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A Center conducted by the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement

Director's Desk

In December it was our honor to welcome the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. George Carey who delivered a lecture sponsored by the Anglican Centre in Rome on "Common Ecumenical Mission in a Pluralistic World". We shall long remember our evening with Dr. and Mrs. Carey.

In this *Bulletin*, we are pleased to offer the text of a lecture given at the **Centro Pro Unione** by Dr. Günther Gaßmann in the Fall of 1996. The attention of the dialogues is beginning to turn to ethical questions and we felt it opportune to invite Dr. Gaßmann to explore some of the first dialogues dealing with this theme. While with us in the Fall, Dr. Gaßmann offered some lectures in the ecumenical section of the Pontifical University of St. Thomas and held a seminar at the Waldensian Faculty of theology. We were also able to enjoy the company of Mrs. Gaßmann who was able to spend some time with us.

Mary Peter Froelicher, SHCJ has prepared the twelfth supplement to the bibliography concerning the interchurch and interconfessional theological dialogues. Because of space limitations we try to maintain the essentials regarding the dialogues, their meetings and the reactions which arise in response to their results. This material represents only a small portion of the entries which are made daily at the Centro. For those that have access to our library through the local network of U.R.B.E., we are able to offer much more information regarding other topics of ecumenical interests which are not specifically related to the official dialogues. It is our hope that in the near future we will be able to construct a Web site on the Internet. In this way we will be able to make available not only all of the holdings of our library but also the texts of the agreed statements and information dealing with each dialogue. We are currently waiting for funding from foundations so that we can begin this task. We have all of the material already gathered at the Centro and we are ready to go! Maybe some of our readers know of some foundations who would be interested in helping us make this material readily available to a world-wide public. If so, please let us know.

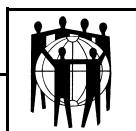
In the Fall we offered a series of lectures in Italian on "Religion, Post-Modernity and New Religious Movements and Sects". Currently we are in the process of preparing these for publication in our «Corso breve di ecumenismo». These should be available in September.

The **Centro** is in the final stages of revising the *International Directory of Ecumenical Research Centers and Publications* last published by us in 1986. So we make a last call for information concerning new ecumenical study centers or ecumenical publications so that these can be included in the revised edition. Please send these to Dr. Teresa Rossi at the **Centro Pro Unione**.

In 1998 the Society of the Atonement will celebrate the centenary of its foundation. Rev. Paul Wattson and Mother Lurana White co-founded the Society in the Episcopal Church in the USA. To mark the beginning of this celebration, the **Centro** is organizing an international symposium on Petrine ministry and the unity of the church to take place in December of 1997. Further details will be sent in the Fall concerning this event.

Kindly check your address label (especially for changes in postal codes) and if corrections are needed now or in the future, please return the label with corrections. Thank you!

James F. Puglisi, SA
Director





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— Centro Conferences

The Search for Christian Unity and Common Moral Orientations Three Case Studies

by

Günther Gaßmann

Former Director of the Faith and Order Commission

(Conference given at the **Centro Pro Unione**, Thursday, 14 November 1996)

I. Introduction: two fundamental ecumenical tasks and the problem of their interrelation

The “search for Christian unity”, the first half of title, refers to the search for the conditions and means which allow us to express visibly that unity of the Church which has already been given in Christ as a gift and calling of the triune God. It is a unity whose full or partial realization we can already now recognize in many places. The second half of the title, the search for “common moral orientations” refers to the effort to develop common ethical perspectives and orientations for common Christian moral witness and service in this world. Such perspectives and orientations are necessary to enable and shape a joint Christian response to the spiritual and material needs of humanity today. The ecumenical advance until now has been much more in the area of the search for manifesting unity than in developing common ethical perspectives and moral orientations.

My main concern in this lecture lies not with these two ecumenical tasks as such but with the little word “and” which stands between them: “The Search for Christian Unity *and* Common Moral Orientations”. There has been since the beginning of the modern ecumenical movement an awareness among many of the ecumenical pioneers that these two fundamental ecumenical tasks should not be separated from each other. The decision to bring together the movements on Faith and Order and on Life and Work as the basic components of the new World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1948 was a signal and attempt to underline this relationship and make it operational. Yet there has been an ever present tendency in ecumenical circles to place a one-sided emphasis either on the search for visible unity or, and this more generally and publicly, on the search for common Christian social-ethical orientation and transforming action. This has created tensions within the ecumenical movement and a one-sided public image of its main organizational instrument, the WCC.

An earlier attempt, inspired by the 1968 Uppsala Assembly of the WCC, to overcome this ecumenical dichotomy with the help

of the Faith and Order study on “The Unity of the Church and the Unity of Mankind” (1969-1974) led to helpful ecclesiological “bridge-building” by developing the concept of the Church as sign and instrument. The study, however, did not result in a comprehensive report.

A new and even more determined effort to interrelate theologically the work of Faith and Order on the unity of the Church and the broad range of ecumenical studies and activities orientated towards common witness and service was undertaken by Faith and Order itself. In its study on “The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community” between 1982 and 1990¹ an attempt was made to integrate the two concerns. This was done with the help of 1) a theological concept which—as a presupposition—holds together and interrelates the two main concerns, Church and humanity, in the perspective of the Kingdom of God², and 2) an ecclesiological concept in which the relation between God—Church—Humanity is expressed and interpreted by the notions of the Church as “mystery” and “prophetic sign” and increasingly also by the comprehensive concept of *koinonia*³.

