

Thomas Paul Schirrmacher (Ed.)

Evangelical – Roman Catholic Dialogue

The official documents of the dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Evangelical Alliance



WEA

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Thomas Paul Schirrmacher (Ed.)

Evangelical – Roman Catholic Dialogue

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Evangelical – Roman Catholic Dialogue

**The official documents of the dialogue between
the Roman Catholic Church and
the World Evangelical Alliance**

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THE EVANGELICAL-ROMAN CATHOLIC DIALOGUE ON MISSION (1977–1984)

A REPORT

Edited by John Stott and Basil Meeking

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Introduction

The Evangelical – Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission was a series of three meetings which took place over a period of seven years. The first was held at Venice in 1977, the second at Cambridge in 1982 and the third at Landévennec in France in 1984.

1) The Participants

Those who took part in the dialogue were theologians and missiologists from many parts of the world. Their names are given in the Appendix (pp. 63f). Six of us (three from each side) attended all three meetings; others were able to come to only one or two of them.

The Evangelical participants were drawn from a number of churches and Christian organisations. They were not official representatives of any international body, however. For the evangelical movement has a broad spectrum, which includes evangelical denominations (both within and outside the World Council of Churches), evangelical fellowships (within mainline, comprehensive denominations), and evangelical parachurch agencies (specializing in tasks like Bible translation, evangelism,¹ cross-

¹ “Evangelism” and “evangelization” are used indiscriminately in this Report. The former is commoner among Evangelicals, the latter among Roman Catholics, but both words describe the same activity of spreading the gospel.

cultural mission, and Third World relief and development), which accept different degrees of responsibility to the Church.²

It is not easy to give a brief account of the distinctive beliefs of evangelical Christians, since different churches and groups emphasize different doctrines. Yet all Evangelicals share a cluster of theological convictions which were recovered and reaffirmed by the 16th century Reformers. These include (in addition to the great affirmations of the Nicene Creed) the inspiration and authority of the Bible, the sufficiency of its teaching for salvation, and its supremacy over the traditions of the Church; the justification of sinners (i. e. their acceptance by God as righteous in his sight) on the sole ground of the sinbearing often called “substitutionary”-death of Jesus Christ, by God’s free grace alone, apprehended by faith alone, without the addition of any human works; the inward work of the Holy Spirit to bring about the new birth and to transform the regenerate into the likeness of Christ; the necessity of personal repentance and faith in Christ (“conversion”); the Church as the Body of Christ, which incorporates all true believers, and all of whose members are called to ministry, some being “evangelists, pastors and teachers”; the “priesthood of all believers”, who (without any priestly mediation except Christ’s) all enjoy equal access to God and all offer him their sacrifice of praise and worship; the urgency of the great commission to spread the gospel throughout the world, both verbally in proclamation and visually in good works of love; and the expectation of the personal, visible and glorious return of Jesus Christ to save, to reign and to judge.

The Roman Catholic participants, who spoke from the point of view of the official teaching of their Church, were named by the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. The existence of the Secretariat is evidence of the effective renewal of attitude towards other Christians, which has taken place among Roman Catholics as a result of the Second Vatican Council twenty years ago, and which is still having its effects. In that Council it was acknowledged that “Christ summons the Church, as she goes her pilgrim way, to that continual reformation of which she always has need, insofar as she is an institution of men here on earth”.³ As a result, Roman Catholics have been able to acknowledge joyfully “the riches of Christ and

² Given the diversity of the Evangelical constituency as well as the differences of understanding between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics the use of the word “Church” in this paper inevitably carries some ambiguity. Further conversations would be required before it would be possible to arrive at greater clarity and common terms of ecclesiological discourse.

³ Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*), 6 in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott (Geoffrey Chapman 1967) – henceforth *DOV II*.

virtuous works in the lives of others who are bearing witness to Christ”.⁴ This same renewal turned the attention of Roman Catholics to the Scriptures in a new way, exhorting the Church “to move ahead daily towards a deeper understanding of the Sacred’ Scriptures” which “contain the Word of God and, since they are inspired, really are that word”.⁵ And it led to a better expression of the relation between Scripture and tradition in communicating God’s Word in its full purity. Here indeed are the elements which have enabled Roman Catholics to acknowledge common ground with other Christians, and to assume their own responsibility for overcoming divisions for the sake of the mission of God and the fullness of his glory.

2) The Background

It is the will of God that “all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all” (1 Tim 2:4–5) “there is salvation in no one else” (Acts 4:12). Mission begins in the activity of God himself who sent his Son, and whose Son sent his Spirit. All who belong to God in Jesus Christ must share in this mission of God.

A dialogue on mission between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics has been possible for two reasons. First, both constituencies have recently been concentrating their attention on evangelism. In July 1974 the evangelical International Congress on World Evangelization took place in Switzerland and issued the “Lausanne Covenant”.⁶ A few months later the Third General Assembly of the Roman Catholic Synod of Bishops studied the same topic, and at their request Pope Paul VI issued in December 1975 his apostolic exhortation entitled *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, or “Evangelization in the Modern World”.⁷

Secondly, a study of these two documents reveals a measure of convergence in our understanding of the nature of evangelism, as the following quotations show: “To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures ... Evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical

⁴ Ibid., 4.

⁵ Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*) 23, 24 (DOV II).

⁶ The Lausanne Covenant: an exposition and commentary by John Stott (World Wide Publications 1975), Lausanne Occasional Paper no. 3.

⁷ *Evangelization in the Modern World (Evangelii Nuntiandi)*, Pope Paul VI (Catholic Truth Society 1975).

Christ as Saviour and Lord ...”⁸ Again, witness must be “made explicit by a clear and unequivocal proclamation of the Lord Jesus ... There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life the promises, the Kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, are not proclaimed”.⁹

3) The Experience

In our time there are many possible forms of dialogue. Some are undertaken with an immediate view to working for organic unity between the bodies which the participants represent. Others do not exclude this purpose, but begin from where they are with a more general purpose. Still others begin by stating that they do not envisage organic or structural unity but aim rather at an exchange of theological views in order to increase mutual understanding and to discover what theological ground they hold in common. ERCDOM has been a dialogue of the latter kind. It was not conceived as a step towards Church unity negotiations. Rather it has been a search for such common ground as might be discovered between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics as they each try to be more faithful in their obedience to mission. It was also undertaken quite consciously in the knowledge that there are still both disagreements and misrepresentations between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics which harm our witness to the gospel, contradict our Lord’s prayer for the unity of his followers, and need if possible to be overcome.

During the three meetings friendships were formed, and mutual respect and understanding grew, as the participants learned to listen to one another and to grapple with difficult and divisive questions, as well as rejoicing in the discovery of some common understandings.

It was a demanding experience as well as a rewarding one. It was marked by a will to speak the truth, plainly, without equivocation, and in love. Neither compromise nor the quest for lowest common denominators had a place; a patient search for truth and a respect for each other’s integrity did.

4) The Report

This Report is in no sense an “agreed statement”, but rather a faithful record of the ideas shared. It is not exhaustive, for more questions were

⁸ Lausanne Covenant, par. 4.

⁹ Evangelii Nuntiandi, 22.

touched on than could be described in this brief compass. Yet enough has been included to give a substantial idea of how the dialogue developed and to communicate something of it without creating misunderstandings or false expectations.

An effort has been made to convey what went on at all three meetings, bearing in mind that in none was a complete expose given of most issues. ERCDOM was only a first step, even if not a negligible one.

Our Report, as far as it goes, gives a description of some areas in which Evangelicals and Roman Catholics hold similar or common views, which we are able to perceive more dearly as we overcome the stereotypes and prejudiced ideas which we have of each other. In addition, it sets out some of the serious matters on which Evangelicals and Roman Catholics differ, but about which in the last seven years the participants in ERCDOM have begun to learn to speak and listen to each other.

Although all those who participated in the three meetings contributed richly, the responsibility for the final form of the Report rests with those who were at Landévennec. Publication is undertaken on the general endorsement of the 1984 participants, although it is not the kind of document to which each was asked to subscribe formally. Nevertheless it is their express hope that it may be a means of stimulating local encounters in dialogue between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics. Our Report is far from being definitive; the dialogue needs to be continued and developed.

The participants in ERCDOM offer this Report to other Evangelicals and Roman Catholics as a sign of their conviction that fidelity to Jesus Christ today requires that we take his will for his followers with a new seriousness. He prayed for the truth, holiness, mission and unity of his people. We believe that these dimensions of the Church's renewal belong together. It is with this understanding that we echo his prayer for ourselves and each other:

“Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth. As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world ... I pray ... that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe ...” (Jn 17:17–21).

I. Revelation and Authority

It may well be asked why participants in a dialogue on mission should spend time debating theological questions concerned with divine revelation, the Scriptures, the formulation of truth, principles of biblical inter-

pretation, and the church's magisterium or teaching authority. For these topics may not appear to be directly related to our Christian mission in the world. Yet we judged a discussion of them to be indispensable to our task, for two main reasons. The first and historical reason is that the issue of authority in general, and of the relation between Scripture and tradition in particular, was one of the readily major points at issue in the 16th century. Indeed, the evangelical emphasis on sola Scriptura has always been known as the "formal" principle of the Reformation. So Roman Catholics and Evangelicals will not come to closer understanding or agreement on any topic if they cannot do so on this topic. Indeed, in every branch of the Christian Church the old question "by what authority?" (Mk 11:28) remains fundamental to ecumenical discussion. Our second reason for including this subject on our agenda was that it has a greater relevance to mission than may at first appear. For there can be no mission without a message, no message without a definition of it, and no definition without agreement as to how, or on what basis, it shall be defined.

I) Revelation, the Bible and the Formulation of Truth

Roman Catholics and Evangelicals are entirely agreed on the necessity of revelation, if human beings are ever to know God. For he is infinite in his perfections, while we are both finite creatures and fallen sinners. His thoughts and ways are as much higher than ours as the heavens are higher than the earth (Is 55:9). He is beyond us, utterly unknowable unless he should choose to make himself known, and utterly unreachable unless he should put himself within our reach. And this is what together we believe he has done. He has revealed the glory of his power in the created universe¹⁰ and the glory of his grace in his Son Jesus Christ, and in the Scriptures which he said bear witness to him (e. g. Jn 5:39).

This process of special revelation began in the Old Testament era. "God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets" (Heb 1:1). He fashioned Israel to be his people and taught them by his law and prophets. Old Testament Scripture records this history and this teaching. Then the Father sent his Son, who claimed to be the fulfilment of prophecy, himself proclaimed the good news of salvation, chose the twelve apostles to be his special witnesses, and promised them the inspiration of his Spirit. After Pentecost they went everywhere preaching the gospel. Through their word Christian communities came into being, nourished by the Old Testament and the gospel. The apostles' teaching was embodied in hymns, confessions of faith

¹⁰ E. g. Ps 19:1–6; Rom 1:19–20.

and particularly their letters. In due time the Church came to recognize their writings as possessing unique authority and as handing down the authentic gospel of Jesus Christ. In this way the canon of the New Testament was constituted, which with the Old Testament comprise the Christian Scriptures.

We all recognize that in the Scriptures God has used human words as the vehicle of his communication. The Spirit's work of inspiration is such, however, that what the human authors wrote is what God intended should be revealed, and thus that Scripture is without error. Because it is God's Word, its divine authority and unity must be recognized, and because he spoke through human beings, its original human context must also be taken into account in the work of interpretation.

But are human words adequate to describe God fully, even if they are inspired? No. The infinite reality of the living God is a mystery which cannot be fully communicated in words or fully comprehended by human minds. No verbal formulation can be co-extensive with the truth as it is in him. Nevertheless, God has condescended to use words as well as deeds as appropriate media of his self-disclosure, and we must struggle to understand them. We do so in the confidence, however, that though they do not reveal God fully, they do reveal him truly.

Roman Catholics and Evangelicals differ slightly in their understandings of the nature of Scripture, and even more on what the proper process of interpreting this Word should be. Both groups recognise that God spoke through the human authors, whose words belonged to particular cultures.

Roman Catholics speak of this relationship between the divine and the human in Scripture as being analogous to the divine and the human in Christ. As the Second Vatican Council put it, "indeed the words of God, expressed in the words of men, are in every way like human language, just as the Word of the eternal Father, when he took on himself the flesh of human weakness, became like man".¹¹ Thus the written testimony of the biblical authors is inscribed within the logic of the Incarnation.

Evangelicals also sometimes use this analogy, but they are not altogether comfortable with it. Although it has some validity, they do not believe it is exact, since there is no hypostatic union between the human and the divine in Scripture. They usually emphasize instead the model of God's providence, namely that he is able even through fallen human beings to accomplish his perfect will. So he has spoken through the human authors of the Bible in such a way that neither did he suppress their personality nor did they distort his revelation.

¹¹ Dei Verbum, 13.

Thus together we affirm that the written Word of God is the work of both God and human beings. The divine and the human elements form a unity which cannot be torn asunder. It excludes all confusion and all separation between them.

With respect to the process of interpretation, Roman Catholics affirm that Scripture must be seen as having been produced by and within the Church. It is mediated to us by the inspired witness of the first Christians. The proper process of interpretation is determined by the process of Scripture's creation. We cannot understand it in its truth unless we receive it in the living faith of the Church which, assisted by the Holy Spirit, keeps us in obedience to the Word of God.

Evangelicals acknowledge the wisdom of listening to the Church and its teachers, past and present, as they seek to understand God's Word, but they insist that each believer must be free to exercise his or her personal responsibility before God, in hearing and obeying his Word. While the Church's interpretations are often helpful, they are not finally necessary because Scripture, under the Spirit's illumination, is self-interpreting and perspicuous (clear).

Thus, contemporaneity has come to mean different things in our two communities. Each recognizes that the Word of God must be heard for and in our world today. For Roman Catholics God's Word is contemporary in the sense that it is heard and interpreted within the living Church. For Evangelicals it is contemporary in the sense that its truth has to be applied, by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, to the modern world.

Despite these differences, we are agreed that since the biblical texts have been inspired by God, they remain the ultimate, permanent and normative reference of the revelation of God. To them the Church must continually return, in order to discern more clearly what they mean, and so receive fresh insight, challenge and reformation. They themselves do not need to be reformed, although they do need constantly to be interpreted, especially in circumstances in which the Church encounters new problems or different cultures. Roman Catholics hold that "the task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition has been entrusted to the living, teaching office of the Church alone".¹² This seems to Evangelicals to derogate from Scripture as "the ultimate, permanent and normative reference". Nevertheless, both sides strongly affirm the divine inspiration of Scripture.

¹² Dei Verbum, 10.

2) Principles of Biblical Interpretation

Our understanding of the nature of the Bible determines our interpretation of it. Because it is the Word of God, we shall approach it in one way; and because it is also the words of men, in another.

a) Humble dependence on the Holy Spirit

Because the Bible is the Word of God, we must approach it with reverence and humility. We cannot understand God's revelation by ourselves, because it is "spiritually discerned" (1 Cor 2:14). Only he who spoke through the prophets and apostles can interpret to us his own message. Only the Spirit of truth can open our hearts to understand, to believe and to obey. This is "wisdom", and the Holy Spirit is the "Spirit of wisdom and of revelation" in our knowledge of God (Eph 1:17). Moreover, the Spirit operates within the Body of Christ, as we shall elaborate later.

b) The unity of Scripture

Because the Bible is the Word of God, it has a fundamental unity. This is a unity of origin, since he who has revealed himself does not contradict himself. It is also a unity of message and aim. For our Lord said the Scriptures "bear witness to me" (Jn 5:39; cf. Lk 24:25-27). Similarly, we read that "the sacred writings ... are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim 3:15). Thus God's purpose through Scripture is to bear testimony to Christ as Saviour, to persuade all men and women to come to him for salvation, to lead them into maturity in Christ, and to send them into the world with the same good news.

In the midst of great diversity of content, therefore, Scripture has a single meaning, which permeates and illuminates all the partial meanings. We renounce every attempt to impose on Scripture an artificial unity, or even to insist on a single overarching concept. Instead, we discover in Scripture a God-given unity, which focusses on the Christ who died and rose again for us and who offers to all his people his own new life, which is the same in every age and culture. This centrality of Christ in the Scriptures is a fundamental hermeneutical key.

c) Biblical criticism

Since the Bible is God's Word through human words, therefore under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who is the only one who leads us into the un-

derstanding of Scripture, we must use scientific critical tools for its elucidation, and we appreciate the positive gains of modern biblical scholarship. Human criticism and the Spirit of God are not mutually exclusive. By “criticism” we do not mean that we stand in judgment upon God’s Word, but rather that we must investigate the historical, cultural and literary background of the biblical books.

We must also try to be aware of the presuppositions we bring to our study of the text. For none of us lives in a religion – or culture – free vacuum. What we must seek to ensure is that our presuppositions are Christian rather than secular. Some of the presuppositions of secular philosophy which have vitiated the critical study of the Bible are (a) evolutionary (that religion developed from below instead of being revealed from above), (b) anti-supernatural (that miracles cannot happen and that therefore the biblical miracles are legendary), and (c) demythologizing (that the thought world in which the biblical message was given is entirely incompatible with the modern age and must be discarded). Sociological presuppositions are equally dangerous, as when we read into Scripture the particular economic system we favour, whether capitalist or communist, or any other.

One test by which our critical methodology may be assessed is whether or not it enables people to hear the biblical message as good news of God revealing and giving himself in the historic death and resurrection of Christ.

d) The “literal” sense

The first task of all critical study is to help us discover the original intention of the authors. What is the literary genre in which they wrote? What did they intend to say? What did they intend us to understand? For this is the “literal” sense of Scripture, and the search for it is one of the most ancient principles which the Church affirmed. We must never divorce a text from its biblical or cultural context, but rather think ourselves back into the situation in which the word was first spoken and heard.

e) A contemporary message

To concentrate entirely on the ancient text, however, would lead us into an unpractical antiquarianism. We have to go beyond the original meaning to the contemporary message. Indeed, there is an urgent need for the Church to apply the teaching of Scripture creatively to the complex questions of today. Yet in seeking for relevance, we must not renounce faith-

fulness. The ancient and the modern, the original and the contemporary, always belong together. A text still means what its writer meant.

In this dialectic between the old and the new, we often become conscious of a clash of cultures, which calls for great spiritual sensitivity. On the one hand, we must be aware of the ancient cultural terms in which God spoke his word, so that we may discern between his eternal truth and its transient setting. On the other, we must be aware of the modern cultures and world views which condition us, some of whose values can make us blind and deaf to what God wants to say to us.

3) The Church's Teaching Authority

It is one thing to have a set of principles for biblical interpretation; it is another to know how to use them. How are these principles to be applied, and who is responsible for applying them?

a) The individual and the community

Evangelicals, who since the Reformation have emphasized both "the priesthood of all believers" and "the right of private judgment", insist on the duty and value of personal Bible study. The Second Vatican Council also urged that "easy access to sacred Scripture should be provided for all the Christian faithful".¹³

Both Evangelicals and Roman Catholics, however, recognize the dangers which arise from making Scripture available to all Christian people and from exhorting them to read it. How can they be protected from false interpretations? What safeguards can be found? Whether we are Evangelicals or Roman Catholics, our initial answer to these questions is the same: the major check to individualistic exegesis is the Holy Spirit who dwells and works in the Body of Christ, which is the Church. The Scriptures must be interpreted within the Christian community. It is only "with all the saints" that we can comprehend the full dimensions of God's love (Eph 3:18).

Roman Catholics also say that Scripture is interpreted by the Church. Yet the Church's task, paradoxically speaking, is at one and the same time to submit totally to the witness of Scripture in order to listen to God's Word, and to interpret it with authority. The act of authority in interpreting God's Word is an act of obedience to it.

¹³ Dei Verbum, 22.

But how in practice does the Christian community help us towards truth and restrain us from error? We are agreed that Christ has always intended his Church to have gifted and authorized teachers, both scholars and pastors. When Philip asked the Ethiopian whether he understood the Old Testament passage he was reading, he replied, “how can I, unless some one guides me?” (Acts 8:31).

Many of our teachers belong to the past. Both Evangelicals and Roman Catholics have inherited a rich legacy of tradition. We cherish creeds, confessions and conciliar statements. We peruse the writings of the Fathers of the Church. We read books and commentaries.

Christ also gives his Church teachers in the present (Eph 4:11), and it is the duty of Christian people to listen to them respectfully. The regular context for this is public worship in which the Word of God is read and expounded. In addition, we attend Church Synods and Councils, and national, regional and international conferences at which, after prayer and debate, our Christian understanding increases.

Respectful listening and mutual discussion are healthy; they are quite different from uncritical acquiescence. Both Evangelicals and Roman Catholics are troubled by the authoritarian influence which is being exerted by some strong, charismatic leaders and teachers of different backgrounds. The kind of thoughtless submission which is sometimes given to such was firmly discouraged by the apostles. The people of Berea were commended because they examined the Scriptures to see whether Paul’s preaching was true (Acts 17:11). Paul urged the Thessalonians to “test everything”, and John to “test the spirits”, i. e. teachers claiming inspiration (1 Thess 5:21; 1 John 4:1). Moreover, the criterion by which the apostles exhorted the people to evaluate all teachers was the deposit of faith, the truths which they had heard “from the beginning” (1 John 2:24; 2 John 9).

b) The regulation of Christian belief

We all agree that the fact of revelation brings with it the need for interpretation. We also agree that in the interpretative task both the believing community and the individual believer must have a share. Our emphasis on these varies, however, for the Evangelical fears lest God’s Word be lost in church traditions, while the Roman Catholic fears it will be lost in a multiplicity of idiosyncratic interpretations.

This is why Roman Catholics emphasize the necessary role of the magisterium, although Evangelicals believe that in fact it has not delivered the Roman Catholic Church from a diversity of viewpoints, while admittedly helping to discern between them.

Evangelicals admit that in their case too some congregations, denominations and institutions have a kind of magisterium. For they elevate their particular creed or confession to this level, since they use it as their official interpretation of Scripture and for the exercise of discipline.

Both Roman Catholics and Evangelicals cherish certain creeds and confessions which summarize their beliefs. They also agree that new formulations of faith may be written and affirmed for our times. Other doctrinal statements may be either revised, or replaced by better statements, if this seems to be required by a clearer proclamation of the good news. All of us accept our responsibility to listen ever more attentively to what the Spirit through the Word is saying to the churches, so that we may grow in the knowledge of God, in the obedience of faith and in a more faithful and relevant witness.

What, then, Evangelicals have asked, is the status (and the authority for Roman Catholics) of the various kinds of statement made by those in a ministry of official teaching? In reply, Roman Catholics say that the function of the magisterium is to regulate the formulations of the faith, so that they remain true to the teaching of Scripture. They also draw a distinction. On the one hand, there are certain privileged formulations – e. g. a formal definition in council by the College of Bishops, of which the Pope is the presiding member, or a similar definition by the Pope himself, in special circumstances and subject to particular conditions, to express the faith of the Church. It is conceded that such definitions do not necessarily succeed in conveying all aspects of the truth they seek to express, and while what they express remains valid the way it is expressed may not have the same relevance for all times and situations”. Nevertheless, for Roman Catholics they do give a certainty to faith. Such formulations are very few, but very important. On the other hand, statements made by those who have a special teaching role in the Roman Catholic Church have different levels of authority (e. g. papal encyclicals and other pronouncements, decisions of provincial synods or councils, etc.). These require to be treated with respect, but do not call for assent in the same way as the first category.

We all believe that God will protect his Church, for he has promised to do so and has given us both his Scriptures and his Spirit; our disagreement is on the means and the degree of his protection.

Roman Catholics believe that it is the authoritative teaching of the Church which has the responsibility for oversight in the interpretation of Scripture, allowing a wide freedom of understanding, but excluding some interpretations as inadmissible because erroneous.

Evangelicals, on the other hand, believe that God uses the Christian community as a whole to guard its members from error and evil. Roman Catho-

lics also believe in this *sensus fidelium*. For in the New Testament Church members are urged: “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teach and admonish one another” (Col 3:16). They are also exhorted to “see to it” that their brothers and sisters stand firm in truth and righteousness.¹⁴

4) Can the Church be Reformed?

a) The need for reform

So far in this first section of our Report we have concentrated on the Church’s responsibility to teach. Can it also learn? Can the Church which gives instruction receive it? More particularly, can Scripture exercise a reforming role in the Church? Is the Church itself under the Scripture it expounds?

These are questions which the Roman Catholic Church put to itself anew during the Second Vatican Council, and has continued to ask itself since (see the Vatican II Decree on Ecumenism, 6).

Evangelicals, however, to whom continuous reformation by the Word of God has always been a fundamental concern, wonder whether the reform to which the Roman Catholic Church consented at Vatican II was radical enough. Has it been more than an *aggiornamento* of ecclesiastical institutions and liturgical forms? Has it touched the Church’s theological life or central structures? Has there been an inner repentance?

At the same time, Roman Catholic have always asked whether Evangelicals, in the discontinuity of the 16th century Reformation, have not lost something essential to the gospel and the Church.

Yet we all agree that the Church needs to be reformed, and that its reformation comes from God. The one truth is in God himself. He is the reformer by the power of his Spirit according to the Scriptures. In order to discern what he may be saying, Christian individuals and communities need each other. Individual believers must keep their eyes on the wider community of faith, and churches must be listening to the Spirit, who may bring them correction or insight through an individual believer.

b) Our response to God’s Word

We agree on the objectivity of the truth which God has revealed. Yet it has to be subjectively received, indeed “apprehended”, if through it God is to do his reforming work. How then should our response to revelation be described?

¹⁴ E. g. 1 Thess 5:14, 15; Heb 3:12, 13; 12:15.

We all acknowledge the difficulties we experience in receiving God's Word. For as it comes to us, it finds each of us in our own social context and culture. True, it creates a new community, but this community also has its cultural characteristics derived both from the wider society in which it lives and from its own history which has shaped its understanding of God's revelation. So we have to be on the alert, lest our response to the Word of God is distorted by our cultural conditioning.

One response will be intellectual. For God's revelation is a rational revelation, and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. So the Christian community is always concerned to understand and to formulate the faith, so that it may preserve truth and rebut error.

Response to God's truth can never be purely cognitive, however. Truth in the New Testament is to be "done" as well as "known", and so to find its place in the life and experience of individuals and churches. Paul called this full response "the obedience of faith" (Rom 1:5; 16:26). It is a commitment of the whole person.

Understanding, faith and obedience will in their turn lead to proclamation. For revelation by its very nature demands communication. The believing and obeying community must be a witnessing community. And as it faithfully proclaims what it understands, it will increasingly understand what it proclaims.

Thus reform is a continuous process, a work of the Spirit of God through the agency of the Word of God.

2. The Nature of Mission

The very existence of the Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission testifies to our common commitment to mission. One of the factors which led to its inauguration was the publication of the Lausanne Covenant (1974) and of *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI's Apostolic Exhortation "Evangelization in the Modern World" (1975). These two documents supplied some evidence of a growing convergence in our understanding of mission. Not that Evangelicals or Roman Catholics regard either of these statements as exhaustive, but they consider them valuable summaries and teaching tools.

1) The Basis of Mission

In response to the common criticism that we have no right to evangelize among all peoples, we together affirm the universality of God's purposes.

God's creation of the world and of all humankind means that all should be subject to his lordship (Ps 24:1–2; Eph 3:8–11). The call of Abraham and of Israel had the wider purpose that all nations might see God's glory in his people and come to worship him. In the New Testament Jesus sends his disciples out in proclamatory witness, leading to the apostolic mission to all nations. In his Epistle to the Romans Paul teaches that, since all without distinction have sinned, so all without distinction are offered salvation, Gentiles as well as Jews (3:22 f.; 10:12).

We are agreed that mission arises from the self-giving life and love of the triune God himself and from his eternal purpose for the whole creation. Its goal is the God-centred Kingdom of the Father, exhibited through the building of the body of Christ, and cultivated in the fellowship of the Spirit. Because of Christ's first coming and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Christian mission has an eschatological dimension: it invites men and women to enter the Kingdom of God through Christ the Son by the Work and regeneration of the Spirit.

We all agree that the arrival of the messianic Kingdom through Jesus Christ necessitates the announcement of the good news, the summons to repentance and faith, and the gathering together of the people of God. Sometimes Jesus clearly used "the Kingdom of God" and "salvation" as synonyms.¹⁵ For to announce the arrival of the Kingdom of God is to proclaim its realization in the coming of Jesus Christ. And the Church witnesses to the Kingdom when it manifests the salvation it has received.

At the same time, long-standing tensions exist between Roman Catholics and Evangelicals. While both sides affirm that the pilgrim Church is missionary by its very nature, its missionary activity is differently understood.

Vatican II defines the Church for Roman Catholics as "the sacrament of salvation", the sign and promise of redemption to each and every person without exception. For them, therefore, "mission" includes not only evangelization but also the service of human need, and the building up and expression of fellowship in the Church. It is the mission of the Church to anticipate the Kingdom of God as liberation from the slavery of sin, from slavery to the Law and from death; by the preaching of the gospel, by the forgiveness of sins and by sharing in the Lord's Supper.¹⁶

¹⁵ E. g. Mk 10:23–27; cf. Is 52:7.

¹⁶ In this Report we use "the Lord's Supper", "the Holy Communion" and "the Eucharist" indiscriminately; no particular theology is implied by these terms. "The Mass" is limited to Roman Catholic contexts. Similarly, we use "sacrament" or "ordinance" in relation to Baptism and Eucharist without doctrinal implications.

But the Spirit of God is always at work throughout human history to bring about the liberating reign of God.

Evangelization is the proclamation (by word and example) of the good news to the nations. The good news is that God's actions in Jesus Christ are the climax of a divine revelation and relationship that has been available to everyone from the beginning. Roman Catholics assert that the whole of humanity is in a collective history which God makes to be a history of salvation. The mystery of the gospel is the announcement by the Church to the world of this merging of the history of salvation with the history of the world.

Evangelicals generally, on the other hand, do not regard the history of salvation as coterminous with the history of the world, although some are struggling with this question. The Church is the beginning and anticipation of the new creation, the firstborn among his creatures. Though all in Adam die, not all are automatically in Christ. So life in Christ has to be received by grace with repentance through faith. With yearning Evangelicals plead for a response to the atoning work of Christ in his death and resurrection. But with sorrow they know that not all who are called are chosen. Judgment (both here and hereafter) is the divine reaction of God to sin and to the rejection of the good news. "Rich young rulers" still walk away from the kingdom of grace. Evangelization is therefore the call to those outside to come as children of the Father into the fullness of eternal life in Christ by the Spirit, and into the joy of a loving community in the fellowship of the Church.

2) Authority and Initiative in Mission

Primary Christian obedience, we agree, is due to the Lord Jesus Christ and is expressed in both our individual and our common life under his authority. Roman Catholics and Evangelicals recognize that the tension between ecclesiastical authority and personal initiative, as also between the institutional and the charismatic, has appeared throughout biblical and Church history.

While for Roman Catholics hierarchical structures of teaching and pastoral authority are essential, the Servant Church, as described by the Second Vatican Council is called to express herself more fully in the exercise of apostolic collegiality and subsidiarity (the principle that ecclesial decisions are made at the lowest level of responsibility).

Evangelicals have traditionally emphasized the personal right of every believer to enjoy direct access to God and the Scriptures. There is also among them a growing realization of the importance of the Church as the Body of Christ, which tempers personal initiative through the restraint and direction of the fellowship.

This issue of authority has a bearing on mission. Are missionaries sent, or do they volunteer, or is it a case of both? What is the status of religious orders, mission boards or missionary societies, and para-church organizations? How do they relate to the churches or other ecclesial bodies? How can a preoccupation with jurisdiction (especially geographical) be reconciled with the needs of subcultures, especially in urban areas, which are often overlooked?

Although our traditions differ in the way we respond to these questions, we all wish to find answers which take account both of Church structures and of the liberty of the Spirit outside them.

3) Evangelization and Socio-political Responsibility

The controversy over the relationship between evangelization and socio-political responsibility is not confined to Roman Catholics and Evangelicals; it causes debate between and among all Christians.

We are agreed that “mission” relates to every area of human need, both spiritual and social. Social responsibility is an integral part of evangelization; and the struggle for justice can be a manifestation of the Kingdom of God. Jesus both preached and healed, and sent his disciples out to do likewise. His predilection for those without power and without voice continues God’s concern in the Old Testament for the widow, the orphan, the poor and the defenceless alien.

In particular we agree:

- a) that serving the spiritual, social and material needs of our fellow human beings together constitutes love of neighbour and therefore “mission”;
- b) that an authentic proclamation of the good news must lead to a call for repentance, and that authentic repentance is a turning away from social as well as individual sins;
- c) that since each Christian community is involved in the reality of the world, it should lovingly identify with the struggle for justice as a suffering community;
- d) that in this struggle against evil in society, the Christian must be careful to use means which reflect the spirit of the gospel. The Church’s responsibility in a situation of injustice will include repentance for any complicity in it, as well as intercessory prayer, practical service, and prophetic teaching which sets forth the standards of God and his Kingdom.

We recognize that some Roman Catholics and some Evangelicals find it difficult to subscribe to any inseparable unity between evangelization and the kind of socio-political involvement which is described above. There is also some tension concerning the allocation of responsibility for social service and action. Roman Catholics accept the legitimacy of involvement by the Church as a whole, as well as by groups and individuals. Among Evangelicals, however, there are differences between the Lutheran, Reformed and Anabaptist traditional understandings of Church and society. All would agree that Christian individuals and groups have social responsibilities; the division concerns what responsibility is assigned to the Church as a whole.

4) God's Work Outside the Christian Community

We have written about the Church and the Kingdom. We are agreed that the concept of the Church implies a limitation, for we talk about "church members" which infers that there are "non-members". But how widely should we understand the Kingdom of God? We all agree that God works within the Christian community, for there he rules and dwells. But does he also work outside, and if so how?

This is a question of major missiological importance. All of us are concerned to avoid an interpretation of the universal saving will of God, which makes salvation automatic without the free response of the person.

At least four common convictions have emerged from our discussions. They concern the great doctrines of creation, revelation, salvation and judgment.

Creation. God has created all humankind, and by right of creation all humankind belongs to God. God also loves the whole human family and gives to them all "life and breath and everything" (Acts 17:25).

Revelation. There are elements of truth in all religions. These truths are the fruit of a revelatory gift of God. Evangelicals often identify their source in terms of general revelation, common grace or the remnant image of God in humankind. Roman Catholics more frequently associate them with the work of the Logos, the true light, coming into the world and giving light to every man (John 1:9), and with the work of his Holy Spirit.

Salvation. There is only one Saviour and only one gospel. There is no other name but Christ's, through whom anyone may be saved (Acts 4:12). So all who receive salvation are saved by the free initiative of God through the grace of Christ.

Judgment. While the biblical concept of judgment refers to both reward and punishment, it is clear that those who remain in sin by resisting God's free grace (whether they are inside or outside the visible boundaries of the

Church) provoke his judgment, which leads to eternal separation from him. The Church itself also stands under the judgment of God whenever it refuses or neglects to proclaim the gospel of salvation to those who have not heard Christ's name.

The sphere for missionary activity is described differently within each tradition. Roman Catholics would expect God's mercy to be exercised effectively in benevolent action of his grace for the majority of humankind, unless they specifically reject his offer. Such a position gives them cause for confidence. Evangelicals consider that this view has no explicit biblical justification, and that it would tend to diminish the evangelistic zeal of the Church. Evangelicals are therefore less optimistic about the salvation of those who have no personal relationship to God through Jesus Christ.

We all affirm that the missionary enterprise is a participation in the mission of Jesus and the mission of his Church. The urgency to reach all those not yet claimed by his Lordship impels our mission.

Whether or not salvation is possible outside the Christian community, what is the motivation for mission work? We agree that the following strong incentives urgently impel Christians to the task of mission:

- a) to further the glory of God; the earth should be a mirror to reflect his glory;
- b) to proclaim the Lordship of Jesus Christ; all men and women are called to submit to his authority;
- c) to proclaim that Christ has struggled with Satan and dethroned him; in baptism and conversion we renounce Satan's rule and turn to Christ and righteousness;
- d) to proclaim that man does not live by bread alone; the gospel of salvation is the perfect gift of God's loving grace;
- e) to hasten the return of the Lord – the eschatological dimension. We look for the day of the Lord when the natural order will be completely redeemed, the whole earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, and people from every nation, people, tribe and tongue will praise the triune God in perfection.

3. The Gospel of Salvation

Roman Catholics and Evangelicals share a deep concern for the content of the good news we proclaim. We are anxious on the one hand to be faithful to the living core of the Christian faith, and on the other to communicate it in contemporary terms. How then shall we define the gospel?

I) Human Need

Diagnosis must always precede prescription. So, although human need is not strictly part of the good news, it is an essential background to it. If the gospel is good news of salvation, this is because human beings are sinners who need to be saved.

In our description of the human condition, however, we emphasize the importance of beginning positively. We affirm that all men and women are made by God, for God and in the image of God, and that sin has defaced but not destroyed this purpose and this image (Gen 9:6; Jas 3:9). Therefore, as the creation of God, human beings have an intrinsic worth and dignity. Also, because of the light which lightens everybody, we all have within us an innate desire for God which nothing else can satisfy. As Christians, we must respect every human being who is seeking God, even when the search is expressed in ignorance (Acts 17:23).

Nevertheless original sin has intervened. We have noted Thomas Aquinas' description of original sin, namely "the loss of original justice" (i. e. a right relationship with God) and such "concupiscence" as constitutes a fundamental disorder in human nature and relationships; so that all our desires are inclined towards the making of decisions displeasing to God.

Evangelicals insist that original sin has distorted every part of human nature, so that it is permeated by self-centredness. Consequently, the Apostle Paul describes all people as "enslaved", "blind", "dead" and "under God's wrath", and therefore totally unable to save themselves.¹⁷

Roman Catholics also speak of original sin as an injury and disorder which has weakened – though not destroyed – human free will. Human beings have "lifted themselves up against God and sought to attain their goal apart from him".¹⁸ As a result this has upset the relationship linking man to God and "has broken the right order that should reign within himself as well as between himself and other men and all creatures".¹⁹ Hence human beings find themselves drawn to what is wrong and of themselves unable to overcome the assaults of evil successfully, "so that everyone feels as though bound by chains".²⁰

Clearly there is some divergence between Roman Catholics and Evangelicals in the way we understand human sin and need, as well as in the

¹⁷ E. g. Eph 2:1–3; 4:17–19; 2 Cor 4:3,4.

¹⁸ Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes) 13 (DOV II).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

language we use to express them. Roman Catholics think Evangelicals overstress the corruption of human beings by affirming their “total depravity” (i. e. that every part of our humanness has been perverted by the Fall), while Evangelicals think Roman Catholics underestimate it and are therefore unwisely optimistic about the capacity, ability and desire of human beings to respond to the grace of God. Yet we agree that all are sinners, and that all stand in need of a radical salvation which includes deliverance from the power of evil, together with reconciliation to God and adoption into his family.

2) The Person of Jesus Christ

The radical salvation which human beings need has been achieved by Jesus Christ. Evangelicals and Roman Catholics are agreed about the centrality of Christ and of what God has done through him for salvation. “The Father has sent his Son as the Saviour of the world” (1 John 4:14). But who was this Saviour Jesus?

Jesus of Nazareth was a man, who went about doing good, teaching with authority, proclaiming the Kingdom of God, and making friends with sinners to whom he offered pardon. He made himself known to his apostles, whom he had chosen and with whom he lived, as the Messiah (Christ) promised by the Scriptures. He claimed a unique filial relation to God whom in prayer he called his Father (“Abba”). He thus knew himself to be the Son of God, and exhibited the power and authority of God over nature, human beings and demonic powers. He also spoke of himself as the Son of man. He fulfilled the perfect obedience of the Servant in going even to death on the cross. Then God raised him from the dead, confirming that he was from the beginning the Son he claimed to be (Ps 2:7). Thus he was both “descended from David according to the flesh” and “designated Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead” (Rom 1:3–4). This is why his apostles confessed him as Lord and Christ, Son of God, Saviour of humankind, sent by the Father, agent through whom God created all things, in whom we have been chosen from before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4), the Word made flesh.

The Incarnation of the Son was an objective event in history, in which the divine Word took upon himself our human nature. Within a single person were joined full divinity and full humanity. Although this understanding of him was not precisely formulated until the theological debates of the early centuries, we all agree that the Chalcedonian Definition faithfully expresses the truths to which the New Testament bears witness.

The purposes of the Incarnation were to reveal the Father to us, since otherwise our knowledge of God would have been deficient; to assume our nature in order to die for our sins and so accomplish our salvation, since he could redeem only what he had assumed; to establish a living communion between God and human beings, since only the Son of God made human could communicate to human beings the life of God; to apply the basis of the imitatio, since it is the incarnate Jesus we are to follow; to reaffirm the value and dignity of humanness, since God was not ashamed to take on himself our humanity; to provide in Jesus the first fruits of the new humanity, since he is the “firstborn among many brethren” (Rom 8:29), and to effect the redemption of the cosmos in the end.

So then, in fidelity to the gospel and in accordance with the Scriptures, we together confess the person of Jesus Christ as the eternal Son of God, who was born of the Virgin Mary and became truly man, in order to be the Saviour of the world.

In our missionary task we have not only to confess Christ ourselves, but also to interpret him to others. As we do so, we have to consider, for example, how to reconcile for Jews and Moslems the monotheism of the Bible with the divine sonship of Jesus, how to present to Hindus and Buddhists the transcendent personality of God, and how to proclaim to adherents of traditional religion and of the new religious consciousness the supreme Lordship of Christ. Our Christology must always be both faithful to Scripture and sensitive to each particular context of evangelization.

3) The Work of Jesus Christ

It was this historic person, Jesus of Nazareth, fully God and fully human, through whom the Father acted for the redemption and reconciliation of the world. Indeed, only a person who was both God and man could have been the mediator between God and human beings. Because he was human he could represent us and identify with us in our weakness. Because he was God he could bear our sin and destroy the power of evil.

This work of redemption was accomplished supremely through the death of Jesus Christ although we acknowledge the unity of his incarnate life, atoning death and bodily resurrection. For his death completed the service of his life (Mk 10:45) and his resurrection confirmed the achievement of his death (Rom 4:25).

Christ was without sin, and therefore had no need to die. He died for our sins, and in this sense “in our place”. We are agreed about this basic truth and about other aspects of the Atonement. But in our discussion two different emphases have emerged, which we have summarized by

the words “substitution” and “solidarity”, although these concepts are not altogether exclusive.

Evangelicals lay much stress on the truth that Christ’s death was “substitutionary”. In his death he did something which he did not do during his life. He actually “became sin” for us (2 Cor 5–21) and “became a curse” for us (Gal 3–13). Thus God himself in Christ propitiated his own wrath, in order to avert it from us. In consequence, having taken our sin, he gives us his righteousness. We stand accepted by God in Christ, not because Christ offered the Father our obedience, but because he bore our sin and replaced it with his righteousness.

Roman Catholics express Christ’s death more in terms of “solidarity”. In their understanding Jesus Christ in his death made a perfect offering of love and obedience to his Father, which recapitulated his whole life. In consequence, we can enter into the sacrifice of Christ and offer ourselves to the Father in and with him. For he became one with us in order that we might become one with him.

Thus the word “gospel” has come to have different meanings in our two communities.

For Evangelicals, it is the message of deliverance from sin, death and condemnation, and the promise of pardon, renewal and indwelling by Christ’s Spirit. These blessings flow from Christ’s substitutionary death. They are given by God solely through his grace, without respect to our merit, and are received solely through faith. When we are accepted by Christ, we are part of his people, since all his people are “in” him.

For Roman Catholics the gospel centres in the person, message and gracious activity of Christ. His life, death and resurrection are the foundation of the Church, and the Church carries the living gospel to the world. The Church is a real sacrament of the gospel.

So the difference between us concerns the relationship between the gospel and the Church. In the one case, the gospel reconciles us to God through Christ and thus makes us a part of his people; in the other, the gospel is found within the life of his people, and thus we find reconciliation with God.

Although pastoral, missionary and cultural factors may lead us to stress one or other model of Christ’s saving work, the full biblical range of words (e. g. victory, redemption, propitiation, justification, reconciliation) must be preserved, and none may be ignored.

The Resurrection, we agree, lies at the heart of the gospel and has many meanings. It takes the Incarnation to its glorious consummation, for it is the human Christ Jesus who reigns glorified at the Father’s right hand, where he represents us and prays for us. The Resurrection was also the

Father's vindication of Jesus, reversing the verdict of those who condemned and crucified him, visibly demonstrating his sonship, and giving us the assurance that his atoning sacrifice had been accepted. It is the resurrected and exalted Lord who sent his Spirit to his Church and who, claiming universal authority, now sends us into the world as his witnesses. The Resurrection was also the beginning of God's new creation, and is his pledge both of our resurrection and of the final regeneration of the universe.

4) The Uniqueness and Universality of Jesus Christ

In a world of increasing religious pluralism we affirm together the absolute uniqueness of Jesus Christ. He was unique in his person, in his death and in his resurrection. Since in no other person has God become human, died for the sins of the world and risen from death, we declare that he is the only way to God (Jn 14:6), the only Saviour (Acts 4-12) and the only Mediator (1 Tim 2:5). No one else has his qualifications.

The uniqueness of Jesus Christ implies his universality. The one and only is meant for all. We therefore proclaim him both "the Saviour of the world" (Jn 4:12) and "Lord of all" (Acts 10:36).

We have not been able to agree, however, about the implications of his universal salvation and lordship. Together we believe that "God ... desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:4), that the offer of salvation in Christ is extended to everybody, that the Church has an irreplaceable responsibility to announce the good news of salvation to all peoples, that all who hear the gospel have an obligation to respond to it, and that those who respond to it are incorporated into God's new, worldwide, multiracial, multicultural community, which is the Father's family, the Body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit. These aspects of the universality of Christ we gladly affirm together.

Roman Catholics go further, however, and consider that, if human sin is universal, all the more is Christ's salvation universal. If everyone born into the world stands in solidarity with the disobedience of the first Adam, still the human situation as such has been changed by the definitive event of salvation, that is, the Incarnation of the Word, his death, his resurrection and his gift of the Spirit. All are now part of the humanity whose new head has overcome sin and death. For all there is a new possibility of salvation which colours their entire situation, so that it is possible to say "Every person, without exception, has been redeemed by Christ, and with each person, without any exception, Christ is in some way united, even

when that person is not aware of that”.²¹ To become beneficiaries of the obedience of the Second Adam, men and women must turn to God and be born anew with Christ into the fullness of his life. The mission of the Church is to be the instrument to awaken this response by proclaiming the gospel, itself the gift of salvation for everyone who receives it, and to communicate the truth and grace of Christ to all.²²

Evangelicals, on the other hand, understand the universality of Christ differently. He is universally present as God (since God is omnipresent) and as potential Saviour (since he offers salvation to all), but not as actual Saviour (since not all accept his offer). Evangelicals wish to preserve the distinction, which they believe to be apostolic, between those who are in Christ and those who are not (who consequently are in sin and under judgment), and so between the old and new communities. They insist on the reality of the transfer from one community to the other, which can be realized only through the new birth: “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Cor 5:17).

The relationship between the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and the whole human race naturally leads Roman Catholics to ask whether there exists a possibility of salvation for those who belong to non-Christian religions and even for atheists. Vatican II was clear on this point: “Those also can attain to everlasting salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church”. On the one hand, there are those who “sincerely seek God and, moved by his grace, strive by their deeds to do his will”. On the other, there are those who “have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God, but who strive to live a good life, thanks to his grace”.²³ Both groups are prepared by God’s grace to receive his salvation either when they hear the gospel or even if they do not. They can be saved by Christ, in a mysterious relation to his Church.

Evangelicals insist, however, that according to the New Testament those outside Christ are “perishing”, and that they can receive salvation only in and through Christ. They are therefore deeply exercised about the eternal destiny of those who have never heard of Christ. Most Evangelicals believe that, because they reject the light they have received, they condemn themselves to hell. Many are more reluctant to pronounce on their destiny, have no wish to limit the sovereignty of God, and prefer to leave this issue to him. Others go further in expressing their openness to

²¹ Encyclical: *Redemptor Hominis*, Pope John Paul II (Catholic Truth Society 1979), 14.

²² Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*), 8 (DOV II).

²³ *Lumen Gentium*, 16.

the possibility that God may save some who have not heard of Christ, but immediately add that, if he does so, it will not be because of their religion, sincerity or actions (there is no possibility of salvation by good works), but only because of his own grace freely given on the ground of the atoning death of Christ. All Evangelicals recognize the urgent need to proclaim the gospel of salvation to all humankind. Like Paul in his message to the Gentile audience at Athens, they declare that God “commands all men everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed” (Acts 17:30–31).

5) The Meaning of Salvation

In the Old Testament salvation meant rescue, healing and restoration for those already related to God within the covenant. In the New Testament it is directed to those who have not yet entered into the new covenant in Jesus Christ.

Salvation has to be understood in terms of both salvation history (the mighty acts of God through Jesus Christ) and salvation experience (a personal appropriation of what God has done through Christ). Roman Catholics and Evangelicals together strongly emphasize the objectivity of God’s work through Christ, but Evangelicals tend to lay more emphasis than Roman Catholics on the necessity of a personal response to, and experience of, God’s saving grace. To describe this, again the full New Testament vocabulary is needed (for example, the forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, adoption into his family, redemption, the new birth – all of which are gifts brought to us by the Holy Spirit), although Evangelicals still give paramount importance to justification by grace through faith.

We agree that what is offered us through the death and resurrection of Christ is essentially “deliverance”, viewed both negatively and positively. Negatively, it is a rescue from the power of Satan, sin and death, from guilt, alienation (estrangement from God), moral corruption, self-centredness, existential despair and fear of the future, including death. Positively, it is a deliverance into the freedom of Christ. This freedom brings human fulfilment. It is essentially becoming “sons in the Son” and therefore brothers to each other. The unity of the disciples of Jesus is a sign both that the Father sent the Son and that the Kingdom has arrived. Further, the new community expresses itself in eucharistic worship, in serving the needy (especially the poor and disenfranchised), in open fellowship with people of every age, race and culture, and in conscious con-

tinuity with the historic Christ through fidelity to the teaching of his apostles. Is salvation broader than this? Does it include socio-political liberation?

Roman Catholics draw attention to the three dimensions of evangelization which *Evangelii Nuntiandi* links. They are the anthropological, in which humanity is seen always within a concrete situation; the theological, in which the unified plan of God is seen within both creation and redemption; and the evangelical, in which the exercise of charity (refusing to ignore human misery) is seen in the light of the story of the Good Samaritan.

We all agree that the essential meaning of Christ's salvation is the restoration of the broken relationship between sinful humanity and a saving God; it cannot therefore be seen as a temporal or material project, making evangelism unnecessary.

This restoration of humanity is a true "liberation" from enslaving forces; yet this work has taken on an expanded and particular meaning in Latin America. Certainly God's plan of which Scripture speaks includes his reconciliation of human beings to himself and to one another.

The socio-political consequences of God's saving action through Christ have been manifest throughout history. They still are. Specific problems (e. g. slavery, urbanization, church-state relations, and popular religiosity) have to be seen both in their particular context and in relation to God's overall plan as revealed in Scripture and experienced in the believing community through the action of the Spirit.

Appendix: The Role of Mary in Salvation

Roman Catholics would rather consider the question of Mary in the context of the Church than of salvation. They think of her as a sinless woman, since she was both overshadowed by the Spirit at the Incarnation (Lk 1:35) and baptized with the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 1:14 f. and 2:1–4). She thus represents all Christians who have been made alive by the Spirit, and Roman Catholics speak of her as the "figure" or "model" of the Church.

The reason why we have retained this section on Mary within the chapter on "The Gospel of Salvation" (albeit as an Appendix) is that it is in the context of salvation that Evangelicals have the greatest difficulty with Marian teaching and that we discussed her role at ERCDOM II.

The place of Mary in the scheme of salvation has always been a sensitive issue between Roman Catholics and Evangelicals. We have tried to face it with integrity.

a) The interpretation of Scripture

It raises in an acute form the prior question how we use and interpret the Bible. We are agreed that biblical exegesis begins with a search for the “literal” sense of a text, which is what its author meant. We further agree that some texts also have a “spiritual” meaning, which is founded on the literal but goes beyond it because it was intended by the Divine—though not necessarily the human—author (e. g. Is 7:14). This is often called the *sensus plenior*. The difference between Roman Catholics and Evangelicals lies in the degree to which the spiritual sense may be separated from the literal. Both sides agree that, whenever Scripture is not explicit, there is need for some check on the extravagances of interpreters. We are also agreed that this check is supplied by the context, both the immediate context and the whole of Scripture, which is a unity. Roman Catholics, however, say that Scripture must be read in the light of the living, developing tradition of the church, and that the Church has authority to indicate what the true meaning of Scripture is. Thus, in relation to Mary, Roman Catholics concede that devotion to Mary was a post-apostolic practice, but add that it was a legitimate development, whereas Evangelicals believe it has been unwarrantably imported into the Roman Catholic interpretation of Scripture.

b) Mary and salvation

In one of our ERCDOM II sessions, entitled “The Place of the Virgin Mary in Salvation and Mission”, an Evangelical response was made to Pope Paul VI’s 1974 Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus* (“To Honour Mary”). Evangelical members of the dialogue asked for an explanation of two expressions in it which, at least on the surface, appeared to them to ascribe to Mary an active and participatory role in the work of salvation.

The first (1.5) describes the Christmas season as a prolonged commemoration of Mary’s “divine, virginal and salvific Motherhood”. In what sense, Evangelicals asked, could Mary’s motherhood be called “salvific”? The Roman Catholics replied that the explanation of the term was to be found in the text itself, namely that she “brought the Saviour into the world” by her obedient response to God’s call.

The second passage (1.15) refers to “the singular place” that belongs to Mary in Christian worship, not only as “the holy Mother of God” but as “the worthy Associate of the Redeemer”. In what sense, Evangelicals asked, could Mary properly be described as the Redeemer’s “worthy Associate”? It did not mean, the Roman Catholics responded, that she was personally

without need of redemption, for on the contrary she was herself saved through her Son's death. In her case, however, "salvation" did not signify the forgiveness of sins, but that, because of her predestination to be the "Mother of God", she was preserved from original sin ("immaculate conception") and so from sinning. Positively, she could be described as the Redeemer's "associate" because of her unique link with him as his mother. The word should not give offence, for we too are "associates of the Redeemer" both as recipients of his redemption and as agents through whose prayers, example, sacrifice, service, witness and suffering his redemption is proclaimed to others.

The Evangelicals made a double response to these explanations. First, they still found the language ambiguous, and considered this ambiguity particularly unfortunate in the central area of salvation. Secondly, they felt the whole Roman Catholic emphasis on Mary's role in salvation exaggerated, for when the apostles John and Paul unfold the mystery of the Incarnation, it is to honour Christ the Son not Mary the mother. At the same time, they readily agreed that in Luke's infancy narrative Mary is given the unique privilege of being the Saviour's mother, and on that account is addressed as both "highly favoured" and "blessed among women" (1:28–42). If Evangelicals are to be true to their stance on sola Scriptura, they must therefore overcome any inhibitions they may have and faithfully expound such texts.

Our discussion also focussed on the use of the term "co-operation". For example, it is stated in *Lumen Gentium* chapter VIII that Mary is rightly seen as "co-operating in the work of human salvation through free faith and obedience" (II, 56), and again that "the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise ... to a manifold co-operation which is but a sharing in this unique source" (III, 62). The Evangelicals agreed that the notion of co-operation with God is biblical (e. g. "workers together with him" (2 Cor 6:1), but pointed out that this refers to a divine-human partnership in which our share lies in the proclaiming, and not in any sense in the procuring, of salvation. The Roman Catholics agreed. The "co-operation" between Christ and us, they said, does not mean that we can add anything to Christ or his work, since he is complete in himself, and his work has been achieved. It means rather that we share in the benefits of what he has done (not in the doing of it) and that (by his gift alone, as in the case of Mary) we offer ourselves to him in gratitude, to spend our lives in his service, and to be used by him as instruments of his grace (vid. Gal 1). The Evangelicals were relieved, but still felt that the use of the word "co-operation" in this sense was inappropriate.

Another word we considered was “mediatrix”, the feminine form of “mediator”. The Evangelicals reacted with understandable vehemence against its application to Mary, as did also some Roman Catholics. She must not be designated thus, they insisted, since the work of mediation belongs to Christ alone. In reply, the Roman Catholics were reassuring. Although the word (or rather its Greek equivalent) was used of Mary from the 5th century onwards, and although some bishops were pressing at Vatican II for its inclusion in the text, the Council deliberately avoided it. It occurs only once, and then only in a list of Mary’s traditional titles. Moreover, in the same section of *Lumen Gentium* (III, 60–62) Christ is twice called “the one Mediator” in accordance with 1 Tim 2:5–6, and his “unique mediation” is also referred to twice, which (it is added) Mary’s maternal ministry “in no way obscures or diminishes”.

The Final Document of the Puebla Conference of the Evangelization of Latin America (1979), which contains a long section entitled “Mary, Mother and Model of the Church” (paras. 282–303), was cited by Evangelical participants. Paragraph 293 declares that Mary “now lives immersed in the mystery of the Trinity, praising the glory of God and interceding for human beings”. Evangelicals find this a disturbing expression, and not all Roman Catholics are happy with it, finding it too ambiguous (if indeed “immersed” is an accurate translation of the Spanish original *immersa*: there has been some controversy about this). Roman Catholics explain that the notion of Mary’s “immersion” in the Trinity means that she is the daughter of the Father, the mother of the Son, and the temple of the Holy Spirit (all three expressions being used in paragraph 53 of *Lumen Gentium*). But they strongly insist that, of course, she cannot be on a level with the three Persons of the Trinity, let alone a fourth Person. In addition, they point out that Roman Catholics’ understanding of the role of Mary should be determined by the whole of chapter VIII of *Lumen Gentium*, and other official statements of Roman Catholic belief, rather than by popular expressions of Marian piety.

The fears of Evangelicals were to some extent allayed by these Roman Catholic explanations and assurances. Yet a certain Evangelical uneasiness remained. First, the traditional Catholic emphasis on Mary’s role in salvation (e. g. as the “New Eve”, the life-giving mother) still seemed to them incompatible with the much more modest place accorded to her in the New Testament. Secondly, the vocabulary used in relation to Mary seemed to them certainly ambiguous and probably misleading. Is it not vitally important, they asked, especially in the central doctrine of salvation through Christ alone, to avoid expressions which require elaborate explanation (however much hallowed by long tradition) and to confine ourselves to language which is plainly and unequivocally Christ-centred?

At the same time Roman Catholics are troubled by what seems to them a notable neglect by Evangelicals of the place given by God to Mary in salvation history and in the life of the Church.

4. Our Response in the Holy Spirit to the Gospel

We agree that evangelism is not just a proclamation of Christ's historic work and saving offer. Evangelism also includes a call for response which is often called "conversion".

1) The Work of the Holy Spirit

This response, however, does not depend on the efforts of the human person, but on the initiative of the Holy Spirit. As is stated in the Scripture, "for by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God – not because of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph 2:8–9). There is therefore a trinitarian dimension to the human person's response: it is the Father who gives; his supreme gift is his Son, Jesus Christ for the life of the world (Jn 6:23); and it is the Holy Spirit who opens our minds and hearts so that we can accept and proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord (1 Cor 12:3) and live as his disciples. This means that the Holy Spirit guarantees that the salvation which the Father began in Jesus Christ becomes effective in us in a personal way.

When human persons experience conversion, the Holy Spirit illumines their understanding so that Jesus Christ can be confessed as the Truth itself revealed by the Father (Jn 14:6). The Holy Spirit also renders converted persons new creatures, who participate in the eternal life of the Father and the Son (Jn 11:25–26). Furthermore, the Holy Spirit, through the gifts of faith, hope and love, already enables converted persons to have a foretaste of the Kingdom which will be totally realized when the Son hands over all things to the Father (1 Cor 15:28).

Thus, the work of the Holy Spirit in Christian conversion has to be seen as the actual continuation of his previous creative and redemptive activity throughout history. Indeed, at the beginning the Holy Spirit was present at the act of creation (Gen 1:2), and he is continually sent forth as the divine breath by whom everything is created and by whom the face of the earth is renewed (Ps 104:29–30). Although all persons are influenced by the life-giving Spirit of God, it is particularly in the Old Testament, which he

inspired, that the recreative work of the Holy Spirit, after the fall of humankind, is concretely manifested. In order to ground the divine plan to recreate humanity, the Holy Spirit first taught the patriarchs to fear God and to practise righteousness. And to assemble his people Israel and to bring it back to the observance of the Covenant, the Holy Spirit raised up judges, kings and wise men. Moreover, the prophets, under the guidance of the Spirit, announced that the Holy Spirit would create a new heart and bestow new life by being poured out in a unique way on Israel and, through it, on all humanity (Ezek 36:24–28; Joel 2:28–29).

The recreative work of the Holy Spirit reached its culminating point in the incarnation of Jesus Christ who, as the New Adam, was filled with the Holy Spirit without measure (Jn 3:34). Because Jesus Christ was the privileged bearer of the Holy Spirit, he is the one who gives the Holy Spirit for the regeneration of human beings: “He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit” (Jn 1:33). Through his death on behalf of sinful humankind and his rising up to glory, Jesus Christ communicates the Holy Spirit to all who are converted to him, that is, receive him by faith as their personal Lord and Saviour. This new life in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit is signified by baptism and by membership in the Body of Christ, the Church. Furthermore, through his indwelling in converted persons, the Holy Spirit attests that they are coheirs with Christ of eternal glory.

2) Conversion and Baptism

We have been agreeably surprised to discover a considerable consensus among us that repentance and faith, conversion and baptism, regeneration and incorporation into the Christian community all belong together, although we have needed to debate their relative positions in the scheme of salvation.

“Conversion” signifies an initial turning to Jesus Christ in repentance and faith, with a view to receiving the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Spirit, and to being incorporated into the Church, all signed to us in baptism (Acts 2:38–39). The expression “continuous conversion” (if used) must therefore be understood as referring to our daily repentance as Christians, our response to new divine challenges, and our gradual transformation into the image of Christ by the Spirit (2 Cor 3:18). Moreover, some who have grown up in a Christian home find themselves to be regenerate Christians without any memory of a conscious conversion.

We agree that baptism must never be isolated, either in theology or in practice, from the context of conversion. It belongs essentially to the

whole process of repentance, faith, regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and membership of the covenant community, the Church. A large number of Evangelicals (perhaps the majority) practice only “believer’s baptism”. That is, they baptise only those who have personally accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord, and they regard baptism both as the convert’s public profession of faith and as the dramatization (by immersion in water) of his or her having died and risen with Christ. The practice of infant baptism (practised by some Evangelicals, rejected by others) assumes both that the parents believe and will bring their children up in the Christian faith, and that the children will themselves later come to conscious repentance and faith.

We rejoice together that the whole process of salvation is the work of God by the Holy Spirit. And it is in this connection that Roman Catholics understand the expression *ex opere operato* in relation to baptism. It does not mean that the sacraments have a mechanical or automatic efficacy. Its purpose rather is to emphasize that salvation is a sovereign work of Christ, in distinction to a Pelagian or semi-Pelagian confidence in human ability.

There is a further dimension of the work of the Holy Spirit in our response to the gospel to which we have become increasingly sensitive, and which we believe belongs within our understanding of the work of the Spirit in mission.

In the light of biblical teaching, particularly in the Epistle to the Ephesians,²⁴ and also in view of the insights gained through Christian missionary experience, we believe that, although the revelation of Jesus Christ as the Truth by the Holy Spirit is in itself complete in the Scriptures, nevertheless he is wanting to lead the Church into a yet fuller understanding of this revelation. Hence we rejoice that in the various cultural contexts in which men and women throughout nearly twenty centuries of Christian history have been enabled by the Holy Spirit to respond to the gospel, we can perceive the many-sidedness of the unique Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of all humankind.

Accordingly, we hope that the Holy Spirit will make us open to such new and further insights into the meaning of Jesus Christ, as he may wish to communicate by means of various manifestations of Christian life in our Christian communities, as well as in human societies where we earnestly desire that he will create a response to the gospel in conversion, baptism and incorporation into Christ’s body, the Church.

²⁴ Cf. Eph 3:10; 3:18; 4:13.

3) Church Membership

Conversion and baptism are the gateway into the new community of God, although Evangelicals distinguish between the visible and invisible aspects of this community. They see conversion as the means of entry into the invisible church and baptism as the consequently appropriate means of entry into the visible church. Both sides agree that the church should be characterized by learning, worship, fellowship, holiness, service and evangelism (Acts 2:42–47). Furthermore, life in the Church is characterized by hope and love, as a result of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit: “And hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us” (Rom 5:5). It is the Holy Spirit who arouses and sustains our response to the living Christ. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the unity of the human family, which was disrupted by sin, is gradually being recreated as the new humanity emerges (Eph 2:15).

The issue of church membership has raised in our dialogue the delicate and difficult question of the conversion of those already baptized. How are we to think of their baptism? And which church should they join? This practical question can cause grave problems in the relationship between Roman Catholics and Evangelicals. It is particularly acute in places like Latin America, where large numbers of baptized Roman Catholics have had a minimal relationship with the Roman Catholic Church since their baptism.

When such Roman Catholics have a conversion experience, many Evangelical churches welcome them into membership without re-baptizing them. Some Baptist churches, however, and some others, would insist on baptizing such converts, as indeed they baptize Protestant converts who have been baptized in infancy.

Then there is the opposite problem of Protestant Christians wishing to become members of the Roman Catholic Church. Since Vatican II the Roman Catholic Church has recognized other Christians as being in the first place “brethren”, rather than subjects for conversion. Nevertheless, since the Roman Catholic Church believes that the one Church of Christ subsists within it in a unique way, it further believes it is legitimate to receive other Christians into its membership. Such membership is not seen as an initial step towards salvation, however, but as a further step towards Christian growth. Considerable care is taken nowadays to ensure that such a step is not taken under wrong pressure and for unworthy motives. In other words, there is an avoidance of “proselytism” in the wrong sense. Then, provided that there is some proof of valid baptism having taken place, there is no question of rebaptism.

Church members need constantly to be strengthened by the grace of God. Roman Catholics and Evangelicals understand grace somewhat differently, however, Roman Catholics thinking of it more as divine life and Evangelicals as divine favour. Both sides agree that it is by a totally free gift of the Father that we become joined to Christ and enabled to live like Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Both sides also understand the Eucharist (or Lord's Supper) as a sacrament (or ordinance) of grace. Roman Catholics affirm the real presence of the body and blood of Jesus Christ and emphasize the mystery of Christ and his salvation becoming present and effective by the working of the Holy Spirit under the sacramental sign,²⁵ whereas Evangelicals (in different ways according to their different Church traditions) view the sacrament as the means by which Christ blesses us by drawing us into fellowship with himself, as we remember his death until he comes again (1 Cor 11:26).

Despite the lack of full accord which we have just described, both Evangelicals and Roman Catholics agree that the Eucharist is spiritual food and spiritual drink (1 Cor 10:3–4, 16), because the unifying Spirit is at work in this sacrament. As a memorial of the New Covenant, the Eucharist is a privileged sign in which Christ's saving grace is especially signified and/or made available to Christians. In the Eucharist the Holy Spirit makes the words Jesus spoke at the Last Supper effective in the Church and assures Christians that through their faith they are intimately united to Christ and to each other in the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the cup.

4) Assurance of Salvation

It has always been traditional among Evangelicals to stress not only salvation as a present gift, but also the assurance of salvation enjoyed by those who have received it. They like, for example, to quote 1 Jn 5:13: "I write this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life". Thus, eternal life begins in us now through the Spirit of the risen Christ, because we are "raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead" (Col 2:12). Yet in daily life we live in the tension between what is already given and what is still awaited as a promise, for "your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you will also appear with him in glory" (Col 3:3, 4).

Roman Catholics and Evangelicals are agreed that the only ground for assurance is the objective work of Christ; this ground does not lie in any

²⁵ Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium), 7, 47 (DOV II).

way in the believer. We speak somewhat differently about the work of Christ, however, and relate it differently in terms of practical piety. Evangelicals refer to the “finished” work of Christ on the cross and rest their confidence wholly upon it. Roman Catholics also speak of Christ’s work as having been done “once for all”; they therefore see it as beyond repetition. Nevertheless, they understand that through the Eucharist Christ’s unique, once-for-all work is made present, and that by this means they maintain a present relationship to it. The relationship to Christ’s finished work which Evangelicals enjoy is maintained by faith, but it is faith in what was done, and what was done is never re-presented.

Roman Catholics and Evangelicals both claim an authentic religious experience, which includes an awareness of the presence of God and a taste for spiritual realities. Yet Evangelicals think Roman Catholics sometimes lack a visible joy in Christ, which their assurance has given them, whereas Roman Catholics think Evangelicals are sometimes insufficiently attentive to the New Testament warnings against presumption. Roman Catholics also claim to be more realistic than Evangelicals about the vagaries of religious experience. The actual experience of Evangelicals seldom leads them to doubt their salvation, but Roman Catholics know that the soul may have its dark nights. In summary Evangelicals appear to Roman Catholics more pessimistic about human nature before conversion, but more optimistic about it afterwards, while Evangelicals allege the opposite about Roman Catholics. Roman Catholics and Evangelicals together agree that Christian assurance is more an assurance of faith Heb 10:22 than of experience, and that perseverance to the end is a gratuitous gift of God.

5. The Church and the Gospel

Evangelicals, because of their emphasis on the value of the individual, have traditionally neglected the doctrine of the Church. The topic was not neglected in our dialogue, however. We found ourselves united in certain convictions about the Church, and in our commitment to it. We were able to agree on a four-fold relationship between the Church and the gospel.

1) The Church is a Part of the Gospel

The redemptive purpose of God has been from the beginning to call out a people for himself. When he called Abraham, he promised to bless all nations through his posterity, and has kept his promise. For all those

who are united to Christ, Gentiles as well as Jews, are Abraham's spiritual children and share in the promised blessing.²⁶

This wonderful new thing, namely the abolition of the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles and the creation of a single new humanity, was at the heart of Paul's gospel (Eph 2:14, 15). He called it "the mystery of Christ" which, having been made known to him, he must make known to others (Eph 3:3–9).

Both Evangelicals and Roman Catholics are conscious of past failure in their understanding of the Church. Roman Catholics used to concentrate on the Church as a hierarchical institution, but now (since Vatican II) see it in new perspective by stressing the important biblical images such as that of the People of God. Evangelicals have sometimes preached an excessively individualistic gospel, "Christ died for me". This is true (Gal 2:20), but it is far from the whole truth, which is that Christ gave himself for us "to purify for himself a people ..." (Tit 2:14).

Thus both Roman Catholics and Evangelicals agree that the Church as the Body of Christ is part of the gospel. That is to say, the good news includes God's purpose to create for himself through Christ a new, redeemed, united and international people of his own.

2) The Church is a Fruit of the Gospel

The first clear proclamation of the good news in the power of the Holy Spirit resulted in the gathered community of God's people – the Church (Acts 2:39–42). This was to become the pattern for subsequent apostolic and missionary endeavours with the gospel. The condition for membership of the community is repentance (chiefly from the sin of unbelief and rejection of Christ), and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, witnessed to in submission to baptism in his name (Acts 2:38). The benefits of membership include the personal enjoyment of the forgiveness of sins, and participation in the new life of the Spirit (Acts 2:38, 39; 1 Cor 12:13).

From the beginning, the community of God's people was marked by a devotion to the apostolic teaching, to fellowship (a sharing which extended to practical loving care), to the breaking of bread (the Lord's Supper), and to the prayers or public worship (Acts 2:42). To this believing, worshipping, caring and witnessing community, "the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47).

Evangelicals on the whole have tended to emphasize personal salvation almost to the point of losing sight of the central place of the Church. The

²⁶ E. g. Rom 4; Gal 3.

multiplication of evangelistic organizations and agencies which are not church based has contributed to this distortion. There is however a growing desire to correct it. For wherever the gospel goes, it bears fruit in the spread and growth of the Church.

3) The Church is an Embodiment of the Gospel

The very life of the Church as God's new community becomes itself a witness to the Gospel. "The life of the community only acquires its full meaning when it becomes a witness, when it evokes admiration and conversion and when it becomes the preaching and proclamation of the Good News".²⁷ Thus the Church is the sign of the power and the presence of Jesus, the light of Christ shining out visibly to bring all men to that light.²⁸

As a fellowship of communities throughout the world the Church is to be "a people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (Cyprian). This was why Jesus had come into the world and why the living communion of believers between themselves and the Lord of life, and between each other, is to be the proclamation that will move people's hearts to belief (Jn 13:34, 35; 17:23).

In every place the believing community speaks to the world by an authentically Christian life given over to God in a communion that nothing should destroy and at the same time given to one's neighbour with limitless zeal (cf. 1 Pet 2:12).

It is also the community of peace which makes Jew and Gentile one, in which by the power of the broken body of Christ the enmity which stood like a dividing wall between them has been broken down and a single new humanity brought into being (Eph 2:15-16). The Church cannot with integrity preach the gospel of reconciliation unless it is evidently a reconciled community itself.

It is a community that makes present the obedient Lord who underwent death for us. It is founded upon him (Eph 2:20), he is its Lord (Eph 1:22), and its power to speak of him comes from the manner in which it reproduces in all its members and in its common life his obedience to the saving plan of God.

This unity, holiness, love and obedience are the alternative sign that Christ is not an anonymous or remote Lord. They are the mark of the community given over to God, and they speak about the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

²⁷ Evangelii Nuntiandi.

²⁸ Lumen Gentium, 1.

4) The Church is an Agent of the Gospel

That the Church must be an agent of the gospel overflows from its internal life. The Church which receives the Word must also sound it forth (1 Thess 1:5–8). The Church which embodies its message visually must also declare it verbally.

First, the Church continues and prolongs the very same mission of Christ.²⁹

Secondly, the Church received Christ's command to be his witnesses in the power of the Spirit to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8).

Thirdly, the Church proclaims the message with the authority of the Lord himself, who gave her the power of the Spirit. As to the qualified subjects of this authority, there are divergences between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics. For Evangelicals the agent of the proclamation is the whole community of believers, who are equipped for this task by those appointed to the pastoral ministry (Eph 4:11, 12). For Roman Catholics also the evangelistic task belongs to the whole people of God, but they believe bishops have a special role and responsibility both to order the life of the community for this task and, as successors to the ministry of apostolic times, to preach the good news of the Kingdom.

To sum up, the Church and the gospel belong indissolubly together. We cannot think of either apart from the other. For God's purpose to create a new community through Christ is itself an important element in the good news. The Church is also both the fruit and the agent of the gospel, since it is through the gospel that the Church spreads and through the Church that the gospel spreads. Above all, unless the Church embodies the gospel, giving it visible flesh and blood, the gospel lacks credibility and the Church lacks effectiveness in witness.

More and more Christians are recognizing this lack of a fully credible, effective witness because of divisions among themselves. They believe that Christ has called all his disciples in every age to be witnesses to him and his gospel to the ends of the earth (cf. Acts 1:8). Yet those who profess such discipleship differ about the meaning of the one gospel and go their different ways as if Christ himself were divided (cf. 1 Co 1:13).

To be sure, Christian separations and divisions have often been due to conscientiously held convictions, and Christian unity must not be sought at the expense of Christian truth. Nevertheless, the divisions and their causes contradict the will of Jesus Christ, who desires his people to be united in truth and love. They also hinder the proclamation of his good

²⁹ Jn 20:21–22; cf. Mt 28:16–20; Lk 24:46–49.

news of reconciliation. Therefore the gospel calls the Church to be renewed in truth, holiness and unity, in order that it may be effectively renewed for mission as well.

6. The Gospel and Culture

The influence of culture on evangelism, conversion and church formation is increasingly recognized as a topic of major missiological importance. The Willowbank Report *Gospel and Culture* (1978) defines culture as “an integrated system of beliefs (about God or reality or ultimate meaning), of values (about what is true, good, beautiful and normative), of customs (how to behave, relate to others, talk, pray, dress, work, play, trade, farm, eat, etc.), and of institutions which express these beliefs, values and customs (government, law courts, temples or churches, family, schools, hospitals, factories, shops, unions, clubs, etc.), which binds a society together and gives it a sense of identity, dignity, security and continuity”.³⁰ Viewed thus, culture pervades the whole of human life, and it is essential for Christians to know how to evaluate it.

It is acknowledged that Evangelicals and Roman Catholics start from a different background. Evangelicals tend to stress the discontinuity, and Roman Catholics the continuity, between man unredeemed and man redeemed. At the same time, both emphases are qualified. Discontinuity is qualified by the Evangelical recognition of the image of God in humankind and continuity by the Roman Catholic recognition that human beings and societies are contaminated by sin. The Lausanne Covenant summarized this tension as follows: “Because man is God’s creature, some of his culture is rich in beauty and goodness. Because he is fallen, all of it is tainted with sin and some of it is demonic”.³¹

We have particularly concentrated on the place of culture in four areas, – in the Bible, in cross-cultural evangelism, in conversion and in church formation.

1) Culture and the Bible

We have already affirmed that the Bible is the Word of God through the words of human beings. Realizing that human language and human

³⁰ The Willowbank Report: Consultation on Gospel and Culture (Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization 1978, Lausanne Occasional Paper no. 2, par. 2.

³¹ Lausanne Covenant, par. 10.

thought forms reflect human cultures, we saw the need to explore two major questions:

- a) What was the attitude of the biblical authors to their cultures?
- b) How should we ourselves react to the cultural conditioning of Scripture?

In answer to the first question, we considered the New Testament. Its message comes to us from the context of the first century world, with its own images and vocabulary, and is thus set in the context of that world's culture. The culture has become the vehicle of the message.

Yet within that first century culture there were elements which the Christian and the Church were required to resist, out of loyalty to the Lord Jesus. Distinctions between the new community and the surrounding culture were clearly drawn. At the same time, the Christian and the Church enjoyed a new freedom in Christ which enabled them to discern those elements in the culture which must be rejected as hostile to their faith and those which were compatible with it and could on that account be affirmed. Blindness, which leads Christians to tolerate the evil and/or overlook the good in their culture, is a permanent temptation.

Our other question was concerned with how we ourselves should react to the cultural conditioning of Scripture. It breaks down into two subsidiary questions which express the options before us. First, are the biblical formulations (which we have already affirmed to be normative) so intrinsically conditioned by their mode of specific cultural expression that they cannot be changed to suit different cultural settings? Put another way, has biblical inspiration (which Evangelicals and Roman Catholics both acknowledge) made the cultural forms themselves normative? The alternative is to ask whether it is the revealed teaching which is normative, so that this may be re-expressed in other cultural forms. We believe the latter to be the case, and that such re-expression or translation is a responsibility laid both on cross-cultural missionaries and on local Christian leaders.³²

2) Culture and Evangelism

Christian missionaries find themselves in a challenging cross-cultural indeed tri-cultural, situation. They come from a particular culture themselves, they travel to people nurtured in another, and they take with them

³² Here Roman Catholics will want to make reference to the Encyclical of Pope John Paul II, *Slavorum Apostoli*, 2nd June 1985.

a biblical gospel which was originally formulated in a third. How will this interplay of cultures affect their evangelism? And how can they be simultaneously faithful to Scripture and relevant to the local culture?

In the history of mission in this century a progress is discernible. The successive approaches may be summarized as follows:

- a) In the first period the missionary brought along with the gospel message many of the cultural trappings of his or her own situation. Then culture, instead of being (as in the New Testament) a vehicle for the proclamation of the gospel, became a barrier to it. Accidentals of teaching and practice were taught as if they were essentials, and a culture-Christianity was preached, as if it were the gospel.
- b) In the second period the gospel message was translated into terms (language and thought forms, artistic symbols and music) appropriate to those to whom it was brought, and the cultural trappings began to be left behind. Now local cultures, instead of being neglected, were respected and where possible used for the better communication of the gospel. In a word, the gospel began to be “contextualized”.
- c) In the third period, in which we are living, missionaries bring both the biblical gospel and an experience of life in Christ. They also endeavour to take seriously the people to whom they have come, with their worldview and way of life, so that they may find their own authentic way of experiencing and expressing the salvation of Christ. This kind of evangelism tries to be both faithful to the biblical revelation and relevant to the people’s culture. In fact it aims at bringing Scripture, context and experience into a working relationship effective for presenting the Gospel.

3) Culture and Conversion

We are clear that conversion includes repentance, and that repentance is a turning away from the old life. But what are the aspects of the old life from which a convert must turn away? Conversion cannot be just turning away from “sin” as this is viewed in any one particular culture. For different cultures have different understandings of sin, and we have to recognize this aspect of pluralism. So missionaries and church leaders in each place need great wisdom, both at the time of a person’s conversion and during his or her maturing as a Christian, to distinguish between the moral and the cultural, between what is clearly approved or condemned by the gospel on the one hand and by custom or convention on the other. The repentance of conversion should be a turning away only from what the gospel condemns.

4) Culture and Church Formation

In the development of the Christian community in each place, as in the other areas we have mentioned, missionaries must avoid all cultural imperialism; that is, the imposition on the Church of alien cultural forms. Just as the gospel has to be inculturated, so must the Church be inculturated also.

We all agree that the aim of “indigenization” or “inculturation” is to make local Christians congenial members of the body of Christ. They must not imagine that to become Christian is to become western and so to repudiate their own cultural and national inheritance. The same principle applies in the west, where too often to become Christian has also meant to become middle class.

There are a number of spheres in which each Church should be allowed to develop its own identity. The first is the question of certain forms of organization, especially as they relate to Church leadership. Although Roman Catholics and Evangelicals take a different approach to authority and its exercise, we are agreed that in every Christian community (especially a new one) authority must be exercised in a spirit of service. “I am among you as one who serves”, Jesus said (Lk 22:27). Yet the expression given to leadership can vary according to different cultures.

The second sphere is that of artistic creativity – for example church architecture, painting, symbols, music and drama. Local churches will want to express their Christian identity in artistic forms which reflect their local culture.

A third area is theology. