

Martin CONWAY

Dimensions of Christian Unity

The point of Christian unity was not, and is not, to deny what our separate churches have developed in their separation from one another, but to find ways of bringing all their contributions together into a seamless whole, which will always be a unity-in-diversity (if more of cultures, languages, generations – ie. of what the Creator has diversely given us – than of the various denominational quirks that human beings have developed to justify our divisions).

I. Unity Between Divided Christian Churches

The point where the new contribution enabled by the WSCF came prominently into view was at the World Mission Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910, where the WSCF supplied several key leaders, notably John R. MOTT as the chairman and Joseph H. OLDHAM as the secretary, and where the interdenominational approach enabled a significantly wider range of missionary societies and church leaders to participate in a conference whose predecessors in the XIXth century had gathered a narrower range of participants on an undenominational basis.

Nonetheless, there were such yawning gulfs between some of the participating bodies and their churches in terms of doctrine and church order, that this conference too gave itself a rule that these topics were not to be discussed; rather, discussion would focus on only the more “practical” matters of proclaiming the Gospel to those who had not yet heard and accepted it. Yet the Edinburgh conference is today remembered far more for its contribution to the movement for Christian unity than for any particular agreements about evangelism.

Two of the most memorable speeches were centrally focussed on aspects of the challenge to Christian – indeed *Church* unity – and both by people among the tiny number of “native Christians” at the conference: those by V. S. AZARIAH, the later Bishop of Dornakal in South India, and CHENG Ching-yi, later the first Chinese secretary of the National Christian Council of China.

What will also never be forgotten about the Edinburgh conference is the “conversion” received in a dream by the American bishop serving in the Philippines, Charles BRENT, which made him into one of the foremost apostles of Church unity and founder of the Faith and Order movement.¹

2 HOGG W. R., *Ecumenical Foundations: A History of the International Missionary Council and its Nineteenth-century Background*. New York, 1952. *World Missionary Conference, 1910*. Edinburgh, 1910.

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One year later the interdenominational approach was to be rigorously, and very successfully, tested when John R. MOTT led the WSCF into the surprising experiment of holding its 1911 world assembly in Constantinople, with the blessing of the Ecumenical Patriarch.

The WSCF had made good beginnings in Russia, Greece, Romania and Bulgaria, partly through sympathetic outsiders working with Orthodox university teachers and students, partly through contacts with student refugees from these countries, of which there were many, for example, in Swiss university cities. The experience of the 1911 conference was so encouraging that a resolution was passed as follows:

“The General Committee puts on record its opinion that no student, to whatever branch of the Christian Church he may belong, should be excluded from full membership in any National Movement within the Federation if he is prepared to accept the basis of the Federation, or whatever equivalent is approved by the Federation.”¹

It took rather longer to begin a comparable process with Roman Catholic students. Undoubtedly a good many individual Roman Catholics turned up here and there in SCM meetings. In H, Czechoslovakia and Austria, Roman Catholics were full and official members in the 1920s.

But it was not until the French SCM initiated a carefully confidential series of discussions in the 1930s with a few leading Roman Catholic theologians, among them Fr. Yves CONGAR OP, that WSCF began to find itself struggling with the distinctive difficulties of the Vatican’s approach, eg. in their encyclical *Mortalium Animos* of 1928 on the ecumenical movement.

Although much happened between those meetings and Vatican II, including Fr. CONGAR’s virtual silencing for a time, it is hardly accidental that he should have been one of the chief drafters of the Vatican II decree *De Œcumenismo (Unitatis Redintegratio)*, which so notably opened the way for the Roman Catholic church’s commitment to the common ecumenical movement of our time.

The process of opening up new contacts, to enable people of an ever-wider range of Christian churches to share in the SCMs and WSCF, has continued. Hank CRANE, the American son of missionaries in the Kasai area of Zaïre, who served as Africa secretary of WSCF in the 1960s before his untimely but unforgettably life-sharing death of cancer in 1973, was for instance able to initiate the contacts with the “Church of Jesus Christ on Earth by the Prophet Simon KIMBANGU” that have been so fruitful for the entire constituency of African-instituted churches over the past twenty-five years.

It must be one of the best-known characteristics of WSCF that it has supplied a stream of leaders for the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the other organs of the ecumenical movement. John R. MOTT, Joseph OLDHAM and Willem VISSER T’HOOFT have been the only three “honorary presidents” of WCC to date.