This new effort was continued at the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order 1993 in Santiago de Compostela. Its theme “Towards Koinonia in Faith, Life and Witness” pointed already to the interrelation of these three basic ecclesial elements. Santiago de Compostela thereby responded to the requests for such interrelation coming from the WCC process of “Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation” with its 1990 World Convocation at Seoul, and from the Seventh Assembly of the WCC in 1991 at Canberra.

¹ *Church and World. The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of the Human Community*, Faith and Order Paper 151 (Geneva: WCC, 1990).

² *Ibid.* §§22-25.

³ *Ibid.* §§25-31 and 34-36.

II. Three studies on Church unity and common moral involvement

Thus, a new development of seriously reflecting on the interrelation between the concerns for unity and for social-ethical involvement had been initiated, and this provides the background—directly or indirectly—for the three studies which we will now consider. They were chosen from a number of ecumenical dialogues and studies because they correspond, despite their different structures and purposes, to the following criteria: (a) inclusion of official Roman Catholic participation; (b) reflection on the preconditions, forms and basic orientations of the churches' moral witness and actions; (c) focus on the relationship between the search for visible unity and ecumenical endeavors towards common moral orientations and forms of involvement.

1. *Life in Christ* — The agreed statement of ARCIC II

Between about 1992 and 1994 (there is no historical overview in the statement) the Second Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC II) prepared the Agreed Statement on *Life in Christ*⁴. The origin as well as purpose of this Statement is a reflection on and response to the question whether differences between official Anglican and Roman Catholic teaching on certain moral issues are of such kind that they justify a continuing breach in communion. Thus, a direct relation between the unity of the Church and moral orientations and involvement is established. The answer to the above question is anticipated in the introductory chapter: Anglican and Roman Catholics “derive from Scripture and Tradition the same controlling vision of the nature and destiny of humanity and share the same fundamental moral values”. This agreement calls for common witness and provides the framework for regarding existing limited disagreements on moral issues like re-marriage after divorce and methods of controlling contraception as not church-dividing⁵.

This perspective is developed in the course of the Statement and its concluding section emphasizes on the basis of the ecclesiological concept of communion the urgency of common moral responsibility and shared witness to which Anglicans and Roman Catholics are called as they seek to move towards full communion with one another.

2. *The ecumenical dialogue on moral issues* — a study of the Joint Working Group (JWG)

A similar purpose to that of *Life in Christ* was pursued by the joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC (JWG). Already since 1987 the issue of new potential sources of division in the area of personal and social ethics appeared on the agenda of the JWG. The Seventh Assembly of the WCC at Canberra in 1991 and the Roman Catholic authorities

requested the WCC to consider the potentially or actually divisive moral issues and to outline how they may be best approached in dialogue so that they may become occasions for common witness instead of deepening divisions. Two consultations in Rome in 1993 and at Tantur, Jerusalem, in 1994 and the revision of their reports in the JWG led to the acceptance in May 1995 by the plenary of the JWG of the Study Document *The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues. Potential Sources of Common Witness or of Divisions*⁶.

The document is analytical and descriptive. It does not provide an answer to the original question whether - and which kind of differences on moral teachings may be potentially divisive. But there is a clear effort to show the interrelation between the efforts for visible Christian unity and the urgency of common ethical perspectives and common moral witness even while the churches are still divided. There are helpful suggestions for ecumenical dialogue on divergent moral positions and for strengthening the common witness of the churches—a continuing main theme of the JWG—by both proclaiming the gospel as well as announcing moral values and orientations in the public realm.

3. *The WCC study process on ecclesiology and ethics*

The third example of an effort to interrelate the search for the visible unity of the Church with the search for common moral witness and involvement is the multilateral WCC study process on “Ecclesiology and Ethics” in which also Roman Catholics participated. The purpose of the study was to help overcome the ecumenical dichotomy between an often one-sided emphasis either on theological dialogue as central for the ecumenical task of manifesting the unity of Christ's Church or on common Christian witness and service as obedient response to God's saving and transforming purpose for humanity and creation. The study built on the insights of the Faith and Order study on *The Unity of the Church and the Renewal of Human Community* 1982-1989 (cf. above) and of the WCC process on *Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation* (JPIC) 1986-1990. It responded to requests from the WCC Executive Committee 1986 at Kinshasa and the Seventh Assembly of the WCC 1991 at Canberra. The study was jointly carried out by the Faith and Order Commission and Unit III of the WCC. Three consultations with their papers and reports represent the results of this work between 1993 and 1996.

The *first consultation* in Rønne, Denmark, February 1993, considered the relationship between *koinonia*, highlighted by Faith and Order as the comprehensive interpretative concept for the Church and its unity and the work on justice, peace and the integrity of creation by Unit III of the WCC. The Report of the

⁴ *Life in Christ. Morals, Communion and the Church*, (London: Church House Publishing/Catholic Truth Society, 1994). Hereafter cited *Life* followed by § number.

⁵ *Life* §1.

⁶ *The Ecumenical Dialogue on Moral Issues. Potential Sources of Common Witness or of Divisions*. A Study Document of the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches. Reprinted from *The Ecumenical Review* 48, 2 (1996), pp. 143-154. Hereafter cited *JWG* followed by § number.

consultation *Costly Unity*⁷ proposes the concept of “the Church as moral community” and seeks to broaden the *koinonia*-concept in order to include in it also the experience of common Christian moral involvement and thereby consider such involvement as integral to the nature of the Church. Consequently the concern for unity and the concern for witness become two aspects of the same reality.

The *second consultation* took place in November 1994 at Tantar (Jerusalem) and its Report and papers are published under the title *Costly Commitment*⁸. The Report again uses and develops an ecclesiological framework for its reflection on the relationship between ecclesiology/unity and ethics/moral involvement. The sacraments, especially the eucharist are interpreted as the place where the interrelation between ecclesiology and moral involvement is grounded. The Report concludes by outlining the important task of moral formation and discernment as implications of the ethical character of the Church, the “ethos of the household of faith”.

This task of moral formation is with many helpful suggestions further developed in the Report of the *third consultation* at Johannesburg in June 1996 on *Costly Obedience. Toward an Ecumenical Communion of Moral Witnessing*⁹. Such formation aims at the building up of a communion of moral witnessing which has in the WCC its major instrument. This Report was drafted by one of the participants, Prof. Lewis S. Mudge, and is therefore shaped by a more personal and verbose style. It includes some highly questionable perceptions of the author. Thus, though the Report contains many helpful observations it is less representative and is also unfortunately not a concluding summing-up of the whole study process on “Ecclesiology and Ethics”.

III. Church unity and common moral orientation and involvement

The three dialogues and studies and the resulting five reports just introduced have had different purposes and the themes they discuss cover a broad range of issues. I would like to bring together those considerations in the texts which deal with the interrelation between the search for visible unity of the Church and common moral values, orientations and involvement. There are other interesting themes and aspects in the texts which cannot

be included here.

1. *The presupposition: the Church as communion/koinonia*

As in most recent ecumenical texts the concept of *communion* or *koinonia* is the predominant¹⁰ term for describing the Church and the unity of the churches. I have always seen one of the “attractions” of this concept in its comprehensive and integrating character which allows to hold together in a coherent way the diverse elements of the nature, life, mission and unity of the Church. This is confirmed by our texts. They seek to link as closely as possible the two dimensions of the Church (a) faith—sacraments—spirituality—worship and (b) life—morals—mission—witness in the perspective of the steps towards the visible unity of the Church. The concept of communion-koinonia provides this linkage. “The theme of communion illumines, we believe, not only the reality of the Church as a worshipping community, but also the form and fullness of Christian life in the world”¹¹. Or, more explicitly, communion means “that the members of the Church share a responsibility for discerning the action of the Holy Spirit in the contemporary world, for shaping a truly human response, and for resolving the ensuing moral perplexities with integrity and fidelity to the Gospel”¹².

This integration of the ethical/moral dimension of Christian and ecclesial life into the concept of communion is shared by the other texts. Yet the reports of the WCC study seem to go one step further by insisting that involvement in the struggles of humanity is not only an expression or consequence of communion but “*generates this koinonia*”¹³. Consequently *koinonia* is presented as an apt term both for the experience of JPIC as a conciliar process and, for the experience of the nature of the Church itself¹⁴. The second WCC text, *Costly Commitment* continues this perspective in a more carefully formulated way by speaking about the “possible ecclesial significance of experiences...of community arising through work for justice, peace or stewardship of creation”¹⁵.

This perspective of regarding *koinonia* created by and experienced in moral involvement as a manifestation of ecclesial reality in its own right is further underlined by reflections in *Costly Obedience*¹⁶. Here the relation between “sacramental communion” and “moral communion”, i.e. whether moral communion may perhaps proceed where sacramental communion has not yet been achieved, is discussed as if we are dealing with

⁷ T.F. Best & W. Granberg-Michaelson (eds.), *Koinonia and Justice, Peace and Creation: Costly Unity*. Presentations and Reports from the World Council of Churches' Consultation in Rønne, Denmark, February 1993, (Geneva: WCC, 1993), pp. 83-105. Hereafter cited *Unity* followed by § number.

⁸ T.F. Best & M. Robra, (eds.), *Ecclesiology and Ethics: Costly Commitment*. Presentations and Reports from the World Council of Churches' Consultation in Jerusalem, November 1994, (Geneva: WCC, 1995), pp. 61-81. Hereafter cited *Commitment* followed by § number.

⁹ Mimeographed 1996. Hereafter cited *Obedience* followed by section number and § number.

¹⁰ though not exclusive, e.g. *Unity* §§25-34; *Commitment* §65.

¹¹ *Life* §90.

¹² *Ibid.* §97.

¹³ *Unity* §5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* §5.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* §36.

¹⁶ *Obedience* §§103-105.

two distinct ecclesial realities despite the fact that the grounding of moral communion in the sacraments is affirmed. Obviously, this represents an effort to transpose the existing practice of Christians cooperating and witnessing together on an ecclesiological level and quality even where sacramental communion does not yet exist. But it is a difference between acknowledging the experience of Christian community in cooperation and common witness and employing for this purpose a double and therefore false concept of communion.

But where the texts succeed to define ethical commitment and moral involvement as an integral part *within* a comprehensive concept of communion/koinonia of faith, life and witness they have rendered an important ecumenical service.

2. *The framework: ecclesiology and ethics*

We encounter the same concern as the one just described when we consider the reflections on ecclesiology and ethics in our texts. It underlined that there is “a growing consensus on the need to affirm and emphasize the ethical character of the Church” (another expression requiring clarification)¹⁷. This ecclesiological view of ethics has one of its presuppositions, according to *Costly Unity*, in the new development that “the community of disciples rather than the individual Christian is the bearer of the tradition and the form and matrix of the moral life”¹⁸. There should be no separation between the Gospel we proclaim and the life we live. Doctrine and morals are closely interconnected¹⁹. Accordingly, references to the Church as sign and sacrament of a renewed humanity always include Christian discipleship and service²⁰. This inclusion of ethics into ecclesiology is rooted in the experience of worship and in the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist. Here, a transformative moral process of justice-seeking, peace-making, caring for our planet is initiated and sustained²¹.

This integration of ethics into ecclesiology is even more focused when *Costly Unity* states that the “being (*esse*) of the Church is at stake in the justice, peace and integrity of creation process”²². Consequently, the “Church not only has, but is, a social ethic, a *koinonia* ethic” or a “moral community”²³. The distinction between “sacramental communion” and “moral communion” in *Costly Discipleship*²⁴ finds now a parallel expression in the distinction between “eucharistic *koinonia*” and

“ethical *koinonia*”²⁵. In conclusion, “there can be no ecclesiology without ethics and no ethics without ecclesiology”²⁶.

These highly ambiguous phrases and statements are, however, modified or differentiated in the WCC texts — the fortunate result of group-work. The Church, it is stated in *Costly Unity*, “is not *constituted* by or dependent for its ongoing existence upon the moral activities of its neighbors”²⁷. And in *Costly Commitment* it is affirmed that “the Church does not rest on moral achievement, but on justification, on God's justice and not on our own” (it must have been a Lutheran who inserted this sentence into the report)²⁸. It is on this basis the report goes on to say, “that we can affirm that moral engagement, common action and reflection are intrinsic to the very life and being of the Church”²⁹.

We can agree with such a formulation and the statement of the JWG that the Church provides a “moral environment” for witness and service, for the formation of conscience and the development of ethical orientations³⁰. The general intention of the texts is important in so far as they affirm that the Church, created and sustained by the action of the triune God, is called by God and equipped by the Gospel and sacraments to be God's instrument of moral witness and involvement in the world. This witness and involvement thus belongs to the nature of the Church and is not an appendix to it. This is clearly an ecumenical convergence — but it needs further clarification.

3. *The content: moral values and orientations*

The main purpose of the three dialogues and studies under consideration was 1) to substantiate the interrelation of ecclesiology and ethics and thereby help to overcome the dichotomy within the ecumenical movement, and 2) to deal with the question of the significance of divergent ethical teachings and positions for the unity of the Church. Because of these emphases the actual content of moral teaching, formation and witness did not receive a systematic and consistent consideration. Moreover, this is to be regretted given the urgent need in the present world situation for a common Christian social witness. However, there are a number of scattered statements which we can summarize in the hope that they may be further developed in the necessary continuation of the work on ecclesiology and ethics.

Let us begin with more general considerations. The report *Costly Obedience*³¹ raises the important question whether universal principles or global moral values can be still identified

¹⁷ *Commitment* §11.

¹⁸ *Unity* §18.

¹⁹ *Life* §2.

²⁰ *Ibid.* §§19-22; 90.

²¹ *Obedience* §§56, 62, 95; *Unity* §§8 and 9.

²² *Unity* §5.

²³ *Ibid.* §§5 and 6.

²⁴ *Cf.* above.

²⁵ *Commitment* §50.

²⁶ *Ibid.* §22.

²⁷ *Unity* §7.2.

²⁸ *Ibid.* §21.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *JWG IV*.

³¹ *Obedience* §85.

and are helpful in the kind of pluralistic world we live in. It is a world whose post-modernist deconstructive intellectual tendencies repudiate all large systems of thought. With an ideological bias the report clearly and repeatedly follows this trend by questioning the validity of global moral concepts and principles³². It seems to me slightly ridiculous when the earlier report *Costly Unity* observed that “now the universal framework of Christianity itself is under radical attack”³³ and a later report of this same study process joins exactly this attack. But *Costly Obedience* is forced to modify its refusal of global visions by the admission³⁴ that at the moment when the WCC reconsiders its calling—a reference to the WCC study “Towards Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches”—larger perspectives cannot be given up. And the real question is, indeed, raised when this report, after all, admits that communion in moral witness requires certain generally accepted “signposts”, and that for such communion enough agreement about the content of that witness must be found³⁵.

The texts seem to agree that the content of such moral witness and involvement, of basic moral values and orientations can be found in the normative witness of Holy Scripture, the interpretation of this witness throughout the Tradition of the Church, the insights gained from involvement in ethical reflection and social issues, and critical openness to the insights of human knowledge and science. This may in some Christian traditions also include a perception of an order that reflects the wisdom and goodness of the Creator as well as contours of a natural morality, sometimes interpreted as “natural law”³⁶. In a similar direction the JWG says that “Christians agree that there is a moral universe grounded in the wisdom and will of God”³⁷. Indeed, affirms the JWG, there has been a long tradition of broad unity in moral teaching and practice. When differences of moral principles developed within divided Christianity these have finally “led today to such a pluralism of moral frameworks and positions within and between the ecclesial traditions that some positions appear to be in sharp tension, even in contradiction”³⁸.

In order to respond to this challenge it is helpful to point to the indications of common ground in our texts. To the common sources of moral values mentioned above one can add the theological argument that it is the redemption won by Jesus Christ which carries with it the promise of a new life of freedom from

the domination of sin³⁹. Through moral formation such a life aims at living a righteous life and influencing positively the well-being of the societies in which Christians live⁴⁰, and to contribute thus to the flourishing and fulfillment of that humanity for which all people have been created⁴¹.

A number of basic moral values and orientations for the practice of such a redeemed life of individuals and of the Church are mentioned, but they are not, as was mentioned before, developed in any fuller and systematic way. Among them are: the respect and reverence for the dignity and sanctity of each person created in the image of God;⁴² God's gift of freedom to be exercised in responsiveness and interdependence;⁴³ the Christian witness against war and for peace and the new attention given to non-violent resolution of conflict;⁴⁴ a life marked by responsibility within community and in relation to God, to society and nature;⁴⁵ the fundamental equality of women and men;⁴⁶ commitment to social justice;⁴⁷ the option for the poor⁴⁸ and solidarity⁴⁹, together with a critique of every form of society based on the unrestrained pursuit of wealth and power;⁵⁰ the necessity of law in a sinful world to preserve order and to protect and serve the common good and to ensure justice and peace;⁵¹ the rejection of euthanasia;⁵² the call “to transcend loyalty to blood and soil, nation and ethnic or class heritage in the name of the God who is one and whose creation is one”;⁵³ Anglicans and Roman Catholics (and other traditions) “continue to discern and uphold in marriage a God-given pattern and significance”;⁵⁴ and there is the new and expanding emphasis on the imperative for responsible stewardship

³² *Ibid.* §§50, 77, 92, 112.

³³ *Unity* §40.

³⁴ *Obedience* §85.

³⁵ *Ibid.* §§93, 108.

³⁶ Roman Catholics and Anglicans in *Life* §9.

³⁷ *JWG* V, §1.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Life* §18.

⁴⁰ *JWG* II, §5.

⁴¹ *Life* §6.

⁴² *Commitment* §16; *JWG* II, §3 and II, §5.

⁴³ *Life* §§1, 5, 7.

⁴⁴ *Life* §1; *JWG* II, §5; *Commitment* §16.

⁴⁵ *Life* §7.

⁴⁶ *Commitment* §16; *JWG* II, §5.

⁴⁷ *JWG* II, §3; *Life* §1.

⁴⁸ *Commitment* §16.

⁴⁹ *JWG* II, §3.

⁵⁰ *Life* §21.

⁵¹ *Life* §95.

⁵² *Ibid.* §1.

⁵³ *Unity* §7.6; *Commitment* §16.

⁵⁴ *Life* §59.

of creation⁵⁵.

One could add further fundamental moral values and orientations from other ecumenical statements. In addition, this could be enriched by the vast material from official Roman Catholic social teaching. Such an effort should be undertaken in order 1) to test the degree and nature of ecumenical agreement and convergence —most probably rather extensive— on fundamental moral values and orientations, and 2) to provide a broader and more substantial basis for common ethical reflections and moral witness in addressing the pressing needs of humanity and the threats to contemporary history.

4. *The goal: unity in faith and common moral values and witness*

This basic task of common Christian ethical reflection and moral witness is affirmed by the JWG when it refers to the increasing urgency in the ecumenical movement and in the relationships between “churches to address those moral issues which all persons face and to communicate moral guidance to church members and society at large”⁵⁶. There are, this report continues, also renewed expectations in and beyond the churches that religious communities can and should offer moral orientation in the public arena. “Can the churches together already offer moral guidance as their contribution to the common good, amidst experienced confusion and controversy?”⁵⁷ Accordingly, Christians are called to promote a global and ecumenical perception of basic human relationships and values and to strengthen instruments of cooperation for dealing with the serious issues confronting humanity today⁵⁸.

How is this calling and task related to the search for visible unity? How can we now respond, on the basis of the material presented to the initial question about the meaning of the “and” in the title “The Search for Christian Unity *and* Common Moral Orientations”? It is clear that our texts interpret the “and” not simply as connecting the two elements of the title. Their whole concern is to interpret the “and” as referring to a close interrelation and integration: “Those who share one faith in Christ will share one life in Christ”⁵⁹. There is a fundamental relation between *koinonia* and ethics:⁶⁰ unity and ethical engagement belong together⁶¹. In the same direction *Costly Unity* mentions that the interconnectedness between the search for visible unity and the work for justice, peace and the integrity of

creation has been underlined in several recent ecumenical texts⁶².

It is, however, in contradiction to such interconnectedness when *Costly Obedience* states that in comparison to the not yet achieved sacramental communion “a moral community of the baptized, struggling with issues of justice in the life of the world, could, for now, be the most visible and tangible lived expression of the unity that is given us in Jesus Christ”⁶³. To make things worse and misusing an often employed phrase, the report says in another place that “some form of visible expression is needed if we are to nurture toward fulfillment the ‘real but imperfect’ moral communion that already exists among Christian communities of faith”. The WCC may offer the space for such expression⁶⁴. While many will not deny that in such groups a sense of Christian community and unity is experienced⁶⁵ this new way of dividing up the Church and its unity into two “communities” will not help to promote the important aim of the WCC study on “Ecclesiology and Ethics”.

The close interrelation of the search for visible unity and for common moral orientations leads to two consequences. *First*, it is asserted that the existing divisions between the churches have also contributed to disagreements on moral issues and, vice versa, that such disagreements have had an effect on ecclesial divisions⁶⁶. Divisions on faith and order and life and work have prevented a unified witness⁶⁷. A lack of ecumenical dialogue on moral issues constitutes another obstacle for the proclamation of the one Gospel⁶⁸. This close connection implies, *second*, that the resolution of moral disagreement and the agreement on fundamental moral orientations will be a significant part of the process towards full communion, while, in turn, a fuller degree of communion can help to resolve disagreements on morals⁶⁹.

Perhaps the theologically most appropriate vision of the relation between the search for visible unity and for common moral orientation, witness and service, is expressed in the

⁵⁵ *Commitment* §16; *JWG II*, §5.

⁵⁶ *JWG I*, thesis.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* I, §2.

⁵⁸ *Life* §§100 and 103.

⁵⁹ *Life* preface.

⁶⁰ *Unity* §18.

⁶¹ *Commitment* §§18 and 15.

⁶² *Unity* §§2-4. The texts mentioned are *Church and World...*, *op. cit.*; paragraphs of a preparatory paper for the Faith and Order World Conference in Santiago de Compostela in 1993; §20 of the Eucharist section of the BEM document: the central affirmation in *Now is the Time*, The Final Document and Other Texts from the World Convocation on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, Seoul, Republic of Korea, 5-12 March 1990, (Geneva: WCC, 1990), and §2.1 of the statement of the WCC Assembly at Canberra in 1991 on “The Unity of the Church as Koinonia: Gift and Calling”.

⁶³ *Obedience* §67.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* §99.

⁶⁵ *Cf. Life* §§104 and 105.

⁶⁶ *Life* §§2, 53, 89.

⁶⁷ *Commitment* §4.

⁶⁸ *JWG Guidelines*.

⁶⁹ *Life* §§11 and 99.

document of the JWG: “God, who through the Spirit leads Christians to manifest the unity of the Church, calls the churches, while still divided, to common witness; that is, together in Christian discipleship they are to manifest whatever divine gifts of truth and life they already share and experience”⁷⁰. It is not only in the nature of the Church, but, indeed, in the action of the Triune God that the relationship and coherence of the two fundamental ecumenical tasks is grounded.

IV. Conclusion: achievements and future tasks

A number of conclusions follow from the rich material which we could only summarize and consider in some of its aspects.

1. It is to be affirmed that the ecumenical efforts both towards manifesting the unity of Christ's Church *and* towards developing common moral orientations and witness and service in a broken world have been and are fundamental ecumenical tasks in this century. They will also in the future remain at the center of the ecumenical movement despite all changing paradigms, visions and situations, because they are God-given tasks and not simply good or even necessary human projects.

2. Each one of these fundamental tasks has its own significance and scope. It is, therefore, absolutely legitimate that ecumenical efforts and activities have their focus on either one of these tasks. They have different intermediate goals and working methods. A necessary ecumenical division of labor is not in itself a refusal of relationships.

3. However, our survey has shown the increasing theological reflection on the need to interrelate these two fundamental tasks. For this the texts provide a wealth of suggestions and perspectives. They all center, though with different emphases and approaches, on a vision of the Church as *koinonia* which makes it possible to hold together the search for visible unity and for common witness and service as both being integral to the nature and calling of the Church.

4. In describing such a relationship we can discern two different approaches. One develops the relation between the search for visible unity and for common moral involvement primarily from the basis of the nature and calling of the Church and seeks to integrate common witness and service into this understanding. The other approach takes the opposite direction. It views the nature and unity of the Church, understood as *koinonia* also from the experience of common moral involvement and struggle which create *koinonia*. This approach “from below” can be helpful in so far as it is conceived as complementary to the other approach “from above”, and in so far as its focus is on experiences of a *given koinonia* in faith and life. But when this

approach is developed, as in some parts of the *Ecclesiology and Ethics* reports, in the sense of generating or creating *koinonia*, and when it is leading to the juxtaposition of a sacramental and a moral communion, then this is clearly contradicting the *koinonia*-generating action of the triune God through word and sacrament.

5. The movement toward the manifestation of the unity of Christ's Church has in recent decades led to important results. There are also many forms of spiritual ecumenism as well as Christian social cooperation and witness. What is lagging behind is an ecumenical clarification of and agreement on fundamental moral values and orientations. In a coordinated effort between the WCC, the Roman Catholic Church and the ecumenically open forces in the evangelical and pentecostal movements the basic outline of such fundamental moral values and orientations should be worked out in order to provide a framework and perspectives for common witness and service. This would also require appropriate global ecumenical structures for communicating such values and orientations.

6. Such an effort has to confront a tendency in certain ecumenical circles to question the possibility and necessity of global moral values and concepts —as well as universal fundamental convictions of faith. Where such a tendency gains influence the ecumenical movement will reach an impasse, if not its end. Many ecumenically concerned people draw from the increased cultural and theological plurality exactly the opposite conclusion. For them the necessity of common theological and ethical convictions and perspectives in this situation is even greater than before because they are necessary means for preserving, expressing and strengthening the universal, catholic character of the Christian faith.

7. Part of the process toward such common ethical convictions and perspectives should be a focused dialogue on moral issues. At the meeting of the Joint Working Group (JWG) in 1992 (Wennigsen, Germany) the need was underlined to learn from the methods of bilateral dialogues on doctrinal issues for comparable dialogues on moral issues. Would it not be an immense ecumenical step forward if a formalized, intense ecumenical dialogue on basic moral orientations and values could arrive at a convergence statement similar to the one on *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*? Such dialogues could be integrated, as was the case with *Life in Christ*, with ongoing multilateral and especially bilateral dialogues. In this way a true complementarity between the doctrinal dialogues and the social-ethical dialogues would be established. Then we could speak with even more hope about the connection between “The Search for Christian Unity *and* for Common Moral Orientations”.

⁷⁰ JWG Guidelines.

A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF INTERCHURCH AND INTERCONFESSIONAL THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUES

Twelfth Supplement - 1997

ABBREVIATIONS FOR CONFESSIONAL FAMILIES CHURCHES AND COUNCILS

A Anglican	Mn Mennonite
AC Assyrian Church of the East	Mo Moravian
B Baptist	NCC National Council of Churches
C Congregational	O Eastern Orthodox (<i>Byzantine</i>)
CEC Conference of European Churches	OC Old Catholic
CCEE Council of European Episcopal Conferences	OO Oriental Orthodox (NON-CHALCEDONIAN)
CP Constantinople Patriarchate	Pe Pentecostal
CWC Christian World Communion	R Reformed
D Disciples of Christ	RC Roman Catholic
DOMBES Groupe des Dombes	SDA Seventh-Day Adventist
E Evangelicals	TAIZÉ Council of Youth
FO Faith and Order	U United Churches
H Hussite (<i>Czech</i>)	W Waldensian
L Lutheran (<i>includes German 'Evangelische'</i>)	WCC World Council of Churches
M Methodist	

LIST OF DIALOGUES

- A-B / usa (nc):** North Carolina Baptist-Episcopal Dialogue
A-B / usa (sb): Episcopalian-Southern Baptist Dialogue
A-L: Anglican-Lutheran International Commission
A-L / eng-g: Representatives of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), and of the Church of England
A-L / eng-nordic regions: Representatives of the Nordic countries and of the Church of England
A-L / eur: Anglican-Lutheran European Regional Commission
A-L / usa: Episcopal-Lutheran Dialogue in the USA
A-M: International Anglican-Methodist Dialogue
A-Mo: Anglican-Moravian Dialogue
A-O: Anglican-Orthodox Joint Doctrinal Commission
A-O / usa: Anglican-Orthodox Theological Consultation in the USA
A-OC: Anglican-Old Catholic Theological Conversations
A-OC / north america: Anglican-Old Catholic North American Working Group
A-OO: Anglican-Oriental Orthodox Dialogue
A-OO / copt: Anglican-Coptic Relations
A-R: Anglican-Reformed International Commission
A-RC: Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC)
A-RC / can: Canadian Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue Commission
A-RC / eng: English Anglican-Roman Catholic Committee
A-RC / f: Groupe mixte de travail anglican-catholique en France
A-RC / usa: Joint Commission on Anglican-Roman Catholic Relations in the USA
A-RC / usa (la): Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue in Los Angeles
A-RC / usa (lna): Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue in Louisiana
- AC-CC / assyrian:** Mixed Committee for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church [Chaldean] and the Assyrian Church of the East
B-L: Baptist-Lutheran Dialogue
B-L / (d)g: Gesprächskommission zwischen dem Bund Evangelisch-Freikirchlicher Gemeinden in Deutschland und der Vereinigten Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche Deutschlands
B-L / (ddr)g: Theologische Gespräche zwischen dem Bund Evangelisch-Freikirchlicher Gemeinden und dem Bund der Evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR
B-L / usa: Dialogue between the Lutheran Council in the USA and the North American Baptist Fellowship
B-M-W / italy: Baptist-Methodist-Waldensian Relations in Italy
B-O: Baptist-Orthodox Exploratory Discussions
B-RC: Baptist-Roman Catholic International Conversations
B-RC / usa (sb): Southern Baptist-Roman Catholic Dialogue in the USA (FORMERLY: Baptist-Catholic Regional Conferences in the USA)
CEC-CCEE: Joint Committee of Conference of European Churches and Council of European Conferences
CWC: Christian World Communion - Bilateral Forums
D-O: Disciples of Christ-Orthodox Dialogue
D-R: Disciples of Christ-Reformed Dialogue
D-RC: Disciples of Christ-Roman Catholic International Commission for Dialogue
D-U / usa: Disciples of Christ-United Church of Christ Dialogue in the USA
DOMBES: Dialogues des Dombes
E-RC: Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission

FO: Faith and Order Commission
L-L / g: Inter Evangelical-Lutheran Relations
L-M: Lutheran-Methodist Joint Commission
L-M / (dg): Lehrgespräch zwischen Evangelisch-methodistischer Kirche in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und West-Berlin (EmK) und der Vereinigten Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche Deutschlands (VELKD)
L-M / (ddr)g: Theologische Gespräche zwischen dem Bund der Evangelischen Kirchen und der Evangelisch-methodistischen Kirche in der DDR
L-M / usa: US Lutheran-Methodist Dialogue
L-Mn / f: Entretiens luthéro-mennonites en France
L-O: Lutheran-Orthodox Joint Commission
L-O / g-cp: Theologisches Gespräch zwischen dem Ökumenischen Patriarchat und der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland
L-O / g-r: Theologischer Dialog zwischen der Rumänischen Orthodoxen Kirche und der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland
L-O / (dg-rus): Bilateraler Theologischer Dialog zwischen der Russischen Orthodoxen Kirche und der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland [Arnoldshain 1959-91]
L-O / (ddr)g-rus: Theologischer Dialog zwischen der Russischen Orthodoxen Kirche und dem Bund der Evangelischen Kirchen der DDR [Sagorsk 1974-91]
L-O / g-rus: Theologischer Dialog zwischen der Russischen Orthodoxen Kirche und der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland [1992-]
L-O / sf-rus: Theological Conversations between Representatives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and the Russian Orthodox Church
L-O / usa: Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue in the USA
L-O-R / f: Dialogue between Representatives of the Inter-Orthodox Bishops' Committee in France and the Protestant Federation of France
L-OC / (ddr)g: Gespräch zwischen der Vereinigten Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche in der DDR und dem Gemeindeverband der Altkatholischen Kirche in der DDR
L-OC-R / (dg): Gesprächskommission zwischen dem Rat der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland in Absprache mit der Arnoldshainer Konferenz und der Vereinigten Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche Deutschlands und dem Katholischen Bistum der Altkatholiken in Deutschland
L-OO / copt: Dialogue between the Coptic Evangelical and Coptic Orthodox Commission
L-OO / copt-s: Coptic Orthodox-Lutheran Dialogue in Sweden
L-OO / g: Unofficial theological meetings between representatives of the EKD and the Oriental Orthodox Churches
L-OO / india: Dialogue between the Orthodox Syrian Church of the East and the Lutheran Churches in India
L-OO / s: Lutheran-Oriental Orthodox Dialogue in Sweden
L-Pe / sf: Lutheran-Pentecostal Dialogue in Finland
L-R: Lutheran-Reformed Joint Commission
L-R / ra: Dialogue between the Evangelical Church of the Rio de la Plata and the Evangelical Congregational Church of Argentina
L-R / usa: Lutheran-Reformed Conversations in USA
L-R-RC: Joint Roman Catholic-Lutheran-Reformed Study Commission on "The Theology of Marriage and the Problem of Mixed Marriages"
L-R-RC / f: Comité mixte de travail catholique-protestant en France
L-R-U / eur: Leuenberg Church Fellowship
L-RC: Lutheran-Roman Catholic [Joint] Commission on Unity
L-RC / aus: Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue in Australia
L-RC / can: Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue in Canada
L-RC / g: Joint Commission of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and the German Episcopal Conference
L-RC / india: Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue in India
L-RC / jap: Roman Catholic-Lutheran Joint Commission in Japan
L-RC / n: Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue in Norway
L-RC / s: Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue in Sweden
L-RC / usa: Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue in the USA
L-SDA: Lutheran-Seventh-Day Adventist Consultations
M-O: Methodist-Orthodox Commission
M-R: Methodist-Reformed Dialogue
M-RC: Joint Commission of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council
M-RC / eng: English Roman Catholic-Methodist Committee
M-RC / usa: Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the United Methodist Council in the USA
NCC: National Council of Churches
O-O: Inter-Orthodox Relations
O-OC: Joint (Mixed) Orthodox-Old Catholic Theological Commission
O-OO: Joint Commission of the Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Oriental Orthodox Churches
O-OO-RC: Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox and Roman Catholic Relations
O-OO / syr: Dialogue between the Patriarchate of Antioch and the Syrian Orthodox Church
O-R: Orthodox-Reformed Dialogue
O-R / ch: Commission de dialogue entre la Fédération des Églises protestantes de la Suisse et les Églises orthodoxes en Suisse
O-R / rus: Dialogue between the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Russian Orthodox Church
O-RC: Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church
O-RC / ch: Orthodox-Roman Catholic Dialogue in Switzerland
O-RC / f: Comité mixte catholique-orthodoxe en France
O-RC / g: Gemeinsame Kommission der Griechisch-Orthodoxen und der Römisch Katholischen Kirchen in Deutschland
O-RC / rus: Theological Conversations between Representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church
O-RC / usa: Orthodox-Roman Catholic Bilateral Consultation in the United States
O-U / aus: Conversations between the Uniting Church in Australia and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese in Australia
OC-R-RC / ch: Old Catholic-Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue in Switzerland
OC-RC / eur: Old Catholic-Roman Catholic Dialogue in Europe
OC-RC / north america: Joint Commission of the Polish National Catholic Church and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops
OO-OO: Inter-Oriental Orthodox Relations
OO-RC: Oriental Orthodox-Roman Catholic Relations
OO-RC / armenia: Armenian-Roman Catholic Relations
OO-RC / copt: Catholic and Coptic Orthodox Joint Commissions
OO-RC / india: Joint Commission between the Roman Catholic Church and the Syrian Orthodox Church of India
OO-RC / india: Malankara Jacobite Syrian Orthodox-Roman Catholic Joint Commission
OO-RC / usa: Oriental Orthodox-Roman Catholic Dialogue in the USA
Pe-RC: Pentecostal-Reformed Dialogue
Pe-RC: Pentecostal-Roman Catholic Dialogue
R-RC: Roman Catholic-Reformed Joint Study Commission
R-RC / a: Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Presbyterian Reformed Church in Austria
R-RC / b: Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Presbyterian Reformed Church in Belgium
R-RC / ch: Evangelisch/Römisch-katholische Gesprächskommission (Switzerland)
R-RC / nl: Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Reformed Church in the Netherlands

R-RC / scot: Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of Scotland
R-RC / usa: Roman Catholic-Presbyterian Reformed Consultation in the USA
RC-U / aus: Working Group of the Roman Catholic Church and the Uniting Church in Australia

RC-U / can: Roman Catholic-United Church Dialogue Group in Canada
RC-W / italy: Roman Catholic-Waldensian Relations in Italy
RC-WCC: Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches
WCC: World Council of Churches - assemblies, convocations, relations

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