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For

**Archbishop Methodios**  
of Thyateira and Great Britain

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**DR. GEORGE DION. DRAGAS**

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# UNITY OF THE CHURCH: THE ROMAN CATHOLIC POINT OF VIEW

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## I. *One Church: A General, Christian View*

"We believe in the one... Church" (*Credo unam... ecclesiam*). Thus it says in the Confession of Faith. In this confession, spoken by all Christians, is thus the statement of belief in the *one* Church. The unity of the Church expressed in this confession, is a given reality of faith. It exists, all appearances to the contrary, because it is a gift of God to us.

*Why only one Church?* One can answer this question in different ways and, in fact, it has been answered even completely in opposite ways.

(1) One familiar argument runs: There is only one God. The Church proceeds (however that may be understood) from the hand of the one and only God. There exists, therefore, only one Church. Because one argues in this case from one God, one may speak of a *monotheistic* foundation of the (believed) unity of the Church.

(2) Somewhat different is the Second Vatican Council. In reliance upon the early theologian and Church Father Cyprian, the assembly of the Church said in the Constitution of the Church ("*Lumen Gentium*"), "the universal Church is seen to be a people brought into unity from the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" (LG, 1, 4). As one sees, it is thought to have been given by God insofar as he exists, according to Christian faith in three persons. This is the *trinitarian* foundation of the unity of the Church.

(3) There are also theologians and Christians who see above all the Holy Spirit at work in the unity of the Church. It is said that the Holy Spirit is active in the Church in a particular way. One certainly sees that the Spirit is mentioned together with the Church in the Confession of faith (in the third article), "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy...Church..." The Council too, expounded the Holy Spirit as particularly important for the unity of the Church. It says that the Holy Spirit, "which dwells in the faithful

and leads and governs the whole Church, creates this wonderful fellowship of the faithful and binds them so intimately in Christ, that he is the principle of the unity of the Church." This is thus the foundation of the unity of the Church in the Holy Spirit, the *pneumatological* foundation.

(4) Particularly frequently one encounters the fourth, the *Christological* foundation of the unity of the Church. The unity of the Church, so runs the basic thought, is determined and guaranteed by Jesus Christ and the fellowship in him. He who thinks thus can support his views in certain ways from Holy Scripture. According to the witness of Scripture, Jesus Christ is the one and only. His work is the unification of that which was separated and alienated. "He has made us both (Jews and Gentiles) one," says the Letter to the Ephesians, and, more pointedly, Paul says in the Letter to the Galatians, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (III, 28). Unity in this view, is grounded ultimately in the saving work of Christ. Because the saving work of Christ is present in the Church, through the Church, one may therefore consider him as the head and her (the Church) as the body. Consider, too, the corresponding passages in Scripture – First Corinthians twelve, Colossians one, Ephesians five. If there is *one* head, then there is also only *one* body: this goes without saying.

I repeat, *the unity of the Church is, in the general, Christian understanding, already in existence.* That this is so is plainly evident in the confessions, prayers, liturgies, and doctrines of the individual Christian fellowships (which does not mean that the doctrine of the unity of the Church would continually be in the consciousness of the average Christian – in fact, the opposite seems true). True unity of the Church already exists and it is a matter of relative indifference whether one establishes this unity monotheistically, trinitarianly, christologically, or pneumatologically. Decisive is the insight that the one Church already exists as a gift of God to humanity. This gift cannot be diminished or totally suppressed by humanity. The German Roman Catholic ecumenist Heinrich

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Note: The Present Article represents a lecture delivered to the University of Durham, England. It is presented to His Eminence Archbishop Methodios of Thyateira in the hope that it will serve as a stimulus for modern thought.

Fries says, "The one Church as the presence of the one Christ is so essentially one that she cannot be divided at all – every visible split to the contrary."

I must express one point differently, however. I have spoken of four possible arguments of the unity of the Church and I said that it is relatively the same whichever one chooses. The same, but surely only "relatively" the same; because in this choice, through this choice, the prior decisions for the understanding of the Church are filtered. He who chooses the *monotheistic* starting point does not, as a rule, differentiate strictly between the Church as a reality of faith and its visible realization. Unity of thought and action earmarks the churchly as well as the political arena and concretizes itself in the monarchic, patriarchal principle at all levels. It is not surprising that the Church was thus understood in the First Vatican Council. It is argued that the Church is not divided, nor split. She is worthy of faith precisely because of her unity, uniqueness, uniformity, she, the perfect society ("societas perfecta") with the Pope as head. It is obvious that this concept of unity does not cover multiformity.

If one argues from the *trinitarian* starting point, one assumes, on the one hand, that the unity of the Church is a given, a gift of God, a reality of faith. On the other hand, such an understanding of unity remains open to various forms in the dimension of the visible. Certainly one could criticize such an understanding theologically that thereby it is not made clear enough that the divine persons (Father, Son, Spirit) are each to be grasped differently in their activity towards humanity. It makes good theological sense when one says that the Father created us (and not, perhaps, the Holy Spirit has created us), or that the Son has redeemed us. The theologian thinks immediately of the so-called doctrine of appropriation.

If one begins with the Holy Spirit, and thus *pneumatologically*, one finds it especially easy to legitimize even a diversity in the Church. The Spirit gives different gifts and thus there is a broad and colourful spectrum in the Church of God. Small fellowships outside the larger Churches have always and readily chosen this manner of foundation. The Holy Spirit, the invisible God, created the one Church as she exists through all churches and fellowships. At the same time he wills and preserves the many and various groups. In this starting point difficulties emerge, above, all in Christology. Where here is the place of Jesus Christ who certainly is involved in a special way with the Church and her unity?

On the contrary one can say that an exclusively *Christological* argument for the unity of the Church allows the Holy Spirit to come off badly; the Holy Spirit who stands above all in the Church for the eventful, the dynamic, the incalculable.

I mention all this, so that you do not think that the matter of the foundation of the unity of the Church

is merely theological frivolity. In such attempts are reflected the concrete churchly life and self-understanding of the centuries. At the same time these attempts (as focal points) make clear what one understands as the Church globally and basically.

What then, in terms of content, does this given unity of the Church *mean*? In this believed unity of the Church it has, above all, to do with faith, hope, and love. It has to do with that which we designate with the word "grace". The reality of grace is preserved beyond all confessional division. One remembers in this connection the well-known words in the Letter to the Ephesians: one Lord, one faith, one baptism, the one God who reveals himself to humanity (that is surely the central meaning of the theological concept of "grace" (God who reveals himself to humanity) the one faith on the part of the individual believer. Baptism and possibly even the Lord's Supper one could see this as a content of the unity of the Church, as God gives it). Finally, one surely sees that one cannot locate the unity of the Church principally and completely in the invisible.

At least the great confessions (by this I mean churches and denominations) agree that the unity of the Church also has visible aspects. Baptism, for example, the one Christian baptism, is one such visible aspect of unity. There is not here a Roman Catholic and there an Anglican baptism. Generally, the understanding of the unity of the Church may be grasped only very inadequately with the early platonic differentiation of "visible" and "invisible". It is a matter of the secret hidden *in* the Church, which can only be grasped by faith. The unity of the Church, therefore, is not a purely spiritual dimension next to, behind, above the visible fellowship. For just this reason the unity of the Church must also be present symbolically, visibly. A well-known ecumenical circle in Germany, the so-called Jäger-Stählin Circle (forty top-flight Roman Catholic and Evangelical-Lutheran theologians belong to it) have concerned themselves in recent months with the symbols of the unity to the Church. This was done in connection with the "Confessio Augustana", that early Lutheran confession whose four hundred and fiftieth anniversary occurred in nineteen-eighty. The theologians were above all in agreement that the unity of the Church is a reality of faith and already exists as a gift of God (somewhat in the sense in which I have presented it). One asks, then, for symbolic, visible realizations of such unity. This dimension of unity has been determined in three ways.

First, the unity of the Church (visible, symbolic) is given in the confession of the one Gospel.

Second, the unity of the Church becomes visible in the sacrament of baptism. The reciprocal recognition of baptism forms a fundamental unity of churches and groups.

Third, unity becomes clear in that it (unprejudiced

and independent of the arrangements in the individual churches) is rather like an office which knows itself to be connected in its mission with the service of the apostles.

These statements and formulas of the ecumenical circle are, as said, made in connection with the text of the "Confessio Augustana". As you can easily see, however, they run in much the same direction, content-wise, as my earlier statements in connection with Scripture.

Certainly the Christian sees less than the unity of the Church. He sees himself confronted above all with the fact that Christianity consists of many churches and churchly fellowships. He is not, therefore, convinced of the fact of the already given unity of the Church. All the more must it be the task of the theologians and all who participate in the proclamation to refer again and again to the gift of God, the unity of the Church. It must be added immediately that the work of humanity must correspond to this gift of God. We humans have obviously not done justice to this task. Christianity is divided, and so much so that until not all-too long one was excluded, considered a heretic, precisely in the name of the Gospel. That this was a situation which should not have existed is obvious.

## II. *The One Church - The Roman Catholic Church*

Until a few decades ago this was certainly no problem for the Roman Catholic Church. By the *one* Church of which the creeds spoke one always thought of oneself, the Roman Catholic Church. Naturally one could not overlook the fact that there were several groups which designated themselves as Christian churches or fellowships. For the Roman Catholic Church the answer to the question "Where among the many who call themselves Christians is the true Church?" can only be "The true Church is that which brings together the characteristics of unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity". This, of course, exists in the Roman Catholic Church. The one Church willed by Christ, so one says, is the apostolic-authority-bearing, world-wide Roman Catholic Church. She is, so to speak, united by three bonds: she is *one* in faith, she is completely *one and uniform* in liturgy, and she is *united* under the hierarchy and through the hierarchy at whose head stands the (one) Pope.

What, then, of the others, the non-Roman Catholic groups? Long ago one saw in them only the devil at work, the anti-christ. Others were thus, on the whole, dissidents, heretics. This attitude was never actually covered theologically, because at all times one had held the idea that God is not necessarily bound to the Church in mediating his salvation. The others were certainly saved (that was the main thought at that time) because they, as it were, were off-shoots of the Faith which was represented fir-

mly and purely only in the Roman Catholic Church.

This became quite different in our century. Already long before the Council it was confessed on the Roman Catholic side that "even in those who are separated, ecclesiological elements of unity exist". One can read this in the third volume of the large theological lexicon, "Lexicon für Theologie und Kirche" (page seven hundred and fifty-four). Pius the Eleventh had said earlier, in nineteen twenty-seven, of the Orthodox churches, "A piece broken off a goldbearing stone also bears gold as well". (Oss. Rom. tenth/eleventh of January, nineteen twenty-seven).

Thus there are before the Second Vatican Council at least two stages in the Roman Catholic theology of the unity of the Church. The one stage is distinguished by controversy between the confessions (by confessions, of course, I mean the different confessional churches). All others are in untruth, one himself has the true faith, himself actualizes church unity completely and fully. The second stage was already introduced in the last century and is particularly clear in the decades before the Council - there is surely only one Church which may legitimately call itself the Church, and this is the Roman Catholic Church. Nonetheless, the concept of unity is so comprehensive and broad that one must at least see and accept certain elements of unity-visible, concrete unity - in the others.

## III. *New Theological Insights*

A third stage is the Second Vatican Council. Naturally it did not fall out of the blue with its ideas but rather had been long prepared in the life of the Roman Church and in the thinking of the theologians.

What, however, is *new* in the statements of the Council?

The Council no longer identified the Roman Catholic Church with the Church of Christ without further ado. We must remember that in earlier times it was clear that the one Church of Christ equalled the Roman Catholic Church. In the church constitution a cautious formula is chosen: it says that the Church of Christ "subsistit" (has her being, exists, endures above all, has her concrete form of existence) in the Roman Catholic Church. This is not just splitting hairs. As we know from the fall of the Council it was formulated with full intent to reckon with new theological thinking. The Church of the Council no longer understands itself simply as identical with the Church of Christ, but believes that she actualizes this in essence. In the same text it will be recognized "that many elements of sanctification and truth are found outside its visible confines" (16 I, 8). The somewhat later Decree on Ecumenism is even more clear. The Church constitution spoke of "ecclesiastical denominations" in order not to have to desi-

gnate the non-Roman Catholic groups as "churches", but there, in the Decree on Ecumenism, the others were quite clearly named "churches". It deals, therefore, not with "so-called" churches which cannot actually be recognized as churches, but rather with actual churches. One place in the Decree on Ecumenism (UR Three, nineteen) is of greatest importance for theologians and Christians in general. It says, namely, that the non-Roman Catholic groups are differentiated from the Roman Catholic Church "above all in the interpretation of the revealed truth". One must pay special attention to this. Earlier on one said, "We have the truth, others are in untruth". Today it is said, or at least implied, "The truth is greater than we. We, the Roman Catholics, interpret the God-given revelation thus: non-Roman Catholics interpret it differently." Different interpretations, however, do not have to exclude, but rather can even complement each other.

What one formulated there in the Council did not (as I have indicated) fall from the blue, but rather was the result of church life and theological work over a long period of time. Here I wish to refer only briefly to biblical scholarship, to exegesis. Earlier on one was of the view that the "early Christians" were of one heart and soul. Exegesis has taught us that there were divisive tendencies already in the early Church. Both letters to the Corinthians, for example, are a clear witness to that. We know that after the death of the Apostles the Catholic Church did not embody Christianity uncontested. From time to time strong groups contested the field. One thinks of the course of Arianism which did not exist as small sects but rather as a rival, great church. Over a thousand years ago it finally came to the first great schism, to a separation of Eastern Church and Western Church (ten fifty-four). Finally then, the Reformation brought the great split in the Occident and new divisions arose within the groups coming into existence through the Reformation.

Groups also split off from the Roman Catholic Church, however – the "old Catholics" after the First Vatican Council, for example. The Lutheran theologian Rückert believes that, "One can say that in the two thousand years of Church History there has never been church unity". I do not know if one may express it so drastically. In any case the Roman Catholic Church could not and cannot simply argue, blind to history, that Jesus Christ founded only one Church, and that we are that one Church from zero hour of her founding to today. One must also take into consideration the tendencies toward division and actual divisions from the New Testament era through modern times.

The Council established that *visible unity is no longer present, it is lost*. One need only read the first sentence of the Decree on Ecumenism. "To create the unity of all Christians is one of the main tasks of the Council". And later in the text it says (UR

Two, five), "The concern for the re-creation of unity is a matter for the whole Church, the faithful as well as those here, and it applies to each according to his abilities in his daily life as well as in theological and historical research. This concern makes it clear to some extent that a brotherly relationship already exists between all Christians, and it is this which finally, according to the gracious will of God, leads to full and perfect unity." What sense could these statements have if the Church of the Council would believe that the unity of the Church is already fully realized in the Roman Catholic Church?

A certain difficulty results, however, for the Roman Catholic theologians. May one now no longer speak of the *one* Church, if one means the Roman Catholic Church? I believe so. The Roman Catholic Church is one community. She is set over against the others actually through one certain form of faith, one liturgy, and one hierarchy. In order, however, to be fair about the matter under discussion one should formulate it somewhat differently. It is surely now accepted at the highest levels that the Roman Catholic Church certainly has the truth in a certain breadth or fullness, but that others, too, have the truth. The Roman Catholic Church can learn from the others, can increase her own riches by accepting some things from the others. I have, therefore, suggested twice in recent years in theological journals that one should speak of a "fragmentary" unity of the Roman Catholic Church, of the unity of the Roman Catholic Church in fragmentary form. Yet this is more a question of *expression*, which need not be disputed. What is important is *what is meant*. The Roman Catholic Church knows that she does not have the complete fullness of the truth. She can and must allow herself to be enhanced. A few years ago the Church of West Germany held a synod. At this synod a series of texts – so to speak as witness of the faith of a regional and national church – was passed. One of the texts concerned itself with ecumenism. What is said in this is of greatest importance for us here. If it is not a question of a universal church voice, then it is a matter of a very weighty voice of Roman Catholic origin. It says of the relationships between the churches: "To the degree in which a diversity in our own churches is accepted and actualized the capability and readiness to perceive and value the richness and limits of such diversity in other churches and churchly fellowships grows as well. As a result there are also new perspectives for a drawing closer and unification of heretofore separated churches and churchly fellowships. In this not only can they preserve their particular traditions, but bring them into a greater whole. For me, this was a main reason for speaking of "unity in fragmentary form". So long as the Roman Catholic Church lacks the full richness of other groups she, too, exists only in a "fragmentary form".

At this point a few notes on the concept of unity are brought to bear. The scholastic concept of unity,

which the Roman Catholic hand-and-textbook use as a rule, means simply that a being is undivided and complete in itself and is thus removed from any other ("unitas est proprietatis qua res est indivisa in se et divisa a qualibet alia"). In such a perspective it naturally makes no sense to speak of "fragmentary" unity. On the contrary, it is to be said (as I pointed out earlier) that on the basis of *this* concept of unity the thesis of the unity and uniqueness of the Roman Catholic Church remains correct. There is, however, another meaning of unity.

Its roots lie in the nineteenth century. The Romantics saw above all the total fullness and dynamic of life realized in "organic unity" and strove for such unity in all fields of knowledge and activity. The Tübingen theologian Johann Adam Möhler, for example, argued on this level that the Church is life and abundance. Precisely this constitutes her unity. *This* meaning of "unity" appears to me to play the decisive role in the texts of the Council as well. See the Decree on Ecumenism, Number One, four. "While preserving unity in essentials, let everyone in the Church, according to the office entrusted to him, preserve a proper freedom in the various forms of spiritual life and discipline, in the variety of liturgical rites, and even in the theological elaborations of revealed truth. In all things let charity prevail. If they are true to this course of action, they will be giving ever richer expression to the authentic catholicity and apostolicity of the Church." In the effort for unity it is a matter of presenting, "a more perfect realization of the very mystery of Christ and the Church". Here unity is thus publicly alive, fulfilled richness, fullness and breadth in the spectrum of faith, in its customs, in spiritual life and the liturgy. This unity is simply not completely realized in the Roman Catholic Church, because she does not have all that the others have.

The new fundamental (or systematic) theologian and ecumenist in Munich, Heinrich Döring, successor to the well-known ecumenist and Newman-researcher Heinrich Fries, attempts to unite the more classic view with these new points of interpretation, perhaps in order to especially meet half-way the theologians in the pastoral care, if congregations who were all educated in different concepts do now meet with great difficulties with the new. Döring uses the image of concentric circles. The degree of the existence of the Church grows in the measure of the greater actualization of visible symbolic elements (that is, confessions of faith, sacraments, leadership). To the degree and extent to which the concrete existence of the Church grows, so will church unity also become symbolically realized and outwardly visible. In this sense, however, the Roman Catholic Church understands itself as a particularly intensive realization of church unity, encompassing, so to speak, particularly many circles. In spite of this, the realization of church unity is not complete in her, because she does not have all,

in terms of wealth, which the others have. A few years ago the current Bishop of Munich, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, himself a theologian of the Council, said, "Churches should remain churches, but first become the one Church".

#### IV. *The Value of Confessionalism*

If one takes all this seriously (and what I have said is not personal opinion, but rather a very official expression of the Roman Catholic Church), one must naturally see the relationship between the one Church and the many confessions differently. It no longer suffices on the Roman Catholic side simply to say, "The unity of the Church is permanently given by God but broken in its visible realization. This situation is deplorable and we must work as quickly as possible at recreating unity." This is a correct viewpoint which still occupies us, but it implies a too negative view of the individual confessions.

God, who, we believe, has willed (instituted, founded – however one wishes to say it) the Church, has also allowed Christianity to develop in various confessions. That it cannot be the will of God that the confessions wage war upon each other is obvious. God cannot desire hate and hostility. The question remains, however, whether one must look upon the diversity of confessions, therefore, as bad and harmful.

I believe not. The different Churches and Christian groups grew out of quite certain, historical circumstances. In the course of time they have worked out certain aspects of Christianity existentially, so to speak, but also theologically. One example which is particularly close to me because of the situation in Germany are the Lutheran Christians. Because of Martin Luther they have stressed the sinfulness of humanity from the beginning and likewise that humanity will be saved through God's grace and mercy alone. In most Churches of the Reformation it was always primarily a matter of the proclamation of the Word. Over against this the Roman Catholic Church always stressed that humanity is surely sinful but is also a good creation of God. Besides this, the sacraments, at least from time to time, were placed very much in the foreground. Does it not appear at first glance that here lie the crucial points which in themselves are valuable and can complement each other? Had there been no division perhaps some essential and important aspects of Christendom would not be so present to us. "God writes straight even on crooked lines", says one German proverb.

For the present, one may only add that the intensity of the confessional movement in our days makes clear to each concerned party how much the groups have of each other when they are, and remain, in conversation. They can learn an enormous amount from each other. Each side can also, however, ask critical questions of certain standpoints. One can

make progress on the way to unity through the exchange of different confessional riches. The Synod of the Federal Republic of Germany has issued an unfortunately much-too-little-known statement, "Hence, in the multitude of traditions of the different confessions it is justifiable to recognize and value positively a legitimate diversity. The Synod hopes for a development in which the heretofore church-dividing contrasts will be broken down and overcome and in which heretofore divided Churches and churchly fellowships will become bearers of such diversity in the one Church of Jesus Christ" (Past. Zus. Four, thirty-three). Thus it is here said that different churches and churchly fellowships exist next to one another, which means, mainly, legitimate diversity. This legitimate diversity should not disappear at all, but rather should enter into the diversity of the one Church of Jesus Christ.

I will make the two questions which one can ask of this text the leading questions for my exposition in two brief final sections. One can first ask, "Should there be a *visible* unity of the Church at all?" We have certainly heard that the unity of the Church already exists! The co-existence of the confessions is valued as legitimate diversity, as richness, by the previously-mentioned Synod. Does this not suffice? Does it not suffice when Christendom presents itself in a diverse co-existence? Why should this be eliminated?

And the second question could run, "If we should come further on the way to realizing unity (as I presume we should), how could, how should it happen?" But to get to the point: Should there be a visible unity of the Church at all?

### V. *The Necessity of Visible Unity*

From the beginning I have said, and repeated several times, that the unity of the Church already exists as a gift of God. We have also heard that this unity is not totally invisible even if it has been largely lost through divisions in the Church. We have, for example, a visible expression of such unity in baptism.

One must confirm, however, that there is relatively little in terms of visible unity. Again the question, "Should this small amount be increased? should there be more visible unity?" The answer to this question is already indirectly given, "One remembers that the Church is anchored in Christ". This foundation suggests a visible unity because he, the God-with-us, is not pure Idea nor is he myth but rather is God in the flesh. We refer particularly to the Gospel of John, chapter seventeen. According to this text the disciples are, so to speak, to illustrate and represent the unity of the Father and the Son. Still further; this unity is necessary for witness in the world; "...that the world may know that thou has sent me and has loved them even as thou has loved me". The former General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, Visser t' Hooft, comments on

this passage in this way, "The words, '...that the world may know that thou has sent me...' can only mean that something is visible here and that this unity is revealed in a way which is, for the eyes and ears of the world, unusual enough to have humanity looking and listening".

Finally, it is the duty to witness and the mission situation of the Church which postulate her visible unity. So, as the confessions live next to one another today (as they in some cases still live, as it were, *against* each other!) the sought-after status is not yet in existence. Nor does it suffice to refer *only* to an invisible Church. Even the non-Roman Catholic theologians, who earlier stressed the invisible side of the Church so strongly, are today almost of one voice with the Roman Catholics in the opinion that a still more complete, visible form of unity must be achieved, as a reversal, as it were, of the event of the Reformation.

The Second Vatican Council had still produced the thought that the Church should be symbol, and, so to speak, model of the unity of humanity: "Since the Church, in Christ, is in the nature of sacrament – a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men – she here proposes... her own nature and universal mission." (LG One, one). How should the Church be able to perceive this, her mission, if only little that is visible of this unity has come to light?

Thus a greater amount of visible unity is required. All that has grown and exists in the different traditions should be brought into this new unity. Therefore the German Synod said, "The Synod hope for a development in which heretofore divided Churches and churchly fellowships will become bearers of such diversity in the one Church of Jesus Christ."

### VI. *Concretizing Church Unity*

All sides are seeking a way to form more fully on a visible level that unity of the Church which already exists invisibly so "... that the world may believe." That is, to form it in such a way that the individual churches and churchly fellowships do not have to give up their individuality.

Hence it follows that certain earlier concepts are non-negotiable. What the Popes once frequently demanded, for example, is out of the question, that is, *return to your common childhood home* (we would say, your common *Vaterhaus*). Return to the Roman Catholic Church which you once abandoned! You will be received graciously, you only must give up your (mistaken) ideas. This concept of the development of the one (the visible-one) Church out of the many confessions is regarded as out of date. After all I have said I need not develop this any further. No Pope and hardly any theologians would any longer use this argument. Further abandoned models are the *addition and subtraction methods*. In these, each

takes everything over from the other or each gives up that which does not allow them to arrive at a common denominator. The creeds of the Churches of the Reformation will be as binding for all as the documents of the Second Vatican Council. One easily sees that this would lead to a loss of substance and surely would effect no genuine unification. Very different groups would simply come together under one roof.

Today there is a series of models under discussion. In this the same concepts are used in different ways (as indeed already the word "ecumenism" means something different in its use by Roman Catholics and non-Roman Catholics). The efforts to create concrete forms of unity have a long history. In this area I would particularly like to refer to the "Lambeth-Quadrilateral" of Eighteen eighty-eight. The Conference for "Faith and Order" in Nineteen thirty-seven outlined three different interpretations of the concretizing of churchly unity: "Federation or alliance of Churches with the goal of practical work together, "Communion" which presupposes the full or partial reciprocal recognition of the churches, and finally "Organic unity" or "corporate union" as the unification of the churches in a particular place".

It is common to all these models that they do not wish to take into account the unresolved tension between "unity" and "diversity", that unity must have a certain pluralism.

The model of the "Federation of churches" was and is to this day discussed in Roman Catholic circles, too. The Church should above all work together on a practical level. They should do together that which they want to do together. Unanimity on theological questions or decisions is to be relinquished. In questions of church order, too, one is satisfied with minimum agreement. To this one must first say that in post-war Germany where the confessions live quite close together and at almost equal strength, this model has long been realized - here more, there less. They work together at the social level, hold common worship services, the pastors of different confessions meet together in regular, practical consultations. The Christian fellowships of one city publish a common magazine - in Marburg, for example, all the Christian groups are publishers of the monthly "Kirche in Marburg" ("The Church in Marburg") in which the common concerns and events are spelled out as well as the (separate) services and events in the individual churches. One must ask, however, whether this model, is, in the end, not rather non-obligatory. It is not rather an intermediate stage which, according to what has been said, must be overtaken and surpassed!

In a certain way "Communion" belongs to the model of "Organic unity". Presupposed is agreement in the following points: faith and confession, worship and sacrament, office and constitution of the Church.

These were the essential concerns of the "Lambeth-Quadrilateral". This model seeks no rigid conformity or complete uniformity. Certainly it will be objected (by the Roman Catholic side, but also from other sides), that when the new Church has her own form, the traditions of the individual Churches seem to be eliminated. Would it be possible on a practical level to bring the individual confessions into, as it were, a new Church without the individuals being forced to give up something essential? And were the Roman Catholic Church to participate, would she not surely overwhelm the others because of her numerical superiority? On purely theological grounds this way appears to me to be, from the Roman Catholic side (if not today, then surely in the foreseeable future), a possibility because there is hardly a doctrinal point any longer which necessarily must be divisive for the Church.

Two further concepts remain to be discussed about the mentioned models. The one is the model of "Conciliar fellowship" formulated in Dar es Salaam in nineteen seventy-three and accepted in Nairobi in nineteen seventy-five. This model has rather association and fellowship on a regional level in mind. Conciliar deliberations and decisions should (in the style of an open trial) prompt further unification.

From the Roman Catholic standpoint this appears to me to be more a sort of basis pattern in the unification process and less a goal. As the aim for the concept of unity I would sooner accept the "Church fellowship" in the sense of a "reconciled-diversity". This model was outlined in nineteen seventy-four by the representatives of the confessional world union and was accepted by the Sixth Plenary Session of the Lutheran World Union in Dar es Salaam in nineteen-seventy-seven. This model, too, is open - it is an open model of a progressive approaching or drawing closer. It provides for interim goals and prepares for the partners to grow together on the path of dialogue to unity. Reconciliation in diversity (the progressive "reconciliation in diversity and of diversity") would be the process and the increasingly realized goal here: "Reconciled diversity". As the concept itself says, multiformity remains preserved yet the individual groups are nonetheless increasingly marked by a common confession, common forms of piety, common religious experience, common worship, more and more, too, by common theological tradition, common church and office structure. When and how God wills, at a certain point the unity which was lost through human sin will be attained.

In conclusion I would like to bring my discussion together thematically. (1) In the view of practically all Christians the unity of the Church is a gift of God which already exists and which cannot be taken away or diminished by humanity. This gift consists essentially of the grace given to all Christians and finds partial, visible expression in baptism, among other things.

(2) Earlier Roman Catholic doctrine identified the Roman Catholic Church with the one Church of Christ. This position has become theologically and doctrinally obsolete except, perhaps, in the thought of Roman Catholic congregations and individual believers.

(3) The Second Vatican Council worked with a comprehensive concept of unity. The borders of the Roman Catholic Church and the borders of Church existence are not identical. Great value can be recognized in the others, much can be learned from them. It is suggested that the unity thus expounded is to be designated as unity in "fragmentary form".

(4) Therefore the confessions are not to be devalued from the Roman Catholic side. They arose, to be sure, from partly unhappy divisions but make clear through their existence and life the fullness of Christianity.

(5) For the sake of effectiveness in the world and for the world, that particular form of Church unity is to be sought in which the confessions can become bearers of diversity within the one Church of Christ.

(6) In sorting out concepts of models and goals for such Church unity, the model advisable is that of "Church fellowship" whose occurrence, however, need not exclude "conciliar fellowship".