

REPORT OF THE JOINT COMMISSION
BETWEEN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
AND THE WORLD METHODIST COUNCIL, 1967-1970

MEETINGS HELD AT

Ariccia, Italy, October 15-19, 1967;
London, England, August 31 - September 3, 1968;
Rabat, Malta, September 15-16, 1969;
Lake Junaluska, North Carolina, U.S.A., August
24-28, 1970.

MEMBERS:

Catholics:

Archbishop J. Murphy, Cardiff, Wales, U.K.;
Bishop James W. Malone, Youngstown, Ohio,
U.S.A.;
Msgr. Francis Davis, Birmingham, England;
Bishop Joseph Brunini, Jackson, Miss., U.S.A.;
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Dr. Edward J. Popham, England;
Fr. Michael Hurley, SJ, Dublin, Ireland;
Fr. Robert Murray, SJ, Heythrop College, En-
gland;
Fr. Jerome Hamer, OP, Secretary, Secretariat for
Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican City;
Canon W. A. Purdy, Secretariat for Promoting
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Methodists:

Bishop W. R. Cannon, Raleigh, U.S.A.;
Bishop Fred Pierce Corson, Philadelphia, Penn.,
U.S.A.;
Bishop F. G. Ensley, Columbus, Ohio, U.S.A.;
Dr. E. Bolaji Idowu, University of Ibadan, Nigeria;
Dr. Harold Roberts, Cambridge, England;
Dr. E. Gordon Rupp, Cambridge, England;
Dr. Albert Outler, Southern Methodist University,
Dallas, Texas, U.S.A.;
Dr. Eric Baker, London, England, U. K.;
Dr. Lee F. Tuttle, General Secretary, World Me-
thodist Council, Lake Junaluska, U.S.A.;
Rev. Max Woodward (first 2 meetings) London,
England.

Cardinal John Willebrands, President of the Secre-
tariat for Promoting Christian Unity, was replaced
for the last two meetings by Fr. Jerome Hamer, OP;
Bishop Odd Hagen of Stockholm, our beloved
co-chairman for the first three meetings, died to the
great sorrow of all of us in February, 1970;

Papers were read at Lake Junaluska by Dr. Mack
Stokes (Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A.)
and Sister Agnes Cunningham (Professor at Mun-
delein Seminary, Chicago, U.S.A.) who took part in
the entire meeting.

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I. GENERAL RETROSPECT

1. As a result of initiatives taken after Vatican Council II and of decisions made at the World Methodist Council in London, August, 1966, a dialogue was inaugurated between groups representing the Roman Catholic Church and the World Methodist Council. This Joint Commission held its first meetings at Ariccia, near Rome, in 1967.

2. Opening papers at Ariccia were given by the co-chairmen, both pastors, on the question "Why are we here?" and one striking answer was "In expression of the 'one ecumenism' of the Holy Spirit seizing the kairos, the Lord's moment, for full and frank discussion".

3. All present were conscious in general of the spectacular change in atmosphere between the two Churches in the past six or seven years, but this was underlined with some hard facts. John Wesley's "Letter to a Roman Catholic" of July 18, 1749, stood out, we were reminded, as an almost isolated overture in a general picture of aloofness and suspicion which could be illustrated, e. g. from a Methodist text book as late as 1953, while changes in Roman Catholic ecumenical attitudes and policy were even more recent.

4. It is against such a background that our present mood and opportunity must be seen in perspective. Catholics recognize how perceptive and generous many Methodists were in seeing and responding to the spirit at work in Vatican II, and acknowledging hitherto unsuspected affinities with their own tradition in some of the great acts of the Council.

5. At the same time we both recognize that for our people the experience of the past decade is new and not yet fully assimilated. It is an experience which, to remain fruitful, must be deepened, built on and more widely shared. Further ecumenical progress becomes harder, not easier, because it cannot be a mere linear progress in the negotiating of differences.

6. From the outset we recognized that Roman Catholic/Methodist dialogue had a singular advantage—there is no history of formal separating between the two Churches, none of the historical, emotional problems consequent on a history of schism. When speakers reflected at Ariccia on “how a Roman Catholic looks at Methodism” and “how a Methodist looks at Roman Catholicism” (each theme was treated twice, once by an American and once by an Englishman) it was made clear, without any glossing over difficulties, that there were yet more solid grounds for affinity.

7. First among these was the central place held in both traditions by the ideal of personal sanctification, growth in holiness through daily life in Christ. Speakers from either side bore witness independently to this. For both, holiness is rooted in theology and in disciplined life. Conversion for the Methodist is but the beginning of a vital process, the ideal which is equally familiar to the Roman Catholic. If the cultivation of “Scriptural holiness” and its spread has always been seen by the Methodist as a common task, making the Church a fellowship rather than a hierarchy, Methodists gratefully recognize new emphasis present in “*Lumen Gentium*” 9-10 and in its chapter V on “The Universal Call to Holiness” while Roman Catholics can strengthen their own new insights by study of Methodist experience (the pursuit of this theme later gave rise to some of the commission’s most satisfying work, which is reported on and its further prospects discussed below, Section III).

8. The disciplined life of the early Methodist, aimed at renewing a lax Church, set standards for the whole of Methodism which have found Roman Catholic parallels more often in the early life of religious foundations such as the Jesuits.

9. If a Methodist ideal was expressed in the phrase “a theology that can be sung”, it was appreciated on the Roman Catholic side that the hymns of Charles Wesley, a rich source of Methodist spirituality, find echoes and recognition in the Catholic soul. This is not least true of the eucharistic hymns, which we saw as giving a basis and hope for discussion of doctrinal differences about the nature of the Real Presence and the sense of the ‘sacrificial’ character of the Eucharist. Methodists on their side were candid in considering Roman Catholic questions on how far the Wesleys remain a decisive influence in contemporary Methodism.

10. One Methodist speaker stressed as early as Ariccia that “we need to keep before us the vision of our common mission”, and this was the governing idea behind seven *practical proposals* elaborated there:

1. That everything possible be done by the Churches in cooperation to promote ecumenical instruction, discussion and action at all levels.

2. That ways be explored of cooperating in the training of ministers so far as local authorities see prudent.

3. That cooperation be sought with other Christian Churches with a view to securing as far as possible uniform wording for prayers which are in frequent use in common prayer. The common use of hymns should also be fostered without prejudice to existing tradition.

4. That in all ecumenical encounters there should be effort to begin dialogue towards common Christian moral standards.

5. That Methodists and Roman Catholics in their dialogue should be constantly aware of the challenge of secularism.

6. That the Roman Catholic and Methodist Churches explore with others further possibilities of social cooperation at various levels. This should include not only joint statements on social issues but also joint effort in fields such as world peace, world development, family life, poverty, race and immigration.

7. That ways of sharing facilities of all kinds be thoroughly explored, though with prudence and realism.

11. While we recognize that a great deal of incidental Roman Catholic/Methodist collaboration reflects these proposals and even goes beyond them, we are disappointed at how little they have been considered and taken up in official ways. We realise of course that some of the purposes in question may be as well or even better achieved in a multilateral cooperation, but in the growing together of two Churches there can be no substitute in this or any age for the basic task of joint witness to fundamental Christian values. (This theme is taken up more fully later on Nos. 34-50).

12. So far this report has no more than alluded to the great doctrinal issues between our Churches; but in fact the friendship and mutual confidence we were able to establish so quickly at Ariccia ensured a welcome for the candour of the chief speakers on doctrine. If the passages in *Lumen Gentium* about the People of God were welcomed by Methodists, it was asked equally how they were to be related to the dogmas, found unacceptable, concerning the papacy. Equally Roman Catholics who speak warmly of Charles Wesley’s eucharistic hymns said that “few Methodists would hold the doctrine of the Real Presence in any sense akin to the Catholic meaning”. In either case the effect was not to inhibit dialogue but to stimulate it, though progress differed considerably in the two cases (cf. below Section V and VII).

13. Methodists, like others who had followed the progress of Vatican II, showed great interest in the references to non-Roman Christians in *Unitatis Redintegratio*, Nos. 31-3 and in *Lumen Gentium*, 15. The crucial question here is, how far are Roman Catholics committed to the developments of which these apparently tentative passages seem capable? A related interest was shown in recent Roman Catholic writings on *ministry*, in which reflection on or-

dinary and extraordinary ministries seems to have many points of contact with the original Methodist situation (cf. No. 97).

14. All these interests assume a purpose in our dialogue which goes far beyond dialogue for its own sake; a Methodist speaker invited the Commission to face squarely from the start the final prospect, if not of full organic union, at least of sharing at Holy Communion and there was no dissent voiced to this approach.

15. The problems of *mixed marriages* were discussed at some length and the need for a thorough common study of the theology of marriage and its relation to mixed marriages and other contemporary problems was accepted. The nearest to an implementation of this has been the study on Christian Home and Family undertaken for and completed at our last (Lake Junaluska) meeting (See below Section IV). There seems no reason why our dialogue should not benefit here from work being done in other bilateral and multilateral dialogue.