More WCC staff members than could at all be counted easily have made their first steps in understanding the worldwide catholicity of God’s churches in WSCF; and the same must be true for the great majority of staff members in the many national councils of churches.

At the WCC Canberra Assembly in 1991, as at the earlier assemblies in that line, it

¹ ROUSE Ruth, *The World’s Student Christian Federation – A History of the First Thirty Years*. London, 1948. 156.

was true that while the people in the formal processions were chosen because they were leaders of the member denominations, most of the people who had imagined and arranged it all and who were drafting the reports were – as is often said – the “WSCF in long trousers”!

Over the century – the first since the Council of Chalcedon, I once heard Lesslie NEWBIGIN assert, in which more prayer and effort has been put into reconciling divided churches than into dividing them and keeping them safely divided! – this critical search for ways of discovering anew a health-giving integrity for previously divided churches has proved also dismayingly complex and slow.

This is no doubt primarily due to that feature of human sin that makes most of us quick to do what we want to and slow to accept suggestions from anyone else. It is also because in the nature of churches, recalling the wider dimensions of their central calling, their life and witness cannot be neatly encapsulated into manageable packets.

Reality again and again escapes the grasp of the would-be reformers! The Holy Spirit, Who works in mysterious ways anyway, can with hindsight be seen to have larger purposes than simply the overcoming of quarrels, ancient or modern, among Christians!

II. Unity in Christ as a Promise for the Unity of Humankind

Turning from experience so far to the challenges ahead, the key hypothesis that I discern in the WSCF tradition, and invite readers now to test out, is this: that the true meaning of Christian unity must be discerned and discovered primarily in this third and widest context, as a vital element in our world’s struggle for its proper basis and forms of harmony and community.

As our human family writhes and wrestles for a future that can realise what we all variously hope for, it is painfully evident that our different and often contradictory approaches to the key themes of identity, purpose, health and fulfilment are all too likely to go on condemning this world to the waste and cruelties of war and oppression. Until, that is, we can find both a basis for living together which can promise a true and reliable unity; and a discipline for facing the many puzzles and conflicts which are bound to arise.

Jose Miguez BONINO unforgettably recalled to the WCC Faith and Order Commission in Lima in 1982 the agonised appeals of Bartolome DE LAS CASAS to the Spanish monarchy in protest at the oppressive cruelty of the Spanish conquistadores, and against that background raised the decisive question: *whose oikoumene* is this world?¹

Whose powers, we may say today, are to be finally obeyed by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) our governments have recently established? *Whose* interests will finally be satisfied by the explosion in satellite communication? *Whose* wisdom and discipline will finally lead us beyond the menaces of the HIV/AIDS pandemic or of global warming?

It is to such questions that Christians have to offer, as what we believe to be the most adequate answer available, the hypothesis of unity in Jesus Christ, the person in history through Whom, we claim, are revealed the purposes and methods of the God Who both created this entire universe and is preparing its final fulfilment.

1 Jose Miguez BONINO, A “Third World” Perspective on the Ecumenical Movement. The Ecumenical Review 1982/2. 115–124.

It is in finding appropriate ways of bringing that hypothesis into public discourse and intercultural testing that Christians today and tomorrow will in this new time be freshly responding to the challenges alike of MOTT's "evangelisation of the world in this generation" and of WCC's "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation" (JPIC).

For it is the human race whose divisions and hostilities God has reconciled by the suffering and atoning death of Jesus. If the Christian Church is called to unity, and is promised an effective unity for itself, it is in order that the Church may by that unity witness to and serve the promised and achievable unity of humankind. If the churches have to experiment and struggle with cultural diversities and devise complex patterns that allow different contributions to be taken equally seriously, it is in order that they may in some measure anticipate what humanity as a whole will one day find it possible to bring about through such organs as the UNO, or local commissions for racial harmony.

This, I judge, has perhaps been the most important, certainly the most exciting, discovery within the WSCF tradition in my generation about the goal of Christian unity – that what may be appropriate for the denominations and churches with which we have grown up is in no way for their own sake – though it will do them decisive good! – but rather for the sake of God's purpose with humanity as a whole. The Church of Christ is called, like Israel before it, to be a witness to the nations, and therefore constantly to shape and reshape its own life and patterns so that they may be a promise-offering anticipation of what God intends for humanity as a whole.

This is as true at the local level, in regard to the priorities and patterns of whatever grouping of congregations find themselves forming the Church in any one place in reference to the health and wholeness of its surrounding community, as it is at the universal level, with regard to the patterns of authority and decision-making, in critical reference to governments and intergovernmental organisations, that can authentically characterise a community seeking to embody the lordship of the crucified Christ as a persuasive hypothesis for a world that is still ensnared by the ruling powers it throws up in self-concerned refusal of the promise and call of God.¹

III. Four Strands for Handling the Tensions

In particular, the experience of SCM and WSCF would-be unifiers has revealed that there will almost always be some four strands in the quest for unity among churches, at local as well as at the wider levels, which in some way need to be distinctly attended to, and yet whose interaction is all-important for the eventual "result" (itself no more than a step on the way towards the world's health, let alone into God's Kingdom).

Moreover, each of these strands involves holding on to at least two "sides" of a tension best resolved by some variation on the "both-and" approach which is never easy to reach. (I state them in an order perhaps convenient for clarity of understanding, but one which in no way indicates how they are best put in priority or best discerned in any one place. One only has to try and think out how these might have impressed themselves on the heart and mind of a John R. MOTT to become aware just how complex human awareness can be.)

1 NEWBIGIN Lesslie, *What is a "Local Church Truly United"?* The Ecumenical Review 1977/2. 115–128.

1. The Classical and the Secular

Discussion in and around the World Council of Churches has long been accustomed to distinguishing-and-holding-together the two distinct but complementary dimensions of the search for Christian unity that have jockeyed with one another ever since the Stockholm and Lausanne conferences of the 1920s: the “classical”, that aims to resolve the splits and quarrels that gave rise to divided churches by working at the Biblical and other roots of those issues that originally proved divisive or have become so; and the “secular”, that aims at enabling churches to work together, despite their divisions, on the great questions of the contemporary world, of war and peace, of wealth and poverty, of freedom and oppression, etc., and thus to encourage them to take each other seriously as partners also in prayer and pastoral action.

From those early meetings in the aftermath of World War I, leaders of the ecumenical movement have frequently said that these two strands need each other and deserve to be seen as complementary. We have been slower to realise just how strongly they deserve to influence each other. And yet this peeps up again and again in practice if not so clearly in theology.

A recent example came in the 1990 “world convocation” on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, held in Seoul, South Korea. This was very much a meeting dealing with the “secular”; it drew up a pointed list of affirmations and commitments about the threats to our world, from global warming to racial tensions.

In order to suggest a practicable framework for how the churches might work on this list it set its findings in a framework of “covenanting” – of God’s initial *covenant* with creation, then with the descendants of Abraham, then through Jesus Christ and the Spirit with all humanity, and so of *covenants* that Christians and churches can enter into with one another under God and with the entire body of Christ.¹

To explore the Biblical and contemporary implications of working within such a ‘covenant’ is also a key part of the “classical” approach to the whole matter of Church division and re-union. But this link has all too seldom been explored.

2. Scripture and Tradition

In the search for “classical” unity our churches have had to learn to take seriously, for instance, both Scripture and Tradition, indeed Scripture as the key element in shaping and releasing the Tradition.

The key sentence about this, from the Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order, in Montreal in 1963, was: “Thus we can say that we exist as Christians by the Tradition of the Gospel (the *paradosis* of the *kerygma*) testified in Scripture, transmitted in and by the Church through the power of the Holy Spirit.”²

So, in the search for an appropriate “secular” unity, churches have had to discover how to hold together a strong, even one-sided commitment to people in evident need – the famine-stricken or refugees, for instance – with a genuinely “non-political” position that keeps out of, while warmly encouraging, the necessary political negotiations, with

1 NILES D. Preman (ed.), *Between the Flood and the Rainbow. Interpreting the Conciliar Process of Mutual Commitment to Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation*. Genève, 1992.

2 RODGER Patrick C. – VISCHER Lukas, *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order*. London, 1964.

all their tensions and risks, involved in re-shaping the communities or nations so that hunger and flight need never occur again.

