for studying "the theological implications of the existence
of the ecumenical movement\(^1\) and for much of the dialogue with Rome. It has been one part of a general trend to find international common ground.

5: CONCLUSION

In this chapter a number of social developments have been briefly outlined. It is suggested that these developments and the attempts which have been made (for instance, by sociologists) to make sense of them, have conditioned Faith & Order’s efforts to realize its ‘definition of reality’. Unity in faith and order was an idea which became current at a particular time and in particular areas. To say that this was caused by a sense of theological scandal does not explain either the time or the place. Faith & Order is a Western, and was at first a very American, phenomenon which started early in this century.

Although the developments described have not led to the ‘united Church’ envisaged in the early years, they provide a background of conditions for the discussion of faith and order. Using one of Smelser’s expressions, they demonstrate that there has been ‘structural conduciveness’ at least for a Faith & Order movement if not for unity in faith and order.\(^2\) But social constraint has not been uniform and there have been ‘countervailing’ assertions from Christians who consider ‘faith and order’ to be irrelevant or who adhere to particular ‘distinctive witness’ positions. The result is a situation of tension and it is in the light of this that Faith & Order’s history must be
seen. It is to the resolution of this tension (to making its 'definition of reality' objective) that Faith & Order has been dedicated.

Having given what has been a largely explanatory account, the task of the next chapter is to be more descriptive: to look at Faith & Order's attempts to define the situation and to realize its definition.
This chapter aims to examine Faith & Order's attempts to realize the idea of unity primarily from the perspective of the participants - to understand what factors have been of importance to them in their efforts to solve the problem facing them. The distinction between 'explanation' and 'description' cannot be rigidly drawn, but the emphasis here is on description. To use Berger and Luckmann's idiom, the aim is to look at the human enterprise of constructing reality as it is exemplified in the attempts of Faith & Order participants to realize their 'definition of reality'.

The early idea of an organized 'ecumenical movement' must be seen against the background of nineteenth-century ventures in Christian co-operation. These ventures often stemmed from the sense of contradiction which sprang from experience of the consequences of exporting Western divisions in missionary work, together with the discovery at once of the immensity of the missionary task and of the obstacles in its way. Ecumenism has had a continuous relationship with missionary work; at home disagreements appear in the local dress of social diversity and traditional forms, but in the mission field differences are more often seen in the cosmopolitan light of the common task facing all Christians.

There were many other movements of co-operation. Thus the Y.M.C.A. (founded in 1844) did much to bring future leaders of the ecumenical movement together. Similarly
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the Student Christian Movement, the World Student Christian Federation and many evangelical bodies cut across the apparently 'given' structures of the churches. Not only did all these movements make for the sharing of ideas about unity and for personal introductions and friendships; they also dispelled many of the illusions which people had about the beliefs and conduct of other Christians.

1: THE PIONEER PERIOD

The Idea

It is not surprising that the initial impetus for an 'ecumenical movement' came from a missionary conference. At the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910, Christians from all over the world gathered to discuss their work. This was the period which marked the turning-point between the sort of 'ecclesiastical colonialism' which had accompanied the colonial expansion of the great powers, and a more cautious attitude to missionary work.

Although the cry was 'the evangelization of the world in this generation' and there was still great confidence both in the power of the Gospel and in the mission of Western civilized man, there was also a feeling that opposition to Christianity in the world at large might have been underestimated.

The conference was the first of its kind. It was not just a meeting of the like-minded; there was a genuine attempt to make it universal, and those who attended came as the delegates of missionary bodies. There was considerable
2 Ibid., p. 128.

Excitement:

"On assembling, they knew keen anticipation within themselves. They felt the very air charged with expectant hope and daring. They thrilled to be part of something new ... the assembly came to realize that it was no huge and unwieldy group, for it had discovered the cohesion and dynamic that belong to 1,200 Christians drawn from around the world and committed to one end."¹

The most emotional part of the conference was the setting up of a permanent body, a Continuation Committee:

"In an instant there had come a group-intuition ... an idea had been planted."² A contemporary commentator remarked that "the Continuation Committee seemed to become transmuted by some sort of spiritual alchemy into a symbol of something greater far."³

A Chinese delegate went so far as to say:

"we hope to see in the near future a united Christian Church without any denominational distinctions."⁴

The conference had seen a "heavenly vision" and the participants rose to sing the doxology on the midsummer's day when the report on Cooperation and the Promotion of Unity was presented and the Continuation Committee appointed.⁵

The Continuation Committee eventually set up the International Missionary Council in 1921. But more important for the purposes of this study is the impression which the conference and the setting up of the committee made on one of the participants: C. H. Brent. Brent was an American Episcopalian and a missionary Bishop in the Philippines, where he had experienced the problems of division. Before
Edinburgh he had not been enthusiastic about unity, but afterwards he said:

"I was ... converted. I learned that there was something working that was not of men in that World Conference; that the Spirit of God was manifesting Himself with new power and so far as I could see He was preparing for a new era in the history of Christianity."1

Much of the success of Edinburgh (and indeed the attendance of many Anglicans of Anglo-Catholic commitment) was dependent on the exclusion of "questions of doctrine or Church polity" from discussion.2 There had been fear of an 'undenominational' lack of respect for theological principles. Brent, however, inspired by the vision of a united Church glimpsed at Edinburgh, was convinced that 'faith and order' should be discussed. He looked forward to a combination of the churches' strengths: a "synthesis of distinctions" in organic unity.3

In 1910 he put his ideas to the General Convention of his church, which was similarly enthusiastic and set up a 'Joint Commission to arrange for a World Conference on Faith and Order'. This Commission consisted of seven Bishops, seven Presbyters and seven Laymen: a sign that it was thought to have special religious significance.4

It was decided that a conference was the "next step towards unity". The invitation was to go to all churches "which accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour"; the conference would be for delegates of these churches; it was not to legislate for the churches; both disagreements and agreements were to be clearly stated and fully discussed.5
There is a minute account of this earliest period (1910-20) in Epting, Ein Gespräch beginnt. Gardiner's correspondence is in FO Arch. He wrote not only to church leaders but also to a publicity agent in New York (P. Dudley); the aim was to inform people of the movement's principles and to show that it had respectable support. The idea of asking H. G. Wells to support it was turned down.

Morgan, the famous banker and philanthropist, regularly attended the Episcopal Church's Conventions and had a respect for ecclesiastical debates; see F. L. Allen, The Great Piec­point Morgan (New York, 1949). For Anderson's arguments see FO 20 (1913), pp. 26-7 (Unofficial). The Commission said that unofficial publications were "deemed worthy of publica­tion" but it did not hold itself responsible for the opinions expressed in them: FO 3 (1911), p. 9.

Held in New York for representatives of interested churches: FO 24 (1913).


These principles, established in 1910, were to be of the greatest importance in Faith & Order's development, determining vital aspects of the outcome at every stage. They were integral to Faith & Order's theory, its 'definition of reality'. The aim was to provide a comprehensive conference-platform where qualified representatives of all churches could discuss a wide range of faith and order topics with a view to unity.

After these first enthusiastic moves to establish a Faith & Order 'definition of reality', the next problem was to persuade churches to take part. R. H. Gardiner, the Secretary of the Joint Commission, began his voluminous international correspondence. J. P. Morgan, another Episcopalian, gave 100,000 dollars to the cause, and C. P. Anderson, the Joint Commission's President and Bishop of Chicago, put forward theological and economic arguments for unity and added that America needed a national identity and Christianity "like the English or the Scotch". Early interest in the idea was shown chiefly in the USA, yet there were some representatives from other countries at the 'First Preliminary Conference' in 1913.

Communications between participants were disrupted by the First War. But the effect of the war was only to delay efforts to achieve unity; except in a few cases it did not impair links already formed. Indeed there is ample evidence to suggest that the horror of war made the unity idea appear more urgent. Thus W. T. Manning, a member of the Joint Commission, said of the war:

2. FG 30 (1916), p. 4: 'North American Preparatory Conference'.

3. The Army and Religion (London, 1919), p. 421. Among enquiry members were Garvie, Tatlow and E. S. Woods.

4. On Roman Catholic reaction see Rouse and Neill, A History ..., p. 416. The Pope hoped all "would see the light and become reunited to the visible Head of the Church". This message was confirmed in the 1928 encyclical Mortalium Animos. The reaction of the German churches is described in A History ..., p. 417.

"It has compelled men to see more clearly than ever the weakness and ineffectiveness of a Christianity disunited, and divided against itself."  

An American Faith & Order conference in 1916 looked forward to a new age "born of the travail of the nations", when a united Church might come forth "to make the rule of Christianity the law of the nations". 2 And in England, some early Faith & Order participants took part in an enquiry which remarked that

"Seen against the vast and terrible background of the trenches and the battlefield, ecclesiastical divisions look spectral and unreal." 3

Many claimed that it was because of its lack of unity that the Church had not prevented war.

Preparations for Lausanne

The end of the war was followed by great enthusiasm for unity and brotherhood in all areas. And for Faith & Order there was the hope of many that the development of biblical criticism would provide a means for easing disagreements which had grown up in less enlightened times.

Delegations from the USA spread the news of the conference. Although the Roman Catholic Church refused an invitation, many others showed interest, including some Orthodox. The German churches at first refused; they saw the moves as too Anglo-Catholic in inspiration - as an Anglo-American imperialist policy. 4

Post-war hopes were first realized at a meeting in Geneva in 1920, where Brent presided. The aim was to decide on details for the coming conference. Brent's
opening address dwelt on the inner unity of all Christians and on the common vision, hope and purpose of unity, which he identified with the indestructible purpose of God. On this basis they were to build. Yet unity was not only inner or devotional; it had to receive visible expression. All churches would bring distinctive contributions to a united Church. He ended by saying: "We can aim at nothing less than the unity of the whole of Christendom."  

Discussion was largely concerned with the form of the vision of unity: the conceptions of the united Church. The Greek Orthodox, in line with their Encyclical of 1920 'to all the Churches of Christ, wheresoever they may be', proposed a League of Churches and wanted assurances that proselytizing among their members would cease. They desired Christian co-operation, but, as at later meetings, they saw little need to 'discuss' faith and order. Rather, they came to declare the right way to unity: through the Orthodox Church. Many views were expressed as to the nature of unity. Gore put an Anglo-Catholic view: "I find an obligatory membership in a visible society to be the characteristic of Christianity" - a society in which there is common faith, the obligation of sacraments and a divinely commissioned ministry. In his view the Church of England had a watchword for a united Church: "a kind of idea of liberal Catholicism".  

This meeting appointed a Continuation Committee which took over the work of the original Joint Commission. Brent suggested the year 1925 as a suitable date for the projected
1 Minutes of the December 1920 Executive Committee meeting: FO Arch '1920-31' boxes. He was referring to the First Ecumenical Council summoned by Constantine in 325.


3 FO Arch '1920-31' boxes: sent out 1922-3.

4 The original 'draft agenda' is FO 41 (1925). This was cancelled by a notice circulated after the Continuation Committee's 1926 meeting, which attempted to get the situation back to its former simple state: FO Arch '1920-31' boxes and FO 44 (1926). Palmer, coming from South India, was concerned with actual church unions.

Conference, as that was the 1,600th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea.¹ He was, of course, aware that his gathering would be somewhat different from the early Councils, but the suggestion nevertheless shows that he had high hopes for its significance. The 1913 meeting had already been compared to an Ecumenical Council,² and some certainly saw themselves as participating in a movement comparable to that of the Church's early years; this was an element in their understanding of Faith & Order.

A letter was now sent out which began:

"The World Conference on Faith and Order will meet in Washington, the capital of the United States of America ... The President of the United States will deliver the address of welcome."³

But in late 1923 the conference was postponed; it was planned to hold it in Lausanne in 1927. The reason given was that more time was needed for fund-raising and publicity; it is also true that there was not yet sufficient support or organization for the holding of a large conference.

Detailed planning began amidst considerable confusion. Many felt that some 'guiding propositions' drawn up for Lausanne were an attempt to determine in advance "official judgements or final conclusions". This suspicion was perhaps not unfounded, for E. J. Palmer, the Anglican Bishop of Bombay, who was Chairman of the Subjects Committee which drew up the propositions, exerted pressure before and at Lausanne for discernible signs of progress and concrete proposals. The controversial propositions were eventually withdrawn.⁴
1 Brent's view is in Zabriskie, Bishop Brent ..., pp. 155-7. Headlam (the Bishop of Gloucester) was a keen advocate of unity and had given his views in the 1920 Bampton lectures: The Doctrine of the Church and Christian Reunion (London, 1920). Ainslie was a prominent member of the Disciples of Christ and was for open membership, communion and pulpits: F. S. Idleman, Peter Ainslie (Chicago, 1941).

2 See La. Also E. D. Soper, Lausanne: The Will to Understand (New York, 1928); E. S. Woods, Lausanne 1927 (London, 1927); A. E. Garvie, Memories and Meanings of My Life (London, 1938). There are many articles, but few go beyond summarizing reports and wondering at the occasion.

Fundamentally, the confusion concerned the objective of Lausanne. While some thought that the aim was only to state what they believed, others hoped that a blueprint for the united Church would emerge. Although the official Faith & Order publications were careful to take the former view, there were prominent participants who gave a somewhat different impression. Men like Palmer, Headlam and Ainslie had definite ideas on what unity implied and were eager to see them implemented in practice. And it appears that Brent saw the conference as a preliminary to a "concrete plan for a united, world-wide Church". No doubt the problem was one of timing; those who saw few obstacles imagined a 'united Church' to be imminent. Yet the confusion was sufficient for there to be little subject-planning for Lausanne.

This problem illustrates important features of the early period; enthusiasm for unity was coupled with uncertainty as to the right way to proceed. Unity was to be visible; indeed it was eventually to be realized in a 'united Church'. But opinions varied on the method to be followed and on the likelihood of early success.

Lausanne

The meeting was itself an expression of unity and there were many indications of this: declarations of fellowship, exhortations to unity, breaks for prayer and hymn singing and such symbolic events as an interpreter offering his services free. C. F. D'Arcy, the Archbishop of Armagh, expressed the feeling in his opening speech:
"No mere regulation of machinery can bring about what we have in view. We must begin with the spirit, and external adjustments will follow as a matter of inevitable result." ¹

This referred to the dominant theme of Lausanne: unity of faith and spirit. At least all were united in Christ, and they were to return to this basic legitimation again and again.

The main function of the first two sections of the conference report was to express this sense of exaltation: the 'Call to Unity' and 'The Church's Message to the World - The Gospel'. Other sections (for instance, on the Sacraments or on the nature of the Church) worked towards a basic consensus, then stated the different positions represented in their deliberations by a straight listing of alternative views. Many groups, such as the Orthodox, felt they were being rushed, and made separate statements of their distinctive stands. On the other hand, some delegates, especially the few Asians, found the whole procedure ponderous. In the face of the unevangelized millions and of the world's needs, they felt that people were being too careful to lay bare differences. ²

The problem of a more precise aim within Faith & Order's 'definition of reality' became plainer in the Section that dealt with the issue of 'The Unity of Christendom and the Relation Thereto of Existing Churches'. The difficulty here was that the report, much of which had been drafted by D'Arcy and Söderblom (the Life & Work leader) not only laid considerable emphasis on the need for joint action, but also

¹ See W. S. Azariah's remarks (La, p. 103) and the plea for urgency by T. T. Law. Also the plea on behalf of youth: La, pp. 400-2.
"No mere regulation of machinery can bring about the end we have in view. We must begin with the spirit, and the external adjustments will follow as a matter of inevitable result." This referred to the dominant theme of Lausanne: unity in faith and spirit. At least all were united in Christ, and they were to return to this basic legitimation again and again.

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1 La, p. 26.
2 See W. S. Azariah's remarks (La, p. 103) and the pleas for urgency by T. T. Lew. Also the plea on behalf of youth: La, pp. 400-2.
spelled out characteristics of a united Church. Some welcomed this as a vital step forward, but others, particularly the Anglicans, attacked it as 'pan-Protestant' in style. They thought that there was excessive stress on diversity and co-operation and insufficient on the marks and discipline of the Church. Gore, for example, saw it as his role at Lausanne to bring people down to earth from their state of exaltation: to prevent loose talk of unity and press instead for the catholic ideal of a united Christendom.\(^1\) The report was finally only 'received' and referred to the Continuation Committee for revision, and the revised version was more cautious.\(^2\)

An appreciation of the optimism of the early period is important in reaching an understanding of Faith & Order's history. A breakthrough had been made in discussing matters of faith and order at all, and it was hoped that this would lead to a united Church. The participants had seen a vision, and in the joy of mutual explanation, their idea seemed powerful enough to transform the objective reality. As Brent put it:

"I would falter were it not that I see, beyond and above \(\text{[a conference]},\) the Heavenly Jerusalem coming down from God, clothed in that dazzling glory which, however it baffles, allures and comforts and inspires".\(^3\)

The enthusiasm owed much to the idealism of the time and to the Americans' comparative lack of concern for doctrinal differences. And this was coupled, in the minds of many, with a wish to save the world through a united Christianity and to fight the signs of what was later called 'secularization'.
One American delegate saw the "national, moral collapse" of his country as "a direct result" of disunity.¹ Many would have put this more ambiguously, but such a view was not uncommon. Feelings of hope were joined by feelings of urgency. As Lausanne's 'Call to Unity' expressed it: "sad multitudes are turning away in bewilderment from the Church because of its corporate feebleness".²

And yet enthusiasm was checked by a growing appreciation of the problem. It was the Anglicans who provided much of the inspiration, finance and leadership, but they were also prominent in trying to ensure that the movement remained comprehensive and therefore that it did not try to achieve unity by 'compromise'. Hence their demand for a particular order to secure a certain conception of unity. Other 'obstacles' as well as this were encountered and the variety of views represented became clearer: the objective reality of divided Christians.

The method which was then adopted was cumbersome and followed the Western democratic pattern in its committee and conference procedure. To ensure comprehensiveness, the pace was slowed down and some who had sought a quick solution, such as Ainslie, dropped out.

Preparations for Edinburgh

The Lausanne Continuation Committee now began to prepare for the next conference. Brent died in 1929, and the Chairmanship passed to Temple, who had made a considerable impression at Lausanne as a man capable of expressing a latent consensus.³
The committee considered that Lausanne had exposed a variety of 'obstacles'. These would have to be overcome before unity could be achieved and it was felt that the task would be best performed by "commissions of theological experts" representing the churches.\(^1\) The first of these (on Grace) was appointed under Headlam as Chairman and he had much of the say in choosing the members. Three further Commissions were appointed in 1934 (one of which again had Headlam as Chairman) to prepare for the Edinburgh Conference in 1937.

The pace was slow and academic. The spirit of the 1930s was very different from that of the 1920s. The international movements of the previous decade had given place to resurgent nationalism. Faith & Order became more sober and 'realistic', especially when it had collected the formidable range of responses to the Lausanne report.\(^2\) While the parallel Life & Work movement was gaining strength meeting the challenge of the totalitarian state and finding the issues very much theological and ecclesiological, Faith & Order was 'in committee'. Its aim, as declared in 1933, was "to discover, face and overcome the obstacles to the full organic unity of Christendom".\(^3\)

This aim was not seen as implying involvement in 'social and political' issues such as the German church struggle. The struggle was not (at least at first) a clear-cut confrontation between two parties; there were many shades of view, and this made it easier for Faith & Order not to take
any decisive stand. But there was more to it than this. Faith & Order had a strong conviction that it could only solve its problems by keeping them separate from the involvements of particular churches, and that to take a stand in the manner of Life & Work would have federal and divisive implications, thus making the united Church less attainable.

Headlam, one of the most influential in Faith & Order at the time, held an extreme form of this view. He "totally failed to see the faith question in the German church struggle". Faith & Order was to be kept out of the hands of the S.C.M. and American Protestants, for such groups would make it 'political'.

Headlam represented the extreme stand on the separation of Faith & Order from 'the world'. But many had similar views, if not on politics in general, at least on the conditions for theological study and for retaining comprehensive participation. Whereas Life & Work had formed the more permanent Universal Christian Council in 1930, Faith & Order remained a Continuation Committee limited to organizing studies. An example of its attitude at the time was the 1934 decision that 'The Church and the World' was not a matter for study at Edinburgh; it belonged to the sphere of Life & Work.

But the most striking indication of Faith & Order's 'definition of reality' at the time, came in the planning for a World Council of Churches. During the 1930s it had become apparent that there were too many overlapping
ecumenical organizations and that there was financial sense
in joint appeals for money. At the same time there was
(particularly in relation to the German church struggle) a
'rediscovery' of the corporate nature of the Church. As
expressed in one of the preparatory volumes for Life & Work's
1937 Oxford Conference, the conviction came to be that:
"Representatives of the Churches can never meet without at
least attempting to live up to their main obligation, which
is to be the Church, and to announce the Lordship of Jesus
Christ over the world."¹

Oxford's watchword was 'Let the Church be the Church' and
if this hope was to be realized, there was seen to be the
need for a representative body.

But Faith & Order was not so enthusiastic. In its
attempts to be comprehensive, representative and theological,
it was largely composed of official 'church' theologians and
church administrators. This meant that they were less in
touch with new theological developments, let alone with what
was considered the life-and-death issue of the time. Although
most saw the point of a WCC, particularly after Temple's
efforts to persuade them, they wished numerous safeguards.
Their feeling was expressed at the time as: "Let us get
married and yet remain single".²

Edinburgh

The matter came into the open at Edinburgh in the
Section on 'The Church's Unity in Life and Worship', which
included the WCC proposal. The report was doggedly opposed
by Headlam, with support from others, and finally only
accepted 'nem. con.' after the addition of a paragraph

1 W. A. Visser't Hooft and J. H. Oldham, The Church and its
Function in Society (London, 1937), p. 97. Later used as
an example of 'trespassing' on Faith & Order ground: FOC I
(1949), p. 28. As those with a 'high' doctrine of the
Church were 'rediscovering' the bible, others 'rediscovered'
the visible Church. This implied that there was a divinely
'given pattern' for the Church - over against those who saw
all patterns as of human origin: see Kent, The Age of Disunity,
pp. 13-14.

2 J. H. Oldham quoted in Visser't Hooft, Memoirs, p. 80. One
aspect of the wish for independence was later of some importance:
the right to have members from outside the WCC's membership.
stating that some of those present were opposed to a Council. \(^1\) In the same paragraph the hope was expressed that the WCC would be so designed as to conserve the distinctive character of both Faith & Order and Life & Work. There were further efforts to ensure this after Edinburgh. \(^2\)

Delegates at Edinburgh were more conversant with each other's positions than they had been at Lausanne. And there had been better preparation in the form of the large volumes and reports from Commissions. Interest was expressed in the "ten years' progress" in union negotiations. \(^3\) Anglicans were once again prominent and the conference began with an address by Temple, its President. He dwelt on the underlying spiritual unity of Christians and called on the participants not merely to reiterate the convictions holding them apart:

"We must believe that there is truth in our own tradition, for we have proved it in experience. Let us remember that the same must be said of the traditions which seem incompatible with ours. Yet truth is one, and the incompatibility must be due to our misapprehensions of the truth, not to the truth itself." \(^4\)

However, the reports were similar to those at Lausanne. There were attempts to find consensus, then lists of points at which the attempts had failed. The subject of Grace was an exception; on this there was "no ground for maintaining division between Churches". \(^5\) The Orthodox complained of the abstract nature of the reports and pointed to the "necessity of accuracy and concreteness in the formulation

2 e.g. in the Continuation Committee: FO 91 (1938): see below, Chapter VII, Third Example (pp. 184-9).
3 Ed, p. 220.
4 Ed, p. 66. See also FO 88 (1937) - notes for Edinburgh Section I - which quoted a letter from Temple with similar content.
5 Ed, p. 224; also the original report FO 66 (1931), p. 28.
of the faith'.

Edinburgh was a less exciting conference than Lausanne and it made little progress in the sense that this had been defined: the overcoming of obstacles. It was still very conscious of the need for unity in the face of 'secularization'. And it was inevitably aware of the grave international situation: the Spanish Civil War and the imminence of world war. The response was to seek unity and with regard to this the agreement on Grace was significant; it was assumed that division could be reduced as doctrinal disagreements were overcome. Unity was to be sought and reached in separation from the political struggles of the time and not in relation to them.

Edinburgh was closely followed by the war and the WCC was left 'in process of formation' until 1948. However, it had a Provisional Committee to which Life & Work transferred its responsibilities. Faith & Order, predictably, remained separate. It discussed the WCC Constitution and set up Commissions on the subjects which seemed most pressing: The Church, Intercommunion, and Ways of Worship. Two of these started work during the war and kept in touch with Hodgson who, since the financial problems of the early 1930s, had been acting as Theological and General Secretary.

The Continuation Committee met again in 1947, when it heard Commission reports and also listened to Visser't Hooft, the WCC General Secretary, speak of the great expansion of the Life & Work side of the ecumenical movement as a clearing house for communications, refugees work and aid. He said that
the Provisional Committee now involved "eleven departments dealing with a consolidated budget of twelve million Swiss francs".\(^1\) Faith & Order resolved that a pamphlet describing the history and achievements of the movement be prepared.\(^2\)

The great impact of the Second War on the ecumenical movement was to increase the will and the need for practical co-operation. This tended to pass Faith & Order by.

The relationship with the WCC was an important new factor for Faith & Order. The more spectacular activities of Life & Work were worrying to participants in Faith & Order, who feared that their movement might be swamped and that its distinctive mandate would be compromised.

**The Unity Idea**

That mandate was 'unity', but this was to be achieved in a distinctive way and it was to take a particular form. Faith & Order had its own 'definition of reality' which it sought to make objective. As has already been pointed out, the movement's history has been one of continual definition against those who hold that spiritual unity or practical consensus are sufficient forms. In the words of the 1948 Constitution, its duty was to proclaim unity and "the obligation of the Churches to manifest that unity so that they may not only work together, but live together as members of the one Body of Christ".\(^3\)

This is not very explicit and in fact marks little if any advance on the expressions of the 1911 'Committee on Plan and Scope' or of the 1913 'Preliminary Conference'.\(^4\) But 'organic' or 'corporate' union was generally accepted as a vital part of Faith & Order's reality and it was implied

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1. FO 102 (1947), p. 11.
2. Ibid., p. 81.

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1947, P• 11.
Ibid., P• 81.
FOC 1 (1948), P• 67.
FO 3 (1911), P• 46: the ideal of 'organic unity'.
1 See Chapter VII below. On 'organic unity' (also called 'corporate'); Ed, p. 252) see above, p. 12a, note 1. The difficulty with such an expression is that there are many understandings of the existing situation and therefore of action necessary to correct it: see FO 82 (1937), pp. 41-4 on the meanings of unity. In the early period, the term was more acceptable; 'structures' were not the object of such concern as they were in the 1960s.

2 On financial support, see e.g. FO 45 (1926), p. 12; about 75% of the finance for Lausanne came from the Episcopal Church.

3 Examples of the latter are Y. T. Brilioth (the Continuation Committee Chairman after Temple); see his The Anglican Revival (London, 1929) and R. N. Flew (Chairman of the Commission on the Church); see G. S. Wakefield, Robert Newton Flew 1886-1962 (London, 1971), pp. 201-5.

The disproportionate influence of Anglicans is difficult to summarize, but the conference and committee reports demonstrate the prominence of e.g. Brent, Temple, Headlam, Palmer and Hodgson. Others such as Gore, Manning, D'Arcy, Tatlow and Bate were also important.

4 See below, pp. 169-72.

5 Henderson, Power Without Glory: he was a member of the Church of Scotland and Professor of Systematic Theology at Glasgow University. See also his Scotland: Kirk and People (London, 1969). For comments see A. Blair, 'Tweed, Thames and Tiber', C.R. (Journal of the Community of the Resurrection), no. 258, pp. 16-20; D. M. MacKinnon in The Stripping of the Altars (London, 1969), pp. 72-82.

that this was to come about by means of accumulated doctrinal agreements, with each making essential and complementary contributions.¹

The Influence of Anglicans

One feature of the early period, not unrelated to the conception of unity (which had similarities to that implied in the Lambeth Quadrilateral), was the prominent role of Anglicans. Faith & Order was started and at first almost wholly financed by them, and the Secretary was an Anglican from 1910 to 1952.² Other Staff and many influential participants were Anglicans and some who were members of other churches had marked Anglican sympathies.³ The way in which this influenced Faith & Order method will be discussed below.⁴ Here, it is necessary to raise the question of whether an Anglican wish for power was an important motive among early participants.

Henderson, in his book Power Without Glory (published in 1967), has attributed much of the ecumenical effort to the "fantasy world" of Anglican "ecclesiastical power mythology".⁵ In Scotland, he had experienced what he considered to be the minority Episcopal Church's use of ecumenism as a cover for gaining influence and power out of proportion to its actual strength. It was in the light of this situation at home that Henderson looked at ecumenism at large. He thought that Anglicans (and particularly those involved in Faith & Order) had employed contrived formulas and the "myth of Apostolic Succession" in an attempted takeover of other churches, and he accused them of using such
1 Their didactic manner was remarked on: Soper, *Lausanne* ..., p. 109; Patrick, 'The World Conference on Faith and Order', p. 18.

2 Wilson, *Religion in Secular Society*, p. 130; Neill in Rouse and Neill, *A History* ..., p. 725. E. A. Hardy has pointed out that it is often more established churches which send less 'establishment' delegates: Interview.

3 See the views quoted in Chapter VII below (pp. 169-72). The Episcopal Church was eager to involve other Anglicans, particularly "the mother Church of England": FD 23 (1913), p. 8. The attitude of some Anglicans in the 1930s is illustrated by the journal *Decumenica*, published under the auspices of the Counsel on Foreign Relations of the Church of England (a body suggested by Headlam), earlier copies of which bore a quotation from J. de Maistre: "Si jamais les chrétiens se rapprochent, comme tout les y invite, il semble que la motion doit partir de l'Eglise d'Angleterre."


opportunities as the Lausanne Conference and the union scheme in South India for their own ends.

Henderson saw Anglicans as trampling on others in pursuit of their own interests. He expanded this criticism into a general polemic against those who think that division can be patched up by diplomacy and formulas, when in fact the roots of churches go much deeper. Anglicans undoubtedly were keen proponents of unity and it is probable that many were encouraged by the prospect of a wider and more glamorous audience than they would have had at home. But there is little reason to restrict this motive to Anglicans. Indeed it has been pointed out that it is often small churches which are keenest to participate, because it gives them recognition and the opportunity for wider influence. And, however confident Anglicans may have been in a united Church, they can hardly have been unaware that other confessions had great numerical advantages in any struggle for power.

A stronger motive was that Anglicans thought they could make a unique contribution through their conception of the Church. They felt at home among disagreements and took naturally to the new situation with their idea of the 'via media'. The Lambeth Conference of 1908 had prepared the way by speaking of "the peculiar position of our Communion, with its power and hope of mediating in a divided Christendom" and the 1920 Conference followed this up with its 'Appeal to all Christian People' for reunion.

It is significant that, since the late 1940s, when
Hodgson's original memorandum (31.1.48) caused some stir, but this was smoothed over by the new permanent Secretary, O. S. Tomkins. Faith & Order's position was the subject of a number of letters to Tomkins: FO Arch 'Box 29'. See also R. N. Flew in FOC I (1948), p. 28 and Brilioth in FOC I, p. 7. Hodgson's view in 1951 is in FOL 3 ('After Lund'), pp. 4-5: FO Arch 'Lund' boxes.

1 Hodgson's original memorandum (31.1.48) caused some stir, but this was smoothed over by the new permanent Secretary, O. S. Tomkins. Faith & Order's position was the subject of a number of letters to Tomkins: FO Arch 'Box 29'. See also R. N. Flew in FOC I (1948), p. 28 and Brilioth in FOC I, p. 7. Hodgson's view in 1951 is in FOL 3 ('After Lund'), pp. 4-5: FO Arch 'Lund' boxes.


what has here been called the 'synthetic method' began to lose favour in Faith & Order, the influence of Anglicans has declined.

2: THE COMMISSION

Amsterdam and Lund

On entering the WCC, the character of Faith & Order changed. It saw its role as that of keeping its original vision of Christian unity (as opposed to 'mere co-operation') at the heart of the WCC from the beginning, and it became acutely conscious of its status. Hodgson expressed concern that subordination to the WCC's Study Department would mean curtailment of Faith & Order's freedom and his fears were widely shared. It took until 1951 before he was pacified and began to talk of the role of "back-room boys" worrying at the Church's divisions.