16. The problem of organizing adequate work between sessions is one that faces every series of annual ecumenical discussions. The most useful results are often yielded by small joint consultations out of which papers to be presented grow. Two such groups met in Cambridge, England during 1968 in preparation for our second meeting in London, and another in 1970 in preparation for our last meeting at Lake Junaluska. Such meetings possibly suggest a fruitful method of future collaboration. It was found to be helpful to meet in a university where two foundations, one Methodist and one Roman Catholic, could cooperate and where Methodist and Roman Catholic scholars were within call. The method of beginning with short memoranda, sets of questions posed by one side to the other, might well serve in the future (see below Nos. 68 and 124-6).

17. With material from the first Cambridge meeting to hand, on the subjects Eucharist and Authority in the Church (the latter with particular reference to the papacy) the full joint commission met for the second time in London from August 31 to September 4, 1968.

18. Great themes of Eucharist theology such as transubstantiation, relations of Word and Sacrament, and the place of sacrifice were found to have emerged at Cambridge, but the conditions and time limits of the London meeting as well as the Joint Commission's terms of reference, prevented anything more than the opening of these issues.

19. There was clarification of what is meant by describing the Eucharist as a memorial. It was agreed that while traditional Methodist reverence for the preaching of the Gospel finds an echo in recent Roman Catholic theological and liturgical thinking, there are signs that Methodists on their part are re-capturing through the liturgical move-

ment an appreciation of the sacraments such as is enshrined for example in Charles Wesley's eucharistic hymns.

20. Turning to the theme of authority, discussion centred on the following problems of authority:

a) What are the implications of the incarnation for any doctrine of authority in the Church? (Cf. Nos. 102 et sqq.).

b) How to discern the *sensus fidelium* in contemporary conditions.

c) The nature of obedience ("internal" and "external").

d) The relation of conscience to informed reasoning (Cf. Nos. 113-6).

e) How far can the authority of conclusions be divorced from the arguments supporting them.

21. In preparation for its next meeting, the Joint Commission resolved that a small group should survey the ground covered by the first two meetings and submit practical suggestions for the way ahead. The hope was also expressed that the next meeting of the Joint Commission in autumn, 1969, might result in an interim report.

In accordance with this decision, it was at Oxford in July, 1969, that a group endeavoured to discharge this task by preparing a report for the third meeting of the Joint Commission at Rabat, Malta, September 15 to 19, 1969.

22. The two main themes under discussion at Rabat, apart from the review just referred to, were Ministry in the Methodist and Roman Catholic traditions, and Methodist and Roman Catholic reflection on the Church in the contemporary world.

23. A first paper outlined how the original Methodist societies with their extraordinary preaching ministry developed into the Methodist Church with its ordinary ministry of the Sacraments as well as of Word. A Roman Catholic paper took as its starting principle the primacy of the Church's memory of what Jesus had said and done and tried summarily to trace the developments of the theology of the Ministry from earliest times to Vatican II. The discussion centred on the sacramental nature of the ordination rite in Methodism and also on the distinction between the ordained ministry and the common priesthood of all the faithful; here it was suggested and widely agreed that the difference in kind was a difference of functions in the Body. We feel that there is a great deal of room for further joint reflection here especially with regard to the prophetic, charismatic aspects of ministry which could be fruitful not only for our own dialogue but in other ecumenical fields as well (Cf. No. IV).

24. Papers on Secularization given at Rabat will be referred to in section II of the report (No. 28).

25. The wider vision of the possibilities of Roman Catholic/Methodist dialogue, which this four years' experience and other parallel experiences have open-

ed up, convinced both the Roman Catholic and the Methodists concerned that the time is ripe for a reorganization of the dialogue. The commission at Rabat decided that proposals for such a reorganization should be discussed at Junaluska in 1970 and presented to the World Methodist Conference in 1971 and to the Plenary of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity in the same year (Section VIII).

Meanwhile four themes were chosen as continuation of the dialogue—themes which had already emerged as crucial and which it was hoped might be well prepared by working (with cooperation of experts from outside the commission) in the intervening months (details and assessment of this work will be found in Sections III, IV, V and VII).

The commission has reason to be grateful to all who collaborated in this work.

II. CHRISTIANITY AND THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

I. SUMMARY OF COMMISSION'S WORK ON THIS THEME

26. The Joint Commission has reflected seriously on the problems and challenges which Catholics and Methodists alike confront in the world today. We have found unity in thought and feeling in understanding and interpreting the contemporary situation.

27. The papers and discussions bearing on Christianity in the contemporary world primarily invited more or less intellectual reflection without making much effort to speak to the masses of Christians who are living and struggling in these times. The interests of these latter are of the first importance and communication with them needs to be a chief object of future discussion if we are to carry out our common mission in the world.

28. One paper on secularization was presented and discussed at the sessions in Rabat, developing the idea that all of the humanitarian efforts of the secular world today actually express the spirit of Jesus. Consequently, those who act outside the Church toward this end may be called anonymous Christians. This paper was tempered by some warnings against facile tendencies to identify Christianity with the secular world. For, in addition to the humanitarian advances made possible by science and technology, we agreed that there are demonic factors which warn against any naive identification of Christianity with secularity. Some preliminary efforts were made to define "secularization", but no searching analysis was forthcoming. The members of the Commission were in agreement that the extensive processes of secularization need to be taken seriously even though they did not have time to develop their own reflections fully and clearly.

29. An English group from both sides prepared a booklet entitled, *Christian Belief: A Catholic-Methodist Statement*, which was made available and

discussed briefly at the Junaluska meeting. This addresses itself to the contemporary situation. Parts I and II identify, on the one hand, some of the major characteristics of the world in which Christians are called upon to live, and, on the other hand, the ways by which men may move towards a living faith in these times. This seems to us an excellent beginning of the kind of work we might be doing together (Cf. No. 125).

30. A paper, entitled, "Trends in Spirituality: The Contemporary Situation", also reflected this desire to understand and assess what is going on in the modern world. Here a serious attempt was made to bring into full view some of the major factors which threaten and challenge Catholics and Methodists in their concern for spirituality. This paper suggested that Christians need to be aware of a new mentality which has been emerging over a long period. This mentality, which has been produced in large measure by the extensive and rapid developments in science and technology, goes deeper than and is the primary source of the phenomenon of secularism (the belief that if God is he does not matter). There seemed to be agreement that one of the obstacles to spirituality is an antimetaphysical spirit in the contemporary world though not all current tendencies here are discouraging. Along with this there is the loss of confidence in man's reason, a loss reflected in the various antirational moods and fads of this era. It was noted in discussion that one of the tragedies on the contemporary scene is the emergence of revolutionary idealism based on emotional and ideological rather than rational and moral foundations. We felt that joint efforts in the recovery and nurture of a basic theistic world-view are essential to spirituality. For when men doubt and deny God, it is obvious that they will doubt and deny the reality and relevance of revelation, the moral order, the redemptive process through Jesus Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit in the community of faith, the life everlasting, etc. Modern doubt and denial is pervasive, and its influence, recognised or unconscious, is difficult to exaggerate.

31. The Commission shared, however, in the conviction that the present situation is full of promise for spirituality. For in man's very experience of failure without God—that is, in his rootlessness, distraction, despair, disillusionment, frustration, loneliness, in obvious moral disasters on the national and international scenes—God is calling men to new and authentic life in the community of faith. On the positive side, the current desire for human dignity and compassion present a special opportunity for Catholics and Methodists to unite in giving new voice to the ancient verities of the faith. Men in danger of dehumanization need more urgently than ever the life of Christian truth.

32. Again, on the positive side, it was observed that there is an emerging concern among men for community. There are signs of inferior expressions of community which require the corrective and

elevating guidance of the historic community of faith. Besides this, the thought was registered that men today, amid all their distraction, pressures, hurry and bias towards mediocrity, require the kind of contemplation made possible through the higher expressions of the devotional life among Catholics and Methodists. In short, life today is complex, dynamic—life in which God calls us to acknowledge the real problems, but also to seize boldly the opportunity of renewing genuine spiritual life.

33. A further concern of the Commission needs to be noted before considering those common resources which are available for appealing to men who are looking toward the twenty-first century. In the discussions there was the recurring sense of unity concerning the moral values with which Catholics and Methodists assess what is going on in the world today. Here it was observed that even among highly sophisticated people there are often subhuman standards of thought and life. Among the masses everywhere there are signs of moral deterioration which make new life in Christ a desperate need. This was noted particularly in some of the discussions on marriage and family life (See Section IV).

II. AREAS OF AGREEMENT WHICH MAY SERVE AS AIDS TO JOINT EFFORTS TO ENCOUNTER THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD.