In Britain our local councils of churches have long understood that they need to be working on both these “fronts”, if their member congregations are to move into closer and more effective unity.

Christian Aid weeks on behalf of the world’s poor belong just as strongly to the calling to unity in Christ as the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity or as the gesture of convening a “neutral” forum addressed by all the candidates at a general election.

3. Particular Cultures and the Culture of the Universal Human Family

More recently a third strand has come into view, though the reality of it was there already one hundred years ago, as is witnessed by John R. MOTT’s third principle above, namely the “cultural” dimension. Unity cannot be imposed by any one participant; that could only lead to a false uniformity; a right way has to be found for each participating church to express her distinct, particular way of being a, indeed *the*, Christian Church in her own cultural setting, and not just for her own sake, but in order that she can most deeply and truly witness to the total community of that culture Who God is and what contribution God has prepared for her to offer into the overall human symphony.

On this I am particularly grateful for Lesslie NEWBIGIN’s discussion of the “complicated and unpredictable evolution” that always characterises the work of intercultural evangelism, when the culture of the outside missionary comes into dialogue with that of her or his hearers, around material from Scripture which brings yet a third culture into play. No wonder that the voice which finally carries conviction must be that of the Holy Spirit.¹

This is all being much studied and discussed at present, often under the title “Gospel and Culture.”² The 1996 World Mission Conference of WCC in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil, was chiefly devoted to this area of investigation. Roman Catholic mission circles are also giving it a great deal of attention, with “inculturation” being a favourite term.

One of the key balances that must be struck is that between particularity and universality. In my own experience I have been most deeply struck, knowing something of the long and painful history behind it, by the declaration to the WCC Canberra Assembly in 1991 of the China Christian Council:

“Important as it is for Chinese Christians to have a selfhood of their own, there cannot be a full selfhood of a church apart from its being a member of the Universal Church of Jesus Christ. The particularity of the Church can be developed only within the universality embodied in such an organisation as the World Council of Churches.”

Only in small part can that refer to specific statements drawn up by WCC or the member churches; far more it points to the human and interhuman qualities of communication and friendship that WCC enables, to the “adequacy or inadequacy of the ways by which a person/church is invited, welcomed, befriended, supported, encouraged, involved in conversation and also questioned and corrected, in a free and open setting where there is no external authority other than that which is recognised as the working of the Holy Spirit.”³

1 NEWBIGIN Lesslie, *The Open Secret. Sketches for a Missionary Theology*. London, 1979, pp. 157-180

2 See, for example, CONWAY Martin, “A Universal Faith in 1001 Contexts?” *International Review of Mission* 1995/4.

3 CONWAY Martin, *That’s When the Body Works. The Canberra Assembly of the WCC as a Foretaste of a Council of the Universal Church*. Birmingham, 1991. 58.

4. Different Authorities in Dialogue

Least clear of the four – here I am experimenting with a new category for something that has only taken form in my mind recently, though there may be something lurking in my Anglican background about ‘dispersed authorities’ – is a dimension that I shall call a *dialogue of authorities*.

Of course, questions of authority are constantly in view in all three dimensions I have already discussed, whether it be the proper authority of the Pope or of the local church in the “classical”, the respective authorities for the matter of justice and for good order in the second, or the clashing authority of tribal tradition and incoming missionaries in the third.

Yet as a fourth overarching “strand” I have in mind the frequent, often necessary, and in the end enriching tensions between the historic “institution” of a church embodied in a bishop or a synod and the exploratory “sense of being church” in a local group; or the never-ending dialectic between the emphases of the “professionals” in the Church (and other community enterprises) and those of the “ordinary people.”

The whole question of democracy is so vital, and yet also so entangled in today’s world, with many people virtually giving up belief that any real democracy is possible, that the Church of Christ would be achieving something of the highest importance if we could show that the hypothesis of God’s promised Kingdom can lead to genuine power-sharing and a lasting satisfactory balance of authorities within our ranks.

The World Council of Churches Struggles to Hold these Tensions together

Within the ecumenical movement, especially within the WCC, there has of course been a lot of work done on each and all of these strands over the years. Yet, as I can witness from my own involvements with that Council, what has by no means been achieved is the satisfactory demonstration of how these distinct strands are to be held together in a total obedience.