The Amsterdam Assembly met in a solemn atmosphere, conscious of the political problems of the time and of the Church's task in trying to build a 'responsible society' in face of the world's disorder: "unlike the 1910 Edinburgh Conference, it did not produce a creative outburst ... of prophetic inspiration and work". Much of the time was spent setting up the WCC, but a major issue was that of the role of Christianity in the East/West confrontation, a controversy focussed in the clash between Hromadka and Dulles.

The influence of the assembly itself on Faith & Order was small, for the Commissions were already set on their
courses towards the Lund Conference in 1952. Yet the use of the Barthian 'dialectical' approach in the Faith & Order Section did make some impact: the attempt to discover 'deepest differences' through a search for agreements within disagreements and vice versa. It was concluded that agreements in detail might be set in a different "whole corporate tradition of the understanding of Christian faith and life", namely 'protestant' or 'catholic'.\(^1\) At least this conclusion suggested an explanation for the failure of earlier ventures. And the search for deep keys to disunity, together with the increased emphasis on 'given unity' in Christ, prepared the way for changes at Lund.

One matter which was important to Faith & Order and which was clarified at and after Amsterdam, was the WCC's self-understanding. An organization which either reduced the importance of organic unity or saw itself as a manifestation of such a unity, would have interfered with Faith & Order's work. But Amsterdam and the 1951 'Toronto Statement' expressed "holy dissatisfaction" with Christian divisions and gave assurances that the WCC did not intend to be a 'super-church'.\(^2\)

Amidst a certain sense of malaise at the slow progress made, the three Commissions now completed their work and submitted it to the Lund Conference. As at Amsterdam, there were no blazing speeches. The tone was set by Schlink's address, 'The Pilgrim People of God', which is remembered as a high point of Lund. He spoke of a Pilgrim
People bound together as if under a situation of persecution and of separation from the world. He mentioned the sense of crisis in Faith & Order and the need for a new method; he said:

"we must tear our gaze away from our visible divisions, which we have not yet overcome, and look firmly at the One Lord towards whom we are moving."

These words expressed the mood of the conference and a 'new method' for penetrating behind set positions and for working from the common faith in Christ on a biblical basis, was 'discovered' and publicized. This was seen as a Faith & Order breakthrough and the main message from Lund. The project was that of "trying to deduce a common theology of the Church from a common Christology". The old aim of searching for doctrinal consensus remained, but some other legitimations in Faith & Order's 'definition of reality' changed. Thus there was less emphasis on the inviolability of present positions and more on the guidance to be found in the bible. Even if the 'new method' was not used by all Commissions after Lund, it liberated them from some earlier assumptions. A more 'realistic' mandate was adopted.

A new programme was now set up around four Commissions. The first on 'Christ and the Church' was to develop Lund's main insight: that new understanding should come from the centre in Christ; the second on 'Tradition and Traditions' was to investigate the problems of Scripture and Tradition; the third on 'Worship' was to continue study in the light of the growing liturgical movement in the churches; the fourth on 'Institutionalism' was to investigate a matter
raised at Lund: the influence of social and cultural factors on division. The subjects of ministry and intercommunion were significantly missing. This was later explained by saying that an indirect approach to such problems is often best.

By 1952 not only had the early optimism of Faith & Order passed, but the relationship with the WCC made tangible progress more urgent as a means of self-justification. Faith & Order had to prove that its vision could become an objective reality. In this situation, which must be seen together with the deep political divisions of the 1950s (the 'cold war' and the McCarthy era), Faith & Order's response was to reach for a hopeful and available approach (which owed much to Barth) as its 'new method', and to remain isolated from events in order to solve the pressing problems of faith and order in committees of experts. In the reported words of the Working Committee Chairman, it was believed

"that the right group of theologians, meeting each other at sufficient depth, could come to an understanding that could never otherwise be brought about".

Evanston and New Delhi

The next Faith & Order conference was in 1963, so the Commissions spent about ten years on their work. But there were more immediate concerns, particularly the Evanston Assembly, for which preparations were made under the title 'Our Oneness in Christ and Our Disunity as Churches'.

The assembly as a whole had as its theme 'Christ the Hope of the World' and there was disagreement between

2 FOC 17 (1953), p. 18: O. S. Tomkins.
those emphasizing the ultimate hope (led by Schlink) and those who stressed the Christian's hope for the world at the present time. The dominant Faith & Order view was undoubtedly the former and this was evident in the Faith & Order Section report.1 Here it was said that unity is in Christ and that unity given now is a foretaste of true unity: a gift to the Church for the sake of the world. There was frequent reference to the authority of the New Testament. And the report attempted to distinguish between diversity and division; when diversity disrupts it becomes sinful division. All must plant the Cross of Christ in the midst of their divisions; this may mean giving up some 'valued treasures'.

This report was characteristic of the new 'Christological' method and was hailed as its first fruit. Faith & Order now embarked on its programme of study; progress reports were received from Commissions and discussed in the Working Committee and Faith & Order Commission. In the years after Evanston there were, however, three other main areas of concern: Faith & Order's relationship to union negotiations, its own future, and the 'churchly' conception of unity. An account of these is important in understanding Faith & Order's 'definition of reality' in the 1950s.

From the time of Lund there was a renewed emphasis on unity as a preparation for mission; Christians were to go out on a mission to the world. This, together with the need for measurable progress at a time of long-term academic study,

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1 The report is in Ev, pp. 82-91. There is an account in M. Villain, Introduction à l'Écuménisme, third ed. (Tournai, 1961), pp. 41-52.
contributed to a greater stress on church unions. Faith &
Order's 'functions' included research into difficulties in
the relationship of churches and the provision of information
about unions. At first great care was taken lest it be seen
as interfering (thus contravening a founding legitimation)
and Faith & Order was restricted to information-gathering
and arranging consultations. But later it became bolder,
and in 1955 made the Secretary available as "an observer
or consultant". In 1958 it was suggested that appraisals
of union schemes be made and a committee decided that a
"far more active attitude" would be appropriate, without
ever sponsoring a union. The first 'consultative service'
visit was in 1959.

The second area of concern (with Faith & Order's future)
dated back to its early alarm on becoming part of the WCC.
Suspicions of being 'swamped' had increased when Faith &
Order claimed for its concerns only one sixth of the Evanston
programme and when, in the 1954 reorganization, it became a
department in the Division of Studies and appeared to be but
one fourteenth part of the WCC. The Faith & Order Commission
decided to ask the Central Committee for a "substantially
larger place" in the next assembly and eventually set up a
'Committee on the Future of Faith & Order' to look into this
and other matters.

This committee's Interim Report not only examined the
movement's functions, but also recommended wide changes in
organization: more Staff (at the time there was one Secretary),
a larger place for the unity topic in assemblies and, possibly,
divisional status for Faith & Order so that it might be enabled to fulfil its mission more successfully. These suggestions were received with mixed feelings by the Central Committee: further versions of the report were more closely argued but did not alter the basic recommendations.

Related to concern both with unions and with Faith & Order's future was interest in 'churchly' unity. The prominence given to a unity beyond that of the spirit or of co-operative ventures was seen as very closely tied to Faith & Order's fate and the 1961 New Delhi Assembly was considered to be an opportunity for education in the meaning of unity and for attracting attention to Faith & Order questions. But, as has already been indicated, although a particular conception of unity had been generally accepted from the early years and was part of Faith & Order's distinctive mandate, this conception had not been worked out in detail. Interest in unity was demonstrated by the North American Conference on 'The Nature of the Unity We Seek' in 1957 and the need for a more precise statement was supported, particularly by J. E. L. Newbigin, in the Working Committee and Faith & Order Commission. Newbigin prepared a paper on 'churchly unity' which was discussed in 1959 and refined in reports of the Future Committee of which he was a member.

The purpose was to discover a more detailed goal for Faith & Order to proclaim, and the result owed much to the South Indian situation in which Newbigin had been working. It was to be a goal beyond mere organization or co-operation, hence the 'churchly'. With only minor changes it is described
The term 'churchly' was withdrawn because of translation difficulty and its institutional overtones: FOC 31 (1960), p. 29 and p. 35.

ND, p. 116.

The last view was quoted in *Faith and Order Trends*, vol. 11:1 (1961), p. 8. It was picked up with apparent approval in *Evanston to New Delhi* ..., p. 43.


The question which was of course asked was: 'What does this mean?'. Is it a proclamation of faith, a description of intercommunion, an agenda for union negotiations, a WCC membership test or 'the ecumenical equivalent of the Lambeth Quadrilateral'? 3

As the explanatory paragraph in the New Delhi report said, many questions were left unanswered. One commentator said that the Statement simply called for "mutual recognition of ministries and members and joint participation in the Lord's Supper". More ambiguous and accurate was Visser't Hooft's "we have agreed upon a description of the object of our common search". 4 It is clear that, at least at the time, the WCC and Faith & Order had accepted a visible conception of unity recognized by certain cautiously defined 'notae unitatis'.

The acceptance of the Statement marked Faith & Order's

2 ND, p. 130.

3 See the altercation between Visser't Hooft and Commission members in FOC 31 (1960), pp. 39-40. Departmental status was later modified to 'Secretariat of the Commission' so that all but study matters were removed from the Division of Studies: MRCC 1965, p. 110.

4 At Amsterdam (Am, p. 25): Brilioth (a Swedish Lutheran) was Chairman of the Continuation Committee from 1947 and then of the Commission until 1957.

emergence from an unspectacular period. Before New Delhi there was distress at the narrowness of the work and it was reported that people thought the movement had ceased to exist at Evanston. But at New Delhi it was agreed that Faith & Order could offer "a certain kind of consultative assistance" to church unions, and other recommendations of the Future Report had been accepted at the 1960 Central Committee: a Staff of three, a larger budget and opportunities to report on unity. However, divisional status was not granted. Some were alarmed at this because New Delhi saw the integration of the International Missionary Council as a division; it appeared that of the three great original streams, two had prospered more than the other.

This status question was of major importance to participants in the 1950s. Once the early leaders had died and the early excitement of working on what Brent had called 'the real issue at stake' waned, it became vital to preserve Faith & Order's integrity in a new situation. Headlam's strictures about association with Life & Work may not have been continued in quite the same vein, yet the problem of how best to fulfil the movement's original 'calling' frequently arose. A threat to what Brilioth called "the elder partner of this union" was a threat to the reality which it believed had been entrusted to it.

Hodgson's fears had been expressed at the time when Faith & Order was in a relationship of 'closest co-operation'
with the Study Department. But the Secretary, Tomkins, says that he felt secure:

"As Secretary of Faith & Order I was also an Associate General Secretary; that meant that I was always, as it were, of cabinet status ... The World Council secretariat was a little group who sat round in [the General Secretary's] study".

It was after the Evanston reorganization that the feeling of being swamped became acute; in Tomkins' words:

"I did become rather aware that my successors, by not being Associate General Secretaries, had got into a kind of emotional attitude where they felt that Faith & Order, no longer of cabinet status, could easily have decisions about itself taken over its head."

But the place of the Secretary was only one element in the situation. In spite of assurances from the WCC's General Secretary that the new structure was not hierarchical, but in terms of service to be rendered, Faith & Order was not satisfied, and this had much to do with the decision to set up the Future Committee.

During the time when the Committee was working there was considerable self-analysis. The movement was anxious not to become a theological appendage: an ideological sideline to be retained to please the Orthodox or to attract Roman Catholics. Tomkins' successor wrote a paper tracing the history of loss of status and calling for divisional status. Agreement with this proposal was expressed by Newbigin. And the Faith & Order Commission's Chairman said that Brent would have been pained in his soul to see the present position. More vocal still was the next

2 FOC 31 (1960), p. 5. The phrase had also been used by W. Freytag (Division of Studies Chairman) in a speech intended to allay fears that the movement had lost status: MRCC 1957, p. 19.

Secretary, K. R. Bridston, who saw the problems as perhaps "pains symptomatic of deep organic maladies which may institutionally cripple the ecumenical body for generations to come unless they are promptly remedied." He said that Faith & Order was "the beloved aristocracy" and that it had a vital theoretical task. The Future Committee's report made many requests, including such 'extras' as the title 'Theological Secretary of the WCC' for Faith & Order's Director (the senior Staff member). When most of these were granted (although the title was not), Faith & Order was able to emerge with more confidence to face the tasks of the 1960s.

The new Staff was now determined to bring Faith & Order up to date and to raise some of the issues which had become current. As in the 1930s the movement had suffered from a restricted definition of its task, which isolated it from the world's events and from new theological developments. It now became important, within the limitations of the participants, to catch up. Some of the former legitimations, such as separation from the world, were seen as no longer tenable; new legitimations were introduced into Faith & Order's 'definition of reality' so as to make it more 'realistic' in a new situation.

Montreal and after Montreal

The main task in the early 1960s was to plan for the Montreal Conference. The larger Staff made possible more publication and activity. Their 1962/3 report spoke of the new tasks ahead, of the need for even more Staff and a larger budget, and of the possibility of a Faith & Order
research institute. The movement looked forward to what might be "the most productive period" in its history. Topics of a wide range were planned for a more mixed conference.¹

The time was one of unrest in many spheres. In America, Civil Rights were a prominent issue; the demands of the 'third world' were being felt with greater force; the views of the young were put stridently and in more overtly political terms; people spoke more of 'technological revolution' and less of the 'cold war' of the 1950s. Furthermore, the year 1963 marked the middle of the Second Vatican Council; everything appeared to be in a state of flux. The churches were more conscious of their marginal position in society and spoke of the need for self-analysis and 'renewal'; questions as to the relevance of their message to 'modern man' were continually asked. The main theological disagreement appeared not so much to be between 'protestant' and 'catholic' conceptions of the Church; instead, it was between 'radical' and 'conservative' attitudes in theology and ecclesiology.

It was in this context that Faith & Order (in the words of one delegate) "emerged from the cloister".² That the emergence was chaotic was agreed by all, and it was reluctant on the part of some. For at least one of the prominent participants in the 1950s (T. F. Torrance), the change in legitimations at Montreal "messed things up" and was the time when Faith & Order became "a third-rates force making statements on non-issues"; it showed that it was "a department of a department instead of a great movement".³ Those
1 Interview: O. S. Tomkins. See also his foreword to the Montreal Report: Mo, p. 7.

2 There is a discussion of this study in B. Gaybbo, The Tradition: An Ecumenical Breakthrough? (Rome, 1971). Here he doubts (pp. 241-2) whether it is right to call The Tradition by the name of tradition at all because it is defined as being beyond history: once it becomes historical, it is mere 'tradition'.

3 FO Arch 'Montreal' boxes. There was a 'reply' by a Roman Catholic: K. E. Brown.


with such views ceased to participate; others thought that "the promising character [of Montreal] was precisely its chaotic character; it revealed that the burning issues do not coincide with confessional lines."

As at Lund, the Sections at Montreal did not pay great attention to the carefully prepared Commission reports. Instead, questions were reopened in the new situation by new people. One Section considered to be successful was that on 'Scripture, Tradition and Traditions', which agreed that all churches were dependent on traditions and attempted to distinguish between the Tradition which is God's revelation and self-giving in Christ, and the traditions of the churches in their cultural situations. Other Sections studied the Church, Ministry, Worship, and the implications of the New Delhi Statement on unity.

But the most widely remembered occasion (in this sense, comparable to Schlink's address at Lund) was the speech by Käsemann on 'Unity and Diversity in New Testament Ecclesiology'. The impression which this made on delegates is more remarkable than its content, much of which had been given before. Its message was that there is no one conception of the Church in the New Testament but rather "a constant transformation of ecclesiology" according to situation. This message, joined with the demand for a 'theologia crucis', which was held to be appropriate for the Church in the world today, was what Käsemann and other 'post-Bultmannian' scholars pressed for in Sections and plenary sessions. The Church was to be the servant in the diverse situations of the day; this was to be an important
legitimation in the new 'definition of reality'.

A speech of a very different character embodied, in some respects, a similar message. W. Stringfellow, a New York lawyer, said that

"the real issues of faith and order have to do not so much with the nature and structure of the ecclesiastical institutions of the Church as with the everyday needs of men in the world ... the thing has become an academic, professionalized, esoteric, elite ecumenical monologue in which the world is seldom heard or addressed, but in which, for the most part, professors, theoreticians, politicians, and, alas, bureaucrats talk to themselves about themselves, each other and their various vested interests in the status quo of Christendom." ¹

He saw the "historic error" as the separation of Faith & Order from Life & Work and took the racial crisis as an example of a "real issue".

Montreal made eighteen suggestions for study. The common thread was a wish for study in a wider context, particularly in examining the relationship between Church and World and between the doctrines of Redemption and Creation.

Faith & Order became more concerned with the doctrines of Creation and of Man. It was the 1964 Commission meeting which set up an elaborate new programme. Work was no longer to be from one conference to another; instead it was to be done by short-term widely-dispersed groups. Four projects viewed "the Church in relation to the whole created order"; there were also to be studies on unity, Councils, biblical hermeneutics, and patristics; moreover, there were some
specialized areas in which Faith & Order was to co-operate with other parts of the WCC. And in 1965 the Joint Working Group between the WCC and the Roman Catholics commenced its task; this was an important new venture and half the WCC party were from Faith & Order.

The Commission next met at Bristol in 1967 and considered the various projects, issuing a report with the title 'New Directions in Faith and Order'. It was believed to be important in these years to take the first steps towards answering the questions raised by a new situation. This implied new methods; there was a re-ordering of Faith & Order's mandate. Efforts to develop a new approach did not always succeed, particularly in the case of the more ambitious projects. This is in part attributable to the fact that many participants remained 'representative' academic theologians. But the dominant intention was to emerge and be relevant rather than to set up long-term Commissions to remove 'obstacles' to unity.

Developments in the Unity Idea

The unity idea became less definite with the new departures at Montreal. In 1948 the implied conception of unity was still a 'united Church' in organic unity based on doctrinal consensus: a variant of the Church of South India writ large. Although other legitimations in Faith & Order's 'definition of reality' changed at Lund, the aim of doctrinal consensus remained the same. It was this which was eventually expressed in the New Delhi Statement: 'churchly' unity recognized by a framework of
1 Much of the debate has been since the period studied here, but there were earlier indications, particularly in the interest in conciliarity. It is true that there are numerous views of unity current at any one time (the principle that there were all to be accepted was established from the start), but there is nevertheless an implied 'Faith & Order view'. On uncertainty in the mid-1960s see Schlink, 'The Unity and Diversity of the Church' in What Unity Implies, p. 91.


3 Ibid., p. 87. Later drafts put more stress on diversity and on its context in the 'secular catholics' of the world: 'Drafts for Sections' (Geneva, 1968) and Up, pp. 13-17.

4 Interview: P. C. Rodger (a Faith & Order Secretary 1961-6). Vischer, the Director since 1966, was an observer at the Vatican Council 1962-5 and it greatly impressed him.

Expressions such as 'related diversity' tend to be used in talking of conciliarity. Care is taken not to identify the conciliar forms with the WCC, but there are of course vast ecclesiological implications in 'calling' a Council; hence the suggestion in FOC 59 (1971), p. 227 that a Council might meet in the hope of acceptance: authoritatively accepted, if not authoritatively called.

caracteristics.

But after Montreal, while there were still many strongly in favour of traditional unions, others also explored more diffuse conceptions: ways of relating diversity and of catering for new anti-institutional feelings. The former sometimes accused the latter of betraying Faith & Order's original 'calling'.

Vischer, the Director, in his opening speech at Bristol rejected too narrow an understanding of unity. Faith & Order must not "close itself to new controversies for the sake of unity. Rather it must discuss the question of unity in the midst of these controversies and clarify it there."

It is significant that the original draft of the paper on unity for the Uppsala Assembly was widely criticized for being too 'churchly': for not sufficiently recognizing the world situation. And there has been greater emphasis on a conciliar form of unity as a way of 'centering' diversity. This has been described as "Lukas Vischer's own desire".

The Place of Theologians and of Theology

In the last chapter an account was given of the 'crisis of theology' and of the trend towards an 'immanent anthropology' in pluralist society. In early years this had some effect on Faith & Order, particularly with the influence of literary-critical methods. But the 1950s represented a reaction and a reassertion of the objectivity of biblically derived truths. The reasons for this 'lag' behind the more widespread Barthian reaction of the 1930s have already been discussed.
Faith & Order participants were, on the whole, academic theologians or church administrators and their priorities were in character. At least until the 1960s, they chose topics which (in Till's words) were "somewhat donnish". Specialists in confessional characteristics have a different world view from that of laity or parish clergy. Meetings tended to have a 'theological society' atmosphere and this was accompanied by the implicit assumption that if the 'doctors of the Church' agreed, then general consensus was not far away.

The effect of this was to make the changes in the 1960s the more noticeable. The circumstances were not conducive to the making of authoritative theological pronouncements.

An example of the change (a sign of the altered place of theology and theologians) was the World Student Christian Federation's 'World Teaching Conference' at Strasbourg in 1960. Here there were lectures by men "internationally recognized as experts in their fields" (many of them connected with the WCC). Yet instead of a receptive attitude on the part of those present, there was "continuous negative evaluation". The students did not want to be 'taught' and were impatient and critical of methods and teachers; the demand was for liberation "from systems and ideologies and narrow confessionalism, into a contemporary, relevant, and meaningful faith in Jesus Christ".

There were "no unanimous resolutions to become a pilgrim people".

It was at about this time that there was an appreciation
in Faith & Order of a trend which had been going on for some time, namely the decline in respect for 'pure theology'. This implied a change in Faith & Order's 'definition of reality'.

To assume, as was done in the 1930s, that Commissions on their own could 'solve' a problem for all time and then move on to the next problem, was no longer possible. Theology had become more 'localized' and relativized; moreover, the status of the laity had risen and that of theologians had declined. Although, largely because of their availability and their willingness to attend, it was still academic theologians who made up the majority of the participants, they adopted a more cautious and inter-disciplinary method of work and their attitude to 'the world' changed.

The Role of the Staff

At the time when theological Commissions spent long periods studying, the Staff function was largely adminis-
trative. An exception to this was Hodgson’s post as 'Theological Secretary’, but he was part-time and more of a contributing member of the movement than in a relationship of 'Staff' as against others. Once Faith & Order became part of the WCC it had a permanent Secretary and his report became a feature of meetings. Such reports were usually a summary of his work, coupled perhaps with suggestions and an affirmation of the movement's importance.

But the character of this relationship changed markedly in 1961, with the increase of Staff and the appointment of a

E. C. Blake (WCC General Secretary 1966-72) says he has found it difficult to keep up since Vischer became Director: Interview. Other interviews confirm this to be so for Commission members.

1 Director. Staff reports became longer and contained policy recommendations; more control was exercised over the conduct of studies; the programme was expanded; publication increased; more was referred to the Staff. It became more difficult for people other than Staff to keep up with developments.

2 Awareness of the increase in Staff power is important for an understanding of the history of Faith & Order since 1961. Ideas favoured by Staff members (such as conciliarity) have become prominent in Faith & Order's 'definition of reality' and the Staff have exerted a strong general influence on the programme. The Working Committee and Commission have become less influential; much of the management of a complex and diversified programme has passed to the Staff.

3: CONCLUSIONS

The above descriptive account has tried to point out some factors of importance in Faith & Order's construction of a 'definition of reality'. One matter which has only been touched on is the 'style' of its work. This is not easy to summarize, but certain features can be indicated.

The attempt to realize the idea of unity has been carried on largely in committees and conferences of Western church representatives. Those who have not liked the procedure have, on the whole, stayed away. Although it is true that an increasing number of participants have come from places where Western procedures and theological priorities are less likely to be accepted, they are often
International Christian meetings have a unique character which is difficult to describe. This character appears to spring from the 'fellowship' felt by a very diverse collection of people working together for similar ends, who nevertheless know that they disagree, even deeply, and yet must do business with one another. The individual often has a certain uneasiness lest he be misunderstood or lest he fail to represent his position with sufficient force. And the whole is experienced under the assumed special guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The result is often confused and, in Faith & Order at least, dialogue must be carried on in theologically respectable terms. Thus problems tend to become 'conference topics' to be discussed, reported on in a draft (usually written by one or two to convey the 'consensus'), and amended by a process which has been called 'theology by show of hands'. The method of drafting, amendment and voting in a multi-lingual (although usually English-dominated) body on which there is pressure to agree, has a tendency to produce what is often called 'ecumenese': wording noted for its lack of concreteness and its use of theological clichés.

It is in such a context as this that 'methods' for reaching unity are worked out. Faith & Order chose the 'method of conference' and committee, and this choice has had a continuing influence both in the type of participant...
Faith & Order's unity idea was born in emotional circumstances and has been the primary legitimation in the movement's 'definition of reality'. To understand the course of the movement's attempts to make this definition objective, it is necessary not only to trace the social developments discussed in the last chapter, but also to give a descriptive account of the factors which were important to the participants. Faith & Order has broadly responded to the social developments, but the response at every stage has been influenced by its conception of its original mandate or 'definition of reality'. Thus the wish to be comprehensive joined other factors in determining the course taken in the 1930s. And what appeared to be a threat to its whole work determined key aspects of Faith & Order's conduct in the 1950s.

Faith & Order's 'definition of reality' has been in a dialectical relationship with the 'structural realities' of society, largely represented in this case by the situation of the churches. The original legitimations (a certain conception of unity; delegate conferences; comprehensive invitation; discussion of agreements and disagreements in faith and order; non-interference), which implied a particular method, were added to and modified as Faith & Order responded to new situations. Yet it remained recognizably the same institution in 1967 as it was in 1920.
Methods for reaching unity are methods for making objective Faith & Order's 'definition of reality'. This definition has been in tension with the objective and constraining reality facing the movement. The intention in this chapter has been to complement the previous one and to provide a background for an understanding of the specific methods which Faith & Order has employed in trying to reduce this tension.
VI: THE LEGITIMATION OF UNITY

The course taken by Faith & Order has so far been studied in the light of the dialectic between its 'definitions of reality' and an objective reality, the constraining influence of which may not always be apparent to participants. But there is also a somewhat 'narrower' perspective which concentrates on the level of cognitive activity. Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance can be used to examine what happens when there is what Berger and Luckmann call 'asymmetry' between a socially supported 'definition of reality' and knowledge of an objective reality.

Faith & Order participants have tried to reduce the dissonance between their idea of unity and their knowledge of the divided situation of Christians. The three ways of reducing this primary dissonance have already been discussed. These are first, to change the idea of unity, secondly to change the knowledge that there is division, and thirdly to add cognitive elements which are consonant with the idea of unity. But such changes are not simple, and are almost invariably made against opposition; the two primary elements are part of a whole complex which has to be taken into account. Each move then requires legitimation; one or more justifications or explanations for rejecting an old understanding and adopting a 'new understanding' of relations between Christians must be arrived at. A conception of unity or a change in the situation of division cannot just be declared.
The purpose of this chapter is first to look at the question of 'essentials' for unity and then to consider some options which Faith & Order has taken up in its attempts to legitimate unity. The chapter is intended as an introduction to the next three chapters, where the methods for reaching unity in faith and order (which involve some selection from the options open for legitimation) will be examined.

1: ESSENTIALS

The Meaning of 'Essentials'

Two cognitive elements are in a dissonant relationship if, considering these two alone, the obverse of one element would follow from the other. Faith & Order is concerned with the reduction of the dissonance for participants between a conception of unity and the knowledge of division. But a question which stems from this is 'Division on what?'. The situation of division may be held to be justified on the grounds of various disagreements. For instance, it may be said that two beliefs concerning Baptism do not 'follow from' each other and that this disagreement makes unity impossible. So the question is raised: 'On what is it essential to agree before unity can be said to have been reached?'

'Unity' implies agreement on certain essentials. If there is not agreement on these, there is dissonance between the unity idea and knowledge of the situation. It is the conception of unity which 'creates' the dissonance.
As has already been indicated, Faith & Order has had a somewhat indefinite conception of unity, but one which at least requires some agreement on faith and order. The task has been to refine this further in the light of the various conceptions of unity involved in the 'distinctive witness' of individual churches and so to arrive at an 'agenda' of essentials. In terms of the theory of cognitive dissonance, this is the task of agreeing on the relative importance for unity of a variety of elements:

"The magnitude of the dissonance or consonance which exists between two cognitive elements will be a direct function of the importance of these two elements."

Not surprisingly, there is wide divergence on this question of 'essentials' and it has been a central problem for Faith & Order. One church may hold that matters of order are of little importance, while another may believe that episcopacy is of the 'esse' of the Church. Each has an implied or explicit hierarchy of truths, at some point on which the distinction between essential and inessential may be drawn. Occasionally this distinction is made less definite; thus, in the case of episcopacy the term 'plene esse' (essential for the Church's fullness - hardly different from 'esse') or 'bene esse' (essential for the Church's well-being) may be used. In either of these cases, the effect is to make the legitimation in question into an essential, and at the same time to attempt to reduce the dissonance caused by disagreement on its account through a reduction in the importance of the legitimation; it receives in effect a lower place in the hierarchy.

1 Festinger, A Theory ..., p. 262.
1 An exception in the case of an individual is Schlink, 'The Unity and Diversity of the Church' in *What Unity Implies*, where he writes of a "functionally related" hierarchy of basic elements of the Church: p. 49. See also Schlink in FOC 50 (1967), p. 128.

2 The idea of a 'consensus fidelium' raises the question of who decides when it exists; this has become more problematic than in the days of the implied assumption that decisions could be taken by 'doctors of the Church'.

A hierarchy of truths is arranged according to a judgement as to what is more or less 'basic' or central to the Christian faith; the vital substance of the faith is distinguished from matters of choice and from the accidents of history. Thus a shared understanding of the sacraments and of the ministry may be considered as a necessary condition for unity, whereas no agreement may be required in the areas of non-sacramental worship or administration. Whether such a hierarchy implies belief in a functional or logical interdependence of the essentials (each 'lower' truth then being dependent on a 'higher' one) or whether it is merely a hierarchy of importance is rarely stated.

Some churches have explicit statements of essentials, such as the Confession of Augsburg or the Lambeth Quadrilateral (very different though these are). Such statements imply that a necessary condition for unity would be agreement on these essentials. But for some other churches and in some recent Faith & Order documents, a less clearly defined form of essential such as a 'consensus fidelium' is suggested. This may or may not go together with use of doctrinal formulas.

Essentials are necessary conditions for unity. But if 'unity' itself is taken as the criterion for the selection of what is essential, then success is achieved by finding what is held in common (the 'highest common factor') and then calling this the 'essentials'. T. S. Eliot accused the architects of the Church of South India of doing exactly this. He said that they gave importance to those
doctrines on which all were in accord and then treated the result as containing 'contributions' from each. If this was the case, it is an example of the first way of reducing dissonance. The conception of unity is changed so that legitimations on which churches are agreed are seen as 'essential', and those on which they disagree are 'demoted' in the hierarchy.

It is always claimed that other criteria are used for selecting essentials; in the light of some other legitimation (such as an understanding of the bible) they are said to be essential 'for salvation' or for the preservation of a distinctive truth, and therefore for unity.

The early protagonists of unity made much use of the idea of essentials and it was Maderlin (1582-1651) who is said to have coined the catch-phrase "in essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity". Many had a yearning for simplicity and, in the tradition of Erasmus, for right conduct on the basis of agreement on essentials in doctrine. Those who stressed ethics and religious experience were foremost in the search for some formula which would express the general truths of Christianity. Various forms were suggested. Thus Baxter (1615-91) wanted to make 'fundamental' the Lord's prayer, the Apostles' Creed and the Ten Commandments. When it was objected that this form would be too inclusive, he replied that it was impossible to devise any form of words to which heretics would not subscribe when they interpreted it in their own words. Locke saw salvation as depending only on the acceptance of

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2 Festinger, *A Theory ...*, p. 182. There is a reference to the manner in which areas needing adjustment may be defined as marginal to a doctrinal core in Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion*, p. 83.
Christ as the universal Messiah and pleaded for simple articles of belief and for toleration:
"Not even Americans, subjected unto a Christian prince, are to be punished either in body or goods for not embracing our faith and worship".1

The problem with these, as with later attempts to find essentials, is that each differs on the ordering of priorities and on the nature of the core. Advocates of the search for essentials open themselves to accusations of 'minimalism': of reducing Christianity to that which is feasible or palatable, thereby losing parts of the revealed truth. The pietist, the mystic and the humanist often disagree with other Christians over the extent of the stated minimum which they consider necessary.

The opposite extreme to 'minimalism' could be called 'maximalism'. Here, the argument is that religion is experienced and believed in as a whole; to split it into 'essentials' is to break this up. This point of view was put by the Orthodox at Evanston, in criticism of the Faith & Order Section's report:
"The whole of the Christian Faith should be regarded as one indivisible unity ... We cannot accept a rigid distinction between essential and non-essential doctrines, and there is no room for comprehensiveness in the Faith."²

Any diversity within the unity of the Church would be limited for the Orthodox by the decisions of the first seven Ecumenical Councils. For the Roman Catholic Church, there is diversity only within the limits set by the recognition of all its dogmas and anathemas; this would include, for instance, the

2 Zabriskie, Bishop Brent ..., pp. 147-8; La, pp. 9-10.

In the case of the Roman Catholics, however, there has been a certain change within the 'maximalist' position, for the 'Decree on Ecumenism' of the Second Vatican Council spoke of a "hierarchy of truths". It therefore indicated that the statements of Christian doctrine do not all stand side by side, but are aimed towards serving some particular core. The way was then opened to agreement on essentials, although it is not yet clear what significance such an agreement would have from the Roman Catholics' point of view.

**Essentials in Faith & Order**

From the beginning, Faith & Order has made use of the concept of 'essentials'. Brent believed that if the fundamentals of the Faith were found, there would no longer be grounds for separation. Every church would be forced to distinguish that which was of fundamental value in its tradition from matters of preference, prejudice or organizational convenience. By treating the results as complementary, a new rich spiritual whole would be arrived at. At Lausanne he followed this up by a plea for a concentration on the 'central principles' of Christianity; other matters could be grown into once these were settled.

In spite of Brent's optimism, there were many problems in this procedure. As the Joint Commission had pointed out as early as 1912:

"No doubt by some it is believed that Christians are generally agreed in all really essential matters. But the truth of such a view depends upon what is reckoned to be essential. The
The problem is also raised in FO 12 (1912), p. 26 (Unofficial).

This matter is treated in Thils, *Histoire Doctrinale* ..., pp. 139-47; also by Neill in Rouse and Neill, *A History* ..., pp. 488-9 and p. 726.

Fact is that Christians are not agreed as to what is essential.¹

Broadly, there have been three main approaches which are closely related both to the degree of recognition which churches accord to others and to their conceptions of what the Church is. The first is the 'maximalist' approach already mentioned; an elaborate confession of faith is seen as a prerequisite for unity. The second, while insisting on certain traditional expressions of faith (such as the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds), is prepared to admit considerable differences on matters which are not precisely set forth in Scripture or Creeds. Thirdly, there are those who hold that loyalty to Jesus Christ and to his Spirit is the one essential for the Church and are opposed to doctrinal formulations; full unity for them is achieved by deepening and extending the experience of unity which already exists. 'Organic' unity with the first category is difficult to imagine other than through submission. 'Organic' unity within each of the other two groups offers fewer difficulties than unity between a church from one and a church from the other. In the latter case, a body which sees doctrine as a way of defining the field within which to have liberty of Christian thinking is confronted by one to which doctrine may appear as an intolerable restriction.²

This raises the further problem that 'essentials' may not be exhausted by doctrinal formulas or by any empirically discernible statements. Less formal levels may be held
to have reached unity (that is, a 'consensus') when there are still
have not been agreed, or they may be
in the absence of any explicitly recorded
Relevance and Tolerable Diversity

Once an agenda for unity has been decided
remains the problem of coming to an agreement on
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As Temple put it to the Edinburgh Conference:
"Is our disagreement such as need or should hinder us from
full union with one another?"
Thus it may be considered essential for unity that Christians
agree that Christ is present in the bread and wine of the
Lord's supper. But it may at the same time be held that a
disagreement over the manner of this presence is not relevant
to unity; division on the manner of the presence would not be
dissonant with a certain conception of unity.

The way in which this distinction of relevant from
irrelevant disagreements has been expressed in Faith & Order
is through the difference of 'division' from 'diversity'.
In determining a question of relevance, certain legitimations
(such as a particular interpretation of the bible) are
referred to. It may then be decided that the disagreement
in question is not relevant to unity: it is an example of
'diversity'. Diversity is legitimate division. The task
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to have reached unity (that is, they may be said to indicate a 'consensus') when there are still doctrinal matters which have not been agreed, or they may be 'against' unity even in the absence of any explicitly recorded disagreements.

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Once an agenda for unity has been decided, there remains the problem of coming to an agreement on the variety which can be tolerated on these essentials. The question to be answered here is one of the relevance for unity of a particular disagreement: is it 'church-dividing'? As Temple put it to the Edinburgh Conference:

"Is our disagreement such as need or should hinder us from full union with one another?"¹

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¹ Ed, p. 63.

Faith & Order has always been careful to give assurances that unity is 'unity in diversity' and that 'uniformity' is not sought. But against this, churches have been concerned to preserve their distinctive positions: to maintain a firm distinction between truth and error and to protect their members from confusion. They may maintain that a wide variety of disagreements (and other less easily definable forms of incompatibility) are relevant to the question of unity and that the situation of division cannot be altered until these are resolved.

2: 'NEW UNDERSTANDING'

For there to be a change in 'essentials' (and thus in the conception of unity) or for there to be a change in the diversity which is seen as tolerable on these essentials, there must be reference to other legitimations. Questions of 'importance' and 'relevance' are decided by reference to certain criteria for coming to a new understanding of relations between Christians. A proposed 'new understanding' might be expressed: 'Seen in the light of the pattern of the Early Church, our conception of unity should be ...'. A touchstone is offered for testing unity or for altering the situation of division. Some of the legitimations in the light of which Faith & Order has tried to come to a new understanding are listed below.

The options listed are not only used to legitimate changes in the conception of unity (the first way of
In very recent Faith & Order documents this assumption is beginning to be questioned: e.g. FO 72/4 (1972), 'Accounting for the Hope that is in us', where it is asked whether there are levels "other than that of the written confession of faith" for the Church's account of its hope (p. 9). FO Arch 'Duplicated Papers'.

A. C. Outler called this a "crucial methodological point" in his paper 'From Disputation to Dialogue' given to the Montreal Conference: BR, vol. xvi (1963), p. 21. See also MD, p. 126.

1) The Limitations of Human Understanding or Expression.

An important legitimation for coming to a new understanding of the relations between Christians is the limitation in man's ability to express the truth. In spite of all difficulties, it has commonly been assumed that the understanding of revelation must be expressed in verbal form.1 But this fact may be held to justify a certain diversity. If the truth is beyond expression, then there is licence for a certain lack of precision.2

The distinction between the truth and the mode of its formulation, as in the study of the difference between the Tradition and church traditions, stresses the relativity of reducing dissonance) but also to encourage changes in the situation of division (the second way). Although Faith & Order has been careful to restrict its interference in the affairs of the churches, it has 'offered' new understandings of disagreements to them. Some options are also important in understanding Faith & Order's use of 'reconciling' legitimations (one alternative in the third way of reducing dissonance). 'Reconciling' legitimations are beliefs consonant with acceptance of unity which, without changing either the conception of unity or the knowledge of division, reduce the dissonance between these two cognitive elements. This use might be expressed: 'Although unity has not been manifested, belief in it is still justified because we have not yet studied the bible sufficiently' or '... because we have not detached ourselves from merely temporary and relative historical or political factors'.

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The distinction between the truth and the mode of its formulation, as in the study of the difference between the Tradition and church traditions, stresses the relativity of
human knowledge of God. This has frequently been emphasized in Faith & Order work. Temple's exhortations at Edinburgh are echoed in comments such as that in the recommendations for study on worship from the Montreal Conference:

"All formulations of the theology of baptism remain human attempts to grasp conceptually what is ultimately the great mystery of God's grace."¹

This is an attempt to make some disagreements irrelevant to unity and thus to reduce Faith & Order's primary dissonance.

Similarly, a lack of appreciation of the limitations of human understanding may be used to explain continued division; it may be used as a 'reconciling' legitimation.

2) Complementarity.

Often related to the belief that man's understanding of God is limited, is the conviction that various attempts at understanding are complementary. This again may legitimate a new understanding. It may be believed that no one church has the whole truth but that a number of contributions are needed in order to approach comprehension of the whole. It has already been said that diversity is legitimated division; a complementary understanding follows from a positive evaluation of diversity.

This is the conclusion to which Troeltsch came in his great work on the social teachings of the Christian churches. He believed that human categories could not contain the fullness of the revelation, and therefore that none of the three Christian types (church, sect and mystical) alone contained the whole truth. A creative compromise or
synthesis was therefore necessary; thus he held mysticism to be "a welcome complement to the Church and the Sects".¹

Similar to this are the many calls for a balance between the tolerant and universal on the one hand and the protesting or prophetic on the other.² And the message of Newbigin's The Household of God is that the Church must have contributions from 'Catholic', 'Protestant' and 'Pentecostal' (a very different typology); if any of these is "taken as alone decisive, error and distortion follow".³

This legitimation for a particular form of unity was very important in the early period of Faith & Order as a basis for what, in this study, has been called the 'synthetic method'. As Hodgson expressed it, the road to unity is for each to develop the vital characteristics of a way of Christian living to its fullness "in order that it may make its full contribution to the life of the whole body of which it is to be visibly and organically an articulated member."⁴

Other participants have given detailed examples. Brent saw the Anglican emphasis on Incarnation and Sacraments as a complement to Protestant stress on the Kingdom of God; he also saw the variety of liturgies as to a large extent complementary.⁵ Others suggested that credal statements and personal experience were both necessary in a united Church, or that unity would avoid "a one-sided and imperfect development" of the doctrine of grace.⁶ One of the introductory leaflets for Evanston went somewhat further: "Diversity in expression of faith in our one Lord and of obedience and devotion to Him can contribute much to our

⁵ Zabriskie, Bishop Brent ..., p. 155.
⁶ The former suggestion is in F0 33 (1920), p. 66 and the latter in F0 66 (1931), p. 28.


3 Morris, in his polemic against the Faith & Order approach to unity, gives his slogan for believers in complementarity: "Let's add our fog to your fog... then we will both see twice as clearly": Include me out, p. 26.

4 Lu, p. 15.


Fuller understanding of God and one another, and to the growth of our life in community. Even sharp and candid disagreement, within the context of one faith and hope, can serve the demands for truth and love among us.¹

The problem with such comprehensiveness is its liability to relativism or syncretism. To assert, for example, that "in religion people are generally right in what they affirm and wrong in what they deny"² is to broaden the possible range of views beyond what is acceptable to many. The fear is of incongruous combinations, some parts of which may have been 'wrong' in the first place.³

³) Christology.

Particularly in the period after the Lund Conference it was held that ecclesiology and other matters on which there was disagreement must be seen in the light of Christology. Through his Spirit, Christ lives in the Church and it must therefore be understood in relation to him. In this way disagreements might be destroyed 'from behind'. As was said in the 'Word to the Churches' from Lund, it may be believed that:

"We need ... to penetrate behind our divisions to a deeper and richer understanding of the mystery of the God-given union of Christ with His Church."⁴

Or again, in the survey prepared for the Evanston Assembly:

"The Way to Christ Is the Way of Unity".⁵

⁴) The Second Coming.

Present differences may be seen in the light of the judgement at the end of time, when all will be revealed. In this case, the eschatological context is believed to
provide a decisive key to the nature of the Church because it emphasizes the Kingdom which transcends the Church. The real norm for unity is the universal saving truth of Christ, and as this will not be fully revealed until the last day, current stands are at best 'penultimate'. The 'last' overshadows the 'later' of the several traditions of the churches. The immediate concerns of Christians may thus be viewed in a new light. Another world is already breaking in; there is an eschatological tension between the 'not yet' and the 'now':

"As we look ahead, in the expectation of the coming Judge of the world and the Redeemer, we shall recognize the temporary character and the lack of finality of many things which now divide us."1

This may be an important legitimation for a decision on essentials for unity, or for coming to an understanding of what disagreements on these essentials are considered to be relevant to unity (the first way of reducing dissonance). At the same time it may be 'offered' as a basis for changing the situation of the churches. Alternatively, a lack of attention to eschatology may be claimed as the explanation for the small progress made (the third way of reducing dissonance).

5) The Biblical Witness.

The results of common biblical study may be seen as a legitimation for a new understanding. Thus the Commission on Worship's European Section said in 1963 that "Only a common study of the Bible will enable us to overcome
provide a decisive key to the nature of the Church because it emphasizes the Kingdom which transcends the Church. The real norm for unity is the universal saving truth of Christ, and as this will not be fully revealed until the last day, current stands are at best 'penultimate'. The 'last' overshadows the 'later' of the several traditions of the churches. The immediate concerns of Christians may thus be viewed in a new light. Another world is already breaking in; there is an eschatological tension between the 'not yet' and the 'now':

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There would still of course be allowance for diversity in many areas. Thus Torrance says that on Baptism "the New Testament does not seem to offer any one clear line for consideration": T. F. Torrance, Conflict and Agreement in the Church (London, 1959-60), Vol. II, p. 93.

Ibid., p. 41 and p. 122.

some of the barriers which still separate us in our understanding and practice of worship."\(^1\)

Especially in the heyday of 'biblical theology' after Lund, it was often assumed that unity could be achieved if only the unified message of the Bible and the model of the 'apostolic age' could be discovered. An exegetical consensus was hoped for: a biblical basis for renewal. Although it was acknowledged that each church interprets the Bible within a certain tradition, it was hoped that a pattern for unity might be found.\(^2\)

But the understanding of the Bible changed at the time of what has, in this study, been called the 'contextual method'. It was still looked to as the source of a pattern for unity, yet at this time it was seen to legitimate much greater diversity. Instead of viewing the Bible as a unified whole with a common message, emphasis was laid on diversity, even on contradiction, within it. The 1967 report on 'The Significance of the Hermeneutical Problem for the Ecumenical Movement' said that:

"Sometimes the diversities can be understood as providing complementary aspects of the truth, but sometimes, as far as we can see, there may be real contradictions."\(^3\)

These could be traced back to "disagreements within the biblical period" or to "different social or historical situations".\(^3\)

An example of the use of the biblical witness as a 'reconciling' legitimation is to believe that the disregard for biblically based diversity explains the slow progress in arriving at unity.\(^4\)
The results of historical study have been looked to for a pattern for unity. For example, this was true in the 1960s when there was less confidence in biblical 'answers' and greater Orthodox participation. It was, as it were, in honour of the Orthodox (who make special claims concerning the early centuries) that studies in patristics and in the work of the Councils were started.

The aim was to get to the roots of ecumenical problems and discover the unifying Tradition; as one group said: "Because God has not only chosen the path of historical revelation, but also the path of historical mediation, historical continuity belongs to the nature of the proclamation of Christ. Within this historical mediation, the patristic period has a fundamental significance." ¹

The work on the Councils was similar in its wish to discover the significance of 'the conciliar process' for today.

This type of study is often called 'ecumenism in time', held by one prominent Orthodox participant to be "a right methodological key to all ecumenical locks and riddles", and characterized by an attempt to identify sympathetically and spiritually with generations of old. ²

In using historical study in this way, special attention is commonly paid to the Early Church of the first five centuries; it could indeed be called a new form of the appeal to the 'consensus quinquesaecularis' which was so popular with irenicists of the seventeenth century. Thus in the 1920s and 1930s Headlam used the pattern of what he called "the conception of Christian unity as it was
presented by the undivided Church.\(^1\) For him the aim was 'reunion'; the unity sought was the unity lost.

Reference to historical factors has also been an important 'reconciling' legitimation. Many disagreements are traceable to particular historical situations and a lack of awareness of this may be held to explain continued disunity. Thus the Committee on the theology of Grace saw St Augustine's views on the subject as "the result partly of the miseries of the world in his day and partly of his own religious experience."\(^2\)

This was then 'offered' to the churches as a fact to legitimate a new understanding.

The wish has frequently been to 'recentre' the traditions by dissociating them from certain past events which have encroached and created barriers to unity. Thus the report on 'Christ and the Church' at Lund, refers to "those who are ever looking backward and have accumulated much precious ecclesiastical baggage", and adds that they "will perhaps be shown that pilgrims must travel light".\(^3\)

7) The Church's Function.

The legitimation for seeking unity at all might be expressed in general terms as the wish to carry out God's will in accordance with Jesus' prayer that all may be one. But particular aspects of God's will for the Church may be cited in order to demonstrate the urgency and the nature of unity. If the idea of unity and the differences of
the churches are seen in the light of the function of the whole Church or of some part of it, there may be grounds for reconsidering them. Thus Neill recommends:

"We have to ask not only 'What is the Church?', but 'What is the Church for?'"¹

There is then a shift of emphasis from ontology to function, and where there may have been disagreement, for instance on an understanding of the ministry, there may now be agreement. Function may legitimate a new understanding either of the disagreements seen as relevant to unity, or of those disagreements themselves.

The most common use of function to legitimate a new understanding is in relation to the tasks of mission and service: the need for evangelism and for Christian effort to serve mankind.

Much of the inspiration for unity has come from what has traditionally been called 'the mission field'. Not only has division been seen as hindering the Church in the performance of its evangelistic task, but a clearer idea of the meaning of unity may be held to arise from engagement in mission. In the words of a report from one of the Sections at Lund:

"Under the constraint of the missionary imperative, [the 'younger churches'] have discovered that the need of unity is fully understood only when related to the great task of evangelism."²

Similarly, it may be believed that unity must be related to the Church's function of fulfilling the tasks presented to it by 'the world': that service will show up Faith & Order's
1 L. Vischer: FOC 50 (1967), p. 120.

2 On social and cultural factors see below, pp. 204-7. The report to Edinburgh was FD 84 (1937): 'The Non-Theological Factors in the Making and Unmaking of Church Union'.

3 Lu, p. 360. The previous Constitution had not mentioned social and cultural factors.

problem in a new light. This approach has often been emphasized by other parts of the ecumenical movement and in criticism of Faith & Order. However, in the period since Montreal, it has been more central to the movement's own method. Thus Faith & Order's Director asked in 1967: 'What do different understandings of ministry, ordination, and succession mean when all churches face the question of what patterns of ministry best correspond to the present time, and in spite of their differences often reach similar solutions?'

8) Social Context.

There have been two main uses of 'social context' as a basis for reaching a new understanding of relations between Christians. The first has been as a 'reconciling' legitimation: the belief that once certain 'non-doctrinal', 'non-theological', 'forgotten', 'political' or 'institutional' factors were removed, unity would become more easily attainable. This was one conviction which led to the report made to the Edinburgh Conference and then, after Lund, to the setting up of a study on social and cultural factors (later refined to 'Institutionalism'). And this was a main reason for the inclusion of the second 'Function' in Faith & Order's Constitution:

"To study questions of faith, order and worship with the relevant social, cultural, political, racial and other factors in their bearing on the unity of the Church."

Later, however, this declaration was interpreted differently and brought more into the centre of Faith & Order work. With increasing interest in the relationship
1 An example is the appreciation of the need for 'indigenization', particularly in worship. Visser't Hooft considered this to be a lesson from the East: 'Christians for the Future', II, The Listener, vol. Ixxvii (1967), p. 327. It was at the time of wider membership that the importance of 'context' was appreciated. See also H.-R. Weber, Asia and the Ecumenical Movement (London, 1966); Confessing the Faith in Asia Today (Redfern, Australia, 1966).

2 There are few examples of the use of this legitimation by Faith & Order, but see FCC 38 (1963), p. 10 on study in the context of worship, and Mo, p. 70 on worship being formative of community and as giving new meaning to theological positions. Schlink deals with the relationship between worship and dogmatic statements at length in The Coming Christ ... and concludes that the right place for some statements is in worship and that they must be reinterpreted in the light of this fact: p. 84.

McIntyre discusses 'Litururgical Method' in The Shape of Christology, pp. 44-7; worship as a test for Christology. 'On the place of Creeds in worship see H. Lash, 'Credal Affirmation as a Criterion of Church Membership' in Kent and Murray, Church Membership ... , pp. 60-4.

between the doctrines of creation and redemption and with growing appreciation of cultural particularity, so there has been stress on the contexts in which churches live, and a belief in the legitimate difference of the forms appropriate to these contexts. 'Context' is then used to indicate that certain apparent divisions are in fact not relevant to unity. In this way there may be a reduction in Faith & Order's primary dissonance.

Here the use of context and of function as legitimations for a new understanding are closely related. The question 'What is the Church for?' is likely to be answered with a certain situation in view. If the answer is 'it is for serving the needs of the world', then these needs are specified according to context. Thus function and context may together legitimate a new understanding of relations between Christians.

9) Worship.

From the beginning, worship has been seen as necessary and natural for Faith & Order meetings. But beyond this, it may be thought that the proper context for some doctrinal statements is the liturgical one and that when this is appreciated, some former disagreements may be seen in a new light.

10) The Ecumenical Movement.

As was pointed out when the idea of a 'kairos' for unity was discussed, the fact and experience of a movement towards unity may be used to justify further movement.
Thus the New Delhi report, after listing the difficulties experienced in the ecumenical movement because of varying convictions about the eucharist, said that it was "imperative that denominations and confessions undertake a new examination of their eucharistic doctrines and liturgies in the light of all these new factors introduced by the ecumenical situation."

This amounts to the advocacy of change in the situation of division, legitimated by reference to difficulties experienced in trying to reach unity. It implies that a new understanding may emerge from the ecumenical process itself. Such a legitimation would never explicitly be referred to as 'Faith & Order orthodoxy' because of the ecclesiological implications of such a term, but there is a 'majority sensitivity' springing from experience in Faith & Order meetings under the assumed guidance of the Holy Spirit, which legitimates a particular agenda and a certain definition of tolerable diversity.

The lack of an ecumenical movement was used as a 'reconciling' legitimation, particularly in the early period. Then, many believed that division was attributable to mutual ignorance: to the lack of meetings and conferences.

3: METHODS FOR REACHING UNITY

This chapter has attempted to illustrate more fully the application of the theory of cognitive dissonance to Faith & Order method and at the same time to introduce important legitimations used in reducing the dissonance for participants between a conception of unity and a
A conception of unity is composed of a number of 'essentials' and a definition of the diversity which is tolerable on these essentials. It is this which 'creates' dissonance with the situation of Christians.

Attempts are made to reduce this dissonance by reference to certain legitimations, some of which have been listed.

The options have in fact been taken up in different combinations: there have been a variety of methods for reaching unity. Put in Berger and Luckmann's terms, there have been a number of ways in which the dialectic between 'definition of reality' and 'structural realities' has been worked out. But it is the contention here that the history of Faith & Order has been marked by three main phases in method. These will be called 'synthetic', 'Christological' and 'contextual'. It is important that these labels are not seen as marking necessarily distinct and conscious changes for all the participants in Faith & Order. Rather, they are 'ideal typical' descriptions of the methods which characterized Faith & Order work at particular times in its history.

'Ideal Type'

Weber's 'ideal type' is a construct or model for research purposes, the pure form of which is never or rarely encountered. It is an 'ideal' extrapolation of the implications of a particular commitment, ideal in the sense of being extreme. There may be no perfect examples of it. An 'ideal type' is therefore not an average; rather, it is a tool derived from observation.
and tested by its use in analysis and in the framing of hypotheses. The aim of constructing ideal types is heuristic. Thus such varied types as 'Marxism', 'Puritanism' or 'bureaucracy' are defined by reference to a set of variables which would constitute the ideal case. So defined they form tools for the framing of hypotheses about cultural history.

It is important also to recognize the drawbacks in using ideal type constructs. Parsons has indicated two forms of what he calls 'typological rigidity' which may ensue. First, an 'ideal type' may make gradual cumulative changes less noticeable; attention may be diverted to abrupt shifts from one 'type' to another. And secondly, there may be theoretical pressure to exaggerate those features which match ideal typical models at the expense of more 'ordinary' phenomena.

In the next three chapters, three methods for reaching unity are examined. The 'title' of each method is taken from the most prominent legitimation used at the time to justify and explain a changed relationship between Christians. An exception is made in the case of the first method, where the term 'synthetic' describes the method in which an important legitimation was the complementarity of diverse Christian positions: the belief in the necessity of a combination of parts to form a whole.

The methods are stated in 'ideal type' form, then the circumstances of their introduction and use are studied. Finally, examples of actual practice are given and a
conclusion reached in terms of the theory of cognitive
dissonance. The examples are selected in an attempt to
balance three principles: (a) that they should be of
interest in the study of method; (b) that there should
be some continuity in subject-matter so that similarities
and differences in method may be more readily apparent;
(c) that topics should have been seen to be of great
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VII: SYNTHETIC METHOD

It is not suggested here that the time between 1910 and about 1950 was marked by the use of one conscious method for trying to reach unity in matters of faith and order. Rather, it is held that the 'ideal type' of 'synthetic method' has heuristic value in the study of the approach characteristic of this period. As the movement gathered strength, various assumptions concerning method were made by those involved. But within the main work of Faith & Order there were two distinguishable streams of thought. The first (which was dominant) sought a 'synthesis of distinctions' on a wide range of essentials of the faith. The second put greater emphasis on essentials and less on differences. The ideal for both was a 'united Church' on an 'organic unity' pattern.

The aim here is not to provide a minute analysis of every Faith & Order study. But one may learn something of the actions of participants as they attempted to reduce the dissonance between their idea of unity and their knowledge that the churches were divided. By 'synthetic method' is meant study undertaken on the implicit or explicit assumption that through discussion and clarification of matters of faith and order, a harmonious integration of differing positions could be achieved which could serve as the faith and order of a united Church.

1: IDEAL TYPE

The synthetic method is characterized by:
e) the discussion of doctrinal positions in the light of the belief that they are ultimately complementary; that a synthesis can be reached;
b) an emphasis on the inviolability of present doctrinal commitments;
c) the distinction of matters on which there is consensus from matters on which there is not, with attention paid to the latter;
d) the adoption of consensus formulas;
e) the search for essentials;
f) the tendency to concentrate on matters of order;
g) the identification of obstacles to unity;
h) a strict separation between what is theology and what is not;
i) study by theological specialists;
j) a stress on unanimity in conference and committee;
k) belief that failure is due to lack of knowledge.

2: THE TERM 'COMPARATIVE ECCLESIOLOGY'

The method used during the period studied in this chapter is frequently referred to as one of 'comparative ecclesiology'. But this is misleading.

First, it was not ecclesiology which was the prime concern, at least at the beginning. Rather, it was assumed that the beliefs of a body of Christians could be analysed and dealt with one by one; subjects such as 'grace' and 'ministry' were all given higher priority than 'ecclesiology'. It was only after Edinburgh that ecclesiology was believed to
be the key, and then a Commission was set up to study it.

But more important than this is the term 'comparative'.

Most have understood this in the sense of Lund's statement that
"we can make no real advance towards unity if we only compare our several conceptions of the nature of the Church and the traditions in which they are embodied." 1

But this comment was largely aimed at the results of one Commission, and it is not accurate when applied to the whole early period, when the emphasis was on the search for essentials and on a reconciliation or synthesis of a variety of stands on these essentials. 2 Comparison was indeed a part of this method, but to describe it as comparative is not only to miss more important aspects of the method, but also to overlook the intention of most participants.

The expression 'comparative ecclesiology' appears to have been coined by those who favoured the 'Christological' method and who wished both to contrast their discoveries with a time of 'mere comparison' and to see the earlier period as a preparation for better times to come. Faith & Order's history could then be seen as an intelligent progression from a 'simple' stage to an 'advanced' one. Thus the Interim Report of the Commission on Tradition and Traditions said in 1961:
"The method of comparative ecclesiology, Konfessionskunde, has served a useful purpose but it has not been able to go far enough." 3

Another comment referred to the time as an 'ecumenical honeymoon' before turning to deeper problems; there are
The expression "ecumenical honeymoon" is used by Outler, The Christian Tradition ..., p. 6. For other comments see Torrance, 'Where do we go From Lund?', Scottish Journal of Theology, vol. VI (1953), pp. 53-64; FOC 29 (1960), p. 7; FOC 31 (1960), p. 19. The expression 'comparative ecclesiology' is more suited to the recent 'Ecumenical Exercises', e.g. FOC 49 (1967); they merely provide information.

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2 FOC 1 (1910), p. 4.

3: FEATURES OF THE METHOD

Assumptions

In this period then, doctrinal positions were discussed more or less as they stood, in search of synthesis. At the very beginning, some intentions were announced:

"We would place ourselves by the side of our fellow Christians, looking not only on our own things, but also on the things of others, convinced that our one hope of mutual understanding is in taking personal counsel together in the spirit of love and forbearance."  

More detail on what this might entail was given in a pamphlet entitled The Object and Method of Conference, first published in 1915 and reprinted five times in the years up to 1925. It presented conferences as opportunities for friendly discussion rather than for controversy. Mutual understanding was sought so that differences might be located and eventually overcome:

"Let us begin from our own point of view. We think we understand our own position. Probably others also think they understand it, but we are hoping that we can show them values in it which they have not seen. It is possible that, as they get to know our position better, we might get them to see that there are needs which we might help them to supply. But if we look at things impartially, we must

...
remember that this is also their attitude."  

In this manner, a conference would move past polemic to people's "real thoughts". It was up to delegates from each church to explain the nature of their beliefs and how they differed from the beliefs of others. They were then to indicate what these differences meant to them and to suggest how a reconciliation might be achieved. Thus there would be mutual correction and eventually reconciliation in "perhaps one, and possibly two, generations". The pamphlet added that apparent oppositions were often due to the use of terms in different senses or to the misguided assumption that an exclusive 'either-or' choice had to be made.

The principal features of this pamphlet (the advocacy of mutual understanding, location of differences and, finally, reconciliation) are characteristic of the synthetic method. The approach may now seem unduly cautious, but the emphasis placed on the inviolability of a church's convictions owed much to the desire to make the conversation comprehensive. Comprehensive participation was vital if the movement was not to appear partisan, and if it was to achieve the aim of a united Church. As the President of the Episcopal Church's Commission said in 1913, no surrender was involved; each gained all and lost nothing as their beliefs and values were harmonized "in a beautiful mosaic". Or again, in the words of a report in 1937:

"One may be very sure that whatever form the Church of the future may take it will grow out of the forms assumed by the Church of the past and will conserve all that is good
Next Steps on the Road to a United Church'; FO 85 (1937), p. 32. See also FO 86 (1937), p. 26 on the function of each within the 'una sancta'.

1. The Orthodox, who would not have agreed with this, can hardly be said to have participated fully in the meetings at this time. They followed their own line and made statements; they took little part in formulating Faith & Order policy.

2. If there were difficulties in aiding the growth of the new Church, these could be explained by the insufficient opportunities for mutual acquaintance; an important 'reconciling' element in this method of reducing dissonance between the belief in unity and the knowledge of division was the common conviction that churches did not yet know each other well enough. More meetings were therefore necessary in order to discover the true commitments of all.

It was implied that the conversation was concerned with comparatively static positions; it was also assumed that these positions could be expressed in propositions and indeed analysed into their constituent parts. Some aspects of one set of convictions would be found to match aspects of another, and on these consensus could be declared, as it was in the Lausanne and Edinburgh reports. Remaining differences were judged to require study. Agreements could thus be accumulated and once achieved, they were there for all time, enshrined, for example, in the large volumes published under the auspices of the Commissions.

The subjects were not pressed beyond what seemed necessary to be fair to all. The assumption was that the churches all had authentic 'vestigia ecclesiae' (although, some would have said, in varying degrees of completeness), but that the total fullness of the Church was discernible in none as they existed at the time.

The method was thus very dependent on complementarity as a legitimation. This demonstrates the enthusiasm and


Temple always sought a way of making partial views contribute to a synthesis. Confidence of the early period. Christians had been divided for many years and in their conferring together, a breakthrough seemed to have been made. As they met against the background of their several very different histories, many believed that each came bearing gifts to contribute to the whole. It is difficult to assess Temple's personal influence on the way these assumptions came to be held, but his own idealist philosophy was certainly a powerful example for those who sought a means to unity. As expressed in the volume on Grace, the conviction was that

"It is not through the surrender of the truth for which either party contends, but through its inclusion in a higher synthesis that certainty is finally to be won. To assist in formulating this synthesis is the high office of Christian theology - an office never more needed than today."

It was only one further step from such an expression to believe that very little sacrifice was necessary for unity, and that in the whole which would be achieved, all would find fulfilment.

On such grounds as these, Schlink has called the method "statistical". Fundamental change was not demanded. Information was gathered and compared with a view to reconciliation. As a popular account of the Lausanne Conference put it, the ideal for many was

"a great family circle, in which all groups, 'Catholic', 'Protestant', and any other, with all their gifts and idiosyncrasies, so far as they are in accordance with the mind of Christ, would find a place."

In working towards such an ideal, 'obstacles' were
An example of such a faith in scholarly activity is furnished by Temple's introduction to the volume on Grace, where he saw the way to synthesis as study by "competent representatives of the various schools of thought": Whitley, *The Doctrine of Grace*, p. x.


1 The aim of the Movement may be stated as follows. Whenever steps are taken towards the reunion of Christendom, sooner or later it is inevitable that differences of conviction in matters of Faith and Order present obstacles. The Lausanne Movement exists to draw together representatives of different Churches for mutual study of their own and one another's principles, in the hope that a wider and deeper understanding may reveal the way in which these obstacles may be overcome. It is our practice to pay special attention to points of disagreement, so that they may be squarely faced, as well as to recognize points of agreement.  

In this way it was hoped to work steadily towards a Church united on a doctrinal basis.

Anglicanism

The method was introduced largely by Anglicans and some, even many of its characteristics show their influence. W. T. Manning spoke for many participants when he wrote:

"In the Providence of God it would seem that the Episcopal Church, together with the Churches which are included in the Anglican Communion, has a special work to do toward bringing about a great synthesis in the whole of Christendom."

The idea that each could live in comparative harmony with the other, having brought their several gifts to the Church, derived much of its strength from the fact that this had been to some degree achieved within the Church of England.
from the time of the Elizabethan Settlement of 1559. Basic to the system of beliefs was the fact that the Settlement, in the words of a church historian, was "a compromise which included parties and persons of very diverse views in one religious establishment" and it was for this reason that "the formulae of doctrine which emerged from the settlement were couched in studiously ambiguous terms". 1 There was confidence in the discernment, balance and synthesis of which Hooker had been the foremost defender.

To this heritage, intimately related to ideas of political unity, had been added some of the thinking of the British Empire. Anglicanism had spread with British expansion overseas and this had affected the Anglican religious consciousness, not only in Britain, but also elsewhere. Brent had a 'commonwealth' conception of unity; his aim was to find a way to a united Church through an agreement on essential matters of doctrine, and the Lambeth Quadrilateral provided him with a pattern for 'organic unity'. The first three points of this (concerning Scripture, Creeds and Sacraments) were not very controversial; it was the fourth (the insistence on the Historic Episcopate) which presented difficulties. Although other matters, such as a particular understanding of the manner of Christ's presence in the Eucharist and its relation to the consecrated elements, may have been of deeper religious significance, it was on episcopal ordination that (since the time of the Oxford Movement) the Anglo-Catholics had laid emphasis as the guarantee of ecclesiological authenticity.

In the light of this that the stress on order in the early period of Faith & Order must be seen. Matters of order received considerable attention, and such studies as that on the nature of Grace were, for some, an integral part of a programme seeking the right order for a united Church. A 'solution' of the age-old disputes on Grace might be a new basis for agreement on the relationship between salvation and order. The thinking of Faith & Order between the first two conferences is well illustrated by a comment by the Continuation Committee in 1934 on 'The Place of Lausanne in the Ecumenical Movement'. This says that Faith & Order is primarily concerned with

"the nature of the church in its corporate capacity and hence with the relation of the different (organized) branches of the church to one another. While both faith and worship hold a central place in Lausanne's interest, both are considered primarily in their relationship to the church's order (e.g. what formulations of the church's faith are to be regarded as adequate; in what way may the sacraments be rightly administered). Hence the central interest of Lausanne is, and rightly should be, the nature, limits, and function of the Christian ministry. This is the sense in which Lausanne is interested in organic unity."¹

It is significant that this statement was issued at a time when the German church struggle had already begun. Faith & Order was at this time emphasizing the concerns indicated by the second part of its name and held aloof from the struggle. It wished to preserve what one pamphlet called "the distinctive lines which it has made its own"² and its work reflected the narrowly clerical preoccupations of some theologians at the time.

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¹ In FO Arch '1931-7' box. Dated Sept. 1934 the comment is an amplification of FO 70 (1933): 'The Lausanne Movement: Its Past, Present and Future', which had been published by the Continuation Committee in Nov. 1933.

² FO 70 (1933), p. 12.
1 L. Hodgson, 'Anglicanism and the Ecumenical Movement', Anglican Theological Review, vol. xxxi (1949), p. 132. An earlier view is in Essays in Christian Philosophy, pp. 144-7 and pp. 149-50, where the answer to the question "how can unity be secured?" is given largely in terms of order. For a similar view see T. D. Wedel, The Coming Great Church (London, 1947), p. 21 (he was a delegate at Lund).

2 Catholicity, p. 49.

3 Little attention was paid to the 1937 report on non-theological factors (FO 84), no doubt partly because Europeans had a suspicion that Americans were not sufficiently interested (or competent) in genuine theology. The report was the work of an American Commission which at first had the title 'The Empirical Approach to Unity'.

4 FO 85 (1937), p. 2.

So Anglicanism provided a pattern for the unity to be achieved. Hodgson, at a time when he was still Faith & Order's Theological Secretary, wrote that Anglican order was "the true secret of the coherence of our enriching diversity in the unity of one visible church" and the treasure "which God wills through us to contribute to the whole company of the Faithful throughout the world". This language is representative of the 'bridge church' point of view. Anglicanism had been faced with problems of unity for many years and had produced a solution which satisfied many Anglicans and some from other churches.

In the words of the report 'Catholicity', presented to the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1947, it was a potential "school of synthesis". This was a view held particularly by Anglo-Catholics.

Unity and Function

Attention was directed to the achievement of doctrinal consensus. Most participants saw theology as a purely academic subject which should be kept clear of more mundane matters. Life & Work dealt with the application of Christianity to social life, and if such concerns impinged on Faith & Order, they were generally treated as 'obstacles'. As one report put it, they were "cultural and political causes [of disunity] independent of the nature of the Church".

Even leaders like Temple, who were much involved in areas other than academic theology, do not appear to have imported their interests to broaden Faith & Order's conception of its task. The explicit aim remained an imprecise
'organic unity', a united Church on an Anglican pattern, based on consensus in essential doctrine.

This idea of unity closely resembles the conception of human society which is supported by sociological 'systems theory'. Such theory tends to view the social structure as a stable whole in which parts make functional contributions and where individual meaning is derived from a "central value system". It has often been pointed out that the convenient analogy for such a view of society is the organic, to show how each part functions within the whole.¹

The standard objections to 'systems theory' are first, that it avoids the necessity of explaining why one particular part (and not some alternative) fulfils a function; secondly, that it is a perspective which has difficulty in accounting for interference and change; and thirdly, that it lays excessive emphasis on social constraint. These criticisms bear a marked similarity to some which were made of the synthetic method; it was later thought to have been too complacent and static, to have consolidated the positions of the churches rather than helping them to move towards unity, and to have underestimated the need for diversity.

4: INTRODUCTION, RETENTION AND REPLACEMENT

The introduction of the synthetic method must be seen against the background of the trends described in earlier chapters: the growing uncertainty about the place of religion and of mission, the widely-felt hope for international co-operation, and the idealism of the post-war
There was indeed optimism concerning co-operation in many fields. It was reflected in the attitudes of the churches and provided the impetus for a greater degree of mutual discovery than had previously been possible. Thus there was frequent amazement and delight at the fact that churches held views very different from those expected of them. A united Church appeared to be more readily attainable, especially now that new light was being shed on old problems by the development of biblical criticism.

The response was to forget many of the polemical attitudes of the past and to sit down in conference in order to talk things out. By collecting a representative body of people, it was believed that barriers to unity could gradually be removed. This was the form which study took during the 1930s and 1940s: obstacles were to be overcome in the search either for bare essentials or for a synthesis of distinctive positions. Some regional groups were organized (almost all in Europe), but the main study was done by a few Commissions. A strict Faith & Order identity was maintained. This identity was demonstrated not only in relations with Life & Work, but also in a more general consciousness of Faith & Order's peculiar task.

For example, it was decided not to set up a special commission to prepare for the Amsterdam Assembly; although some who had been taking part in Faith & Order meetings did participate, there was no official Faith & Order contribution to the work on 'The Universal Church in God's Design', a subject surely close to the centre of their
interests. The reason given was the wish not to "divert time and energy" from the existing programme.\(^1\)

The three Commissions set up after Edinburgh eventually reported to Lund in 1952. It was this conference which in fact marked the end of the period characterized here by the term 'synthetic method'. The method had been retained because it had made possible many advances in mutual understanding and yet did not undermine the positions of the churches. In the words of A. C. Outler, it had been possible to "register significant gains without much radical change required of the churches themselves".\(^2\) One alternative would have been the use of a 'biblical theology'. Yet this had at once too many Life & Work and 'protestant' associations; further, some of its ideas were too 'new' for many Faith & Order theologians.\(^3\) Another possible approach would have been one which laid more stress on the function of the Church in the world, but this could not have been reconciled with their very academic conception of the nature of theology. Faith & Order therefore continued with the method implied by the principles on which it had been founded; this still produced some results and participants saw no reason for dispensing with it.

But after 1948, Faith & Order was a fairly small part of a large organization and had to 'prove itself'. By this time, the synthetic method was more than a little discredited. Certainly the churches now knew more about each other, but the extent of the doctrinal consensus remained small and it appeared that many doctrinal commitments had only been

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1 Lu, p. 74.
3 Faith & Order attracted few of those who were breaking new theological ground. An example is E. Brunner, who resigned from Faith & Order activities in 1931 and later accused it of "deadly officialdom" and said, "The reason for my leaving the theological committee of the Lausanne conference was my impression that the vast majority of its members belong to a bygone theological era. The same impression is forced upon me in going over the list of the Continuation Committee, as far as the continental people are concerned." Letter E. Brunner to L. Hodgson dated 19.5.34 in FO Arch '1927-46'.

4 Brunner to L. Hodgson's problem has been that it has tried to be representative and yet 'vanguards' are not representative.

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strengthened by contact with others. There was little hope of making further progress without a new approach which would yield a transcendent vantage point from which to view disagreements, something which the synthetic method had significantly failed to do. So the movement was receptive to ideas for a new approach which might provide a 'breakthrough' or liberation.

5: FIRST EXAMPLE: SECTION V AT LAUSANNE, 1927

'The Ministry of the Church' was one of the six subjects discussed at Lausanne. There was one 'full session' on each of these subjects and this was followed by Section meetings of about 120 people who discussed the subject in question with a view to making a report. The Sections met for five periods of between two and three hours. A report was then presented to the conference and comments were made. The report was 'received' and the suggestions referred to a drafting committee. A second draft was then produced, which was again discussed and this time 'unanimously received' (i.e. 'nem. con.') in order that it might be included in the documents 'for transmission to the Churches'.

There was hardly any preparatory material for Lausanne, so the Sections had no 'working papers' before them. Instead, on the ministry, there was the 'full session' of seven addresses from representatives of various churches. Six of these made statements of the views of their particular bodies and the seventh summed up and made recommendations; he said that progress was expected of the conference and
The report is in La, pp. 467-72.


2 The report is in La, pp. 467-72.

suggested "some sort of neighbourly recognition" of ministries. The emphasis in these statements was on comparison and the aim of each was to find the characteristics required for the ministry of a united Church. Much of the content was apologetic and a wide range of views was expressed.

On this basis the Section, with Headlam as its convener (exercising from the chair what one member called "monarchical government"), discussed the matter and drew up its report. In his introduction, Headlam remarked on the difficulty of the subject, and said that the intention was to put before the churches some lines of investigation.

**The Report**

The final report starts with five consensus statements on ministry, for instance that it is "perpetually authorised and made effective through Christ and His Spirit" and that it is "entrusted with the government and discipline of the Church, in whole or in part". It then goes on to state that differences of understanding have grown up and that the first step towards overcoming them is "the frank recognition that they exist, and the clear definition of their nature". On account of the need for intercommunion and for unity in mission, a commonly recognized ministry is urgent.

The two most significant paragraphs follow this statement of need. The first says that there had not been time in the conference "to consider all the points of difference between us with that care and patience which could alone lead to complete agreement" and that this observation also applied to proposals for the constitution of a united Church. The
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second makes some suggestions. On the grounds of Early Church practice and that of the churches since, it was recognized that episcopal, presbyteral and congregational systems "must all, under conditions which require further study, have an appropriate place in the order of life of a reunited Church". Therefore each communion should bring its spiritual treasures to the common life of the whole. To this central statement is added the conviction that, if in future any one form of ordination to the Church's ministry were accepted, such acceptance would imply no adverse judgement on those already ordained by other means.

The report ends with a call for co-operation in "activities of brotherly service" and an expression of thanks to, and confidence in, God. Notes follow which try to give a clear account of important differences. Thus there was an official Orthodox statement followed by a description of other views held by the churches represented. One rested on a view of ordination as a sacramental act and on belief in apostolic succession; over against it another stressed that no particular form of ministry was necessary as a matter of faith. Various intermediate types were duly noted.

In discussion of the first draft there was clear appreciation that the report amounted to an acceptance of the episcopal form of ministry. A Congregationalist speaker advocated that episcopacy should be acknowledged by non-episcopal churches as a needless concession to "a prejudice founded upon nothing that could be found in the Scriptures, but to which they were willing to lend themselves, without
negation, in order to further the cause of unity." A Pastor from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of France, however, said that their vision of the visible unity of the Church was a great contribution of Anglicans to the spiritual treasures of Christendom. There were some suggestions of additions to the text; these were simply added in the second draft, where material was set out in a different order. There was greater stress on the existence of differences and on the urgency of the need for their resolution.

Comment

Many of the features of the synthetic method are illustrated in this first example. There is an emphasis on differences and on an investigation of the exact stands of the churches. These are then compared and an attempt is made to find a way to integrate them for 'the common life of the united Church'. The tentative synthesis takes the form of some consensus statements followed by a straight complementary approach to the forms of ministry. No church is expected to give up anything; no adverse judgements are passed. In the words of one Section member: "the ideal was the contribution by each branch of the Church of its own special heritage for the enrichment of the whole". It appears to have been assumed that it was only a matter of time before the ideal was realized.

The report accepted episcopacy. This form of ministry would no doubt be modified, but bishops in any church order are either present or absent, and here they were to be present. It is on these grounds that Henderson has called
the report the "death-warrant of all non-episcopal churches" and that Douglass, in commenting on the Church of South India (which owed much to Lausanne), said that it was "frankly to be episcopal in essential polity". This demonstrates the tendency in the synthetic method to produce a result little different from the most 'recal-citrant' of the original constituent parts (whether in statements of belief or in forms of ministry). Each was to contribute, but the result looked remarkably like the most elaborate of the original contributions. Given the assumptions of the method, the Presbyterian Section member's comment was correct when he said of episcopacy: "Am I not correct in stating that no other method of securing a reunited Church has ever been before us?"

The report also indicates some other problems of a synthetic approach. It does not go deeply into many of the matters on which there was potential and actual division (such as the degree of doctrinal definition of the ministry which would be required); rather it is content to rest with consensus statements and then a 'clear statement' of the types of ministry which the participants hoped to fuse one day in the reunited Church. The difficulty of doing this to the satisfaction of all does not appear to have impressed the delegates with any great force.

6: SECOND EXAMPLE: SECTION III AT EDINBURGH, 1937

It was hoped that Edinburgh would be an advance on Lausanne: that the reports would be concerned not so much
with matters of fact as with the presentation for consider-
tation by churches of "such progress as we shall have been
able to make in our joint studies towards overcoming the
obstacles which hinder us from full unity".\(^1\) After Lausanne
the many differing stands of the churches had been collected
in the volume 'Convictions' and this had shown the extent
of the problem facing Faith & Order. However, four Com-
misions had in the meantime been engaged in study in order
to try to improve the situation.

Section III at Edinburgh had before it the report 'The
Ministry and Sacraments', produced by a "small, but widely
representative Committee", which had met for ten days in
order to consider about thirty papers written for it.\(^2\) The
papers had been published in an impressive volume; most of
them were on the views of particular churches, but there
were also studies on biblical and historical aspects of the
problem and at the end were three 'Constructive Statements'.\(^3\)

When Headlam presented the report to the Continuation
Committee he said that the Commission "had been able to
reach a greater measure of agreement than they had dared
to hope", but added that this was perhaps "because they had
confined themselves to the religious aspect of the subject
without attacking questions of what might be called 'exact
theology'".\(^4\) On the Sacraments there was a list of agree-
ments (for instance, "God is not bound by His Sacraments")
and although the Commission "had not been able to solve the
problem of how to achieve a common ministry", it nevertheless
presented a list of agreed conclusions on this subject.\(^5\)
There were some qualifying footnotes, but these had been kept to a minimum and most of them were the work of the Orthodox member.

At Edinburgh, after a short introduction, the delegates began Section work with a view to producing reports.

The Report

When the report of Section III was first presented, tribute was paid to the work of the Commission. It was acknowledged, however, that the Section had been less successful, because it was not "a small body of experts". In fact the report is bristling with qualifying notes, and the "violent clashes in full session" only tended to add to these. Headlam made an attempt, on the first presentation, to have an amendment inserted so that the report would be more useful for church unions (he had the plans in South India particularly in mind). What he recommended was the insertion of a statement, taken from the report of his Commission, concerning "the organization of the united Church of the future". This described a particular form of episcopal order. In spite of three protests, the amendment was not inserted.

The final report is long, largely on account of the number of statements of particular positions. Each confession appears to have wished to have its own distinctive beliefs represented. There are some traces of Headlam's avoidance of 'exact theology', for example in the section on the Eucharist. But these are overshadowed by references to many 'fundamental differences of interpretation' and
1 In his 'intellectual biography' in C. W. Kegley (ed.), The Philosophy and Theology of Anders Nygren (Carbondale, Illinois, 1970), p. 26. He implies that the degree of unity was partially attributable to this.

2 The report on 'The Church of Christ and the Word of God' (seen as a 'Continental' preoccupation) and on 'The Church's Unity in Life and Worship' (an 'American' concern) were similar in style. For the regional allocation, see the discussion when the Commissions were set up: FO 71 (1934).

'special difficulties in regard to union'. The report begins: "We are agreed that in all sacramental doctrine and practice the supreme authority is our Lord Jesus Christ Himself"; agreement did not go far beyond this.

Comment

What had been achieved by a small group, under firm leadership which tended to emphasize the avoidance of differences, proved impossible to reproduce in a conference. There, the delegates were very conscious of the matters on which they differed and attempts at synthesis broke down because of the great range represented. Headlam's suggestion of an episcopal order would, paradoxically, have been too precise and was therefore rejected. In all the reports from Edinburgh, except for that on Grace, the progress towards consensus was small. The Section on Grace was presented with a more carefully prepared Commission report than that on Ministry and Sacraments. Again, it had a less thorny subject (one more open to theological restatement) and there is some indication that a more 'Christological' method was used in its treatment. Indeed, Nygren has said that he first used his phrase 'The way to the centre is the way to unity' in the discussion on Grace.1 In the other Sections, however, there is no evidence of any concerted effort to change the method; the synthetic approach was tried, although the result of its use only revealed the gulf between the churches.2 One delegate said of Section III:

"One could not help wondering throughout the lengthy
The constitution had been drawn up by the 'Committee of Fourteen' (representatives from Faith & Order and Life & Work) and discussed by a meeting in Utrecht early in 1938. The account is in FO 91 (1938).

The year 1938 was important for Faith & Order. It had to assimilate the results of the Edinburgh Conference and plan what to do next. Edinburgh had recommended two subjects for study: the Doctrine of the Church and 'liturgical questions'. These were therefore on the agenda; so was the proposed World Council of Churches. Work had been done since 1937 to draw up proposals for a WCC constitution and the Continuation Committee were to comment on this. The discussion on the WCC and on the setting up of a Commission on the Church will be considered here. Not only does the former demonstrate some of the attitudes of Faith & Order at the time (attitudes not unrelated to method), but the discussion on method itself indicates an important divergence which is not fully apparent if study is limited to documents of the main conferences.

Discussion

The proposed constitution of the WCC was presented by Temple as Chairman; the comment desired from the Continuation Committee was whether this constitution accorded with the requirements agreed at Edinburgh. The WCC was to have Assemblies and a Central Committee. Discussion began with a request from Headlam for clarification of the authority of these bodies over Faith & Order. Fears were voiced on
the subject of representation in the assemblies and R. Newton Flew, a leading British Methodist, expressed the hope that both Faith & Order and Life & Work would be able to pursue their own distinctive tasks. Headlam asked "What kind of supervision is it intended to empower the Central Committee to exercise?" and demonstrated his reason for the question by saying "A theological commission should be left as free as possible". Two other members were worried that Faith & Order might become involved in political controversies through the WCC and that this might interfere with its work. Discussion developed on these lines until a motion was passed that Faith & Order should proceed in accordance with the basis on which its two conferences had been called and conducted. When the final motion of approval for the WCC constitution was put, there was opposition. Headlam was convinced that there would be interference and made an implicit reference to the fact that there was no delegation at Edinburgh from the German Evangelical Church: "It was our relation with Life & Work initiated at Edinburgh that brought to Faith & Order its first set-back". However, the motion of approval was eventually carried.

On the subject of study of the Church, Hodgson, the Secretary, had issued a memorandum before the meeting. This had recalled the 'distinctive task' of Faith & Order, which was to "pursue our studies with a view to the removal of obstacles to unity". He proposed Commissions to discover obstacles, to study them and then to find a way to union. This was his 'Five Year Plan'.

1 'Programme for the Meeting of the Continuation Committee' (1938), p. 3: in FO Arch '1927-46' boxes.
In the discussion, however, some thought this concentration on obstacles to be too negative an approach. Continental theologians would reject this method. Headlam said that it was best to ask what is the truth about the Church:

"The only way of advance is to get real scholars of different points of view and to get them to work together for discovering what is true, studying Scripture, the Fathers, Luther, Calvin, etc."

H. Clavier (from the French Reformed Church) tried to express the disagreement as one between a 'method of facts' (he meant a summary of the true positions of the churches) and a 'method of principles'. He suggested that each of these methods be used by a Commission, so that "we should see whether by advancing along both lines we could reach the same point".

There was some further discussion and E. J. Palmer then spoke in his characteristic manner and proposed what could be called a 'Christological' method. He said that all should listen much more to the New Testament and relate their plans to Jesus Himself: "What our Lord sees when He looks down is still one Church". Stands must be criticized in the light of this fact: there must be a "responsible and painful revaluation of all the views by which we justify our separate existence". Others urged a scriptural basis, among them Visser’t Hooft and Flew. The latter made a long speech setting forth ideas for the work of the Commission on the Church, shortly after which he was proposed by Headlam as its Chairman, a proposal which was carried unanimously. After an appeal from W. Paton that efforts be made to get contributions from 'younger churches' because of the...
importance of the subject to them, the discussion was closed. Thus the question of method was left more or less open for the Commission to settle.

Comment

There are three comments to be made on this discussion. First, it is important to compare ideas advanced here with the actual work of the Commission. The possibilities of a more scriptural and Christological method were put forward; so was the idea of having wider geographical areas involved in the study. The course which the Commission chose will be considered in the next example.

Secondly, the relationship with Life & Work is significant. Although there were few in the Continuation Committee who feared the WCC enough to vote against acceptance of the new constitution, most members were concerned lest Faith & Order be 'swallowed up'. This hesitation appears to have been due to their wish to pursue specialized studies without outside interference; they did not wish extraneous factors introduced into their search for the faith and order of the united Church. 'Politics' and 'theology' were not to be mixed; 'real scholars' were to be left alone to find the truth.

The third comment relates to the divergence in method. Several possibilities were aired, but the strongest alternative to the original Faith & Order project had its source in the early 1930s (and even earlier) when Headlam's Committee had been working on Grace. At that time, R. W. Brown (the Secretary from 1924 to 1933) had objected to Headlam's
avoidance of differences by his enforcing concentration on the 'religious aspect' of a minimum of topics, and not on 'exact theology'. In 1932, Brown wrote to the Secretary of the 'Committee of Theologians':

"Do you think the Theological Committee is likely to produce a second report designed, like the one on Grace, to dismiss from consideration things in which the Churches differ and to deprecate the emphasis which people put on them? In that case I think the Theological Committee ought to be dismissed as an agency of this movement. That design is contrary to the Lausanne method and delays recognition of its excellence and the prosecution of the work."1

Others shared these fears; for instance, at the 1936 meeting of the Continuation Committee, one member is reported as saying of the report on Ministry and Sacraments that "genuine differences had been obscured and the degree of unity exaggerated".2

Headlam had made his method clear in his Bampton lectures in 1920 and never altered his basic approach.3 His method was one of mutual recognition, a search for essentials, and avoidance of definition: "the necessary elements of the Christian faith are few, and it is the right and wise course to insist on them only".4 There had to be a particular understanding of Scripture, the use of the Nicene Creed, and the right administration of the two Dominical sacraments. Added to these, the Episcopate in the Apostolic Succession was necessary as "an external mark of the unity and continuity of the Church".5 Here was the pattern of essentials which could be found by studying the early undivided Church; reunion must be on these terms. If only definition could
be avoided and the right theologians met for a sufficiently long time, it would be found that there already was agreement on these fundamentals. Thus in the original Bampton lectures he said that "we all alike accept what is most essential" and in the volume on the Sacraments: "It will be necessary for the Church to agree on certain fundamental points, but on these probably it agrees already".

The reports of the Commissions on Grace and on the Ministry and Sacraments bear the mark of this thinking. Although there were dissenting footnotes, a high degree of consensus was expressed. Differences were considered but the emphasis was on finding the underlying agreement which, it was believed, existed already. This approach certainly appears to have had some success in a small group under Headlam's masterful guidance. His method was synthetic but the essential 'ingredients' for the synthesis were much restricted. It was an attempt to search for few essentials on the basis of the teaching of the Early Church. But this approach did not succeed in conference; there, too many delegates wished their distinctive differences to be represented, and felt that Faith & Order's own special traditions might be undermined. What could remain a statement on fundamentals in committee, tended in conference to become a series of generalizations interspersed with numerous qualifications.

B: FOURTH EXAMPLE: THE REPORT ON 'THE CHURCH'

The 1930s were marked by a 'rediscovery' of the Church
on the part of many who had not been accustomed to stressing its importance. This was in part a response to the problems of the time: persecution, war, a largely and increasingly secular world, and rival systems of beliefs. Edinburgh considered such problems under the title 'The Conference Looks at the World' at a meeting "preparatory to the real work of the Conference". But some Sections came to believe that different understandings of the Church might underlie the difficulties which they were experiencing. In 1938, the first new Commission to be set up was therefore to consider 'The Church'. Before he was appointed Chairman, Flew had already spoken of the importance of this subject at the 1938 Continuation Committee meeting; he stressed the need for authoritative books on the subject and made an appeal to the Committee:

"will you send the Commission on its way with a certain amount of awe, realising that you are sending it on the greatest enterprise that has ever been undertaken by Faith and Order."  

Once appointed, with this understanding of the task, it is not surprising that Flew made fairly wide-ranging plans. He described them in an article 'Our Next Task' in 1939, where he once again emphasized that authoritative statements were needed. But he felt that the greatest problem still remained once these were written:

"It is the task of reconciliation. The divergencies of doctrine on the nature of the church must be stated and, if possible, harmonized. Attempts must be made to present a synthetic view which embraces all the different views of all the various churches in the Faith and Order Movement."
This was a "vast venture in systematic theology ... a venture of faith which should turn the faces of the men and women of this generation to the future".¹ The goal was practical; in order to achieve it, four volumes would be necessary: (1) biblical; (2) historical; (3) statements "from all the various communions"; (4) dogmatic or systematic, "aiming at a synthesis of the varying views, and at a doctrine of the Church which could be held by all of us to-day".²

The plan was not a success in this form. To assist in the whole venture an American co-operating committee had been appointed to work on the same lines and this published a pamphlet in 1945 containing a report and eleven 'denominational statements'.³ But after the war, increasing emphasis was laid on the third and fourth volumes. So in Flew's report in 1947 he spoke of "astonishing progress" in collecting confessional statements, while he was less happy about the other projects.⁴ In 1952 the volume of statements was published, as was the fourth 'volume', namely the report of the Commission to the Lund Conference in 1952.⁵ In 1953 it was stated that the first two volumes still lacked material, but "Dr Flew was encouraged to continue his work of editorship".⁶ However, they never appeared.

The Report

The report must be seen together with the volume of statements. Both were compiled by means of correspondence, supplemented by two meetings, one in 1949 and one in 1950. The volume contains statements which were as official as possible; they were checked with 'authorities' in the

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² R. N. Flew, 'Our Next Task', p. 64. The plan was presented in similar form to the Continuation Committee in 1939 (FO 92, pp. 23-4). The intention for the third volume is expressed in almost the same words in FOC 1 (1948), p. 34.

³ FO 100 (1945): 'The Nature of the Church'.

⁴ FO 102 (1947), p. 15; a later example is FOC 4 (1950), p. 4.

⁵ The statements are in R. N. Flew (ed.), The Nature of the Church (London, 1952); the report is FOC 7 (1951): 'The Church'.

⁶ FOC 17 (1953), p. 45.
1. M. Bévenot, who attended the 1949 meeting. 'Authorities' usually meant church councils or groups of prominent theologians: Flew, The Nature of the Church, pp. 9-10.

2. Correspondence between R. N. Flew and G. W. Richards (at the time, Chairman of the American Theological Committee) 1940-1: in FO Arch 'The Church' boxes.


churches concerned, with the exception of the one entitled 'The Church of Rome', which was written by Flew on the basis of notes from an anonymous Roman Catholic theologian. At the end of the volume the American committee's pamphlet is reproduced. This contains brief 'popular' denominational replies to a questionnaire and a report which indicates areas of agreement and disagreement, and discusses the process by which these had been clarified. This report ends on a 'functional' note. The Church is considered as a means to an end (both in relation to the world and to its own members) as well as being an end in itself.

The much longer European contribution is more academic and bears the mark of Flew's early grand intentions. Indeed there had been some disagreement with the Americans in the early 1940s over the degree to which the results were to be 'intellectual', and they had in consequence been allowed to go their own way. But in the main report, published separately, the Commission had to admit defeat in respect of a synthesis. Although Flew had originally seen synthesis as "the really decisive work", his foreword says: "If any reader of this Report expects to find formulated within it a synthetic doctrine of the Church wherein the chief differences have disappeared, he will be disappointed." The time for synthesis was not yet: "Non uno itinere potest pervenire ad tam grande secretum".

The report follows no one particular method. Thus there is a chapter which seeks to discover where agreements and disagreements lie and another which attempts to dig deeper to the social, political and cultural factors which
lie behind the divisions among Christians. There are then two chapters on 'new factors'. These factors include those in the contemporary situation which have fostered the growth of the ecumenical movement and those trends in theology possibly significant for reframing thought on the Church. Among these latter are 'laymen's movements' and 'the return to biblical theology'. Notes follow on the ecclesiological significance of the newly-formed WCC and there is a chapter on 'Our Future Tasks'. This last emphasizes the new light which biblical research had shed on disagreements; it also refers to the importance of historical study and of the "analysis of the present reality of the separated communions, as the ecumenical encounter takes place to-day". The chapter ends by pointing out that unity is not just a matter of 'faith and order'; it involves the whole life of the Church. Certain suggestions are made for study at Lund, for example, 'continuity' and 'sacrifice'. At the end of the report there are two appendices, one on the way 'modern thought-forms' affect theological understanding, and another on the possibilities which existentialism opens up for relegating many former differences to a secondary status.

**Comment**

The first feature to be noted about the final report is that it has no one particular direction. Numerous possibilities are left open and the argument is nowhere conclusive. Rather, there are a series of essays summarizing various aspects of the problem facing the churches in the area of ecclesiology.
The Memo, by Flew for the 1949 meeting of the Commission (dated July 1949) puts great emphasis on authoritative statements and says "Nothing is to be gained by premature attempts at synthesis", in FO Arch 'The Church' boxes.

There were only two 'younger church' members out of the forty participants and neither attended either of the Commission's meetings. This was in spite of American encouragement on this point: see the Flew/Richards correspondence in FO Arch 'The Church' boxes.

The Commission, or at least their Chairman, had started out with clearly synthetic intentions. Biblical, historical and confessional material was to contribute to a synthesis which would draw together the strengths of each church and perhaps solve the basic problem of ecclesiology underlying other disagreements. The Continuation Committee had approved the plan in this form and so it remained until 1949. But then, with no articles prepared for the first two volumes, with only two years left for preparation, and with the somewhat confusing findings of the Amsterdam Assembly recently issued, it became apparent that the project would have to be less ambitious. Further, many of the prerequisites for a synthesis were not agreed: for instance, the way in which biblical and historical material was to be handled, and the norms for somehow finding unity among the many 'authoritative statements'.

In the end the 'findings' comprised the volume of statements, the chapter in the final report on agreements and disagreements, and some suggestions for further study. This is reminiscent of the results of earlier attempts at synthesis. The suggestions made in the 1938 meeting had not been taken up: the biblical volume had not been published; the method was similar to that which had been used, for example, at Edinburgh; 'younger churches' had hardly participated. However, one indication of things to come was the chapter in the report on social and cultural factors. It was appreciated by some that doctrinal issues might not be the whole problem, although it is interesting to note...
that this insight was still (as at Edinburgh) considered to be an American preoccupation, as it was the only chapter which a member of the American committee had been asked to draft. ¹

The report of the Commission marks the passing of the synthetic method, but it indicates some of the possibilities which were opening up. The reports of the other two Commissions (on Ways of Worship and on Intercommunion) are not dissimilar. Positions were catalogued, papers were written and some of the problems were pointed out.

9: CONCLUSION

The early period was one of experiment in seeking to realize a developing 'definition of reality' in relation to a situation of division among Christians. The dissonance between the idea of unity and the knowledge of division was not great at first. The idea was exciting and not very clearly defined, and it was consonant with many other cognitive elements: for example, the need for unity in mission, and for a Christian parallel to secular international movements.

The first aim was to have a conference at all, and many of the initial decisions were determined by the desire not to offend any who might attend. If comparative strangers were to meet, discuss, and possibly agree, while retaining the greater part of their original views, it was inevitable that something like the synthetic method would be tried out at this time. There were certainly other suggestions current
Yet these were not entertained seriously in the decisions taken. The main divergence was over the extent of the disagreements thought to be relevant to unity. For Headlam, the extent was small. But his approach had little success at Edinburgh, and it was abandoned in later studies.

1) Headlam's variation of the synthetic method is an example of the first way of reducing dissonance, using the legitimation of the pattern of the Early Church. He had a conception of unity which, whatever his own private intentions, looked as if it had been designed to accord with the 'highest common factor' of the legitimations of the churches. But this policy created excessive dissonance for participants: dissonance, that is, between their understanding of this conception of unity and their knowledge of the various convictions held by member churches.

So, a wider range of differences had to be seen as relevant to unity. The idea implied was that of a united Church, patterned on Anglican experience, to which each would contribute the riches of their own particular heritage. This was legitimated by reference to the complementarity of the various stands, by a belief that the full truth could not be represented in any one of them, and to a lesser extent by historical and biblical study. To have sought unity in relation to the Church's function in the world would have been dissonant with the participants' conception of their task and with their understanding of Faith & Order's 'mandate'. So the role of spectator was adopted, as in
Edinburgh's short session entitled 'The Conference Looks at the World'.

But the exact form of unity was kept uncertain. To have made it more definite would have created excessive dissonance between knowledge of a 'concrete plan' and the several conceptions of what should be in such a plan. At the same time unity was made 'easier' by restricting the task to one of doctrinal agreement. Barriers were to be broken down in conference and it was implied that unity was to be achieved by means of accumulated agreements.

The synthetic method was one developed for use by strangers meeting, as it were, for the first time. But as participants became more informed about each other and about the complexities of the unity problem, so they felt that the early legitimations for unity were unsatisfactory. The primary dissonance between their idea of unity and their knowledge of the positions of the churches increased. So the synthetic method came to be seen as 'unrealistic'.

2) The second way in which dissonance could be reduced (through change in the participants' knowledge of the divided state of the churches) was thought by many in this period to be the natural result of discussion and conference. There was great optimism, at least at first, and therefore little stress on 'eschatological suspension' or on judgement and sacrifice. Bodies which had come into being in the struggle to find what is true, were not willing to give up the form in which the truth had been revealed to them, nor was this considered to be necessary. So the findings of conferences...
See the minutes of the Continuation Committee after Lausanne, particularly the 1930 meeting: FD 63.

and Commissions were transmitted to the churches in the expectation that they would be of effect.

Later, however, after the range of responses to the Lausanne Conference had been collected and there was less euphoria, more interest was taken in 'objective progress' in union negotiations. In this way, especially by observing progress in South India, there could be a reduction in the primary dissonance.

3) The third way of reducing dissonance (the addition of new cognitive elements) is a significant feature of the synthetic method. First, there were the 'reconciling' legitimations of historical and political factors. Not only were some divisions traceable to specific circumstances in the past, but present progress could be seen as held up by political involvement, as at Edinburgh, or by more general intrusions on Faith & Order's work, like the Second War.

More important, however, as a reconciling legitimation was the lack of knowledge among churches of each other's characteristics. Many thought that the convictions of the churches were ultimately consonant with each other in the light of the current conception of unity, but that the lack of unity achieved could be explained by the sheer fact of ignorance. Great emphasis was then put on meeting; after one conference, the task was to prepare for the next.¹

This leads on to the second alternative for dissonance reduction by adding new cognitive elements: a change in the proportion of dissonant to consonant relations involving a
particular element. Instead of concentrating on the relationship between the state of the churches and the conception of unity, there was a tendency to rejoice in the unity of the spirit and the achievement of coming together at all. It is difficult now to understand the relief and excitement of the early period, yet there was certainly immense enthusiasm. For a long time participants were able to feel that they were breaking new ground and arranging meetings of world-moving importance. When intractable problems were encountered, attention could be diverted to the new joys of mutual acquaintance. There was ready social support for the idea that unity was vital; in fact the meetings were a form of unity in themselves.

Later in the period the original enthusiasm wore off; there was less satisfaction in the fact of meeting. And by this time the reconciling element of ignorance was becoming less plausible. Some thought that Faith & Order had reached a dead-end in the 1940s and the primary dissonance for participants increased. A 'breakthrough' was needed.
VIII: CHRISTOLOGICAL METHOD

Lund was a conscious turning-point for Faith & Order. At Amsterdam, four years earlier, the Barthian 'dialectical method' had been tried in an attempt to find the 'deepest differences' between the churches: agreements within disagreements and vice versa. This essay in 'getting behind' the obvious differences was, in a sense, a preparation for Lund. But at the same time, many of the assumptions of the synthetic method were still held, for instance, the hope of reconciling 'protestant' and 'catholic' conceptions of the Church.

At Lund, the emphasis shifted from the 'given' stands of the churches to 'given unity', and a wish to relate differences to this gift. In this change the influence of Barth's radically Christo-centric theology was considerable. If it is said that Hitler 'saved' Life & Work by giving it a focus in the 1930s, it was Barth who saved Faith & Order through his influence on the 'biblical theology' which provided a new basis for study.¹

But the new 'Christological' method was not all-embracing. What Lund did was to free Faith & Order from some of the assumptions of earlier years. The new method was used to a large degree by the two Sections of the main Commission (on 'Christ and the Church'), but the work of other Commissions did not follow this lead. This is not to say, however, that they were not influenced by the changes at Lund; the Commissions on 'Institutionalism' and on

1 An act of 'salvation' by proxy. To apply the term 'Barthian' to 'biblical theology' would have met with the approval of many of the 'biblical theology' movement's supporters, but certainly not of Barth himself. In addition to this, there was Barth's suspicion of what he called 'the ecumenical circus'. On their part, ecumenical enthusiasts had grounds for being detached on account of Barth's 'congregationalist' ecclesiology; see K. Barth, 'The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus' in the volume for Amsterdam, 'The Universal Church in God's Design' (London, 1948), pp. 67-76, especially p. 75. For comments on this essay in Faith & Order see FD 102 (1947), p. 27.

'Biblical theology' had already influenced the ecumenical movement through leaders like Visser't Hooft; see J. L. Hromadka, 'Biblical Theology in the Ecumenical Struggle' in Mackie and West, The Sufficiency of God, pp. 17-23. But Faith & Order had remained detached.

'Tradition and Traditions' bore a relationship to the new method which will be discussed below. The Sections on 'Worship' were more detached; two wrote what could be called 'contextual' reports, dealing with worship primarily in relation to social context. Indeed, J. A. Sittler, the Chairman of the American Section on Worship, was critical of the approach of the main Commission; he said that the real problem was not 'Christ and the Church' but Christ and the world.¹

1: IDEAL TYPE

The Christological method is characterized by:

a) consideration of the divisions of the churches in the light of the 'given unity' of faith in Christ;
b) an emphasis on common study of the message of the bible;
c) a stress on eschatology and on sacrifice for unity;
d) the search for doctrinal consensus;
e) belief in the importance of mission;
f) study on the assumption of strict separation of 'Church' from 'world';
g) the identification of 'obstacles' to unity, particularly 'non-theological' ones;
h) long-term study by theological specialists.

2: FEATURES OF THE METHOD

Assumptions

The first assumption was that the method could throw new light on the barriers to unity. There was growing
appreciation that differences between churches do not always coincide with confessional lines, and it was felt that new norms for unity might be discovered. The aim was "to go together to some of the great themes of the Christian faith, to study them together on a soundly biblical basis and then, working outwards from the centre, to challenge each other to justify the things that divide us, as they begin to appear in the light of our previous agreement on fundamentals."¹

Other loyalties were to be challenged by the fundamental loyalty to Christ; themes such as ecclesiology were to be subject to a Christology based on what T. F. Torrance called a "rigorous and constructive biblical theology".²

Barth's view was that the only foundation for knowledge at once of man and God is Jesus Christ, true God and true man. He is the divine Word most fully revealed to us in scripture by the Holy Spirit. To this revelation of God's Word, man must listen.

In different ways, such thinking influenced dogmatic theologians such as Torrance, Schlink and Nygren; they were part of a movement commonly described as 'biblical theology'.³ To a greater or lesser extent, they saw the bible 'as a unity'. At this time they used what is sometimes called the typological method to show the fundamental point of view which informs the whole bible, through which the Word of God speaks.⁴ The bible's unity was to be discovered through certain 'types' (such as 'covenant'); these were thought to deliver its underlying structure and to point to the reality of Christ. They were indicative of the continuing events through which God saved his people; the

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³ These names are from the European Section on 'Christ and the Church'. There were representatives of similar thinking in the North American Section, e.g. J. Knox and F. V. Filson. Cullmann (a powerful advocate of 'biblical theology') was a 'corresponding member' of the European Section.

⁴ See O. S. Tomkins, FOC 29 (1960), p. 5.
continuing Heilsgeschichte.

'Biblical theology' was marked by a reaction against the earlier liberal analytical criticism of the Bible, an approach which had had a fragmenting effect on the biblical tradition by its use of such tools as source-criticism. It was also marked both by opposition to evolutionary models of the development of religions, leading to Christianity as their apex, and often, when Barth's own voice prevailed, by hostility to any form of 'natural theology'. The Word of God spoke equally to men of every age; it followed that no great hermeneutical sophistication was required. 1

This thinking was considered to have great implications for Faith & Order. By searching the scriptures together, without preconceptions, it was felt that unity might emerge: a biblically based consensus.

After Lund, the more comparative approach of the early years was occasionally used, but always with a certain self-consciousness: a fear, in the words of one report, of seeming static and of failing "to show what is dynamically evolving among the churches in relation to one another". 2 The intention was to be less 'static' and the theme of eschatology became prominent. This was emphasized at Lund and Evanston: the Church was on pilgrimage between the first and second advents of Christ and therefore it could repent and dispose of some of the baggage it had picked up earlier in the journey. 3 Times of urgency require a return to the centre; in such a return, confessional positions are only met incidentally. The theme here was one of transcendence:

1 FOC 31 (1960), p. 20: in the American Section there was no "specific discussion of hermeneutical methods". See also FOC 25 (1957), p. 19, where it was reported that agreement on interpretation could be found without "dealing directly with the problem of hermeneutics as such".


3 Lu, p. 21; Ev, p. 84.
of the eschatological breaking in of another world, showing up the things of this world in a new light.

Implied View of Unity and of Society

From the basis in Christ, the aim was to achieve consensus. The consensus was to be in doctrine, on the pattern of the apostolic witness as revealed in the New Testament. Through the focus on Christology, it was hoped that the themes of Faith & Order could be interrelated. Thus an agreement on Baptism would make an agreement on the Eucharist more readily attainable.¹

The idea of unity did not owe much to 'the world'; rather, it was in separation from 'the world': a firm base for mission to the world. This attitude owed something to the earlier association of Barthian theology with the 'recovery of the Church' in the situation of the 1930s. And at the time when the worldly divisions of the 'cold war' were very apparent, it was thought that the role of the Church was to transcend them and reach consensus, thus providing an example of true unity. It was out of such thinking that the New Delhi unity statement eventually came: 'churchly' unity based on 'given unity' in Christ.

Social and Cultural Factors

Faith & Order's attitude to social and cultural factors was closely related to this view of 'the world'. The interest can be traced back to Edinburgh, and to the much publicized letter from C. H. Dodd in 1949, which had suggested that disunity could be understood only if historical and cultural factors in the situation were

¹ e.g. FOC 29 (1960), pp. 70-1.

2 FOC 10 (1951). Lu: especially the report sections IV and VI.


5 e.g. Knox, Torrance and Nygren; see Nygren's Christ and His Church, p. 96: "The body of Christ is Christ himself ... The Church is Christ as he is present among and meets us on earth after his resurrection."

recognized. A meeting was held before Lund and the subject was then taken up at the conference itself. Faith & Order was aware of 'non-theological' conditioning, but the question of its attitude to this fact had not been settled.

Lund was, in a sense, very conscious of the world's crises. The problem of Germany loomed over it, and the East/West conflicts were personified, as they had been at Amsterdam, by Hromadka. Barth's Christo-centric and transcendentalist theology could set men free to face such issues, as it had done in the German church struggle, offering a freedom often not afforded by more immanentist thinking. As D. M. MacKinnon pointed out after Lund, social radicalism may go together with a transcendentalist theology.

But the theology of Lund's 'new method', although it owed much to Barth, was not in fact Barth's, and the situation was not that of Germany in the 1930s. 'Biblical theology', by its deliberate distance from any doctrine of immanence, could treat 'the world' as little more than a theological category. It was of this that one of the delegates complained when he called Lund's theology "immensely remote from being a working account of what the Church is and does and ought to be" and said that it consisted of "heavily literal and systematic propositions ... a celestial mathematics". This tendency was continued after Lund, particularly as some of the leading theologians stressed the image of the Church as the Body of Christ: as the risen Christ, rather than Christ on the cross, suffering in the world.
1 Lu, p. 32 and p. 35. And e.g., p. 63, where there is mention of seeking "to isolate" social and cultural tensions. The encroachments of the world had also been seen as obstructions at Amsterdam: Am., p. 56.


3 The 'Program of Work', 1958: FOC 26, p. 45.

4 FOC 27 (1959), p. 10; reiterated by N. Ehrenström in FOC 31 (1960), p. 71. There is another reference to 'unmasking' in FOC 34 (1961), pp. 36-42. The title was acknowledged as Troeltsch's (although its original meaning was not retained), presumably a reference to his Der Historismus und seine Uberwindung (Berlin, 1924).

The work of Faith & Order in the 1950s was not closely associated with 'the world' and its problems. The Lund report said that the Spirit creates unity, while one of the causes of division lies in treating as absolute cultural factors which are only relative; it had recommended "special study of these hindrances" to churches seeking union. \(^1\) The Section on Worship suggested a study of such factors and eventually, in 1955, a Commission was launched. It first met in 1957. This was the Study Commission on Institutionalism (significantly, unlike the other Commissions, it was not given the title 'Theological Commission'), which was to study both the 'positive' and 'negative' effects of the Church's institutional involvement. But it was 'negative' effects which were emphasized. \(^2\) The Commission sought "to indicate especially those points at which commitment to forms of organization and other factors of a highly relative character create strains between churches, and stand in the way of unity." \(^3\)

And in 1959, W. G. Mueller, the Chairman, said that the most clearly agreed point at the Commission's recent meeting was that study should help churches to see their structures sociologically and theologically and provide them with a means of "unmasking" some of the barriers to unity. \(^4\)

The attitude to some historical study was similar. The title of a report from the American Section of the Commission on Tradition and Traditions was 'Overcoming History by History' and it spoke of an inquiry into "the possibility of transcending the relativity of the Church's history." \(^5\) An accompanying essay saw the study of history.

2 Interview. Few theologians at the time had inter-disciplinary training.

3 H. R. Niebuhr, 'The Church Defines Itself in the World', p. 6: in FO Arch 'Christ and the Church' boxes.

4 Skoglund and Nelson, Fifty Years of Faith and Order, p. 77. Mascall says that concentration on non-theological factors sometimes demonstrates despair with theological problems or a feeling that they do not matter: E. L. Mascall, The Recovery of Unity (London, 1958), p. ix. Although this may be so in some cases of the analysis of society and culture, the feeling at the time when such factors were often defined as 'non-theological' within Faith & Order was not one of despair with theology; indeed, it was the reverse.

as opening up the opportunity for a reappraisal of schism and heresy. So a perspective might be found, bringing "a heightened sense of candour to our recognition of the reasons for 'our unhappy divisions' and the real obstacles to Christian unity." 

Social and cultural factors were seen as obstructions to theological progress. In the words of Visser't Hooft: "The difficulty was that you talked with people who didn't like non-theological factors ... with dogmatic theologians who think that non-theological factors stink." Or again, as H. R. Niebuhr wrote in his criticism of Faith & Order's attitude to 'the world': "A consequence of the decision ... to define the church in opposition to the world has been the tendency to ignore or deprecate the 'worldly' character of the church and the 'churchly' character of the world." The method emphasized the separation of 'sacred' from 'profane' in order that the study of sacred or theological matters might continue without interference. This is in marked contrast to later understanding of relations with the world.

Interest in 'non-theological factors' was not the return to the 'real world' implied by Skoglund and Nelson. Faith & Order's first method of work within the WCC involved confinement to a narrow field in order to progress.

3: INTRODUCTION AND RETENTION

Faith & Order lacked confidence in itself after Amsterdam. The Secretary expressed its malaise when he doubted whether the proper image for its task was that of progress.
along a road. Instead, he suggested the image of a patient in the hands of a doctor: a patient in whose case the diagnosis of unsuspected depths of disease would be the prelude to a lasting cure. 1 A 'breakthrough' was required, both to shed light on divisions and to justify Faith & Order in the eyes of the churches and of the WCC.

The change was partly in response to internal need. The tools for its accomplishment seemed available in the fashionable categories of the 'biblical theology' movement. Increasing consensus had been reported in biblical study. A conference had met in Oxford in 1949 to find 'Guiding Principles for the Interpretation of the Bible' and had discovered "surprising agreement":

"It is agreed that the Bible is our common starting point, for there God's Word confronts us, a Word which humbles the hearers so that they are more ready to listen and to discuss than they are to assert their own opinions." 2

The ecumenical implications were obvious and Torrance, who had been at Oxford, looked forward to a new era, to "the promise of a development in modern times that may well correspond eventually to the development of ecumenical theology in the fourth and fifth centuries." This was on account of "the rising tide of Biblical theology". 3

With such change of method came a change in personnel. The Commission reports, laboriously prepared for Lund, received little attention: "In human terms, it was the conflict when one group takes over from another". 4 Flew, for example, was unhappy with Lund because it appeared to overturn much earlier achievement, and he took little part

2 Richardson and Schweitzer, Biblical Authority for Today, p. 240. This agreement on principles, like the later agreement in the 1960s, would appear to contradict Schlink's experience that "joint exegesis of the Bible is much easier at ecumenical conferences than the formulation of principles of exegesis" (The Coming Christ ..., p. 78). Agreement on principles has been comparatively easy; it has been their application which has been difficult.
3 Torrance, 'Where do we go from Lund?', pp. 53-4. See also FOC 17 (1953), p. 14: his comments on biblical studies: "It is in this direction above all that we shall find differences breaking down."
4 Interview: O. S. Tomkins.
Wakefield, Robert Newton Flew ..., pp. 226-7. He was angry that Torrance (a consultant, not a delegate) should steal the limelight. At the 1953 Working Committee, Flew is not reported as having spoken. In 1954 his health failed.

MRCC 1951, pp. 65-6.

Once the Commissions set up by Lund were worked on, little could be done to change the course. The pace was slow; long and thorough theological study was the requirement. Little change occurred until a new staff arranged the Montreal Conference in 1963 and the Commissions made their final reports.

Many thought that Faith & Order had 'submerged' during this time, yet there were achievements which were seen as justifying the method's retention. There was the novel (though controversial) Faith & Order work for Evanston and later, the unity statement for New Delhi. And it was thought that the new method would contribute to the missionary task of the Church. The main theme at the 1951 meeting of the Central Committee had been 'The Calling of the Church to Mission and Unity' and its report said that 'The division in our thought and practice between 'Church' and 'Mission' can be overcome only as we return to Christ Himself', and that unity and mission are "indissolubly connected". This theme was taken up at Lund; once the Church was gathered out of the world, it was sent into the world to proclaim salvation to all. The Church, the Body of Christ, is first called, then sent. Faith & Order had earlier been criticized for being introverted; now unity was to be more purposeful: it was to be for mission.

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In order that the task of mission might be more effectively fulfilled, there was increased emphasis on
For emphasis on unions see e.g. FOC 26 (1958), p. 5. There is a fuller discussion of this in Chapter X below.

FOC 29 (1960): Interim report of the Commission on Christ and the Church.

Reports by the Secretary laid great stress on unions and in the report on Faith & Order's future, unity, unions and the organization of Faith & Order, were all considered in close relation to each other.

4: REPLACEMENT

From the time of the New Delhi Assembly, there was little confidence in the Christological method. But its effective abandonment did not come until 1963. Those who still defend the approach adopted at Lund claim that reports such as 'One Lord, One Baptism' succeeded in 'getting behind' established positions, and that this very success led to a conservative reaction in the churches. In some cases this may have been so: a method which worked for consensus and tried to transcend historically divisive issues often threatened exactly those parts of their traditions in matters of faith and order which churches valued most.
1 FOC 31 (1960), pp. 85-8: a good example of the way in which a new 'definition of the situation' was introduced. Kraemer was given a hostile reception in 1960; four years later the reception would have been very different. Kraemer was a 'Barthian' and this occasion also illustrates the fact that the adoption of a Christo-centric theology need not have led Faith & Order in the direction it did. One can imagine Hromadka (who supported the method's introduction at Lund) making a similar criticism of Faith & Order at this stage.

2 The book was a best-seller at Montreal: Mo, p. 20.

But there were other, more powerful reasons for the change. First was the question of relevance. To many, the work of the Commissions read more like learned theological papers than attempts to contribute directly to unity. This was Kraemer's criticism at the 1960 meeting of the Faith & Order Commission. He had asked Faith & Order to take up the question of the laity's role in the life and mission of the Church. But he did not like their response, and he found a 'Christological' statement of the problem (by Torrance) quite unrelated to the reality of the situation. The reality

"is a matter of standing in the mud with the laity, and to search there for inspired direction. I do not hear anything here about the mud we are standing in."

In the early 1960s the problem of relevance was felt acutely: a fact of which the reception of Honest to God was but one indication. Dogmatic theologians lost much of their prestige. The role of the laity was stressed more forcibly and 'issues' such as 'race' became more prominent as distinctively theological topics. All this implied a change for Faith & Order, an approach at once more inter-disciplinary and 'involved'.

The failure of the Christological method to encourage 'standing in the mud' was further criticized by the Bultmannian scholars at Montreal; they objected to its apparent triumphalism and also to its exegetical techniques. And there was criticism of the way in which some practitioners of 'biblical theology' used linguistic evidence from the bible. J. Barr, in his book The Semantics of Biblical
Language, gave his reasons for seeing much 'biblical theology' as "an attempt of the systematic theological consciousness to dominate biblical exegesis."\(^1\) Barr denied that there was the kind of relationship between grammatical structure and religious thought often assumed by 'biblical theology' in its attempt to establish the theological types allegedly basic to the framework of the New Testament. He held that there was a failure to examine the Greek and Hebrew languages as a whole and a lack of any general semantic method. Barr concluded that the way in which 'biblical theology' assumed that the Bible speaks its own Word to men is a "concealed dogmatics" - a "gross and complacent illusion" by which dogmatic preconceptions are imposed on linguistics.\(^2\)

The Christological method had many internal tensions and it lost popularity as a way of reducing the dissonance for Faith & Order participants between a conception of unity and the divided state of Christians. It was replaced by what is called, in this study, a 'contextual' method: a method which has sought to use the context of the Church and of the churches as the primary basis for coming to a new understanding of the relationship between Christians.

5: FIRST EXAMPLE: CHAPTER II OF THE LUND REPORT, 1952

'The Church' was the main topic at Lund; three of the five Sections were devoted to it. Before them was the report of Flew's Commission. One chapter of this report had been on 'Agreements and Disagreements' and
Minutes of the Section in FO Arch 'Lund' boxes. Torrance was a 'consultant'; he came by invitation of Faith & Order, not as a delegate of his church (Church of Scotland). His powerful manner at conferences and his tendency to say (in the words of one participant) 'Here are the questions and here are the answers', are matters for frequent comment.

P. M. Dawley to the Business Committee: FO Arch 'Lund' boxes.

Four of the nine had been at the Oxford Conference on 'Guiding Principles for the Interpretation of the Bible' (1951).

The first speaker at the first meeting of Section I was Torrance. He criticized the Commission's report and asked, "What is the relation of the Church to Jesus Christ?". He offered this as a solution to "eighty per cent of our differences": "If we look straight at Christ, we get the clearest answer we can to questions which vex us in the ecumenical movement". On the next day, Torrance returned with an outline entitled 'The Church as the Body of Christ'.

After this meeting the Chairman of the Section reported "a number of difficulties owing to differences of opinion concerning the method of approach".

The solution to this was to appoint a sub-committee under A. Dun; it was to explore the relation of Christology to ecclesiology. This had only nine members, among them Torrance and Schlink. They retired to Nygren's house in Lund to write a report. Hodgson, as Theological Secretary, gave an account of developments to the conference. Some "theologically minded members" had appreciated the importance of the relation of Christology to ecclesiology, how "its exploration and development might enable the Lund
conference to make a creative contribution to the thought of Christendom on the nature of the Church.\textsuperscript{1} The rest of the Section were in the meantime "clarifying what the Churches here represented do actually hold and teach about the definition of the Church". Hodgson anticipated that the sub-committee's report would form an opening chapter to the report of the whole conference.

The report was accurate. The two reports from Section I remained separate. But it was explained that Part I ('Christ and His Church', from the sub-committee) had been approved by the whole Section. This statement cannot, however, have convinced everyone, for most of a two-hour plenary session was later taken up in discussing whether the two parts had equal status. The dispute was only settled when an account of how Part I had come to be written was omitted from the Preface.\textsuperscript{2}

The conference thus made 'Christ and His Church' its own. Indeed it had the place of honour as the first main chapter of the Final Report, while the other work from Section I became Chapter VI: 'Where do we stand?'. It is apparent from the Preface, from the 'Word to the Churches' and from the recommendations at the end of Chapter II itself, that the approach expressed in 'Christ and His Church' had been adopted as the main theme and central achievement of Lund.

Chapter II\textsuperscript{3} starts with a credal form of affirmation: "We believe in Jesus Christ our Lord, who loved the Church
and gave Himself for it"; Christ is the keystone of the Church; he is the head of the Church which is his Body; what happens to Christ also happens to his Body so that "the way of Christ is the Way of his Church". After this introduction, there is a statement of intention to penetrate behind earthly divisions to the common faith in Christ.

Further emphasis is placed on the image of the Church as Christ's Body; Christ and his Body are united, and a means of realizing that unity "in the actual state of our divisions on earth" is sought.

The main part of the text follows, starting with the Church's faith in the Trinity, and continuing with a description of its nature and mission. Christ's Church is not only called out from 'the world', but also sent into it. "By calling and sending his People, by granting them manifold spiritual gifts for the ministry, Jesus Christ builds up his Church as the living Temple of God."

The next section is strongly eschatological: the Church is "a pilgrim people in a strange land"; it looks forward to the time when Christ will come; it already essentially belongs to the new age.

There is then a long conclusion, prefaced by a reflection on method. The convictions expressed are arrived at through faith in Christ and acceptance of the authority of scripture: "We cannot build the one Church by cleverly fitting together our divided inheritances. We can grow together towards fullness and unity in Christ only by being conformed to him who is the Head of the Body and Lord of his people."

The conclusion drawn is that when the churches place themselves
under Christ's judgement, they will know that they cannot manifest their unity without being changed.

Few alterations were made between the first and final drafts of this chapter. When it was finally presented, it was said that some of the Section members had felt that it was somewhat vague; this vagueness was defended on account of the wide range of thought represented. The only important revision was a recommendation that future work should treat the doctrine of the Church not only in its relation to Christology but also in relation to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

Comment

This chapter marked the adoption (and was itself a first application) of the Christological method. Thus a technical theological essay became the conference theme. The work of a very small group (with powerful support from others, such as Visser't Hooft) was 'staged' as the message of all present. The introduction of the 'new method' was a successful 'mise en scène' for an occasion which might otherwise have failed to achieve anything akin to a 'break-through'. On the basis of common acceptance of the authority of the bible and common faith in Christ, the aim was defined of getting behind differences, instead of cleverly fitting together items of ecclesiastical inheritance. The Church is on pilgrimage between Christ's first and second Coming; it is under judgement and the separated churches must therefore change themselves in order to unite. 'The world' is that out of which the Church is called and into which it is
1 Great emphasis was put on this image: a characteristic of 'biblical theology' in general and Torrance in particular. There was, however, disagreement in the Section as to its importance.

2 Lu, p. 60. The draft was less complimentary (Lu, p. 240): the change was perhaps made in order to placate Commission members who had taken hard blows during the conference.


sent; its affairs do not provide an agenda for the theologian. The Church is Christ's Body; Christ is the Body's head and unity in him is the key to unity.¹

The other report from Section I is less abstract and Christological. It is complimentary about the Commission report on 'The Church', although it admits that a point has been reached "at which our divergences stubbornly resist easy solution".² There is stress on the new-found sense of crisis and urgency, and on the missionary imperative. Attention is focussed on the distinction between the Gospel and the forms of its expression in history, and on the social and cultural factors which play a part in maintaining divisions.

6: SECOND EXAMPLE: FAITH & ORDER WORKING PAPER FOR EVANSTON

After Lund, Faith & Order had to prepare for the 1954 Evanston Assembly. At Lund a committee had recommended that the new approach be continued with the theme 'Our Oneness in Christ and our Disunity as Churches'. It also suggested lines of departure, which the Secretary used for an introductory leaflet in late 1952. A 'Preparatory Commission', formed from the Working Committee, met in 1953. At the same time, two other papers were being written: a 'Popular Pamphlet' outlining Faith & Order's achievements and prospects,³ and what was first called a 'Factual Survey'. The latter discussed current problems, and outlined the positions of churches and their relationship as members of the WCC; it ended with a strongly Christological
affirmation of 'unity in hope'.  

Whereas this survey was largely retrospective, the Preparatory Commission was to provide the basis for new thinking at Evanston. Here the 'overarching perspective' was to be 'Christ - The Hope of the World'.

The 1953 meeting produced a rough draft of a working paper. Torrance took this away and rewrote it. Comments were then made from an Orthodox point of view by G. Florovsky and the paper was revised and shortened by the Chairman of the Commission (O. S. Tomkins). Another draft was then made by Nelson, the Secretary, in the light of comments made by Commission members.

The first outline received by Evanston delegates was at this stage. They were given a memorandum containing a summary of the working paper, questions relevant to the theme, biblical references and a reading list. Before the working paper was itself in their hands, it was again revised at a Commission meeting immediately before the Assembly.

The Working Paper

To understand the working paper, it is necessary to be aware of how it was written. Although correspondence at various stages shows that Commission members were in broad agreement with the content, and that they suggested some alterations, the working paper was the result largely of Torrance's work, with help from Nygren and Schlink (both of whom were strongly in favour of the approach) and with correction from Florovsky. The task for Nelson and Tomkins

1 FOC 18 (1954): largely written by J. R. Nelson (the Secretary) with suggestions from the Preparatory Commission.

2 The list contained books in English suggested by Nelson and Torrance and books in German suggested by Schlink: FO Arch 'Evanston' box.

3 The paper and all drafts are in FO Arch 'Evanston' box.
The structure of the final draft is similar to that of earlier ones. First there is an affirmation: "We believe in One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit". The Oneness of all in Christ is then asserted: all can speak "with one mind and in the language of the New Testament" of the Church's unity as the Body of Christ. Christ has given oneness to the Church and because he will come again as he promised, the Church "awaits with confidence the final revelation and consummation of its unity".

The eschatological emphasis is continued under the heading 'The Oneness of the Church in its Earthly Pilgrimage'. The Church spans two ages: it is in the world and yet redeemed from it. In its struggle on earth it is cleansed and healed by God's Word and Sacraments. All are made one Body in Baptism and are renewed in that unity in the Eucharist. The Church is "sent into the world" and suffers there, but in suffering it finds unity.

The second main section refers to 'Our Disunity as Churches'. In spite of the fact that "according to the New Testament, it is impossible for the Church as the Body of Christ to be divided", Christians are in fact divided. This state of affairs is not diversity but "sinful division". It is at this point (the paper continues) that differences of opinion arise over the interpretation of divisions: whether they are separations from the one Church or divisions within the one Church. By "planting the Cross of Christ in
the midst of our divisions" the sin of division can be overruled. There is hope in Christ's resurrection and in his final Coming. Disunity is even now "under the attack of the unity that is yet to be revealed".

The last main section is on 'The Action of Faith'.
Here, prayer and confession of sin are recommended. Convictions must be re-examined in the light of common faith. "We must listen together in the midst of our disunity to our one Lord speaking to us through Holy Scripture"; we must learn to speak the truth; we must learn the implications of one Baptism for sharing in the Eucharist; we must recognize where the Gospel is preached. There is no knowing what may be disclosed if all look together to the head of the Body.

Revision had had some effect on this final version. First there were Florovsky's comments on Torrance's long draft. These comments took the shape of suggested alternative paragraphs, and although few of the suggestions were taken up, they provide an interesting contrast, both in style and content, to the other versions. Florovsky pointed out that schism may be a witness to the truth, as well as a sin, and he was generally more conscious of the significance of the Church's historical structure: of the fact that division and reunion alike take place in a given historical context, a context from which talk of eschatology cannot remove them. In fact his whole approach was more 'down to earth': an attempt to express the differences, for example, between 'protestants' and 'catholics' instead of trying to 'penetrate behind' them.
The next revision retained the structure and most of the content of Torrance's draft, while toning down some wording. Later revisions also sought to foresee points at which delegates, particularly the Orthodox, would raise objections. Thus 'Our Disunity in the Church' was changed to 'Our Disunity as Churches', and more contrasts were drawn between those who "stand in succession to the Protestant Reformation" and others.

Comment

This paper, which had considerable influence on discussion at Evanston, attempted to 'get behind' existing divisions. Its terminology has much in common with that of the previous example: the heavy, abstract wording, emphasis on the image of the Body of Christ, and stress on the eschatological suspension of many problems. Once again, the report was produced by a few people with strong ideas as to the right road forward. Those prepared to do the work had the privilege of having their efforts accepted. The Preparatory Commission's function in this case had been that of making some initial suggestions, and then pointing out ways in which the paper could be made more 'ecumenical' in temper than earlier drafts.

7: THIRD EXAMPLE: THE FINAL REPORTS ON 'CHRIST AND THE CHURCH'

The North American and European Sections of the Theological Commission on Christ and the Church were intended to develop Lund's main insight. Preparations for Evanston had been made by some of the Working Committee over a period
of only two years. Now, however, there was the chance to
apply the method fully: to scrutinize ecclesiology in the
light of Christology, in long-term expert discussion.

Nygren, the Chairman of the European Section, wrote
to his Section in 1954 outlining their task. They had
to answer the question, "What is the Church in its essence
and in its indissoluble union with Christ Himself?" In
doing this, "expert advice must take the place of the
usual form of representation." He said that there was to
be new creative thinking, and that the starting-point was
of course to be the Bible; those involved would try to get
a "total picture of the meaning of 'ecclesia' in the New
Testament". If they failed, deadlock was inevitable, so
the study was of great importance for Christendom.

R. L. Calhoun, the Chairman of the American Section,
was similarly enthusiastic. And in the Working Committee
the subject was seen as Faith & Order's central task.
Study of other topics was at first left to 'enquiry groups';
attention and finance were concentrated on 'Christ and the
Church'. Indeed A. C. Outler complained that other Com-
missions were assigned "marginal status" and that
"the effects were deleterious to the quality of work ... 
and damaging to any prospects of the Faith and Order
Commission exercising significant influence in the larger,
practical affairs of the WCC."

Work began after Evanston with yearly meetings at two
of which both Sections were present together. Papers were
presented and discussed. Reports were made to the Working
Committee or to the Faith & Order Commission; these reports

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1 Letter A. Nygren to the European Section dated 4.1.54 in FO
Arch 'Christ and the Church' boxes. For his later thinking
see his book Christ and His Church, where his argument is
that "Ecclesiology is a direct consequence of Christology":

2 This latter quotation is significant, coming from someone
trained in Faith & Order's tradition of careful representation.
The correspondence with the Chairman of the American Section
(in FO Arch 'Christ and the Church' boxes) indicates that its
members were chosen on similar criteria.


4 Minutes of the American Section of the Theological Commission
on Tradition and Traditions (of which Outler was Chairman),
The impression conveyed by this quotation has been confirmed
by members of the Commissions: interviews.
1 J. R. Nelson, 'Some Summary Statements on the Work of the American Section of the Commission on Christ and the Church', July 1959; in FO Arch 'Christ and the Church' boxes.

The Sections were committed to thorough Christological study. At times, this proved to be too much, at least for the Americans, who were slightly less 'biblically' minded. As Nelson reported, there were outbursts of impatience from those who "felt that preoccupation with Christological questions spelt procrastination in coming to grips with the Church itself". He added: "If time, money and human endurance were unlimited, the study on Christ and the Church could go on indefinitely." This comment is perhaps just; minutes of meetings read like those of a theological society which could find infinite subjects to discuss.

However, when the Montreal Conference was planned, it was decided that the Commissions should make their final reports there, offering an interim report in 1960. The latter, written at the joint meeting in 1959, stressed the new method's success, sketched future work, and concluded with a paper on 'The Meaning of Baptism', drafted by the Europeans. It was emphasized that this report was by no means final; however, little time remained before Montreal in 1963. The American Section started its preparations in 1960, but European preparation was confused; in the end, their report was largely Torrance's work.

Report of the American Section

One of the members of this Section was H. R. Niebuhr and he made the only concerted attack on method 'from within' in either Section. In his paper entitled 'The
Niebuhr, 'The Church Defines Itself in the World', especially pp. 4-5.

It is in FOC 38 (1963), pp. 9-33.

Church Defines Itself in the World' (written in 1958), he questioned the decision to define the Church doctrinally over against the world by an almost exclusively Christocentric interpretation of scripture. He demanded fuller understanding of God as Creator and as Holy Spirit, and less separation from "the created and inspired world". But Niebuhr died in 1962 and was not there to help prepare the report. Although there are signs that his criticism had some effect, the report in fact applies the assumptions of the Christological method. There is a section at the end on 'The Church in the World', but this lays most emphasis on the duties of 'the Church' to 'the world', rather than on participation in the world's affairs.

The report begins with the claim that the new approach "has made the formidable controversies of the past seem less intractable"; "the way to Christ is the way to reconciliation". This is followed by comments on method: on the scriptural approach based on the whole bible, and on a method aware of the world and of the Trinitarian faith of the Church. The main section follows with consideration first of the relations of Christology and Ecclesiology, then of 'The Church of Christ', and finally of 'The Church in the World'. The terminology is complex; there are many phrases like "the effectual reality of the structure of salvation" and statements 'penetrating behind' current problems such as:

"All in the Church are ministers in that they participate by grace through the gift of the Holy Spirit in the
The plan is with the Minutes of the meeting of the European Section: Sept. 1961: FO Arch 'Christ and the Church' boxes.

This is revealed by Minutes of the Section, where alternatives such as 'the People of God' were supported. The image was also a subject for controversy in the Working Committee: FOC 17 (1953), p. 14; FOC 23 (1956), p. 19; FOC 25 (1957), p. 19. Torrance defended his view in 'What is the Church?', ER, vol. xi (1958), where the first words are: "The Church is the Body of Christ" (p. 6).

Report of the European Section

The European report does not require extensive treatment, for it is similar to the first two examples quoted of 'Christological method'. A plan had been drafted at the 1961 Section meeting, but the final report does not follow it exactly. The foreword to the final version says that "certain of our number have reservations as to the adequacy of the method adopted and would have preferred a different one.

Some had had doubts at various stages, not only over the vast weight put on the image of the Church as the Body of Christ, but also over lack of emphasis on the doctrine of the Trinity. Torrance, however, stood firm and he did most of the work. One commentator, unaware of this, remarked that "it is hard to believe that the report actually represents a firm consensus, it has been presented in such a compact dogmatic form"; he saw "no sign of protest or of diversity of interpretation, even at points which have almost invariably invoked tension in the past".

Comment

These reports marked in fact an end to the use of originative and determinative ministry of Christ; and the whole life of the Church is itself a ministry marked by many varieties of ministering."
1 Interview: W. N. Pittenger.

the 'Christological method', in any except isolated cases. Characteristic of its approach, they provided a focus for its replacement. They assumed a particular view of the bible; they appeared without bearing on current problems; and people found their language both obscure and remote. In the words of a member of the American Section:

"The reports at the Montreal meeting were a demonstration of the fact that you can't do theology as we were told to do it at Evanston; you can't do it in a vacuum."¹

8: CONCLUSION

To use the ideal-type 'Christological method' is deceptive in the sense that many of the studies during the period did not share the assumptions of, for example, the 'Christ and the Church' reports. The 'Lund method' was a 'take-over' by a few who were convinced that they could solve the basic problems of Christian unity. They believed that ecclesiology was not the key; rather, it was Christology.

Justification for employing the term 'Christological method' rests on the fact that the method was used in the main studies and that its practice was Faith & Order's means for justifying itself to other parts of the WCC and to the churches. It was the answer to Brilioth's question: "Lausanne 1927 - Edinburgh 1937 - Lund 1952 - these are the milestones in the history of the Faith and Order movement. Will the Lund Conference be able to continue the great tradition of its predecessors?"²

From the point of view of a study of method the period
Festinger, A Theory ..., p. 18. For a more sociological version of this see p. 183: on the intensification of change in one's own opinion, in the attempt to influence others, and in the introduction of 'reconciling' elements, with an increase in dissonance.


after Lund is particularly interesting. The conception of a united Church based on doctrinal consensus remained from the earlier period, and the situation of division had not altered greatly (from the Faith & Order point of view); but legitimation by reference to complementarity had not been successful and it had become progressively more difficult to believe that the explanation for disunity was ignorance. The primary dissonance for participants had increased in magnitude. And, as stated in Festinger's theory:

"the strength of the pressures to reduce the dissonance is a function of the magnitude of the dissonance."¹

1) The use of the Christological method was a response to an increase in dissonance. In the first place, the legitimations for unity were changed markedly. Unity was to be unity not in relation to each other, but in relation to Christ. Thus Nygren, in his report to the Faith & Order Commission in 1960 said:

"All that is related to the Church should be dealt with in the same way. Christ has always to be taken as the starting point; for Christ and the Church as soma Christou belong together. The Church being the body of Christ is nothing without Christ ... As there are different views of the Church in the different churches, the way to unity is only open to us if we relate all these differing views to the one undivided Christ."²

This is descriptive of a particular form of unity: one which doctrinally cuts 'behind' (or 'above') the divisions of the churches. It claimed to find its sanction in 'biblical theology' and the eschatological context was
stressed, suggesting the 'penultimacy' of many current disagreements, thus making them less relevant to the search for unity.

At the same time, agreement was still restricted to that found by selected experts in the strictly doctrinal realm.

Such a method for finding unity was still tenable in the early 1950s. But the difficulty emerged that, although it reduced the primary dissonance for some, for others it created dissonance with other cognitive elements. Both the form in which the biblical and Christological legitimations were expressed, and the very conception of unity which they had legitimated, came to be questioned. Was not diversity found in the bible, and was not the Church also diverse in its forms and in its service to the world?

2) The second way in which the method sought to reduce dissonance was by changing participants' knowledge of the state of the churches. Frequent surveys were begun and the Secretary's annual reports painted an optimistic picture of the movement towards union.

The various studies not only tried to 'cut behind' confessional positions for the benefit of the churches; some also urged that division is sinful and that unity requires repentance and sacrifice. The eschatological emphasis sought to draw churches out of their present situations.

It is in the context of this second way of reducing dissonance that the paradox of simultaneous concern both
with enclosed academic study and with statistics of church union should be seen. It was important, in this period, to prove that the churches were uniting and therefore to imply that Faith & Order's approach 'worked': that it was not irrelevant, but useful for advancing union and for the Church's great function of mission.

An attempt to reduce dissonance through actual changes in the churches may lead to a reaction in those churches which feel a threat to their 'distinctive witness'. There is some evidence of such a reaction, especially in the responses to the Lund and Evanston reports. ¹

3) The third way of reducing dissonance is to add new cognitive elements. The 'reconciling' legitimation of 'non-theological factors' has already been discussed, a powerful reason for believing that unity would be reached if it were not for certain intruding and ultimately irrelevant obstructions. At the same time there was a similar use of historical study. And a third reconciling legitimation took the shape of reference to the inadequacies of the previous method. Somewhat in the manner of political parties which see current evils as the fault of their predecessors, adherents of the Christological method could denigrate 'mere comparison' and feel that they had to start again. ²

But at the same time, the proportion of dissonant to consonant elements was altered. Some of the more intractable differences were either avoided or only lightly touched on, allegedly in order to get 'behind' them. Thus the paper on

1 FOC 24 (1957); FOC 23 (1956), pp. 24-8; 'Response to Evanston' (Geneva, 1957). And in general comment, particularly on the Evanston report, which the Orthodox refused to sign because it applied Luther's phrase 'simul justus et peccator' to the Church: EV, p. 84 and pp. 94-5. Torrance alleges that after 'progress' in the 50s, churches sent conservatives to Faith & Order to protect their distinctive positions: Interview.

2 See above, pp. 164-5.
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baptism presented in 1957 avoided the main differences by using the phrase 'the unity of baptism',¹ and the subjects of ministry and intercommunion (the latter was a burning issue in the 1940s and '50s) were almost completely ignored.

Meetings were of tight groups of theologians who could support each other in their quest for unity. Faith & Order's intention to co-operate with other WCC departments was not carried through.² The participants could attend their yearly meetings, discuss the papers presented, and feel that they were furthering unity. This activity reduced the proportion of dissonant to consonant relations involving the cognitive element of 'unity'. But at the same time, it increased the dissonance between the knowledge of what Faith & Order was doing and the growing belief elsewhere that these were not 'real issues' and that the movement had in fact retreated from the world. This retreat was reflected in its language, but more fundamentally, Faith & Order was thought to have misconceived the central task.

1 FOC 25 (1957), pp. 13-18: there was considerable criticism of the paper. See also E. R. Hardy, 'The Place of Worship in Faith and Order Discussions', Studia Liturgica, vol. iv (1965), p. 73.

2 The possibilities opened up by becoming part of the WCC had been discussed in 1951: FOC 8, pp. 33-56, especially p. 34.
Exactly what 'context' means is a complex subject, rarely elucidated in Faith & Order studies. First, there is the difficulty of knowing what 'counts' as a context: a problem already met in the attempt to define 'place' in 'all in each place' at New Delhi: ND, p. 118. Secondly, it has not been easy to determine the nature and extent of the influence which 'context' may be allowed to exercise: a problem parallel to that around which much of the debate on 'situation ethics' revolves.

The term 'contextual' is intended to indicate that Faith & Order had at least begun to seek answers to these problems in their work and that it is here that the main difference from earlier methods lies. There has been less weight given to 'tradition', more to 'situation'.

IX: CONTEXTUAL METHOD

In the early 1960s there was support for a more empirical method in Faith & Order. With a larger staff and the increased finance approved at New Delhi, the movement had an opportunity to emerge from a somewhat unspectacular period. The churches were increasingly open to 'global' social issues and to theological reflection in relation to them. An attempt was now made to see the Church’s unity in its relation to the created order. This was a common thread running through the schemes stemming from Montreal.

Although the developments are seen, in this study, as a 'new method', the widened scope did not issue in unified rules of procedure. Rather, there was confusion in endeavours to find the best way forward. In particular, participants disagreed whether more weight should be given, on the one hand to the movement's traditional 'calling' or 'mandate', or, on the other, to the new problems which the world and the churches had thrown up. The use of the term 'contextual' is based on the judgement that it was the supporters of the latter policy who were more influential.

1. IDEAL TYPE

The contextual method is characterized by:

a) consideration of the Church's unity in relation to the world which it serves;

b) a stress on the diversity of contexts, both past and


present;

- c) a positive attitude to the influence of particular social situations;
- d) a convergence on the doctrines of creation and of man;
- e) a very imprecise conception of unity;
- f) emphasis on the problems of biblical hermeneutics;
- g) the intention of having an inter-disciplinary approach;
- h) short-term study by local groups;
- i) intensive Staff participation and influence.

2: FEATURES OF THE METHOD

Assumptions about Context

The central new assumption was that Faith & Order should make its work more open to 'context' and, as a corollary of this, should itself become less isolated. This implied a wider choice of topics, one which related more to the priorities of the churches and of the world than to the priorities of professional theologians. Many within Faith & Order might not have gone so far as to say that "the ecumenical movement does not speak so much about the relations among the churches, but relations between the church and the world" (to quote one WCC Staff member), but much of the emphasis was near to this. Thus a committee at Aarhus in 1964 stated:

"the Church is not to be considered in isolation from the world; this becomes ever clearer. The Church is not only the sphere of redemption; it is also part of creation. God is at work not only in the Church but in the world."

This had implications for the search for unity.
Vischer, the Director, said in 1967:

"The interest has shifted noticeably. Today the weight of doctrinal differences is much less felt. The conversation is much more concerned with problems which all the churches must face in confrontation with the modern world. One could say: the differences pale before the urgency with which renewal is demanded of all the churches."

It is difficult to draw a consistent message from Montreal, but if there was one, this was it: that new approaches must be found to old problems and contemporary challenges met in such a way that they would come to mean more than historically inherited divisions. Social involvement, indeed social conditioning, were seen less as 'obstacles' to doctrinal unity than as inevitable, even desirable, aspects of the life of the churches. The churches participated in the creation, and through the creation God might address them.

It therefore became necessary to see a particular church's legitimations 'in context', and the context of the whole Church had become a matter for study. 'Situation' began to be consciously accepted as a constitutive factor in theological reflection. Thus, allegedly timeless and placeless statements of the Word were called into question; the work of Faith & Order was to be more modest and localized, more dependent on a theology of the natural which would serve as a bridge between Church and world.

It followed that there must be a new and more humble attitude to 'the world'. If there were a close relationship between creation and redemption, then a theological method which took this fact into account, would be more appropriate.
than the apparent ecclesiological triumphalism of some Faith & Order work in the 1950s. Instead of the Church 'addressing' the world and 'proclaiming' the Word to the world, the world was taken more seriously in its own right. 'The world' was to be treated as something more than just the stage on which the Church worked out its mission. Although this attitude was not elaborated at Montreal, it became increasingly explicit in later years. This did not necessarily mean letting the world 'write the agenda' in every respect; but the agenda was at least to be checked against the contemporary situation. There was less distinction between 'faith and order' and 'life and work'. One implication of this, hardly appreciated during the period studied here, was that increased attention might be given to right action - 'orthopraxis' - as distinct from right belief, 'orthodoxy'.\(^{1}\) Granted the new presuppositions, common activity might be seen as more important than doctrinal agreement (the actualizing of beliefs more important than their intellectual formulation), just as the forming of 'community' might take precedence over the search for the doctrinal prerequisites for a united Church.

It was appreciation of this possibility which eventually led some within Faith & Order to talk of an 'inter-contextual' method. The 1971 Louvain meeting of the Faith & Order Commission was an experiment in such an approach, an attempt to bring the theme of the unity and disunity of the Church together with that of the unity and disunity of mankind.\(^{2}\)
1 For instance, racism may be held to be 'heretical' - more heretical perhaps than 'wrong' eucharistic doctrine: see J. Deschner, 'Ecclesiological aspects of the race problem', International Review of Missions, vol. 11x (1970), pp. 285-95. These views were foreshadowed in W. Stringfellow's address at Montreal: 'The Freedom of God', p. 5.

2 See the account in FOC 59 (1971), pp. 184-99. The aim was to examine the question of the unity of the Church in the light of situations such as the struggle for justice or 'differences in culture', but with the assumption that either aspect (Church or situation) might be the context for examining the other. The place (Louvain) was significant; Faith & Order has been increasingly conscious of relations with Rome, and Roman Catholicos have been members of the Faith & Order Commission (since 1968), without their church being a WCC member.

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The change at Montreal has been called one "from theology to anthropology"; this was a further development of the same thinking. 1

Assumptions about Historical and Biblical Study

Parallel to new assumptions about Church and world, there was a changed view of the past. In both historical and biblical study, the approach laid greater emphasis on hermeneutics, the attempt first to clarify what was being said in a particular situation (exegesis), and then to find a way in which this could be translated for the present. In historical study, the aim was less to dispose of obstacles than to find lessons for today. In the 'frontier' work on which Faith & Order was to embark, help was needed from an understanding of the past, particularly in the light of growing Orthodox and Roman Catholic participation.

Thus the study on Councils was intended first to look at their place in the Early Church and then to discuss implications for the Church today. 2 It was asked to discover: "What led the Early Church to hold Councils? Is the holding of the Councils a necessary element in the life of the Church? Can there be Ecumenical Councils again today?" 3 The primary concern was with Councils as an ecclesiological problem; the early centuries were looked to for guidance. 4 The approach of the Patristics group was similar. It took as a case study St Basil's treatise on the Holy Spirit and concluded that "The patristic period is a living tradition for the churches, not a fossilized deposit. As a living tradition it must be repeatedly rediscovered and made fruitful"; the group looked for a "re-actualization" of
1 FOC 50 (1967), p. 46.
2 Kasemann, 'Unity and Diversity in New Testament Ecclesiology', p. 4. For a similar view see Schweizer (who was also at Montreal), 'Unity and Diversity in New Testament Teaching regarding the Church'.

Basil's work.¹

More marked than the new approach to history was the change in understanding of the bible. Tomkins, the conference Chairman, asked at Montreal whether Faith & Order had not been guilty of a theological provincialism in which certain trends (such as the Butlmannian) had not been adequately reflected. It was decided that too little attention had been given to historical biblical research. So the 'hermeneutical question' was raised. The term 'biblical theology' began to be used in a derogative sense; this movement was said to have been based on misguided assumptions about the bible and to have been too abstractly intellectual.

It was Kasemann who said in his Montreal speech:

"No romantic postulate, dressed up as Heilsgeschichte, can relativise the sober fact that the historian simply cannot speak of an unbroken unity of New Testament ecclesiology. For he perceives there the early pattern of our own situation, with its differences, dilemmas and antitheses, at best an early ecumenical confederation - without a World Council of Churches."²

These were strong and controversial words, but the change in Faith & Order assumptions was in this direction. Indeed it was seen that such an understanding might contribute to a revised view of unity:

"The awareness of the differences within the Bible will lead us towards a deeper understanding of our divisions and will help us to interpret them more readily as possible and legitimate interpretations of one and the same Gospel."³

In this way the actual situation of the churches could be
1 MRCC 1963, p. 87.


seen as more nearly justified; there could be a reduction in dissonance for participants between their knowledge of divisions between Christians and their belief as to the demands of the New Testament.

Assumptions about Diversity and Flexibility

The manner in which the work was done was closely connected with the general assumptions of the new method. With the emphasis on the world's many contexts and on their relevance to theological reflection, the old style of work was considered inappropriate. A pluralistic situation demanded a pluralistic response. 'Classical' Faith & Order topics were still admitted, but they had been joined by new tensions on subjects like the authority of Scripture, the place of the 'institutional element' in the Church, and the response to social issues.

Each case was now to be decided on its merits. Faith & Order reported to the Central Committee in 1963 that the time demanded "diversity and flexibility", and that this could not be achieved by long-term theological commissions. The result was a variety of study groups and meetings involving more confessions and more disciplines.

To co-ordinate all these ventures, the Staff were given more authority. This is a paradox of the sort of 'decentralization' which has characterized the contextual method. With small, widely spread regional groups, the need for central co-ordination and the opportunity for central direction (for instance, in drafting the original documents and revising them in the light of comments) has
Montreal tried to set an example with reports written so that "ordinary educated Christians without theological training" could understand them: Mo, p. 19. There was a call for "simple and direct language" in the report on the programme at Aarhus: FOC 44 (1964), p. 73.

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FOC 41 (1963), p. 31 (Section V), see also Mo, p. 31.

As Faith & Order increasingly talked of diversity, so Geneva in fact gained influence over the course of events.

Summing up these changes in 1965, a member of the Working Committee wrote:

"The scope of studies is now much wider than before, methods employed are diverse, there is collaboration with other ecumenical groups within and outside the WCC, and the time-tables are generally much shorter than when ten or fifteen years per project were thought proper. A good deal more responsibility for planning has been given to the secretariat."

Conception of Religious and Social Unity

Studies were to include a greater variety of people and to cover a wider area; they were also to be more readily comprehensible. In the attempt to respond to new circumstances, the trend was away from what some called 'theological imperialism'; work was to be more rooted in the many situations of Church and world. Churches were viewed more as 'wholes' with both doctrinal and social aspects. Greater respect was therefore due to those factors previously called 'non-theological'. Thus one Montreal Section wrote:

"Our discussions of place, locality, neighbourhood, and the study of social and cultural factors in relation to unity and disunity, have amply demonstrated that these issues require a more adequate understanding of God's creative activity in the world."

At the same time that it was appreciated that men live locally and relate their theology to their situation, it was also increasingly realized that some of their problems...
are universal. All Christians and all mankind were seen to be faced with the technological age and its 'global' issues. In Faith & Order terminology, local unity had to be complemented by an understanding of 'catholicity'. At a time when the world was striving for 'low level' diversity linked with 'high level' unity, Faith & Order's thinking started to run on similar lines, and indeed it eventually drew specific parallels between the Church's unity and that of mankind.1

The 'organic unity' model for bringing churches together on the basis of doctrinal agreement was seen as having limitations in this situation. Unions were encouraged, but there was an attempt to find new models and, in the words of Vischer, to get "beyond the naïve state in the search for unity".2 'Conciliarity' provided a pattern for bringing diversity into unity. What this would entail was uncertain, but the idea was consistent with the assumptions of the new method and with the reaction against the 'institutional' connotations of organic unity. And a conciliar form might be more readily attainable.

3: INTRODUCTION OF THE METHOD

Montreal was presented as the beginning of a new era. New people were to deal with new issues. Commission membership was revised; it was claimed to have grown "in size, in strength, in diversity and in representative character".3 Many more Orthodox had joined the WCC and relations with Roman Catholics had changed radically. In the face of all
these factors, the Staff thought Faith & Order was still at an exploratory stage:

"Even those agreements which have already been reached can no longer be taken for granted in the wider context." 1

For the conference, it was thought desirable to find topics which "invite the simultaneous exploration of doctrinal and social issues", and since the work would increasingly involve both, to have a wide range of personnel. The result of this more 'engaged' thinking was confusion. But later, under the strong influence of Vischer, a more coherent programme emerged. In 1964 he spoke on 'The Faith and Order Movement at the Beginning of a New Period'. 2 He outlined the present situation of Faith & Order, called for greater commitment to its task, made some criticisms of the work in the 1950s, and hoped for a new approach which would get to basics on a broad front. He showed how the new studies fitted in with this aim and added that a second group of more traditional topics would also be considered. The speech was in support of "the programme which is being submitted" by the Staff; this programme was accepted with only minor alterations.

Essential to the method's introduction was a changed attitude to the bible. Faith & Order had taken many years to 'discover' Barth; the discovery of Bultmann was similarly delayed. But at Montreal, 'post-Bultmannian' New Testament scholars made a profound impression. The greatest shock was the denial that the New Testament was 'a unity'. In
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Essential to the method's introduction was a changed attitude to the bible. Faith & Order had taken many years to 'discover' Barth; the discovery of Bultmann was similarly delayed. But at Montreal, 'post-Bultmannian' New Testament scholars made a profound impression. The greatest shock was the denial that the New Testament was 'a unity'. In
1 Interview. Lampe was a Vice-Chairman of Section I at Montreal.


3 Dinkler took a similar view to that of Käsemann; see E. Dinkler, 'Kritischer Rückblick auf die 4 Weltkonferenz für Glauben und Kirchenverfassung in Montreal', Ökumenische Rundschau, vol. xiii (1964), pp. 83-93.


the words of G. W. H. Lampe:

"The whole idea of discontinuity and variety within the New Testament seemed surprisingly new to us ...; it came to a number of us at Montreal as a great surprise and a very salutary shock; we found the categories of the 50s were inadequate."

Visser't Hooft's first reaction to such ideas is reported as being that, if Käsemann were right, the ecumenical movement and the WCC would be doomed. This reaction reflected the assumption of many at the time, that biblical unity was the foundation stone for authentic Christian unity, and that if this stone were removed, the edifice would fall.

But the effect of Bultmannian influence is demonstrated by the conference reports and by subsequent events. There was a consultation on hermeneutics immediately after Montreal, chaired by E. Dinkler. The work on hermeneutics was carried on in regional groups and gathered into a report in 1967. It was this which stressed the necessity of literary-critical and historical-critical method, emphasized that "forced harmonization" was to be avoided, and pointed to the possibility of "real contradictions" in the bible.

Seeing the Church of the apostolic age in relation to its situation was consistent with a view of the modern Church serving in the modern world. It would have been difficult for Faith & Order to remain detached when the troubles of the world were increasingly becoming the concern of the WCC and of the churches. Must not unity also be seen in relation to 'race', 'the third world',...
much of the evidence for these criticisms comes from conversation and general observation, but see e.g. Meyendorff, 'Unity of the Church - Unity of Mankind' for an implicit attack on the contextual method from one 'side' (Orthodox), and C. F. H. Henry, 'Montreal Jamboree: theological stalemate', Christianity Today, vol. vii (1963), pp. 23-6, for a rebuke from the other (American Baptist Convention).

1 FDC 50 (1967), p. 58.

'The main criticism of the new method has inevitably been that traditional concerns have been lost in a confusion of issues which are irrelevant to Faith & Order's 'calling'.

'It has been alleged that a muddled role has replaced the search for church union and that the work has become too generalized, a sign of loss of direction.

A variation on this theme has been to say that Faith & Order's new-found concerns are admirable, but that they do not solve the problem of division in faith and in order.
This view holds that differences arose in certain circumstances, expressed in a particular language, and that to ask, for example, a sociologist to help to solve them, may be interesting, but is irrelevant to the task in hand which is the search for unity. In other words, differences must be overcome in a recognizable way and not by 'avoiding' them.

A further criticism has been offered of the tolerance of a contextual method: of the fact that once an attitude of 'understanding' has been adopted, the effect is often to 'process' all views until they appear to be eminently true and therefore potential material for an agreement. Since Montreal, there has been little emphasis on giving up 'treasured possessions' and it may be felt that this is for lack of any firm 'criteria of truth' such as might be thought to derive from the bible.

The problem here is a familiar one in anthropology and sociology, where it has been discussed under the heading 'rationality', and has centred on the question of whether 'criteria of rationality', for instance in the study of primitive societies, are universal or context-dependent or a mixture of the two. Thus E. Gellner has accused anthropologists of being too 'contextual': of being indiscriminately charitable in their efforts to avoid the sin of ethnocentrism. He says that they have not admitted the possibility that what people say (whether 'primitive' or not) may be wrong or absurd. The parallel with the criticism of Faith & Order lies in the difficulty which its 'contextual' approach meets when it is called to work...

towards a conception of unity which is not a mere acceptance of existing diversity.

5: FIRST EXAMPLE: SECTION I AT MONTREAL, 1963

The many accounts of the Montreal Conference leave a confusing picture.1 But there is agreement on some characteristic features: the great extent of the work to be done; the lack of any very definite aim; the wide representation, especially of Orthodox; consciousness of new relations both with Roman Catholics and with the Roman Catholic Church; the pressing issues of the world; the humid heat, and the rush to write reports. About two-thirds of the time was spent in Sections; Section I's subject was 'The Church in the Purpose of God'. Before the Section was a wealth of material: Commission reports, particularly those on 'Christ and the Church', some comments on these reports, a study guide, and papers relating to conciliar ecclesiology (among the subjects in the brief). The aim was to deal with basic ecclesiology. The Section split into four sub-sections (with about twenty people in each); these worked on topics which went to make up the parts of the final report.

The central issue met in Section I, and especially in its first sub-section ('Christ, New Creation, Creation'), was whether the place of the Church in the purpose of God is one of glory or of suffering. The 'post-Bultmannians', such as Käsemann and E. Schweizer, dominated the Section in their demand for a shift from the remote Christology which
Some have referred to the change as one towards a 'theologia crucis'. This is not the sense used by Luther. His 'theologia crucis' must be seen in its opposition to what he called the 'theologia gloriae' of Scholastic theology, which tended to place little emphasis on the cross: see P. E. Persson, Sacra Doctrina (transl. Oxford, 1970), e.g. p. 217.

See E. Dinkler, 'Kritischer Rückblick ...', particularly p. 88 on the theology of the crucified and resurrected Christ.

Käsemann's account is in 'Einheit und Wahrheit', particularly pp. 68-71.

The point was made that life and theology find true meaning in the cross. This implied a different attitude to the world. The Church, in the diverse forms in which it participates in the world (a diversity already apparent in New Testament ecclesiology), is judged to be faithful when it manifests obedient service and discipleship, to the point of suffering and humiliation.

The result of the forceful statement of this point of view was heated argument and an atmosphere which dominated the conference. The argument came out into the plenary session not only through Käsemann's main address on 'Unity and Diversity in New Testament Ecclesiology', but also in the presentation of the draft report of Section I, when the Bultmannian point of view was supported by Dinkler and others. Käsemann's own account talks of the chaos which ensued and it would appear from other comments that this was a right assessment. In fact, the final draft of the
introductory 'Word to the Churches' from Montreal (the first draft was rejected as inadequate) can best be described as an attempt to convey what Section I had experienced. It speaks of the irrelevance of many long-defended positions to God's purpose, and of the varied and deep issues to be confronted. It is offered with the prayer "that our work may indeed be of service to God in his love for all the world".1

Confusion in Section I was in keeping with the sense that Faith & Order had been insufficiently aware of the world's problems, a point which had been made in plenary session by Stringfellow.2 And this was as much a message from the Staff as it was from main speakers. In planning the programme, the views of speakers had been foreseen, even if their expected impact had been underestimated. A Staff working party had met in 1962 and expressed the opinion that "too much preoccupation with ecclesiastical affairs would give the impression of isolation from the world and irrelevance to its concerns".3 A memorandum at the time asked:

"In what ways have the traditional image and the traditional categories of Faith and Order work become obsolete? If there were no institutional expression of Faith and Order concerns, what sort of agency would be considered imperative today to deal with those concerns?"4

It was after this that P. S. Minear, the Director, wrote to Käsemann with an "urgent request from the staff" asking him to speak.5
The report is in No, pp. 41-9.

The Report

In the introduction to Section I's report, there is immediate reference to Christ's crucifixion-resurrection and to the exacting demands of obedience to which Christians are called. The "excitement and vigour" of the debate is mentioned, and the Commission reports on 'Christ and the Church' are 'recommended for study', but with reservations from some, particularly over the reports' lack of Trinitarian emphasis and their minimizing of "the significance of the cross". The first section on 'Christ, New Creation, Creation' follows. The theme is that "the Church must be viewed as the body of the crucified and risen Christ, with an existence determined by participation in the death and resurrection of the Lord who is its head"; the power of the Crucified one in his glory "enables the Church in its lowness to go into the world and witness to his glory". The Section was agreed that the love of Christ implies identification with all men, and a welcoming of the signs of God's grace and truth in the created order. There are, however, two footnotes, which refer to disagreements over the nature of Christ's lordship over the world (for instance, whether it is exercised only through the Church), and call for a study on the relation of creation to redemption. This part ends with questions which had arisen; thus, "If Christ was flesh and blood and if he is to be the Lord of all creation, how can we, his followers, so often flee into a spirituality that divorces God from earth and its possibilities?"

The second main part of the report is on the Church as
The major interest in the 'ecclesial' reality of the WCC and its 'ecclesiological' expression had been in 1951: at the time of the 'Toronto Statement'. The matter had been raised again at New Delhi: ND, p. 132. On the reaction to the 1963 debate see MRCC 1963, p. 17.


The 'act and institution'; the Church is seen as constantly renewed with gifts from God, and it is added that these gifts are also tasks. The third main part discusses the relationship between the Church and the churches. Instead of seeing churches as part of the Church, all Christians are seen as included in the Body of Christ. There is reference to disagreements as to which Christian communities are manifestations of the one Church. This part ends with the assertion that the "tremendous revolutions of our time" in many areas must involve profound changes in the churches and in their relations with each other; to this is added a criticism of the way in which the 'Christ and the Church' reports had spoken of the world "as if it were a theological category alone".

The last part of the report is on the significance of the WCC, a subject which caused controversy, but on which no 'progress' was made on account of opposition from the Orthodox to any ecclesiological recognition for the WCC.¹

Comment

Montreal opened up new areas for Faith & Order. In the words of one delegate: "the problem of nature, creation and grace, arose in so many contexts that it became a distinctive feature of the Conference".² This is demonstrated above all by the Section I report, where the conception of the Church as servant is accepted with all that this implied for an attempt to relate theological thinking to the revolutions of the age and to identify with all mankind. Many who did not accept Käsemann's exegetical conclusions nevertheless
accepted the message of the servant Church.

The implied conception of unity became less definite. The 'Word to the Churches' said that Christians were being "drawn and driven together" in a world shaped by God, but nowhere is there a clear idea of what form of unity this entails. What is certain is that unity is not just the result of experts meeting in theological discussion. An indication of this changed attitude was that reports were more humble and questioning; they were reports of explorations, rather than of agreements for all time, and they were adopted not by the whole conference but by the Sections themselves.

6: SECOND EXAMPLE: 'CREATION, NEW CREATION AND THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH'

After Montreal, an attempt at cool assessment of the results was made at the 1964 meeting of the Faith & Order Commission at Aarhus. Here, priority was given to broadening the scope, and a number of studies were started. Study of creation and redemption had been recommended by four Montreal Sections, and in the intervening year the Staff had done some preparation.1

The problem was that of the relation between the 'natural order' and the 'new order' of life in Christ. Behind this lay the theological paradox that 'the world' (kosmos) is believed to be in the power of the evil one, and yet it is 'the world' (kosmos) which God created and which he so loved that he sent his Son.2 From this paradox
follow disagreements over the extent to which the 'natural order' is corrupt, and therefore over whether the Church should listen to, and take lessons from, the world (because God is active in it), or alternatively should view the world as at best a neutral realm with regard to man's salvation (because God exercises his Lordship through the Church).

This is a large subject and reservations were expressed at Aarhus that it might lead into an "uncharted and immeasurable ocean of theology," a fear no doubt related to the fact that the WCC Division of Studies' work on 'The Finality of Christ in an Age of Universal History' was failing for lack of any particular focus. However, Creation and Redemption was the main theme at Aarhus and the study, as planned by a committee under J. A. Sittler, was approved.

The theme and title 'Creation, New Creation and the Unity of the Church' were chosen because:

"To those with faith in God's governance of all things, present historical movements in the world at large may be interpreted as exercising pressures and providing occasions for growth towards unity. As the Church responds faithfully to tasks presented by her life in the world, she will be given grace to realize her unity in Christ. But at present there is a real danger that those who are concerned with an organic Church and those who are concerned with an organic world may drift further and further apart. This study may be used by God not only to heal schism but to prevent it."  

The Progress of the Study

Early in 1965 the Faith & Order project was merged with the 'Finality' study and H. Berkhoft from Holland was asked by the Division of Studies committee to write a paper on
1 MRCC 1965, pp. 120-1; Berkhof was a member of the Division of Studies committee, but not of the Faith & Order Commission.


3 The group consisted of fifteen people from Europe and the USA and included four WCC Staff; list in Fd Arch 'God in Nature and History' boxes.

4 The 'official' report is in FOC 50 (1967), pp. 7-31; the 'unofficial' one is in FOC 50, pp. 133-40.

'God's action in history'.¹ The paper, called 'God in Nature and History', was circulated to individuals and local study groups for comment. By 1966 there was progress to report; replies were coming in and the 'prime importance' of the study was formally expressed by the Working Committee.²

A pamphlet of comments was collected by Staff in 1967 and the paper was then revised by a group, some of whom were natural scientists, and presented to the Faith & Order Commission at Bristol.³

In the meantime, an 'unofficial' paper had been written by an Anglo/Scandinavian group, entitled 'Creation, New Creation and the Unity of the Church'; it was attached to the comments pamphlet, but was not discussed by the 1967 revision group. After some opposition, it was, however, discussed at Bristol, and printed as an appendix to the report.

The difficulty experienced in drawing attention to this 'unofficial' paper is more comprehensible if it is compared with the 'official' one.⁴ The former was written deliberately with the intention of beginning with creation; the latter, however, chose the perspective of Heilsgeschichte: of the history of God's redeeming activity from the old covenant, to the formation of the Church, to the consummation. What was no doubt feared by Staff-members and others before Bristol, was that to start from the perspective of creation might cause Montreal-style chaos and raise old questions of 'natural theology' which would dominate discussion and mean that the carefully prepared 'official' paper would not get
the attention desired.

At Bristol, however, the 'official' paper was criticized from many points of view, but mainly for the fact that it appeared to have avoided some of the central issues through its traditional approach and its presuppositions, for instance concerning the unity of scripture. It was admitted in the paper that it chose only one approach to the subject and that "this study has no pretention of being our contribution to the dialogue of the Church with modern scientific man. We are not yet prepared for that dialogue. What we have to do first is to have a conversation within the Church itself."1

The question was whether these restrictions were appropriate in the light of the demands from Montreal and the recommendations from Aarhus. Was the paper not too Western; did it have anything to say to non-believers and non-theologians; did it give too little attention to the fall and sin; must one work from redemption to creation and not vice versa; can man encounter God in creation apart from any confession of his redemptive work? These were the chief questions asked, and some were stimulated by comparing the two papers.2

The Bristol Section appointed to consider the papers and to recommend further work, suggested that a study on 'Man in Nature and History' should receive "top priority". This recommendation was made in the light of a number of questions which had been raised: can man's cultural achievements be seen as building stones for the Kingdom of God; what is the scope of unity if it means reconciliation, and the object of God's reconciling work is the whole created

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1 For 50 (1967), p. 9; a significant admission in the light of reasons given at Aarhus for the theme's selection.

2 Ibid., pp. 88-92 and pp. 130-3. Some of these questions had already been raised in comment on the original draft, particularly in some strong criticisms which the Staff had not included in the comments pamphlet: see correspondence and comments in FO Arch 'God in Nature and History' boxes.
world; is there a relationship between the churches' unity and that of mankind; how is the Word of God to be understood in its relation to the whole of creation, for instance in contemporary movements for peace? The study was to start from a dialogue with Christian and non-Christian scientists, and was to focus on certain questions of mutual interest in the hope that a fresh approach might be made to anthropology, and that this might lead to a profitable re-examination of some theological questions.1

Comment

The 'contextual' approach was not marked by any smooth progression from initial discoveries to the formulation of a co-ordinated method. Although there was a basic intention to look at the question of the Church's unity in relation to the world, this was accompanied by uncertainty both over the subjects to be chosen from the wealth of new problems raised, and over the approach to be employed in dealing with them. The 'official' paper used a traditional historical approach, but was nevertheless arrived at in a new way: written by one person, circulated widely, and then revised in an interdisciplinary group. But it did not follow the plan made at Aarhus. Nor did it satisfy Commission members at Bristol. The 'unofficial' paper started from modern man's predicament and from the need for an understanding of creation. It concluded that

"Through its witness to the unity of reconciliation in Christ the Church can hope to receive unity ... Church unity must be a by-product of the reconciliation of the world."²

The recommendations for the future were nearer to this
1 Interview: E. C. Blake. See also W. Goodall, Ecumenical Progress (London, 1972), pp. 11-12 on the convergence of many WCC departments on 'man'. This led in 1968 to the setting up of the 'Humanum Study' under the direction of one of the authors of the 'unofficial' paper on 'Creation, New Creation and the Unity of the Church' (D. E. Jenkins). He himself now sees the setting up of this study as a symptom of uncertainties within the WCC about its relation to the world, rather than as the result of an accurate diagnosis of what was needed at the time: 'Man's Inhumanity to Man', ER, vol. XXV (1973), pp. 5-28.

latter approach, but the focus was still not clear. An indication of this fact is that the short three-page Section report at Bristol contains twenty-eight questions, a fact reminiscent of the reports from Montreal. The nature of unity was not well defined, nor was the road for reaching it. The intention was to be inter-disciplinary, but there was doubt how to realize this. Some of the confusion was traced to differences in the understanding of man, and this study was therefore given priority at a time when many parts of the WCC were converging on the same subject. As expressed by one of the WCC Staff: "The human has become the common denominator".

7: THIRD EXAMPLE: 'SPIRIT, ORDER AND ORGANIZATION'

This example of method departs from one of the principles used in selecting other examples, namely that they were understood at the time to be of major importance for Faith & Order. It is chosen, however, because it indicates a possible development of the contextual method, a development which, for significant reasons, was not followed through.

The roots of the study on 'Spirit, Order and Organization' go back to the early discovery that more than doctrine divides the churches. This had led to attempts to isolate the 'non-theology' which was holding back or at least obscuring the theology which was Faith & Order's true concern. But as Faith & Order developed a new conception of its task in the 1960s situation, so this approach was seen as unrealistic. First they had defined themselves against 'the world', then
they had chosen more world-related topics and papers written by theologians had been read by others; but was it not possible to go further and be genuinely inter-disciplinary?

The study was proposed by the Staff and adopted by the Commission in 1964 as part of the scheme of "seeing the Church's unity in relation to the world in which it is set". The plan took its starting-point from the New Delhi Statement on unity, which referred to the action of the Holy Spirit in guiding Christians into fully committed fellowship. It was recognized that this opened up many problems concerning the Church's forms and structures; for instance, Christians see the Spirit not only as a source of continuity but also as a judging and transforming power. Such questions were raised as: "How should new forms of community and service be evaluated?" These questions, it was thought, would be best answered from an empirical starting-point, and not simply by doctrinal deduction. So it was proposed to study forms of church life, and to examine the work in the light of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

A Consultation was convened in 1965 in order to agree on preliminary definitions of purpose and method. The aim was to find a new "way of doing theology":

"In order to get round the impasse in purely doctrinal discussions of questions of church order and to take account of the questions which we believe the Holy Spirit is putting to the churches in their various present situations and problems, it is necessary to submit theology to the questions posed by the mission of the Church to the world."

It was believed that 'order' had to be understood in relation
to particular historical situations; the conviction was that "engagement in mission in the contemporary world can and should lead to unity in faith and order." 1

On this basis, the Consultation explored the possibility of a co-operative enterprise between sociology and theology as equal partners. Seeing the Holy Spirit as "God at his most empirical," 2 the participants tried to develop an interdisciplinary method for understanding the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the doctrine of the Church. This involved the search for a common terminology and for areas of investigation which had meaning from theological and sociological perspectives, in order eventually to arrive at "statements of parallel meaning" for theology and sociology. 3 Some progress was made in this search at the first Consultation; working definitions were developed, and the areas of 'unity' and 'protest' selected. It was decided that topics would first be approached through sociological case-studies, and a research design giving guidelines for these was written.

It was hoped that the case-studies would clarify theological issues and produce practical advice for Christian organization and for preparation for mission. At this second stage, there would be theological contributions from various traditions on matters such as the nature of order and the recognition of the Holy Spirit; here, it was expected, would be the bulk of the work: in tying in theology with the empirically recognized problems.

As it turned out, this was the major meeting of the study. A further Consultation (of three days) was arranged
for 1966 but little progress was made; few of the former participants attended and much of the time was spent re-defining the problem and rewriting the research design.²

At the Bristol meeting of the Commission in 1967, the study proposal was reformulated, but the inter-disciplinary emphasis in this was much decreased. Instead of an attempt to find a 'new way of doing theology', it became more of a theological review of sociological work; the two disciplines which were meant to interact had become separated.²

The study was finally shelved after appeals for money had failed and after M. B. Handspicker, the Staff member who played a large part in the organization, had left Geneva. It was also felt that the study would run into theoretical difficulties if it continued on the assumptions with which it had started.³ So a concluding report was written in 1970.⁴

Comment

The study has many features of the 'contextual' model. It was done on the assumption that the Holy Spirit was speaking to the Churches through their diverse situations, and from this it was seen to follow that a solely deductive approach would not meet the problem. So the attempt was made, through inter-disciplinary reflection on method, to develop a plan which would use the perspectives of sociology and theology as much in parallel as possible. Consultations were arranged which were dependent on Staff co-ordination and initiative in Geneva.

The eventual collapse of the study was for a number of well-documented reasons, such as shortage of funds. But it
Only two foundations were approached after the recommendation from Bristol that the study be continued with outside resources: FD Arch 'Spirit, Order and Organization' box. The participants found it difficult to convince others that there was some point in the study: Interview: D. E. Jenkins.


The setting for this change became clearer during the Second Vatican Council, and with the 1966 Church and Society Conference. 'Seeing the Church's unity in relation to the world in which it is set' became Faith & Order's main intention, even if the implications of this were not fully can be suggested that, had there been sufficient enthusiasm among Staff and the Commission, the study would have been able to continue and finance would have been found. But when it was launched, such a study was very much a 'frontier' one for Faith & Order, and as it continued it was seen as insufficiently 'theological'. That this is a correct assessment is indicated by the reception of the idea of the study in the Working Committee and in the Commission between 1964 and 1970.2

8: CONCLUSION

The model 'contextual method' can contain many variations. Indeed, flexibility is integral to the assumptions on which the method has been based. The specific method employed has depended on a number of variables such as the subject for study, the purpose in view and the people involved. But in spite of this fact, there is value in generalization, in order to clarify the change at Montreal and subsequent developments, developments which may be said to follow, if not from the report of Section I, then at least from the atmosphere which prevailed in its meetings. In Berger and Luckmann's terms, there was an alteration in the way in which the dialectic between 'definition of reality' and 'structural realities' was worked out.

The setting for this change became clearer during the Second Vatican Council, and with the 1966 Church and Society Conference. 'Seeing the Church's unity in relation to the world in which it is set' became Faith & Order's main intention, even if the implications of this were not fully
1 For the way in which the studies were seen to fit together see FOC 44 (1964), pp. 40-2 e.g. on the Ministry as ministry of the whole Church to the whole world.

2 Many WCC Staff, when asked about changes in Faith & Order, answer with words to the effect that: 'They went through a bad stage in the 1950s, but they got better after Montreal'. For a moderate statement of the traditional view: J. E. L. Newbigin, 'Which way for "Faith and Order"?' in What Unity Implies, pp. 115-32. Also Newbigin's unpublished essay, 'The Form and Structure of the Visible Unity of the Church' (1972): lent to author. Many are doubtful about 'new forms of unity', e.g. Visser't Hooft: Interview.

1) As the legitimations used in the Christological method, and the idea of unity it implied, came to be seen as less feasible, so there was a desire for change. As the magnitude of dissonance increased, so did pressure to reduce it. The most marked way of reducing dissonance for participants between the conception of unity and the knowledge of division was a change in the implied idea of unity. 'Organic unity' based on doctrinal consensus, which had characterized the 'Christological method' and the New Delhi unity statement, received less support. Some indeed would say that Faith & Order 'sold out'. There was greater emphasis on diversity legitimated by reference to 'context', to the Church's function of service to the world, and to the diversity already present in the Church of the New Testament.

If it was the servant Church which was relevant to today, and this could be shown to accord with the pattern of the apostolic age, where each church witnessed according to its situation, there was justification for a new attitude. There was then less dissonance for participants than there had been between the idea of a 'united Church' and the knowledge that Christians were very far from this.

Although the unity conception now implied created dissonance for some who believed in the more traditional pattern, Faith & Order moved with the times. Not to have done so would have created excessive dissonance for participants between their idea of unity and such elements as their beliefs about the New Testament, their awareness of
the movement against 'centralization' and 'bureaucracy', and their appreciation of the fact that Christians were very far from being united in a traditional sense of that term. More consonant with these elements was an emphasis on the many contexts, on an indefinite conception of conciliarity, and eventually, on the unity of the Church in relation to the unity of man.

2) The second way of reducing dissonance (that is, through a change in the knowledge of Christian division) was not marked in the sense of an effort to persuade churches to change. There was uncertainty about the direction of change: about the right conception of unity.

   But the situation was represented differently. If, at Montreal, the "great disputes were on fundamental questions which are common to us in all the confessions", this amounted to knowledge of a change in the divided state of the churches. The new problems could be seen as possibilities to be faced together, as relations with a common world which was itself rapidly changing.

3) The third way of reducing dissonance is to add new cognitive elements. The most important 'reconciling' legitimation was the conviction that the problem facing Faith & Order was immensely complex. The time was one for asking many questions, but for giving few answers. A new situation demanded a new start, so there need be little surprise if progress was slow.

New cognitive elements were also added in the trend
towards a more 'involved' role. Remaining solely concerned with narrowly theological affairs, Faith & Order had often been unsuccessful, and had been considered by many to be irrelevant. Now, in its interest in man and in the world, new elements consonant with the belief in unity had been found. These were new subjects, on which there were less established disagreements, and on which attention could now be focussed.

Consequently, Faith & Order was less aware of the reference group of professional theologians; people from other disciplines were sought out for expert advice. As theology's status as a serious discipline was increasingly questioned, so Faith & Order favoured inter-disciplinary study and wooed non-theologians. In 1965, Sittler told of difficulties he had had in trying to set up an 'interest group'; he said that "the kind of people he had in mind were not interested and the few who were interested were not the kind of people who could usefully contribute to the study." He put this down to the fact that the concepts of revealed theology were neither intelligible nor interesting to those whose participation was desired, and implied that the solution to this was the 'translation' of the concepts.

The attempt was made to involve other disciplines, but it did not always succeed. What was more successful was the setting up of many short-term study groups, working on diverse subjects. Even if it was difficult to determine what constituted success, there was nevertheless great activity. And the Staff could be occupied with the
considerable directing and co-ordinating role. The activity was consonant with belief in unity; it was a way of reducing the proportion of dissonant as compared with consonant relations involving the cognitive element of unity.
X: THE REALIZATION OF UNITY

In 1910 Brent gave an address on 'The Realization of Christian Unity' in which he said:

"The man who has an ideal in his arms is not far from becoming what that ideal is." ¹

In 1967, Tomkins, speaking on 'The Future of Faith and Order Work', asked:

"Why do we stick? Why is there so little actual change? It has been said 'Nothing can resist an idea whose time has come'. Is our 'idea' wrong? Or has the 'time' not come?" ²

In this final chapter, it is appropriate to start with the question of whether efforts to realize the idea of unity have met with any success.

1: THE QUESTION OF EFFECT

To use Berger and Luckmann's idiom, the question to be answered is whether Faith & Order's 'definition of reality' has been realized in any sense through its own efforts. In Festinger's terms, it is the issue of whether the situation of division has been altered by Faith & Order, thus reducing the primary dissonance for participants. ³

Have all the meetings and reports stemming from the initial idea led to results? In answering this question, the first difficulty is to discern what the movement's aim has been. The conception of unity has at all times been marked by its lack of definition. For example, the 'united Church' of Faith & Order's earlier period was found acceptable only when understood in vague outline. Attempts to derive

¹ Brent, The Inspiration of Responsibility, p. 92.
³ In Troeltsch's terms it is the question of how far theory has been able to "penetrate into actual conditions and influence them": The Social Teachings ..., Vol. 1, p. 34.
These 'readjustments' may include other forms than 'organic unity'; their purpose may be reciprocal intercommunion or some form of federal arrangement. However, the implied conception of unity for Faith & Order from the beginning until the mid-1960s was 'organic union' (on this see above, p. 12a, note 1).

1 Douglass, A Decade of Objective Progress in Church Unity, p. xx.

2 A sequel to this report was published in 1952, and there have been further surveys at intervals of about two years.

Faith & Order has of course 'offered' its many studies and findings to the churches, hoping that they might have effect. But its more direct involvement in unions has taken a specific blueprint from it invariably failed.

Two factors, however, make assessment somewhat easier. First, the operative ideal of unity has often been considerably in advance of that which Faith & Order has been able to conceptualize. Secondly, there has been a cumulative process. Successive aims, once established, become, as it were, built-in and by no means ineffective elements in ecumenical memory. Thus the early optimism of some participants took many years to fade in spite of the intractability of the situation. Similarly, in the more recent period, while the concern of some prominent participants has been to promote the idea of 'conciliarity', others have remained loyal to the more 'old-fashioned' conception of 'organic union'. In such ways, Faith & Order has continuity.

Church Unions

The most common measure of progress has been the number of negotiations and actual unions between churches. Although Faith & Order participants have rarely claimed unions as victories for the movement itself, there is no doubt that they have frequently seen them as indices of its success. Close attention has been paid to what a report to the Edinburgh Conference termed 'objective progress' involving "formal ecclesiastical readjustments". A sequel to this report was published in 1952, and there have been further surveys at intervals of about two years.

Faith & Order has of course 'offered' its many studies and findings to the churches, hoping that they might have effect. But its more direct involvement in unions has taken
It was in 1952 that unity's "urgency for world mission and evangelism" was included in the first function of Faith & Order's Constitution: *Lu*, p. 360.


three forms: (1) publication of reports and comments on unions; (2) arrangement of consultations; (3) sending of consultants on request.

At Lausanne, the fact of meeting at all seemed sufficient indication of the movement's achievements. In later years, however, there was greater demand for tangible results. This demand reached its peak in the 1950s when the urgency of unity for the Church's mission was stressed. Much time of the Commission, Working Committee and Future Committee was then taken up with discussion of Faith & Order's attitude to unions. Yet in this period few unions were actually achieved and this fact contrasts with glowing reports of progress. An example is the Secretary's address to the Commission in 1957:

"The unity movement has accelerated during these [last] three years in an amazing way. Church unions have been consummated, older union negotiations between Churches have been revived or intensified, new negotiations have begun, numerous conferences on unity have been held, dozens of books and hundreds of speeches have pointed the way to unity, minds have been changed, prejudices dropped and understanding achieved, and prayers have been offered in ways and quantities beyond our reckoning."

Many of these claims are hardly verifiable, but those which are, appear over-optimistic. Two surveys of union negotiations covering the period reveal a very different picture. There were few unions or negotiations; successes were largely between very small churches; progress was minimal. In this case, the optimistic report appears to have sprung from the wish to reduce dissonance for participants through knowledge
On the Future Report see above, pp. 120-5.

2 It is also possible that by this time it had been appreciated that unions do not necessarily lead to mission; indeed, they may lead to an increase in complacency.


4 See particularly discussion in FOC 26 (1958), pp. 22-8. The fear has been that of appearing to promote any one scheme of unity, thus implying that the advocates of the scheme are following 'Faith & Order policy' while the opponents are not. This would conflict with the founding principle of being a comprehensive meeting place: a matter on which the Orthodox are especially sensitive because their own participation is firmly based on the (often stated) assumption that membership never involves a compromise of commitment.

of a change in the situation of division, at a time when Faith & Order was pursuing a narrowly academic course.

Later, after 1960, the number of unions increased.

But reference to them in the Commission and Working Committee then became less frequent, and surveys stressed that unions were but one aspect of the movement towards unity. Once Faith & Order had met with some success over the New Delhi Statement and its Future Report, less attention was paid to unions as evidence of progress.1 And with the new understanding of relations with 'the world' formulated after Montreal, not only did ideas of unity change, but stress on mission (and therefore on union as its condition) declined.2

2) The second form of involvement with church unions has been in the arrangement of consultations for those engaged in negotiations.3 This has been done regularly since 1952 and has been seen as a way of facilitating discussion without interfering with specific schemes. Initially they were 'unofficial' gatherings arranged after other meetings, but later, in 1964, they gained official status.

3) More controversial has been the sending of consultants to union negotiations. Non-interference has been an important principle for Faith & Order, but it has experienced the dilemma of trying to be both interested and neutral. Only after long argument, and with considerable caution, was the first consultative visit made to Northern Madagascar in 1959.4

In the report to the Central Committee in 1960, it was
stated that the service to negotiations would be most relevant.

"In the younger churches, which might not feel they had adequate theological resources to enter the complexities of negotiations under certain circumstances." 1

An additional attraction for 'younger churches' (which was not mentioned) is the fact that the acceptance of consultants reduces their dependence on their 'founding fathers' in the West. And, from Faith & Order's point of view, it is of course important to note that the Western model of church union has had its greatest success in 'younger churches' where divisions are seldom indigenous.

The two Madagascar consultants were given strict instructions 2 and the visit was followed with interest. One consultant wrote a diary which remarked, for instance, on the political factors involved, and noted the dominant position of foreign missionaries. A letter was later sent to the Union Committee in Madagascar which made suggestions and pointed out difficulties, indicating, however, that these did not express the official opinion of Faith & Order's Working Committee. 3

In this case, the visit was made early in the negotiations. The union was finally consummated in 1968. Consultants have since visited other negotiations.

Other Forms of Unity

Not all Faith & Order participants would hold that 'organic union' is desirable. Moreover, those who do, would not define progress only in relation to this form of unity.

The movement has been concerned to aid other, less easily
Especially since the Roman Catholic entry into the ecumenical conversation: see Ehrenström and Gassmann, Confessions in Dialogue.

 quantifiable, manifestations of what it has called 'the essential oneness of the Church of Christ'. Its many studies and articles are published in the hope of contributing to growing agreement, and it has undoubtedly brought into the open issues (such as that of the understanding of 'tradition') which churches would not have looked at on their own.

In all periods, great attention has been paid to meeting and discussion, to the removal of misconceptions, and to the study of topics thought to be relevant to the achievement of unity between those from different 'traditions' and, more recently, from different 'situations'. This has extended, for example, to the encouragement of regional conferences and of 'dialogue' between confessions.\(^1\) A continuous emphasis has been put on strengthening the spiritual bonds between Christians, both through meetings, and through occasions such as the week of prayer for unity, which is co-ordinated by Faith & Order.

**Assessment**

For all forms of unity, but particularly for these latter ones, it is very difficult to discover to what extent, if at all, Faith & Order has been effective. It has not succeeded in its original aim. No 'united Church' can be said to exist in the sense in which this ideal was understood by the movement's founders, and even if such a Church did exist, this would not prove Faith & Order's effectiveness.

The 'main work' of which the Constitution speaks is
to "draw the Churches out of isolation into conferences".¹

Although this work has only touched a few people, the effect which Faith & Order has had on these few has often been noted, and they in turn have encouraged forms of unity at a more local level. In Goodall's words:

"Most of the leaders in the negotiation of schemes of union in various parts of the world have at some time been involved in a Faith and Order meeting."²

Thus Palmer, who was on the original Continuation Committee in the 1920s, took a large part in the preparations for the Church of South India.³ The formation of the Reformed Church of France in 1938 was to some extent inspired by the experience of the Lausanne Conference.⁴ More recently, J. D. McCaughey has said of negotiations in Australia:

"it cannot be denied that we shared in the new impetus and new hope which came into Faith and Order discussions between Lund and Montreal."⁵

And D. Horton, in an article on 'The Relevance of Faith and Order to Actual Church Union Negotiations', says that the formation of the United Church of Christ in the USA was an instance when "the Faith and Order movement contributed directly to organic union between churches". He claims that "It is no accident that, since the Faith and Order movement was organized there have been more concrete unions between communions than there were in all centuries previous."⁶

The problem of astrology is far from simple, and such statements as this one are examples of how the unity movement is experienced 'from within'. But they only represent one side of the picture, and must be interpreted in the light of

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¹ Sundkler calls him the "main architect": The Church of South India ..., p. 115, and says that Faith & Order had a decisive influence on leaders in South India: pp. 157-8.


⁵ "it cannot be denied that we shared in the new impetus and new hope which came into Faith and Order discussions between Lund and Montreal."

⁶ "It is no accident that, since the Faith and Order movement was organized there have been more concrete unions between communions than there were in all centuries previous."
a number of socially constraining factors. One may say that, in certain cases, the activities of Faith & Order have been a necessary condition of the achievement of progress towards its conception of unity, such that in its absence, this unity would not have been achieved. However, this is not to suggest that in those cases the movement's activities were a sufficient necessary condition.

Thus a view such as that of J. R. Chandran (in 1958) that the movement towards union is "a fruit of the Faith and Order movement" must be treated as part of the 'definition of reality' of a participant in a particular situation (in this case, a situation where a sense of progress was lacking).

And, using a broader perspective, the claim must be seen in the light of the conditioning of changes in the social structure, and of Christians' awareness of these changes.

The idea of unity has been proposed innumerable times through history, but it is only in the twentieth century that there has been 'structural conduciveness' both for a Faith & Order movement and for it to have effect. Faith & Order has been one factor in creating conditions in which concrete changes have taken place towards unity between Christians.

2: GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

In its attempts to realize its idea of unity, Faith & Order has employed methods which can usefully be divided into three 'ideal-typical' stages. These three cannot be rigidly distinguished from each other. Nevertheless, each method has a character of its own as an endeavour to solve the problem
facing the movement, namely the problem of resolving or reducing the tension between a conception of unity and a situation of division.

In this study, an attempt has been made to interpret the development of Faith & Order method in the light of two theories. That of Berger and Luckmann concerning the social construction of reality, has furnished the broad dialectical perspective lacking in Festinger's work on cognitive dissonance. Their theory has been used as the framework for general study of Faith & Order's endeavours to objectify its idea of unity.

The 'definition of reality' (that which participants know to be true) which the movement arrived at in the early years, must be seen against the background both of the international idealism of the time, and of growing uncertainty whether the spread of Christianity was inevitable. A combination of circumstances helped to make the unity idea appear more attractive, and the initially daring notion that the hitherto sacrosanct areas of faith and order might be opened for discussion, gained in popularity, especially among Americans and Anglicans - two groups prepared for the idea's reception.

The 'reality' which was constructed by participants consisted from the first of a conception of unity beyond 'spiritual' and 'practical' unity, together with some guiding principles which were to aid in making it objective. These principles 'guarded' the distinctiveness of Faith & Order's idea and implied a certain method. The movement was to work through delegate conferences to which all churches would be invited; there would be discussion of
agreements and disagreements in faith and order; it was not
to legislate for the churches.

Of central importance was the desire to be comprehensive.
As the churches came together to meet, as it were, as strangers,
it was important that there should be no discrimination. So
their several positions were respected as more or less static
bodies of belief. Together, the churches were to make up the
'united Church' of the future. Although this ideal was not
formulated in detail (to have refined it would have antagonized
some participants), it implied a diverse body based on doctrinal
consensus in essentials - a body to which each would bring
their complementary contributions, thus forming a functional
whole more complete than any of its parts. The consensus was
to be achieved through study by theologians who were repre-
sentative more of the distinctive beliefs of their churches
than of church members or geographical areas. They were to
become more informed about each other's beliefs and to remove
obstacles to unity through conference and committee.

Thus the original 'definition of reality' was constructed
in relation to a particular situation and resulted in a method
which has been termed 'synthetic'. However, the situation of
the world and of the churches changed markedly in the 1930s
and '40s. Not only was there now less optimism concerning
co-operation, but the theological climate had also changed
from one of confidence in biblical criticism, to one where
many were 'rediscovering' the Church in the light of a
Christo-centric theology. During this period, Faith &
Order's definition of the situation remained from an earlier
and very different time. Its participants were 'church theologians' dedicated to theological study, and their commitment to comprehensiveness legitimated their detachment from the struggles of those years.

But the 'synthetic method' was not successful in achieving its aim. The intractability of Christian division was gradually borne in on Faith & Order. Failure did not, however, lead to the method's wholesale rejection or to the movement's collapse. Rather, in the dialectic with the objective reality, Faith & Order's approach to the problem facing it was modified with the tools most readily available, namely those of a Christo-centric version of what is often called 'biblical theology'. Whereas such an approach had been very new in the 1930s, it was more respectable in 1952. The aim remained that of a 'united Church' (although this phrase was used less frequently) to be attained primarily through academic study, but there was to be a 'new method' which was to penetrate beyond set positions to the fundamental consensus. Current commitments were viewed in a more dynamic light, and prominence was given to eschatological and missionary legitimations for unity.

An essential factor in promoting this change was the new relationship with the WCC. Since 1937 the movement had done little to make an impression, while other parts of the WCC had prospered. But the 'new method' was Faith & Order's legitimation for its claim to be a centrally important branch of the ecumenical movement. A 'Christological method' was introduced as a new means for realizing Faith & Order's
'definition of reality'. The movement settled down in long-term committees to remove obstacles to unity. The significance of such documents as the Faith & Order Section report at Evanston and the New Delhi Statement on unity should be seen against this background.

Although a Christo-centric theology might have led the movement into a wider and less clerical world, this did not happen, largely because it was 'representative' theologians who participated, and many of them considered that 'non-theology' was ultimately irrelevant to the issues discussed. Faith & Order constructed its 'reality' with the Church's mission to 'the world' in view. The solution to its problems was not to be found with the world's aid, particularly not the 'cold war' world of the 1950s.

But the 'Christological method' did not succeed in producing the desired advances. And at the same time, the objective reality altered markedly, as did Faith & Order's perception of that reality. The theological and political climate of 1963 was very different from that of 1952. The assumptions made in the 'Christological method' were widely questioned, and the matters raised, for example, by Bultmann, were demanding attention. The new divisions in the churches appeared to be along the lines of 'radical' and 'conservative'.

At the same time, the churches had become more conscious of their marginal position in a pluralist society. Awareness of 'secularization' gave rise to a more secular response. The difficulty which theologians have in responding meaningfully to the world (in constructing legitimations which make
sense of the institutional order, and give meaning to individual biographies) became a matter for frequent reflection. Faith & Order's 'definition of reality' was modified in the face of a new situation. During the 1960s a more 'contextual' method for realizing a new and less definite conception of unity was introduced. 'Contextual' is a term which is far from precise, but it is intended to describe a method in which the context of the Church and of the churches was beginning to be accepted as a constitutive factor in theological reflection.

In this change, the decline in the status of academic theology was an important factor, a decline to which Faith & Order had no doubt contributed through the apparent insignificance of its own work. In a pluralist society, it was less easy to construct 'transcendent ontology' and the trend was towards an 'immanent anthropology'. The mediating role of the doctrines of creation and of man became important, and implied inter-disciplinary study. At a time when the objective reality was one of 'issues' and of more functional thinking, Faith & Order had to change its attitude to the world in order to legitimate its continued activity, both to the churches and to the WCC. Unity was seen more in relation to the world and its concerns, and this was accompanied by greater stress on the permissible diversity of Christian forms.

The particular version of the sociology of knowledge suggested by Berger and Luckmann provides a framework for reaching the above conclusions. The difficulty with their
theory lies in its generality.\footnote{1} The recommendation of research on a systematic accounting of the dialectical relation between structural realities and the human enterprise of constructing reality is admirable, and it provides a constant reminder that a more complete approach must be sought than the excessive sociological positivism of some accounts or the encyclopaedic idealism of others.

But such a reminder is not sufficient. It is desirable to find a way of bringing Berger and Luckmann's work closer to the 'middle-range', so that it may become applicable with more precision, although still conducive to general theoretical reflection.\footnote{2} This study has been, in part, an experiment in such a 'reduction'. By introducing the theory of cognitive dissonance, it is suggested that a combination is reached which provides an adequate framework for studying the chosen subject-matter. Dissonance theory holds that the presence of dissonance gives rise to pressure to reduce it in proportion to the magnitude of the dissonance, and that there are three major ways in which dissonance may be reduced.

In Faith & Order's early years, the dissonance between the idea of unity and the participants' actual knowledge of the situation of division was not great. The idea was stimulating, new and consonant with many other cognitive elements - for example, with knowledge of the need both for unity in mission and for a Christian counterpart to the secular movements towards international accord. It was thought that the situation of the churches would be

\footnote{1}{For a similar criticism to this see R. Creyf, 'A Sociological Reflection on Methodological Problems in the Empirical Study of Secularization', \textit{11\textdegree Conférence Internationale de Sociologie Religieuse} (Lille, 1971), p. 408.}

\footnote{2}{See Merton, \textit{Social Theory and Social Structure}, pp. 39-72 on 'Sociological Theories of the Middle Range'; he gives dissonance theory as an example: p. 64.}
I amenable to change and that, in bringing this about, very few would have to give up anything. And there was the powerful 'reconciling' element of the knowledge that Christians were in fact still very ignorant of each other's positions; if only they could have more meetings, they would find unity.

So conferences were arranged and Commissions organized to seek doctrinal consensus. In themselves, these meetings were a way of adding elements consonant with the idea of unity: dissonance was reduced through scholarly ecumenical activity. The faith and order for a united Church was sought by means of an attempted synthesis of the 'essentials' of positions believed ultimately to be complementary. Moreover, change in the relations between Christians was legitimated not only by appeal to the principle of complementarity, but also by such elements as knowledge of the pattern of the Early Church, and awareness of the inadequacy of man's capacity to express God's self-revelation.

But when there was less satisfaction in the sheer fact of many meetings (when they were less of a novel experience), dissonance for participants, and pressure to reduce it, increased. By this time the 'reconciling' element of ignorance was becoming less plausible, and it was beginning to be appreciated that the situation was highly resistant to change. More direct interest was taken in 'objective progress' (in change in the state of division), and a strong effort made to find the key to unity, largely through study of the doctrine of the Church.
But this only served to increase dissonance. Particularly in the light of Faith & Order's new position in the WCC, participants needed a 'breakthrough' proving that their idea was still a stimulant to ecumenical action. New legitimations for changing the relations between Christians were available and so were the people to promote them. A "new method" for reducing dissonance was introduced. Unity was now to be legitimated through focus on Christ and through common search of the bible. Current stands were seen in a more eschatological light. The unity was to be that of a pilgrim people, united in mission to the world.

No longer was it assumed that all or nearly all church positions would be represented in a united Church; real changes were envisaged. There was a demand for sacrifice and for acknowledgement of the sin of division. There was greater stress on changing the situation (the second way of reducing dissonance), illustrated by more active interest in actual unions.

The third way of reducing dissonance was also prominent. 'Reconciling' elements were found in 'non-theological' interference and, for example, in knowledge of the inadequacies of the previous method. Not only were subjects which might have increased dissonance (such as ministry) avoided, but elements consonant with unity were found in the detachment of 'theological society' meetings.

However, with the desire to be relevant to a new situation, and with a sharp change in attitudes to the role of the Church and to the place of the bible, dissonance
increased again. There was doubt whether the 'Christological method' had been the right one and it was felt that it avoided too many important issues.

On this occasion, the change of orientation in order to reduce dissonance took a very different form. Some would say that Faith & Order 'sold out', others that it became more 'realistic' in its attempt to relate to the world. The secularized and pluralistic situation was the context for a more secular and pluralistic response. It is important to appreciate that Faith & Order 'secularized' itself from within. In order to reduce dissonance, its idea changed and became more consonant with the situation of division which was itself represented differently. Eagerness to change the situation declined in consequence. There was a search for 'new forms of unity': an emphasis on diversity and on finding ways of drawing diversity into unity. Alteration in relations between Christians was now legitimated on the basis of a very different understanding of the Bible and by correlating varying commitments of groups of Christians with their diverse contexts and functions, both past and present.

At the same time, the conception of unity was 'reconciled' to the situation by stressing the great complexity of the problem ahead. Faith & Order participants considered that they had to start almost from scratch to re-think in what they now saw as a new situation. They adopted a cautious and questioning attitude.

Each of the methods illustrates the three ways of reducing
dissonance. Changes of method have been brought on by marked increases in the magnitude of dissonance and in the consequent pressure to reduce it.

The theory of dissonance is a way of 'tying down' Berger and Luckmann's more general work. In the light of a combination of these two theories, the course of the movement's 'definition of reality' can be traced in its relationship with the objective reality facing it.

Much of Faith & Order's history can be seen as a simple (and often conscious) response to the constraining reality of social developments. Thus it followed other international movements in the optimism of the 1920s, and its change in method in the 1960s must be seen in the light of a whole new pluralistic context and of its perception of that context.

But an understanding of Faith & Order's methods must not stop here. There are many other factors which have powerfully determined the course of the idea, and the participants' understanding of the movement's mandate has affected key aspects of the outcome at every stage. For example, the adoption of the 'Christological method' at Lund must be seen in the light of factors which 'prevented' its use in the 1930s, such as the type of participant, their dedication to comprehensiveness, and their suspicion of association with Life & Work. And there were also important circumstances which precipitated its introduction, including frustration at the failure to achieve doctrinal consensus (felt acutely at Lund), and the insecurity of Faith & Order's position in the WCC.
The further question of what effect Faith & Order has had on the situation of division is not easy to answer. But it can be said that in certain cases Faith & Order's activities have been a necessary condition of the achievement of progress towards its conception of unity, and that many have been drawn 'out of isolation into conferences'.

As the original idea and principles (the 'definition of reality') were tried out on the situation of Christian division, so they were modified and added to. Faith & Order at times became more 'realistic', yet elements from its original mandate remained as powerful influences within its 'definition of reality'. The whole can be seen as a dialectic between an idea which participants have seen as their peculiar responsibility to advance, and a situation which they have attempted to change.

3: COMMENT

Faith & Order has tried to assert that 'God wills unity in faith and order' and that 'Unity is possible', over against the intractability of the situation of division, in its turn legitimated by beliefs such as 'We stand for the truth' and 'The churches will always be divided'.

Today the dissonance for participants between their theological interests and their knowledge of current pragmatic values has increased, and they could hardly maintain a 1950s-style retreat, even if that were considered desirable. A sociologist might argue that the wisest course for the movement to pursue in order to survive, is one mid-way
between what Berger calls "pontifical insouciance about the opinions of mankind", and the opposite pole, which amounts to a surrender to the imagined world-view of 'modern man'.

Faith & Order's record in this respect is not good. In the 1930s it was largely unaware of many of the important issues of the day. In the 1950s, it used its 'new method' in a way which amounted to a withdrawal from 'the world'. In more recent years, although it has made some efforts to 'catch up' - for example, in its preparedness to discuss the type of issue raised by the Civil Rights movement, and in its broader view of what statements of faith (or 'accounts of hope') might consist of - these attempts have been piecemeal and uncertain.

What appears to be necessary is a body which can persuade its participants to reflect theologically on the issues (both 'classical' and 'contemporary') which divide Christians, in order to help to work out in an ecumenical setting some implications of Christian faith today. Such a concern could be linked with one of the long-standing, but often narrowly interpreted, functions of Faith & Order, namely the study of the theological implications of the ecumenical movement.

To follow this 'function' through would indicate a broader view of its task than that hitherto adopted by Faith & Order, and one which would be consistent with its wider membership. A powerful influence in the course taken by the movement to date, has been the type of Western 'representative theologian' which its activities have attracted. Indeed, its history could be used as evidence to support
the argument that creative theology rarely results from
the work of theologians who are directly or indirectly
representing the churches to which they belong. There
are so many constraints on such participation (as some
‘great theologians’ have appreciated) that the results
tend to lack relevance to the quest for unity.

Faith & Order’s choice of topics shows a high degree
of the influence of what D. E. Jenkins calls “the heads
of the theological industry”.¹ These topics have, in general,
been chosen with a particular aim in view, namely the attain-
ment of doctrinal consensus. If such a consensus is the
foundation for unity, then ‘doctors of the Church’ must
write their own agendas and remove barriers to unity. If,
however, the search for unity is more broadly conceived
as the ‘growing together’ of Christians whose lives are
lived on many interrelated levels, then representation and
agendas will be differently understood. Indeed, the tradit­
onal form of meeting may be considered unsuitable.

Such a change in direction amounts to an altered
understanding of theology. It has been a particular
conception of the role of theology which has meant that
‘comprehensiveness’ has commonly been interpreted as
implying only that all confessional positions should be
represented. But a broader view of unity indicates a
larger part in consultation for people who are not ‘academic
theologians’ or ‘church leaders’. And wider geographical
representation also follows, in order to take into account
the diversity of Christianity; a broader view of unity
implies that Faith & Order would have to 'hand over' the
tradition in the way advocated by Allen early in this
century. The trend, which involves a less clearly
defined role for Faith & Order (and which is a necessary
mutation in response to a new situation) has been in
these directions, but it has not gone far.

The method which would appear to follow from such a
role, is one in which participants endeavour to find theo-
logical meaning in the process of relating Christians'
understanding of God's revelation to the circumstances
and lives of men today: in the correlation of theological
and empirical meaning. The type of approach employed in
the 'Spirit, Order and Organization' study, and in the 1968
Zagorsk meeting, show greater potential for making such a
correlation than the efforts of 1971. The main reason
for this difference of potential could lie in the fact that,
whereas selection for the former studies was broad, Louvain
continued to reflect what has been described as "a delicate
balance between dependable churchmanship and theological
expertise." Little attention was therefore paid at Louvain
to the search for a method which might bring together the
'contexts' of 'Church' and 'mankind'. In order to develop
an approach which merits the description 'inter-contextual',
it is not sufficient for Christians to be conscious of
'concrete problems' facing them. They need also to be able
to correlate the two contexts.

Even the broader role of reflecting theologically on
divisive issues is difficult to reconcile with modern
The question was raised again at length at the Working Committee meeting in 1972, when the main concern was with Faith & Order's relationship to the new WCC 'Unit I', of which it has been made part.

1 The question was raised again at length at the Working Committee meeting in 1972, when the main concern was with Faith & Order's relationship to the new WCC 'Unit I', of which it has been made part.

pragmatism. Espousal of what amounts to an 'end of ideology' thesis is now common, not least in ecumenical circles. It is a significant commentary on theology in general (a theology to which Faith & Order has itself been a contributor) that a call for theological reflection is now frequently held to be tantamount to a desire to obstruct the fulfilment of the Church's necessary tasks in serving the world. The role of theology is extremely precarious, and one way of demonstrating this is to study Faith & Order's history and, in particular, its perennial fears for its own status.¹

It is, in part, the way that Faith & Order has projected its self-image as an aristocratic 'think-tank' of the WCC, which has denied it the possibility of an important role in that organization. And yet, there is a sense in which these very aspirations have fulfilled a function from the point of view of the WCC. As the ecumenical movement has increasingly experienced the participation of the Orthodox Churches and of the Roman Catholic Church, so the WCC has found it necessary to show that it is something more than a Christian equivalent to the United Nations: that it is concerned with the great spiritual truths of Christianity, and with a more profound unity than mere practical co-operation. Faith & Order can be used to show that the WCC is not theologically impotent, and some position for the movement is assured while it continues to fulfil this function.

The subject of its relationship with the WCC leads to a question which is inescapable when studying Faith & Order, namely 'Was Headlam in some sense right when he warned the
movement to keep clear of the WCC at all costs? It is of course difficult to imagine what would have happened to Faith & Order had it remained independent. Yet one can say that Headlam's recommendation might have been right on two counts. First, it is likely that independence would have meant that the movement diverted less of its energy into a search for 'breakthroughs', and for status in an organization which it has often feared was hostile to its aims. Secondly, detachment might have stimulated interest in a wider field (although this would hardly have pleased Headlam) and enabled Faith & Order to reflect, without being seen merely as the 'ideology department' of the WCC.

However, the balance of the argument would appear to be against Headlam's advice. The movement would almost certainly have had great difficulty in surviving financially had it not been for support which has come through the WCC. But, more important than this factor, is the probability that continued separation would have led to a narrowing of interest and a lessening of achievement, given the fact that Headlam's reason for making a stand against the WCC was the wish to retain exactly that style which is now seen to have little relevance. Any move which served to accentuate the style recommended by Headlam would have reduced Faith & Order's effectiveness. Indeed, even as the course of the movement has turned out, it is plausible to argue that its 'results' have been the prisoner of the distinctive style which it has adopted.
In other words, the way in which task has often been carried out, through conferences and committees of experts who issue statements and reports, has ensured that the task of realizing unity has only been achieved to a very limited extent. The rhetorical results of 'theology by show of hands', which are then 'recommended to the churches for study', are the products of a particular way of conducting theological discourse, which in turn implies a certain conception of unity. But it is paradoxical that, as the facilities for international conferences have become ever greater, so their appropriateness as a means for theological reflection has declined. They had a function in days when mutual ignorance was massive, and when it was necessary to create the atmosphere for starting a new movement. Now, however, unity is seen as a more comprehensive matter, for which statements of doctrinal consensus are only one of many bases. This implies a more diffuse study method than there is at present, and one where the initiative lies more with the churches than with Faith & Order Staff.

It follows that 'conciliarity' is inappropriate as the prime aim of Faith & Order. The value of the notion is that it encourages the conviction that there are a number of ways in which Christians can become mutually accountable, of which this is one. Another is so-called 'organic union'. Although 'organic union' has old-fashioned connotations, it does mean that the Christians involved in a scheme have not only to take each other seriously (a result unlikely in the almost inevitable contextual relativism of current ideas like
'centred diversity'), but also to entertain the possibility of sacrifice in the cause of unity.

An acceptable answer has still to be found to the complex problems of co-operation and union in very varied situations. Unity is an eschatological ideal which can be worked towards in a number of ways in the sphere of 'faith and order'. In this work, there is a role for an international body to 'service' the various efforts being made, and at the same time to provide a centre for theological reflection on what the ecumenical movement should entail.
APPENDIX ONE

LIST OF CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS


1927 Lausanne: First World Conference on Faith and Order.

1937 Oxford: World Conference on Life and Work: 'Church, Community and State'.

1937 Edinburgh: Second World Conference on Faith and Order.

1948 Amsterdam: First Assembly of the WCC.

1952 Lund: Third World Conference on Faith and Order.

1954 Evanston: Second Assembly of the WCC.

1961 New Delhi: Third Assembly of the WCC.

1963 Montreal: Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order.

1964 Aarhus: Meeting of the Faith & Order Commission.

1966 Geneva: 'Christians in the Technical and Social Revolutions of Our Time'. Organized by 'Church and Society' - the part of the WCC which has inherited many of the interests of Life & Work.


1968 Uppsala: Fourth Assembly of the WCC.

1971 Louvain: Meeting of the Faith & Order Commission.
APPENDIX TWO

LIST OF SOME PARTICIPANTS MENTIONED

Anderson, C. P., Episcopal Church (Anglican), USA, Bishop. President of Episcopal Church’s Joint Commission 1910-20.

Baillie, D. M., Church of Scotland (Presbyterian), Scotland, Professor. Chairman of Section III at Edinburgh; Chairman of Commission on Intercommunion (to 1952).

Brent, C. M., Episcopal Church (Anglican), USA, Bishop. Chairman of 1920 Conference and of its Continuation Committee; President at Lausanne and Chairman of its Continuation Committee (to 1929).

Bridston, K. R., Evangelical Luthern Church, USA, Dr. Secretary 1957-61.

Brilioth, Y. T., Church of Sweden (Lutheran), Sweden, Archbishop. Chairman of Edinburgh Continuation Committee 1947-8; President at Lund; Chairman of the Faith & Order Commission 1948-57.

Brown, R. W., Episcopal Church (Anglican), USA, Mr. Secretary 1924-33.

Calhoun, R. L., United Church of Christ, USA, Professor. Chairman of American Section of Commission on Christ and the Church (to 1961).


Florovsky, G., Greek Orthodox, USA, Professor.

Gardiner, R. H., Episcopal Church (Anglican), USA, Mr (a lawyer). Secretary 1910-24.

Handspicker, M. B., United Church of Christ, USA, Dr. Secretary 1963-7.

Headlam, A. C., Church of England (Anglican), England, Bishop. Chairman of Section V at Lausanne; Chairman of Commissions I and III after Lausanne.

Hodgson, L., Church of England (Anglican), England, Professor. Theological Secretary 1932-52; Secretary 1933-48.

Horton, D., Congregationalist, USA, Dean. Chairman of Section III at Lund; Chairman of the Faith & Order Commission 1957-63.
Hromadka, J. L., Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, Czechoslovakia, Professor.

Käsemann, E., Evangelical Church in Germany, Germany, Professor. (More a visitor than a 'participant', but influential nevertheless).

Manning, W. T., Episcopal Church (Anglican), USA, Bishop.

Mehl, R., Reformed Church of Alsace and Lorraine, France, Professor.

Minear, P. S., United Church of Christ, USA, Professor. Director 1951-3; Chairman of the Faith & Order Commission 1963-7.

Nelson, J. R., Methodist, USA, Professor. Secretary 1953-7; Chairman of Working Committee (from 1967).

Newbigin, J. E. L., Church of South India, Scotland, Bishop.

Nygren, A., Church of Sweden (Lutheran), Sweden, Bishop. Chairman of European Section of Commission on Christ and the Church (to 1963).

Outler, A. C., Methodist, USA, Professor. Chairman of N. American Section of Commission on Tradition and Traditions (to 1963).


Richards, G. W., Evangelical and Reformed Church, USA, Professor. Chairman of Section III at Edinburgh; Chairman of American Co-operating Committee on the Church (to 1952).

Schlink, E. W. L., Evangelical Church in Germany, Germany, Professor.

Sittler, J. A., United Lutheran Church, USA, Professor. Chairman of N. American Section of Commission on Worship (to 1963).

Temple, W., Church of England (Anglican), England, Archbishop. Chairman of Lausanne Continuation Committee (from 1929); President at Edinburgh and Chairman of its Continuation Committee.

Tomkins, O. S., Church of England (Anglican), England, Bishop. Secretary 1948-53; Chairman of Working Committee 1952-67; Chairman of Future Committee 1957-60; Chairman at Montreal.

Torrance, T. F., Church of Scotland (Presbyterian), Scotland, Professor.
Vischer, L., Swiss Protestant Church Federation, Switzerland, Dr. Research Secretary 1961-6; Director (from 1966).

Visser’t Hooft, W. A., Swiss Protestant Church Federation, Holland, Dr. General Secretary of WCC's Provisional Committee (to 1948); General Secretary of WCC 1948-66.
The bibliography is in three parts:

a) Faith & Order papers cited
b) General Bibliography
c) Archive material cited

a) FAITH & ORDER PAPERS CITED

Note: Papers are in the WCC library.

FO 1-32 : Faith & Order papers 1st series published by the Joint Commission of the Protestant Episcopal Church (USA) appointed to arrange for a World Conference on Faith and Order. The term 'unofficial' was applied to a few of these papers; they were deemed worthy of publication, but the Commission did not hold itself responsible for opinions expressed therein.

FO 33-103 : Faith & Order papers 1st series published by the Continuation Committee of the 1920 Preliminary Meeting, succeeded by that of the 1927 conference and finally by that of the 1937 conference.

FDC 1-59 : Faith & Order papers 2nd series published by the Commission on Faith & Order of the WCC.

F0s

1 : Report and Resolution of the Protestant Episcopal Church suggesting a Conference, and Report and Resolutions of the National Council of the Congregational Churches (1910).

3 : Report of the Committee on Plan and Scope (1911).


14 : An official statement by the Joint Commission of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the USA (1912).


24 : A First Preliminary Conference (1913).

28 : The Object and Method of Conference (1915).
45: Minutes of the Continuation Committee of the World Conference on Faith and Order, Berne (1926).
50: Records of the Continuation Committee of the World Conference on Faith and Order, Maloja, Switzerland (1929).
53: Records of the Continuation Committee of the World Conference on Faith and Order, Mürren, Switzerland (1930).
61: Meeting of the Continuation Committee, Hertenstein, Switzerland (1934).
66: Meeting of the Continuation Committee, Clarens, Switzerland (1936).
85 : Next Steps on the Road to a United Church. Report prepared by the Commission on the Church’s Unity in Life and Worship (1937).

86 : Questions Proposed for Discussion by Section IV of the Edinburgh Conference (1937).

88 : Notes for the use of Section I at Edinburgh (1937).

91 : Meeting of the Continuation Committee, Clarens, Switzerland (1938).

92 : Meeting of the Continuation Committee, Clarens, Switzerland (1939).


101 : The Executive Committee at Geneva (1946).

102 : Meeting of the Continuation Committee, Clarens, Switzerland (1947).

FOCs

1 : Continuation Committee/Commission: Meetings at Amsterdam and Baarn, Holland (1948).


4 : Minutes of Executive Committee, Bières, France (1950).


8 : Meetings, Commission and Executive Committee, Clarens, Switzerland (1951).


11c : Survey of Church Union Negotiations (1957).


17 : Minutes of Working Committee, Bossey, Switzerland (1953).


23: Minutes of Working Committee, Herrenalb, Germany (1956).


27: Minutes of Working and Future Committees, Spittal, Austria (1959).


45: Minutes of Working Committee, Bad Saarow, Germany (1965).


49: An Ecumenical Exercise: essays on 4 churches outside the WCC's membership (1967).
50 : New Directions in Faith and Order. Minutes, Reports, Documents of Commission Meeting, Bristol (1967).


59 : Reports and Documents of Commission Meeting, Louvain (1971).

b) GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

Note: This does not include books and articles mentioned only once and not of central interest. Bibliographies may be found in the books by Fey, Rouse, Siegmund-Schultze and Vischer (A Documentary History ...).

Official Reports


General


------ 'Our Next Task', *Christendom*, vol. iv, no. 1, 1939.


------ 'Faith and Order's Vision of Unity', *Ecumenical Review*, vol. xii, 1960.


Minutes and Reports of meetings of the Central Committee of the WCC, published by the WCC, copies e.g. in the WCC library.

Monod, W., Après La Journée, Paris, 1938.


Papers of the Faith and Order Consultation on 'Spirit, Order and Organization', Concept no. 10, 1965 (Concept consists of occasional papers published by the Department on Studies in Evangelism of the WCC).


------, 'Where do we go from Lund?', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol. vi, no. 1, 1953.


Zabriskie, A. C., Bishop Brent - Crusader for Christian Unity, Philadelphia, n.d.

c) ARCHIVE MATERIAL CITED

Note: Material is arranged, as near as possible, in chronological order.

Minutes of the December 1920 Executive Committee Meeting: '1920-31' boxes.

Letter sent by Continuation Committee in 1922-3 to the churches asking them to a conference in 1925: '1920-31' boxes.

Notice circulated in 1926 cancelling the Lausanne Programme in FO 41: '1920-31' boxes.


Letter E. Brunner to L. Hodgson dated 19.5.34 giving comments on Faith & Order: '1927-46' boxes.
'The Place of Lausanne in the Ecumenical Movement', Comment by Continuation Committee in 1934 on FO 70: '1931-7' box.

'Programme for the Meeting of the Continuation Committee' (1938): '1927-46' boxes.

Correspondence between R. N. Flew and G. W. Richards concerning the Commission on The Church: 'The Church' boxes.

Correspondence concerning the position of Faith & Order on becoming part of the WCC: 'box 29'.

Memorandum by R. N. Flew for 1949 Commission meeting on 'The Church': 'The Church' boxes.

Numbered paper FOL 3 (1951) giving L. Hodgson's views on the place of Faith & Order: 'Lund' boxes.

Minutes of Section I at Lund: 'Lund' boxes.

Minutes of the Business Committee at Lund: 'Lund' boxes.

A speech by Hodgson to the Lund Conference; FOL Conf 16: 'Lund' boxes.


Preparatory papers for Evanston on 'Our Oneness in Christ and our Disunity as Churches' (duplicated): 'Evanston' boxes.

Duplicated letter from A. Nygren to the European Section of the Theological Commission on Christ and the Church dated 4.1.54: 'Christ and the Church' boxes.

Correspondence with R. L. Calhoun concerning appointment of members of the Christ and the Church Commission: 'Christ and the Church' boxes.

'Towards the Second Assembly of the WCC', Introductory Leaflet No. 1 (1954): 'Unnumbered Pamphlets' box.


Papers FOC/WC/66A (J. R. Nelson) and FOC/WC/66D (J. E. L. Newbigin) - 1958: 'Future Committee' boxes.

'Some Summary Statements on the Work of the American Section of the Commission on Christ and the Church', J. R. Nelson; duplicated paper July 1959: 'Christ and the Church' boxes.
Records of the visit of consultants to Madagascar in 1959: 'Church Union' boxes.

Minutes of the American Section on Tradition and Traditions for May 1961: 'Tradition and Traditions' boxes.

Plan for European Section's Report on Christ and the Church, with Minutes for Sept. 1961: 'Christ and the Church' boxes.

Minutes and Memorandum from Staff planning in Jan. 1962 for Montreal: 'Montreal' boxes.

Correspondence P. S. Miner - E. Käsemann in Feb. 1963, asking the latter to speak at Montreal.


'Collection of Reactions to and Comments on the New Delhi Statement on Unity', M. Santer (1963), duplicated paper.

'Rationale for a Faith and Order Study of Creation and Redemption', M. B. Handsicker, FO/64/6 (April 1964): 'Aarhus' boxes.

'Creation and Redemption', E. R. Hardy, FOC/142 (June 1964), 'Aarhus' boxes.

Correspondence and lists of participants, 'God in Nature and History' study: 'God in Nature and History' boxes.

Material concerning study on Spirit, Order and Organization: 'Spirit, Order and Organization' box.

FO/72/4 'Accounting for the Hope that is in us' (1972), duplicated paper.

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