34. As we look toward the future, we are immensely encouraged by the areas of profound agreement which, if properly explored and actively shared, can enable us both to strengthen ourselves and engage in effective dialogue with the nonbelieving world. In particular, seven such regions of substantial agreement in thought, feeling and concern have become increasingly visible.

35. *First*, we agree that Jesus Christ alone is the supreme and final authority. It has been commonly supposed that our differences on authority are so deepseated and conflicting that there is not likely to be any real consensus. We have discovered, however, that when we start with Jesus Christ as the supreme and final authority both Catholics and Methodists find themselves sharing in a common conviction, whatever other and secondary authorities may be officially recognized. Christ is the last word and the final authority in relation to whom everything else pertaining to salvation is to be understood, interpreted and judged. Both Catholics and Methodists can build unhesitatingly on this foundation, and can move into the world to carry out the mission which Christ commanded (Cf. Section VII).

36. *Second*, closely related to this is our essential agreement on the Bible as God's living Word.

Some of the statements of Vatican II on this subject open the way to important advances both for Catholics and Methodists, on the one hand, and

for the contemporary secular world, on the other. One of the basic contributions of the Council is its interpretation of the Biblical vision as a massive sweep of God's revelation of his purpose for mankind. In an age which tends to deny the reality of ultimate purpose, the stress on the category of purpose becomes essential in understanding and using the Bible. (See for example *Lumen Gentium*, Pars 2-3; and see also "The Constitution on Revelation", Pars 2-6). There are points to be discussed here, but the vision of God's revealed purpose as set forth in bold outline would seem to be central for both Churches, something indispensable unless we are prepared to abandon the Christian religion itself. One of the tasks with which Catholics and Methodists are jointly charged is that of identifying certain basic principles for interpreting the Bible, which aim to recover the sense of the authority and finality of the Bible without lapsing into obscurantism. The essentials would appear to be precisely those stressed by Vatican II.

37. *Third*, we share in affirming a total theistic world-view. This world-view, so gravely needed in our age, is not developed philosophically by the Biblical writers, but it is there in bold outline and can therefore be used as a basis for communicating with the modern mentality. In fact one of the beauties of the Bible at this point is that it presents a total vision concerning ultimate reality and the purpose of God which can be comprehended by the generality of mankind.

38. There are philosophical systems that move in the right direction, but they cannot be made available to the general public. Very few men have either the interest or the ability to philosophize in any authentic way. Besides, even among philosophers only a limited number will be convinced by any particular system of thought. Again, philosophical systems, while serving their own important ends, appeal chiefly to the intellect. This restricts their usefulness still further. More important still, philosophy is one thing, religion is another. Men need both a responsible world-view and a vital faith. This combination alone furnishes an intellectual atmosphere in which the soul of a man can thrive. It alone opens the way to a living encounter with God that nurtures love and hope.

39. The genius of the Biblical revelation, in part at least, is that it affirms a world-view that is both intellectually plausible and open to confirmation by experience. It appeals to the best thinking of men and at the same time calls them to commitment and faith. But unless this can be made credible to modern man, with his inevitable doubts, the message of the Bible cannot pierce through.

40. Briefly stated, the range of theistic world-view embraces the following convictions we share. God's creation has a purpose; He created man that man might perfect himself morally and spiritually in community under the lordship of Jesus Christ; there is a real moral order grounded in God; human

dignity and freedom are real and crucial; men are called to responsible living in community as well as individually; there is a life after death wherein the pilgrimage begun on earth is consummated in God's eternal love.

41. There are Catholic and Methodist theologians grappling with theoretical issues touching metaphysics and the nature of ultimate reality. We should promote collaboration here, for we have much to share and to offer each other in a field where guidance and leadership are wanted.

42. *Fourth*, we are in essential agreement in seeking to diagnose the human situation in the world today. We need to work together in interpreting the theological and spiritual meaning of modern man's despair and disillusionment. We need to talk about his quest for identity and what that implies both negatively and positively. We have a common ground on which to move in interpreting modern man's quest for meaning in his secular experience. We have a wealth of ideas to share on modern man's quest for community, contemplation, compassion, and dignity (Cf. the important paper on this theme, referred to in § 30).

43. In "The Constitution on the Church in the Modern World", Methodists recognize very important statements on the situation which all Christians today face. Consider this:

... growing numbers of people are abandoning religion in practice. Unlike former days, the denial of God or of religion, or the abandonment of them, are no longer unusual and individual occurrences. For today it is not rare for such decisions to be presented as requirements of scientific progress or of a certain new humanism. In numerous places these views are voiced not only in the teachings of philosophers, but on every side they influence literature, the arts, the interpretation of the humanities and of history, and civil laws themselves. As a consequence, many people are shaken (Para. 7).

44. There is also an excellent statement on "the forms and roots of atheism" which "must be accounted among the most serious problems of this age, and is deserving of closer examination":

Yet believers themselves frequently bear some responsibility for this situation. For, taken as a whole, atheism is not a spontaneous development but stems from a variety of causes, including a critical reaction against religious belief, and in some places against the Christian religion in particular (Para. 19).

45. We have now reached a point in history when the stark realities of doubt and massive abandonment of God and the things of God are a present reality. The end is not yet in sight. We believe that Catholics and Methodists, tackling this general theme together, can analyze and interpret the human situation so as to indicate how the Holy Spirit Himself is working on the contemporary scene for the

purpose of drawing people into the orbit of God's Kingdom. We can confront the world with an alternative interpretation of the meaning of contemporary experience, including experience felt by many of the absence of God. We need to think more seriously on the ways in which the Holy Spirit functions in our negative as well as in our positive experiences: to identify more clearly how the Holy Spirit acts on the human spirit at each stage of man's earthly life.

46. *Fifth*. Methodists find in the statements of Vatican II on human dignity and autonomy many echoes of their own tradition (Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, Ch. 1). Combining objectivity with a steady relation of human activity to God, these statements offer opportunities for development and application which Catholics and Methodists should exploit together, recognising that amid the threat of dehumanization here is an approach to man's secular achievements which promises better fruit. If the genuine autonomy of the secular is recognised the Christian will be more open and sympathetic towards the artist, the scientist and other creative workers; he will be more willing to learn from them and to hear the voice of God speaking through them, and they in their turn will feel less alienated, more encouraged and stimulated. There is no more eloquent witness the Church can give to the dignity of man than intelligent support of and scope to his highest activities, and she has a remarkable history in this.

47. *Sixth*. Though we recognize in the Christian heritage a recurring tendency towards passivity and withdrawal, Catholic and Methodist thought and practice call for responsible living in community within the Church and alongside it. Joint efforts in thinking and practice are possible here, and call for careful study.

48. *Seventh*. Perhaps the agreement we have most strongly felt has been in our sense of the importance of Christian spirituality, greater than ever in today's situation. This is treated fully in the next section of the report (See §§ 57-61).

49. By way of summary we may say that Catholics and Methodists can unite and share at many points in a vast programme of interrelated activities in behalf of the conversion of the world and the elevation of mankind throughout the world. This includes an adventurous quest for peace, for justice, for ministry to the needs of men in ignorance and poverty and for the entire benefit of the human world both physical and spiritual. In and through all this there is the glorious shared vision of the life after death when Jesus Christ shall be all in all.

50. We would recall here Chapter V of *Lumen Gentium*. This is entitled "The Call of the Whole Church to Holiness". There is no part of that document more congenial to the Methodist heritage, properly understood, than this. Here there is a universal call to holiness which erases the false distinction between higher and lower levels of Chris-

tian faithfulness. And we share in the concern that holiness be affirmed as both a possibility and an imperative for all Christians. Whatever definition we give to the term, the idea of sanctity—that is, the idea that God has called men to enter into new life dominated by the love of Christ and motivated by the example of Christ—this gives a vast area of agreement. And in the practical sphere it has the most far reaching possible promise. For on both sides we are eager to emphasize the mysterious dynamic interaction between the Holy Spirit and the human spirit. This divine-human interaction, rightly understood, seems to be God's chosen way for the recreation of men and the conversion of the world.

III. SPIRITUALITY

I. INTRODUCTION

51. Our sub-committee on Prayer and Spirituality took its beginning from a recommendation in the interim report made at Rabat in September, 1969. Two themes for further study were suggested because of their "particular scope" for making the dialogue an occasion for "common witness to great Christian values". One of these themes was, "Christian Life and Spirituality - Holiness of Heart and Life". The report expanded this theme in the following words:

This would examine the genesis of Methodism as a movement of personal, spiritual renewal, and its emphasis on the social implications of perfect love. Development of the theme might include consideration of the priesthood of all believers, the universal call to holiness, the Holy Spirit and grace, the meaning of prayer, the relation of liturgical prayer to personal piety, the spiritual life, devotion to the Sacred Heart, Marian devotion, devotion to the Saints, monasticism, the Pentecostalist phenomenon among Catholics and Methodists, attention to the Word as a constitutive element of the spiritual life, the complementary relation of the interior life and the life of good works. The treatment should reflect the current practice of Methodists and Roman Catholics, as well as providing a historical and theological development.