It has been easier for the WCC in effect to divide into distinct constituencies, the one (for the most part theological academics) to be concerned in the Faith and Order Commission with the “classical”; a second (also academics, but with a good dose of activists too) to devote themselves to the “secular” in the Church and Society Commission and those other programmes that have grown out of that (International Affairs, Development, Peace, etc.), and a third (grassroots leaders and those who support them) to give priority to the current questions of culture and subcultures in the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME).

There was a striking moment at the 1983 Assembly in Vancouver when an almost visible handful of people were able to pull the Assembly back from the brink of dividing into “classical” versus “secular.” The key paragraph in the report begins:

“At this Assembly we have sensed a tension between some of those who are concerned with the unity of the Church and others concerned with the desperate need for justice, peace and reconciliation in the human community. For some, the search for a unity in one faith and eucharistic fellowship seems, at best secondary, at worst irrelevant to the struggles for peace, justice and human dignity; for others the Church’s involvement against the evils of history seems at best secondary, at worst detrimental to its role as eucharistic community and witness to the Gospel.”

Their discussion of this tension and how it can be overcome led up to this paragraph: “As we have explored together the relation between God’s Church and God’s world we have been struck by the affirmation of the Uppsala Assembly (in 1968) that ‘the Church is bold in speaking of itself as the sign of the coming unity of humankind.’ At Vancouver we reaffirm this, and want to deepen our understanding of what we mean when we make such a bold claim. ... Our conviction that the Church is called to be a prophetic ‘sign’, a prophetic community through which and by which the transformation of the world can take place. It is only a Church which goes out from its Eucharistic centre, strengthened in its own identity, resolved to become what it is, that can take the world on to its agenda. There never will be a time when the world, with all its political, social and economic issues, ceases to be the agenda of the Church. At the same time the Church can go out to the edges of society, not fearing of being distorted or confused by the world’s agenda, but confident and capable of recognising that God is already there.”¹

IV. Tomorrow’s Great Questions

Finally, I should like to offer a brief view into tomorrow, in the belief that the WSCF tradition, even if likely to remain that of a minority of Christians, will continue to have a central role to play. It can hardly be in dispute that the XXIst century is presenting humanity with at least three vast challenges, none of which is entirely new, but which are going to require a lot more exploration and commitment than many of us have yet known how to give them.

1. The Economic Challenge

One is relatively familiar, though daily becoming more urgent. This is the growing gap between *rich and poor*, between the richer nations of the North and the poorer of the South, but which is also rapidly becoming a no less disturbing gap between those within any one country, in North or South, who can command an affluent and secure life and those who find themselves having to struggle against poverty, insecurity and the lack of self-worth to which both conditions condemn them.

A leading economic journalist in Britain, Will HUTTON, has put this in a memorable way² – that 40% of the population in the richer Western countries are increasingly affluent, at least in money terms, while there are also the lowest 30%, increasingly driven onto the margins and towards destitution, and a middle 30% who cling on to what meagre scraps they can, envious of their “betters,” while seeking above all to avoid the fate of their “inferiors.”

The numerical proportions do not work the same way on the world scale, but it is perhaps true that those who are increasingly affluent around the globe can be sure of wielding enough power to serve their own interests, over against those who are made to suffer the consequences, and so entrench the advantages of the richer in ways that the poorer will feel hopeless to challenge. If this is the way the world is going, then Christians need to mount a life-long campaign calling for justice as the only way to ensure lasting and genuine harmony and peace for the human race.

¹ GILL David, *Gathered for Life: the Official Report of the 6th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Vancouver 1983*. Genève, 1983. 49–50. CONWAY Martin, *Look Listen Care – One Man’s Experience and Interpretation of the WCC Vancouver Assembly*. London, 1983.

² HUTTON Will, *The State We’re in*. London, 1995.

2. The Ecological Challenge

The second is increasingly spoken of, if hardly yet in ways that promise much improvement. I refer to the challenge of *environmental sustainability*. Will the human race be able to live on this planet in fifty, even twenty-five, years' time if we continue to damage its built-in balances and adjustments in the way we have done during the XXth century?

Already we are seeing the effects of global warming in terms of climate change and sea levels. Already we have evidence of the long-term and damaging after-effects of nuclear accidents such as the one at Chernobyl. The Rio UN Conference of 1992 addressed many of these problems, but is much actually being done to change our ways?

Do the solutions there suggested add up to a sufficient change to permit a long-term optimism about the relations between humanity and the natural environment? If not, must not our faith in God as Creator as well as Redeemer and Perfecter be brought to bear in far more costly, sacrificial ways, to plead for radical reversal of current habits and for quite new lifestyles, so that our grandchildren may have lives worth living?

3. The Interreligious Challenge

The third is now surely in view, if hardly yet addressed – namely the need for endlessly deeper mutual respect, understanding and transforming *dialogue* between the great world religious traditions: between Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews and Christians,¹ and whatever other traditions govern the hearts and minds of significant sectors of the human race.

Of course, each of these has to cope with all sorts of internal tensions and diversities in its own ranks. There is almost no way by which we can expect at all quickly to produce some representative “Parliament of Religions.” But we do urgently need many more personal friendships, much wider understanding and much deeper respect and dialogue between people in any and every walk of life.

No easy answers here either, but it must surely be seen as an unbearable contradiction within each of our faiths that we claim a “way of truth” valid for all people, while in practice we each use our faith to cut ourselves off from the others. Indeed, Wilfred Cantwell SMITH, one of the outstanding scholars and writers in this field, said in the introductory chapter of his great book *The Meaning and End of Religion*:

“Unless a Christian can contrive intelligently and spiritually to be a Christian not merely in a Christian society or a secular society but in the world; ... unless a Buddhist can carve a satisfactory place for himself as a Buddhist in a world in which other intelligent, sensitive, educated men are Christians and Muslims – unless, I say we can together solve the intellectual and spiritual problems caused by comparative religion, then I do not see how a man is to be a Christian or a Muslim or a Buddhist at all.”²

No Ready Answers – Yet Always Some First Steps

Christians must learn to trust far more deeply in God the Holy Spirit, Who can use friendship and a readiness for dialogue in ways that are endlessly surprising, but always for the ultimate good of humanity.

¹ LAMB Christopher, *Belief in a Mixed Society*. Tring, 1985.; CRAGG Kenneth, *The Christ and the Faiths. Theology in Cross-Reference*. London, 1986.

² SMITH Wilfred Cantwell, *The Meaning and End of Religion – A Revolutionary Approach to the Great Religious Traditions*. New York, 1962; London, 1978. 11.

Now it is of course very much easier to name these challenges than to see how to tackle them. In each case the bare phrase involves a huge and far-reaching complex, indeed tangle, of patterns of behaviour, thinking and underlying assumptions that it can take a lifetime to sort out conceptually, let alone to transform in the practice of millions of people and their institutions.

Each of these (no doubt like others you might wish to put alongside them) cannot but call for the most penetrating and costly discernment of what is truly health-giving, and what is in the end death-serving, in our inherited traditions, cultures and indeed faiths.

I dare not claim that there are any easy answers, but I can and do claim that there are in each case always some immediate and first steps which could be taken tomorrow by individuals, corporate bodies and, yes, governments, if only the will was there. For the WSCF tradition shows us that even the most gigantic tasks can be fruitfully, if sacrificially, faced by perfectly ordinary young people with the right sort of encouragement.

At the same time it must also be seen clearly that as things stand at the moment, one of the major obstructions to confronting these challenges, one of the major powers against which humanity has to find a way of working, is the *dominant Western and “modern” culture* which continues aggressively to shape this world and its common institutions, and which is understood, alike from within and without, as having sprung up in Christian Europe. For Europeans like me, our very birth and upbringing, let alone our education, puts us on the wrong side of the battle lines before we even start to try and face up to these challenges.

It is therefore far from straightforward to speak of Christians offering the hypothesis of unity in Christ as the best available way of discovering a basis upon which humanity can resolve its tensions and dilemmas. It will have to be done by the worldwide Christian community, in which – thank God – the “modern” West is no longer numerically or qualitatively predominant.

It will have to be done, moreover, as we have gradually and painfully learned about any true evangelism, not so much by what any of us *say* – however modest and careful – as by what Christians *do*; and not so much by anything we can do – however sacrificial – as by *the sort of people Christians are*, by the sorts of relationships we form, by our readiness to listen and receive from others.

Here WSCF can also give us the inestimable privilege of meeting and making friends with comparable people from the other side of those same “battle lines.” To start the task of facing up to these issues alongside friends from the other side makes the whole business both less frightening and very much more practicable.

It will be as we Christians are ourselves transformed, in ways both great and small, so as to live by the Spirit that was in Jesus, that God may be able to use us in the doing and speaking that can serve God’s purposes, and that others may be encouraged to take the initiatives that they also need to in order to open up the questioning and experimenting by which God the Holy Spirit can bring on a new and hopeful world.

Suggested Reading

- CRAGG Kenneth, *The Christ and the Faiths. Theology in Cross-Reference*. London, 1986.
- GILL David, *Gathered for Life: the Official Report of the 6th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Vancouver 1983*. Genève, 1983.
- KINNAMON Michael (ed.), *Signs of the Spirit. Official Report of the 7th Assembly of the WCC, Canberra, Australia, 1991*. Genève, 1991.
- LAMB Christopher, *Belief in a Mixed Society*. Tring, 1985.
- MCCAUGHEY J. Davis, *Christian Obedience in the University*. London, 1958.
- MOTT John R., *The World's Student Christian Federation: Origin, Achievements, Forecast*. Genève, 1920.
- NEUBIGIN Lesslie, *What is a "Local Church Truly United"?* The Ecumenical Review 1977/2. 115-128.
- NILES D. Preman (ed.), *Between the Flood and the Rainbow. Interpreting the Conciliar Process of Mutual Commitment to Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation*. Genève, 1992.
- RODGER Patrick C. – VISCHER Lukas, *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order*. London, 1964.
- ROUSE Ruth, *The World's Student Christian Federation – A History of the First Thirty Years*. London, 1948.

Martin CONWAY: Dimensions de l'Unité Chrétienne

Cette article fouille dans les diverses manières la tradition de la FUACE et de ses divers mouvements membres a constamment rafraîchi et élargi le sens de l'unité Chrétienne comme étant l'argumentation centrale de leur engagement et de leur dessein. Ils ont exploré et testé son sens aussi bien dans les forme et procédures de leur mouvement propre, dans les divisions et amitiés entre plusieurs dénominations du Corps du Christ, l'Eglise Universelle; que dans la promesse que l'Eglise Universelle peut offrir au cœur des luttes des communautés, tribus, foies, nations et blocs économiques, des voies encourageantes pour découvrir et vivre l'humanité une. Ce faisant, ils ont contribué aux dimensions d'espérance du XXIe siècle, même si cela a laissé au devant de nous des grands défis. L'article s'achève sur une note d'encouragement pour les étudiants de demain, de vivre dans une acceptation constructive des tensions issues de la confrontation entre leur propre héritage et celles des autres ayant des origines différentes, où que cela peut les mener. Avoir une ferme préoccupation pour des relations plus ouvertes avec des compagnons d'aventure, si difficile que cela peut être; et s'enraciner dans la croyance vitale en Dieu le Saint Esprit Qui garde ouvert la promesse d'un monde différent et meilleur pour toutes Ses créatures.

Martin CONWAY: Dimensiones de la Unidad Cristiana

Este artículo indaga en las formas en que la tradición de la FUMEC y sus miembros SCM han refrescado y aumentado constantemente el significado de unidad cristiana como un empuje central de su compromiso y su propósito. Han explorado y probado su significado similar en forma y procedimientos a su propio movimiento, en las divisiones y relaciones entre las muchas denominaciones separadas de un cuerpo de Cristo, la Iglesia Universal; y también en la promesa que la Iglesia Universal puede hacer en la lucha de las comunidades, tribus, fe, naciones y bloques económicos, con la promesa de vías para descubrir y materializar una sola humanidad. En este quehacer han contribuido enormemente a las dimensiones esperanzadoras del siglo XX, incluso si nos ha dejado muchos retos por delante. El artículo termina con un estímulo a los estudiantes del mañana a vivir en una aceptación constructiva de las tensiones entre sus herencias y dondequiera que su amistad con personas de antecedentes diferentes los guíe; aceptar una preocupación estable por las relaciones sin trabas con aventureros, sin importar cuan complicados se prueben; y centrarse a sí mismos en una vivida creencia en Dios el Espíritu Santo quien aun mantiene la promesa de un mundo diferente y mucho mejor para las criaturas de Dios.