52. The first meeting of the sub-committee was held at Raleigh in December, 1969. Results of the study of this sub-committee were available for the final meeting of the Joint Commission at Lake Junaluska in August, 1970. The subject might well have been broached earlier, since its importance was early realised. In one of the opening papers at Ariccia, in 1967, it had been pointed out that, "Catholics and Methodists have always had one very important thing in common, though they have not fully realized it: ... the conviction of John Wesley that each man has a duty to seek holiness and Christian perfection". Personal sanctification and growth in holiness through daily life were seen as

prominent in both traditions. The Methodist view of "entire sanctification", that is, sanctification of everything in daily life and work, met the Catholic view of the continuous growth in perfection which makes up the whole progress of the spiritual life. The disciplined life of the early Methodists recalled the asceticism of the early Jesuits.

53. Both Methodists and Roman Catholics found common ground from agreement in the universal call to holiness which helped to confirm what one of the speakers at Ariccia saw as, "the discovery of meaningful harmony between Wesley's 'evangelical catholicism' and the spirit of Vatican II". Following the recommendations made at Malta, the discussion on spirituality was taken up in terms of both the historical background of the two traditions and their contemporary situation.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

54. Investigation of the historical dimension gave special emphasis to the nineteenth century in both Methodist and Roman Catholic spirituality. Here, again, in spite of some differences, it could be seen that Catholics and Methodists shared a wider, deeper, richer heritage of Christian spirituality than might have been suspected. This heritage is rightly called, "Life in the Spirit". In it, we find common roots in mutual reverence for Scripture, in mutual stress on conversion and renewal, in mutual insistence that "heart religion" shall find expression in social action, in mutual concern for the Christian home and family as the 'domestic Church'.

55. Out of their separate traditions, both Methodists and Roman Catholics come together as they recognize God's gracious providence, and as they express belief in Jesus Christ as God's Love Incarnate and the Holy Spirit as God with us. Both traditions hold man's cooperation with God in the mystery of salvation as necessary; both look upon life itself as liturgy. Both traditions converge in

"compatible definitions of goals for the Christian life (however disparate the means and uneven the results), a dynamic process of growth in grace, from the threshold of faith (justification) toward the fullness of faith (sanctification)—by means of affective patterns of moral and spiritual discipline (asceticism), charismatic gifts and outpourings, sacrificial love and service as 'effective signs' of faith's professions and of pious feeling".

56. A study of the historical background of Methodist and Roman Catholic spirituality leads to the conclusion that what has mattered most in both traditions has been the reality of religion as it brings about the transformation of man's heart and mind in everyday living. In our conversations, we saw that here was the meaning of the *theologia cordis*, by which we come to know the crucified and risen Christ as Lord and Saviour and the Spirit present in us and in the Church.

III. THE CONTEMPORARY SITUATION

57. It is not enough in ecumenical dialogue to look to the past for the comfort of a common heritage of spirituality. For this reason, a further study was made of current trends in both Methodist and Roman Catholic prayer and spirituality. This was found to be necessary since Christians, too, are, in a sense, "men of our time". As such, they are faced with both the threat and the challenge which the contemporary situation offers to Christian spirituality.

58. The negative aspects of the contemporary situation have been considered separately in this report (Cf. § 30). The conversations on prayer and spirituality also brought to light a number of positive factors which exist in the world today. Some of these touch on personal relations and contribute to the development of spirituality through their worth for human existence. Others reveal a call to spirituality in the frustrations, the emptiness and the boredom which man experiences in many phases of daily life and culture.

The void in the world he has constructed is, itself, a plea for fulfilment that must come from beyond man. The contemporary situation, betrays man's thirst for the God whom he strives to find, often unknowingly—at times, even while rejecting him.

59. At least three trends in spirituality have been discerned recently, suggesting that there are possibilities for a creative response on the part of the Church and the Christian in facing the contemporary world. In the first place, there is a search for prayer as *contemplation*. This search reveals our deep need of God, our longing for salvation, our eagerness to know and to do God's will as revealed in Jesus Christ. Secondly, there is a call for *compassion*. This call is addressed to the Church which is dedicated to the primary mission of guiding persons in corporate action and in the works of justice, truth and love. Finally, there is a desire for *community*. This desire gives witness to the fact that we are to be saved as a people. It recognizes also that the Churches must pray and work together toward the true unity, wherever and whenever this is possible.

60. Such a creative response as that suggested above can be assured only if the Church and all members of the Church realize the importance of inner renewal. Through constant renewal, the Church will become truly catholic, evangelical and reformed. The Church will be *catholic* in knowing how to express what is universal in the Christian message of God's love for all men. It will be *evangelical* in reaching out effectively to share this good news by word and by responsible living in community. It will be *reformed* in willing to engage in self-criticism and to weed out the inauthentic in thought and practice.

61. The discussion on spirituality led us to agree that the Churches must proclaim community by showing the way through compassion and contem-

plation in Christian living to communion-in-unity. Spirituality in the Church must be a witness to the capacity of men to live as human beings and as Christians in the institutions and structures of contemporary society and under all the conditions which go to make up the contemporary situation.

IV. CRITIQUE

62. We acknowledge with gratitude and joy the discovery of a vision shared by Methodists and Roman Catholics in our understanding of prayer and spirituality in the Christian life. The study which led to this discovery, however, did not treat every facet of this topic in the same manner.

63. For example, to countless Roman Catholics, devotion to Mary is an integral and important part of their Christian experience and of the "Life in the Spirit". For Methodists, on the other hand, the dogmatic status of Roman Catholic doctrines concerning the Mother of our Lord was identified at Ariccia as one of three "hard-core issues of radical disagreement" between the two traditions. Neither the positive nor the negative side of Mariology was treated in the study of spirituality covered by this report. No special attention was given to the restoration of the Marian question effected by Vatican II.

64. The Junaluska report referred to common Methodist—Roman Catholic reverence for Scripture and to the eucharistic foundation of both traditions of spirituality. Both of these marks were accepted without question as implicitly basic to the study. This acceptance, however, did not take up the questions or state the real ambiguities which rise out of certain attitudes toward Scripture and Eucharist, at times, in the two traditions (Cf. Section V and VII).

65. At the end of the discussions on spirituality, Methodists found that inadequate treatment had been given to two strong traditions in their devotional history: that of *hymnody*—particularly as seen in the eucharistic hymns of Charles Wesley—and that of the *koinonia*—as carried on in the class meetings. Roman Catholics were quick to admit that they had much to gain from a better knowledge of these two facets of Methodist spirituality.

66. There was general agreement too that the question of communion *in sacris* and the possibility of sharing in the Lord's Supper ought properly to have been raised in relation to the discussion of spirituality, as much as in any other areas of ecumenical concern.

67. The great wealth found in the common heritage and shared vision discovered by both Methodists and Roman Catholics during our conversations on prayer and spirituality led the members of the commission to see the need for a continued education along this line. They strongly recommend that programmes be begun to assure mutual enrichment at every level on this topic.

68. We add some *practical suggestions* which are addressed especially to the concerns expressed by the commission elsewhere in this report regarding communication:

1. Informal colloquies, such as those held at Cambridge, ought to be devoted to the study of spirituality.

2. We need continued opportunities for discussion together on the different sacramental and non-sacramental ways of fostering spirituality in both traditions.

3. There is a need for devotional material which can be shared by both traditions to help the general body of the faithful in their use of the Bible and prayer in everyday life.

4. Means must be taken to make it possible to share such practices as lay missions.

5. We need to study the problem of wide-spread communication in view of promoting a fuller understanding of our common heritage of "Scriptural holiness".

6. We must learn how to deal with the old suspicions and gradually do away with them—for example, the Catholic rejection of what seems to be a life-refusing attitude in certain disciplinary practices in Methodism.

7. We must learn how to develop common devotion, such as the Methodist devotion to the five wounds of the crucified and risen Lord alongside the Roman Catholic devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and, in this matter, to be mutually enriched.

8. Practical means must be found to help both Methodists and Roman Catholics move into a growth in their devotional life with balance and vitality. Such means might include shared retreats, small prayer or Bible study groups, groups of Christian response to all areas of human experience, shared devotional and instructional material, shared facilities for Christian and spiritual education at all levels.

IV. CHRISTIAN HOME AND FAMILY

69. Our two Churches welcome the recent dialogue between them at theological and sociological levels on various aspects of the Christian home and family and recommend that arrangements should be made for this work to be continued.

70. Both Churches find much ground for agreement on Christian marriage and family life in the Decree of Vatican II, "The Church in the Modern World", Part III, Chapter I, Section 47-52 and commend this document as a basis for future study and dialogue on these issues.

71. We agree that the well-being of the individual person and of society as a whole is intimately linked with marriage and family life. We are agreed that married life is a holy and honourable estate instituted by God for the mutual love and sanctification of men and women, as well as the rearing and educa-

tion of children. We agree that a marriage between two baptised Christians is a voluntary union for life, of one man to one woman to the exclusion of all others so that they become one flesh (*Matthew 19:6*) and as such a sign of God's fidelity to His people and symbol of the unity between Christ and His Church (*Eph. V*). A married couple render mutual help to each other through the intimate union of their persons and of their actions. The permanent nature of Christian marriage provides a suitable environment in which children can develop into mature and responsible citizens. Christian marriage also calls us to and produces mutual fidelity, unity and love which are themselves great God-given blessings. Pre- and extra-marital intimate sexual relationships are incompatible with the teachings of Christ and with the standard of personal holiness both Churches expect their members to attain. Holy Scripture directs and inspires married couples and their families to live in love and friendship with God. To this end Christian parents should encourage family prayers, Bible study and the perfect fulfillment of their duties and obligations as a means for the personal sanctification of themselves and their children.

72. *Inter-Church Marriages.* God has made man and woman in His own image but in such a way that each sex is complementary to the other. We are agreed that there are great advantages if husband and wife have much in common especially in matters of religious faith and practice. We are agreed that marriage in which one spouse is Methodist and one Roman Catholic presents a special opportunity and responsibility for joint pastoral concern by both our Churches. The basic unity in faith through baptism and attendance to the World should make it possible for couples in such marriages to help one another in spiritual growth, and to share with their children that rich Christian heritage which they hold in common.

73. We are not unmindful of the difficulties which can occur when the Church allegiance and doctrine of two parties differ, and both are deeply committed to their different Christian traditions. This conflict must be seen in the context of the right to marry, the inviolability of conscience, the joint obligation of the parents for the care and education of their children, other mutual rights and obligations in marriage and the teaching and self understanding of the Churches involved.

74. While recent changes in the legislation of the Roman Catholic Church on inter-Church marriages are seen as an ecumenical advance, we are nevertheless conscious of the fact that the conflict and agony in such marriages have not been created by positive law, nor will they resolve by positive law. The difficulties inherent in inter-Church marriages should compel us not only to work with greater zeal for fuller ecclesial unity, but also to do everything possible to help the partners of such marriages to use them as means of grace and of ecumenical

growth. We urge a special World Methodist Council/Roman Catholic working party be set up to deal with the theology of marriage and problems of inter-Church marriages or that the World Methodist Council consider the possibility of joining in dialogue in progress on this subject between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Federation of the Reformed Churches.

75. *Divorce.* The Roman Catholic Church does not allow the divorce of baptised partners of a consummated marriage with a view to re-marriage, nor has she allowed the re-marriage of divorced persons. The Methodist Church has taken a different point of view on these matters. Nevertheless, we are well aware that special problems are created by the breakdown of marriages and that these cause great suffering, not least to the children of that marriage. We are aware that theological reflection is at present active in this whole field, and recommend that further joint study and dialogue be given to this important problem. We are greatly concerned with the increasing incidence of divorce and the disintegration of family life and jointly urge both Churches to make common effort to reduce their occurrence.

76. *Contraception.* We agree that human sexual intercourse has two equal and inter-related functions, namely fostering love, affection, unity and fidelity between husband and wife as well as that of reproduction. Under the stress and strain of modern social and economic conditions, parents have a right and duty before God to decide the number of children they may bear, support, rear and educate. How this decision is to be implemented is a moral matter, a matter of conscience which should be the subject of prayerful consideration by the parents who are to seek help and guidance from the Church. We recognize, however, that at present there exist differences between the official positions of our respective Churches on the application of contraceptive methods by responsible parents. As we take cognizance of existing movements within our two Churches and of the sociological, ecological and demographic conditions of mankind, we would encourage further dialogue on this matter.

77. *Abortion.* We agree that the Holy Scripture affirms the sacredness and dignity of human life and that we have, therefore, a duty and obligation to defend, protect and preserve it. Our two Churches are at present confronted with complex moral issues relative to abortion and with wide differences between them in their teaching and interpretations. We have a responsibility to explore, clarify and emphasise the moral and ethical issues involved in abortion and confront our people with them as the ultimate basic for decision. We recommend that this be the subject of special dialogue between experts from our respective Churches.

78. *Care of the Aged.* At the other end of life the problems of geriatrics are formidable and increasing. Now that people are living longer, special

housing and other facilities are needed for those whose natural powers have atrophied or are declining. We recognize this to be a family, Church and society responsibility to make possible the maintenance of family life for the aged. We recommend that both Churches should cooperate in caring for the needs of the elderly by providing preparation courses for retirement and giving the aged and infirm a sense of being loved, wanted and cared for. This assurance which is needed as we enter the world and develop into adult life is needed no less as we prepare to depart from this life to eternity.

78a. *Moves towards Unity.* We believe that our present desires for greater unity between the Roman Catholic and Methodist Churches can be greatly helped and accelerated if means are available for local Churches to be kept informed of the results of dialogue between theologians on matters which at present concern us. To this end we recommend that Catholic dioceses and Methodist districts or conferences establish local, joint committees to foster and encourage better mutual understanding between members of the clergy, local Churches, and lay organisations (Cf. §§ 121-2).

V. EUCHARIST

79. The subject of the Eucharist, Mass, Lord's Supper is one to which the commission has devoted a good deal of attention, and not only in its main meetings and in its sub-committees: this theme took up a good deal of time at the colloquia at Cambridge. This was not because of any undue preoccupations with sacramentalism, but because there was an obvious place of common agreement and appreciation with which to begin, i. e. the emphasis on frequent Communion of the Wesleys which led to a eucharistic revival in the first part of the Methodist story, and of which the eucharistic hymns of Charles Wesley are a permanent legacy. So our first conversations included an appraisal of those hymns from a Catholic view.

80. It should be stressed that at no point of our conversations has there been more friendly honesty and candour. It was not disguised, for example, that the eucharistic devotion of the Wesleys and the hymns of Charles Wesley are no index at all to the place of Holy Communion in the life, thought and devotion of modern Methodists. The conversations ranged from the great recurring theological themes to such practices as the Methodist custom of using unfermented wine, and to Roman practices of extra-liturgical devotions to the Sacrament. In our discussions, it has been a little like ascending a spiral staircase, coming back again and again to the same points, but at another level and with a wider horizon.

81. Obviously two of these points were, first, the sense in which Christ is *present*, the mode of his presence and how our awareness of his presence is realized in the sacrament; second, the question of how far we may speak of a *sacrifice*. Other questions,

the nature of our memorial (as the Protestant Reformers themselves stressed, much more than a bare act of intellectual remembrance of a past event) and the whole eschatological and forward looking element in the Eucharist, with its implications in the life of the believer, of the whole body of Christ and of the Body of Christ in relation to the world—were dealt with in less detail. The whole problem of the relation of Christ's presence to the elements of bread and wine demanded and received the full treatment of a massive paper on the problem of transubstantiation in relation to modern ways of thought.

82. Here are continuing problems and neither in this case nor in that of the idea of sacrifice could our commission hope to come up with solutions of questions which still exercise the scholars in the learned world. Nonetheless we can register an astonishing, helpful and hopeful measure of agreement, which we have thought fit to summarize and record:

83. POINTS OF AGREEMENT:

I. *The real presence*

1. Both Methodists and Roman Catholics affirm as the primary fact the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the Mass, or the Lord's Supper.

2. This is a reality that does not depend on the experience of the communicant.

3. It is only by faith that we become aware of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

4. Within the worship of the Church, this is a distinctive mode or manifestation of the presence of Christ.

5. Christ in the fullness of His being, human and divine, crucified and risen, is present in this sacrament.

6. The presence of Christ is mediated through the sacred elements of bread and wine over which the words of institution have been pronounced.

7. Bread and wine do not mean the same outside the context of the Eucharistic celebration as they do within that context. Within the eucharistic celebration they become the sign par excellence of Christ's redeeming presence to His people. To the eyes of faith, they now signify the Body and Blood of Jesus, given and shed for the world; as we take, eat and drink, and share the bread and wine, we are transformed into Him. The eucharistic bread and wine are therefore efficacious signs of the Body and Blood of Christ.

II. *The sacrifice*

1. The Eucharist is the celebration of Christ's full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, offered once and for all, for the whole world.

2. It is a memorial which is more than a recollection of a past event. It is a re-enactment of Christ's triumphant sacrifice and makes available for us its benefits.

3. For this reason Roman Catholics call the Eucharist a sacrifice, though this terminology is not used by Methodists.

4. In this celebration we share in Christ's offering to Himself in obedience to the Father's will.

III. *Communion*

1. The perfect participation in the celebration of the Eucharist is the communion of the faithful.

2. By partaking of the Body and Blood we become one with Christ, our Saviour, and one with one another in a common dedication to the redemption of the world.

84. POINTS OF DIFFERENCE:

I. *The presence*

1. The presence in the Eucharist for the Methodists is not fundamentally different from the presence of Christ in other means of grace, i. e. preaching.

2. For some Methodists the preaching of the Word provides a more effective means of grace than the Eucharist.

3. To the faith of the Roman Catholic, the bread and wine within the context of the Eucharistic celebration are transformed into another reality, i. e. the Body and Blood of the glorified Jesus. The external of the bread and wine remain unchanged. For the Roman Catholic this transformation takes place through the words of institution pronounced by a validly ordained priest.

4. The worship of the Blessed Sacrament is linked with the Roman Catholic doctrine of the transformation of the elements, and does not obtain in Methodism.

II. *Intercommunion*

1. In Methodism any Christian who can conscientiously accept the invitation is welcomed to the Lord's table. Except in cases of urgent necessity, eucharistic communion is extended by Roman Catholics only to those who share the same faith.

We welcome the ongoing study of this problem in actual dialogue, and look forward to the day when we can partake of the Eucharist together. We rejoice in the increasing agreements in doctrine between the two communions which are working to bring this about.

85. POINTS FOR FURTHER STUDY:

In addition to the problem already raised these further issues relating to the Eucharist need further study:

1. The ministry and the apostolic succession (Cf. Section VI).

2. Our common faith.

3. The relation between eucharistic union and ecclesiastical fellowship.

86. It might be felt that in the light of this concentrated common study and conversation this is a theme which might be left for a time while attention is turned to other subjects. If so, it would be important to return to it at convenient points—in the light for example of further understanding about the nature of the Church, or of our common experience of worship—not only in theoretical discussion but even more in the light of our experience of worshipping with one another. In any case there remains before us the task of getting across our agreements to the Churches at large and to bodies of Christians who have perhaps hardly begun to consider some of our problems, let alone our solutions. Nor can we ignore the agreement already registered between Catholics and Orthodox and Catholics and Anglicans in which we recognize an overall growth in ecumenical understanding.

VI. MINISTRY

87. Two illuminating papers on the ministry, one from the Catholic side, the other from the Methodist, were presented for study at Rabat. From these, though no concrete conclusions were drawn by the Commission, it was recognised that this is one of the primary areas for more extensive sharing and exploration, particularly in view of the renewed emphasis by both Catholics and Methodists on the ministry in relation to the cultivation of spirituality in local Churches. The possibilities for mutual benefits from further dialogue are evident also because of the new emphasis on the Bible and preaching among Catholics since Vatican II and because of the growing appreciation of the sacraments among Methodists.

88. On the basis of the two papers presented at Rabat and in the light of certain general presuppositions among Catholics and Methodists concerning the ministry, there are *areas of agreement* which await further reflection and action. The following may be singled out for special mention:

89. 1) The primary authority and finality of Jesus Christ as the One through whom the ministry, whether sacramental or otherwise, is both identified and ultimately authorized. The minister participates in Christ's ministry, acts in Christ's name.

90. 2) The importance of the work of the Holy Spirit in calling people into the ministry (we recognize, of course, that the call comes in various ways—sometimes suddenly, usually gradually—and no effort needs to be made here to say what it means to be called).

91. 3) The understanding of the ministry primarily in terms of *a*) the *full-time* dedication to Christ for *life*, for studying and communicating the Gospel, and *b*) the functions of the minister (both of these concern the work of administering the Sacraments, preaching the Word, teaching Christian truth, defending the faith, nurturing souls in spirituality,

and, by teaching and example, showing leadership through acts of reconciliation and of service to people in need).

92. 4) The understanding of the ministry as, in some mysterious way, an extension of the incarnational and sacramental principle whereby human beings (as ministers), through their souls and bodies, become, by the power of the Holy Spirit, agents of Christ for bringing God into the lives and conditions of men (this means also, of course, that they are agents for enabling men to find their way toward God).

93. 5) The shared recognition of prophetic and special ministries with their distinctive moral and charismatic qualities.

94. 6) The "connectional" character of the ministry (the term is a Methodist usage but the general meaning corresponds to the Catholic conception) whereby everyone who is authentically called by the Holy Spirit is both authorized by that same Spirit through duly recognized persons (for Catholics, bishops) in the community of faith and assigned a place of service in that community. Each is bound to the other through the varied connectional systems to form a "ministry" in the corporate sense. For example, in the Methodist Churches there are ways of recognizing a person as a minister, namely, ordination and conference membership wherein he subjects himself to appointment for service.

95. 7) The need for high standards of education and spiritual training for ministry. For this the basic theological and pastoral studies are as necessary as ever, but we would agree that they need to be supplemented by a sensitive and open attitude to the arts and sciences, especially those concerned seriously with human behaviour. Readiness to gain from the advances and achievements of human knowledge, and receptiveness to those spiritual elements deriving from the common Christian inheritance, often latent in literature and the arts, are needed in ministry today. In this regard, much in Part II of the Roman Directorium Ecumenicum leads us to hope that much more serious efforts at joint study of common problems and at practical collaboration in preparing for ministry may prudently develop between us.

96. 8) Encouraging experiments are already there to point to an awareness of problems and ambiguities arising in an age of rapid change concerning the meaning and function of ministry.

97. In the immediate future there are certain problems facing us, certain questions that Methodists especially would wish to ask which may be clearly and briefly stated:

1. How are we to understand the relationship of the ordained ministry to the laity? What does it mean to speak of "a difference in kind (*essentia*) and not merely in degree" (*Lumen Gentium*, 10, ii). In what sense is there a difference in kind?

2. What specifically stands in the way of Roman Catholic recognition of Methodist *ministry* as *authentic*? Do the changes of emphasis in thinking about ministry manifested in Vatican II offer promise of progress here? What can be expected of new thinking and research on the concept of apostolic succession?

3. What is the bearing on the question of ministry of prophetic and special ministries?

4. In what specific functions may and should Catholic priests and Methodist ministers *share*? If they can share in these (whatever the list), are they not alike ministers in those functions?

5. In view of the lack of clarity in both the New Testament and the early history of the Church on the nature and authorization of the ministry (except for the Master's selection and authorization of the disciples), what guiding principles are indicated for understanding the meaning of orders? How important have pragmatic factors been and how much influence should they continue to have in defining orders? Why should there be three orders instead of two or one?

98. We do not of course suggest that these questions are either original or exclusive to us. For instance, they have, together with important related questions, concerning e. g. episcopacy and primacy, been the object of expert study within the "Catholicity and Apostolicity" commission of the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, an interim account of whose work has recently been published. Our two Churches in the next phase of their dialogue should welcome the latter commission's proposal to "study in depth and examine critically" these themes and should welcome equally the commission's compilation as "a tool in the service of Joint research".

VII. AUTHORITY

99. Problems connected with authority have exercised the commission from the beginning of our conversations, and have cropped up during our discussions of other themes, e. g. ministry, Eucharist. We do not feel that our direct discussions on this theme have been more than exploratory, opening up rather than exploring the question deeply. We believe that discussions on this subject will be a necessary item on any future agenda of Roman Catholic/Methodist conversations.

100. From the beginning of our discussions it was recognized that problems of authority were implicit in some of the deep "crevasses" between us, and notably the Mariological dogmas and the doctrines of the Infallibility or Indefectibility of the Church on the one hand; while on the other hand the whole question of the origin and development of Methodism as a work of the Spirit, of an extraordinary and prophetic character, has at some point to be related to the Catholic view of church order and of its understanding of the authority of

Christ in His Church. We agreed to postpone these important questions because it seemed to us fundamentally important to begin, not with our differences and disagreements, but with our agreements and with that fundamental unity without which all our conversations would cease to be conversations between Christians.

101. Yet we realize that those questions do bear on the problem of authority, and have to be faced in our hope of approaching our goal of genuine communion between our Churches *in sacris*. Thus one of the most hopeful conceptions in recent discussion has been the concept of a hierarchy of truths: the possibility that because we might hold and affirm truths which are central and which concern the heart of the Christian gospel, we might live together on this basis, while differing in many lesser things, and while we still search for agreement and understanding in others. But the question then arises—is our agreement in obedience to Christ, our acceptance of the authority of the Scripture, our acknowledgement of the apostolic faith as witnessed to in the creeds of the Ecumenical Councils—are these the hierarchy of truth at its indispensable, top level? Or must, say, the dogmas laid down in 1856 and 1870 be included among the indispensables? It will be remembered that Newman stressed the importance of the word "irreformable" in relation to 1870 and interpreted this to mean that once the Church has made up its mind, and declared itself, then, however much the meaning of this pronouncement might be modified in a later context, such doctrine must be accepted by the faithful. If this is so and the Mariological dogmas and infallibility are regarded as necessary to any communion *in sacris*, the way ahead is obviously going to be long, precarious and uncertain. We mention this not because we have studied this issue but to show why further discussions on the nature of authority cannot finally ignore these problems.

102. We began therefore by our common acceptance of the paramount authority of Christ in His Church (Cf. § 35) and asked what kind of authority was consonant with the Incarnation, that is with the condescension of God to become man, to enter history, and so to put himself, it seems "at risk", suffering the consequences of living among sinners in a sinful world, and indeed doing this to the very limit (*Phil.* 2:1-11)—and in the Cross seeming to put Himself at the mercy of history. To this question asked by Methodists at the first Cambridge colloquium, a paper was read from the Catholic point of view which further defined the authority of Christ as the authority of the Gospel. Thus if the gospel partakes of the authority of Christ, Christ who lives with His people and is present with them, ruling and guiding them, it becomes clear that this simple acceptance of the authority of Christ is bound to lead to the consideration of subsidiary "authorities" and even perhaps to a hierarchy of authorities recalling what has been said earlier about a hierarchy of truths.

103. Thus the distinguished Methodist historian, Sir Herbert Butterfield, at the end of his study of Christianity in history, sums up the whole matter with the words "Hold to Christ, and for the rest be uncommitted" intimating not only that commitment to Christ is the heart of the matter but that such commitment leads to whole areas of Christian freedom. This is entirely in harmony with Catholic teaching that authority is not absolute but God-directed and that it is a service aimed at the unfolding of the free, human, Christ-directed personality. But when the implications of this apparently simple commitment to Christ are examined they are seen to involve consideration not only of the apostolic kerygma and the Scriptural witness to it, but also the continuing investigation of the mystery of salvation, and the connection with it of the mystery of His own person, which occupied so massively the thought of the Church in the first centuries and of which the great Christological treatises of the Fathers and the creeds and confessions of the great Councils bear witness. It is similar with another apparently simple statement—the famous toast of Newman—"The Pope and Conscience—but Conscience First".

104. That Christians have a duty to obey the voice of conscience at all costs, that it is one of the ways in which God speaks directly to men, and that all Christians have the duty to respect the consciences of others, are matters on which we might easily agree. But again investigation shows that the matter is not as simple as this, though historical polemical oppositions of "authority" and "conscience" have often induced the simplification. We know what crimes have been committed in the name of conscience, including some of the more terrible war crimes of the People of God. We understand the meaning of Philip Melancthon's saying "a good conscience is the invention of the Devil". In other words, the conscience itself needs to be enlightened, instructed, corrected, informed, by the Holy Spirit indeed, but a Holy Spirit showing himself in many ways, and using the Holy Scriptures on the one hand, and the discipline of the Church on the other; nor can the individual conscience be isolated from the mind of the whole Church, from the "consensus fidelium" insofar as it exists and can be ascertained in matters of faith and morals. An informed Christian conscience makes a responsible decision in the light of the example, the principles, the life of Christ; of the experience of the Christian community from Christ to the present; of the guidance and authoritative teaching of the Church; while the consciences of societies outside the Church, and the insights and compelling perceptions of all men may have their importance for the individual. No doubt in the end each man must have this freedom to obey his conscience against the whole world, and certainly against the decisions and commands of any "Establishment". But just as certainly no man's conscience is an island, entire of itself.

105. Our acceptance of the authority of Christ, of the gospel, and of the witness to the gospel in

the Scripture and in the creeds poses a whole series of questions concerning the relation of Scripture and tradition which we have noted, but which we have not explored. An important paper pointed us to the Fourth Gospel and to Christ's claim to bear witness to the truth—and this might well be further explored in relation to two other Johannine utterances, that "the truth shall make you free"—that is, the authority of Christ in his witness to truth is always a liberating one, and comes to deliver men from legalism, not to entangle them further in commandments of men.

106. Again in the light of Christ's washing the feet of his disciples, his "I have called you friends" speaks of authority in terms of service and discipleship from which all thought of triumphalism is removed. Christ's disciples are his friends because they are to know and understand what the Lord has done and be able to imitate him. In Pauline terms which come close to the heart of John Wesley and the original Methodist testimony (but no less close to, say, the rule of St. Benedict) Christ's authority is manifest in the faith not of servants but of sons—sons who share in the glorious liberty of God's children. Only an authority given in love and received in love expresses the deepest meaning of the word for Christians. By comparison all uses of the word in terms of the rule of the Gentiles, of juridical and political usage, are beside the point. Here Methodists would say that half-a-dozen more John XXIIIs and Paul VIs in the next century would do more than anything to dispose of a thousand years of conflict and misunderstanding.

107. Thus, an important paper read at Lake Junaluska set our questions amid a general crisis about the nature of authority in our modern world, and we might add the fact that in two important fields, in education and in the home, it is authoritarian and "paternalistic" view of authority which are being most sharply challenged. Nonetheless (however much the historic expression of the authority of Christ in his Church throughout the centuries may need to be re-appraised in terms of the new insights of recent times) for us the problem of Christian authority must be sought and expressed within the Christian dimension.

108. This paramount authority of Christ in the Church has in fact been regarded by both our Churches as exercised in varying and diverse modes, and it is perhaps an omission that in our conversations, though the attempt was made, tardily and with insufficient time for success, at Lake Junaluska, we never listed side by side our hierarchies of authorities and studied the place of the varying elements in them in our list of priorities. Both Churches, e. g., acknowledge an authority of conscience, also an authority of discipline exercised by the proper courts of the Church; all accept the authority of Scripture, but within this authority there are many questions some of which have not been and some of which may never be finally resolved.

The various elements in the holy tradition, which we all accept and on which our continuing life as Churches also depends—theologies, liturgies, devotion, the sacraments, preaching of the Word and study of the Bible, the authority of the ministry and of Pope and bishop or of the Methodist Conferences and ministry—it is likely that the two lists of authorities might not turn out to be as dissimilar as we might expect. But almost certainly we should place them in a differing order and lay more stress here on one element and there on another. Indeed until we have done this, the problem of authority remains an abstract one, perhaps an obsessive one in which we spend too much time talking about the problem of the problem, certainly one unrelated to the enduring purpose of our conversations, which is to bring us into living relation and communion with one another.

109. Another possible field of useful discussion would be those “principles of the Reformation” to which the Deed of Union of the Methodist Church in Great Britain explicitly refers, but which it does not further define. Without wishing to revive what was bitter controversy, not so much—at this point—in the 16th as in the 19th century (when on an Ultramontanist view private judgment was regarded as an individualist arrogance which was the root of all schisms while Protestants saw it as the great bulwark against a blind and irrational acceptance of priestcraft) there are one or two important matters on which agreement can be registered and about which affirmations should be made.

110. Thus, many Protestants would have seen the heart of the doctrine of private judgment in the affirmation (the priesthood of all believers meant the same thing at this point) that no priests can intervene between a man’s soul and God. And yet this view has never been more unreservedly stated than in a great passage in Newman’s *Apologia*:

“From a boy I had been led to consider that my Maker and I, His creature, were the two beings luminously such... I know full well now, and did not know then that the Catholic Church allows no image of any sort, material or immaterial, no dogmatic symbol, no rite, no sacrament, no saint, not even the Blessed Virgin herself to come between the soul and his creator. It is face to face ‘solus cum solo’ in all matters between man and his God. He alone creates: He alone has redeemed: before His awful eyes we go in death: in the vision of Him is our eternal beatitude” (§ 177.1. 5-14).

The “*Dream of Gerontius*” is a commentary on this. Later in the same work Newman observes:

“It is the custom with Protestants writers to consider that whereas there are two great principles in acting on the history of religion, authority and private judgment, they have all the private judgment to themselves and we have... authority... but this is not so... Catholic Christendom is no simple exhibition of religious absolutism but

presents a continuous picture of authority and private judgment alternately advancing and retreating as the ebb and flow of the tide” (§ 237 1.7).

111. Also in the *Apologia* and again in his famous essay on the function of the laity in matters of doctrine he points out how again and again in Church history the breakthrough in creative thought has come from an individual or small group of Christians. Methodists, on the other hand, also recognize that private judgment alone is not enough. The very recognition of doctrinal standards — Scripture, the principles of the creeds and Reformation, and in a narrower sense Wesley’s sermons, as preaching standards; the whole discipline of the Church as exercised by the Conference over ministers and laity; the Conference’s whole process in ordaining those who believe themselves to be inwardly called of God, by confirming and accepting this in the name of the Church — all these are ways in which private judgment and authority are seen to belong together and to safeguard one another.

112. Discussion therefore of the relation of private judgment to authority might fruitfully lead to consideration of two other related problems. The first is the place of reason in the hierarchy of authorities. John Wesley’s “appeal to men of reason and religion” shows that for him a renewal of inward religion could not safely be left to emotion without the critical safeguard of reason. He thought in terms of his own century and we as the heirs of so many recent genuine advances in philosophy and psychology could (perhaps) no longer think of reason exactly as did the men of his age. Nor can we revert to any kind of scholasticism, Catholic or Protestant. Yet in a world which at the moment is being swept along (and much of the Church with it) by vast tides of irrationalism, ought not our two Churches from their own tradition to be speaking words of sane and moderate common sense, and eschewing the current violence of the tongue and an emotive romanticism which seems to drag us to the edge of dire danger? (Cf. § 30).

113. The other question concerning private judgment is one which from the time of John Oman has been regarded as important among Protestants—the view that truth has not simply to be accepted but seen to be true. Methodists might ask, did even Our Lord expect to be believed on his own “say so” or because he was bearing witness to a truth which men might understand and prove by trying it out for themselves—and so discovering that they were building not on sand but on a rock? Is not here part of the meaning of being “friends” of Christ and “sons of God”? Does not God will all his children to see and understand and know to the fullest and uttermost of their capacity? Does not then the saying of a great Evangelical Temple Gairdner “let us believe the maximum” become intelligible, since new beliefs are not so many fetters on the mind but magic casements opening on ever new enthralling vistas of truth?

114. Catholics, while by no means rejecting all of this, might in turn ask whether faith is not primarily a relation to persons, not propositions. Though it necessarily implies also a faith in assertions (in truths; in propositions) this is not something isolated, but encompassed and sustained by the *person* who is believed, Christ. Any statement of the kind "I believe that..." is based upon the authority of the person at the centre of the belief, Christ, and upon the assurance derived from thence.

115. Yet we might agree that Catholic as well as Protestant history shows the importance of the "Ulysses factor" in the Christian way—the creative importance of men who explore truth for its own sake; at all costs and wherever it may lead. On the other hand there are implications for the problem of authority and private judgment in the fact that the wholeness of the Christian faith is so many-sided that no individual can wholly comprehend it for himself.

116. The Catholic would recall here that, if creation is already a kind of revelation and self-disclosure of God (*Rom.* 1-18), there is an essential difference between the inadequate knowledge of God attainable through creation and the self-disclosure of his mystery through revelation. God is not only the object and goal of faith, but through his self-revelation is its principle and ground. Faith is a preeminent way in which the biblical word is manifested, "It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me". There is much for further discussion here, if only to dispel misunderstandings, surviving suspicions that Catholics demand some blind submission of the intellect while Protestants cherish a wilful and arrogant individualism.

117. Of the ways in which authority both safeguards and limits freedom we have had little discussion, yet it is evident that here too there lies before us an important task. It has been said that Vatican II while having noble statements about liberty has added little to a Christian rationale of toleration, a toleration based not on indifferentism but on a sense of the truth of Christianity and its final efficacy for all men, combined with a reverence for the dignity and liberty of the consciences of others. Protestants have not lived up to what they have said about this but at least such documents as Milton's "Areopagitica" put forward a view of truth in freedom which has unexhausted implications for our two Churches in relation to other Christians and to the modern world.

118. We have tried to indicate that a fruitful beginning has been made with a subject so important that it must surely be continued, if not on these then on other lines, in any continuing conversations.

VIII. THE WAY AHEAD

119. Our instructions were to devote the last section of this report to developing and setting out the commission's ideas on how Roman Catholic-Metho-

dist dialogue might profitably go forward following the first phase of which the report marks the conclusion.

120. In the field of theological dialogue what has been said above in sections II to VII will not suggest any lack of material for future programmes, whether they be programmes of further thinking and acting together in areas where we feel we have much to share and to offer each other, or programmes which boldly tackle the chief difficulties which keep us apart. In none of the areas covered by this report do we feel that the possibilities of dialogue have been exhausted. In some of them it has hardly begun, and we are concerned chiefly to suggest what we hope might be improvements in organization and method.

121. In working these out we have borne in mind one or two main considerations already aired in the progress report drafted at Rabat, e. g. §§ 22-5: "We would hope that those responsible for the deeper (theological) inquiry... would bear continually in mind the responsibility we feel for serious planning of the education of our Churches at lay, ministerial and local levels, for the overcoming of prejudices and misunderstandings and for offering guidance toward cooperation between local Churches. If this responsibility should remain unfulfilled, the work of our Joint Commission will be to that extent unfruitful.

This in turn raises the vital question of communication. Given the nature and mandate of the Joint Commission, it cannot be expected that the general public will share fully in all phases of the consultation. On the other hand, it is *not* easy to see how the serious planning of the education of our Churches at lay, ministerial and local level is to begin, or how our Churches are to be convinced that their spokesmen are doing anything, if there is no better communication than in the conventional press release.

It is therefore suggested that provided the status of papers be clearly established (working papers, e. g.) they might be circulated among responsible and qualified people, and summaries of them might be incorporated in reports. This last could be done even if the papers did not command general acceptance, since dissent could be recorded as part of an account of the substance of discussion.

It might be that certain of the papers prepared for these consultations would prove suitable for publication in one form or another.

122. It is the judgment of the commission that the dialogue would be most efficiently continued under a central committee with a maximum of six members from each side, and with more precisely defined functions. It should be responsible in general for relations between the World Methodist Council and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity; and an important part of this responsibility should be the stimulating of good relations, of dialogue and cooperation at national and local level. This should include collecting information about

activity and experiments wherever they are shared by Methodists and Roman Catholics and in whatever context, and facilitating its circulation and exchange. Thus useful comparative judgments can be made and clearer ideas may emerge of how we can best achieve our shared purposes in Christian life and witness and in the search for unity. The dialogue in the fullest and liveliest sense can hardly be thought of as something merely to be kept ticking from one annual central committee meeting to another.

123. The task of the committee in regard to serious theological dialogue should be mainly one of organization, coordination and review.

124. *Organization* should be as flexible as possible, regulated only by the principle that the best work is done only by adequately equipped people giving adequate time, energy and interest to it. This entails regular cooperation, usually possible only to people who have regular access to each other in the right kind of circumstances. An example of such circumstances has been briefly considered above (§ 16). Another joint work the commission might stimulate and to some extent organize is written work for publishing, of various scope, whether aimed at involving larger numbers from the learned world in the dialogue and bringing it into useful relationship with other dialogues, or whether aimed at making our people (and others) at large aware that progress is being made and familiarizing them with a situation of friendship and joint activity.

125. Favourable reference has already been made (§ 29) to the English joint publication *Christian Belief*. As well as further examples of this type, we think that other types, such as formal symposia on given themes, books in the form of exchange of letters, sympathetic commented editions of the works of one side by members of the other - e. g. of C. Wesley's hymns from the Roman Catholic side or of some Catholic classic from the other.

126. But in an age when less and less reading can be relied on to be done this literary activity would need to be supplemented, especially below the specialized level, by joint effort in the other communications media, and by stimulating well-directed discussion among our people in order to create constructive Christian criticism towards the vast impact of the mass media in general.

127. The committee's *coordinating* and *reviewing* function would include taking account of the total ecumenical picture, including both other dialogue and such schemes as either Church might be involved in—e. g. the Consultation on Church Union in U.S.A. The commission should also feel the need to see the dialogue in the context of human unity in general and of the many problems involving religion

and culture in the conditions of our age. This might sometimes involve encouraging certain types of expert enterprise more than others.

128. Finally the committee should have the task of seeing that the authorities in the two Churches are adequately aware of what is being done, give it adequate attention and make adequate response.

129. We would have no illusions, however, about the fruitfulness of all these activities if they were divorced from the spiritual renewal and the spiritual sharing which are at the heart of ecumenical progress. It is because (as this report has so insisted) we have become aware of exceptional affinities between Roman Catholics and Methodists in that religion of the heart which is the heart of religion, that we believe in the future of Roman Catholic-Methodist relations.

130. Roman Catholics would not consider this complete without grateful reference to the noble Resolution of Intent, unanimously adopted by the General Conference of the United Methodist Church in U.S.A. on April 23, 1970. Disavowing the traditional polemical understanding of those among its "articles of religion" which were part of an anti-Catholic inheritance from a less happy age, the resolution gives courageous practical and public expression of that "change of heart" which the Second Vatican Council saw as the soul of the ecumenical movement, and a solemn responsibility of all in every Church. It has been our privilege in the commission to be spurred to such change of heart by the heart-warming experience of our work together. We are profoundly thankful to God for the *koinonia*, the shared spiritual experience of prayer and self-scrutiny together.

131. Measured against our age-old estrangements, our progress in ecumenical experience in the past three years has been swift and surely led by the Spirit. For this we give heartfelt thanks to God and from it we take hope and courage. But measured against the exigencies of our Churches and the challenge of our times, it leaves us aware of the distance that still lies between us now and our professed goals. We know too well that the latter stages of the ecumenical dialogue are more formidable than the early ones, requiring of us redoubled efforts and devotion, not merely to the work we have to do together, the joint witness to great Christian values that we must give and widely promote in our Churches, but to the tasks of educating our people and communicating to them something of the joys and inspiration that have been vouchsafed to us. As we look to the future, therefore, we renew our commitments and reaffirm our confidence in God's providential leading, in which we have already been so richly blessed.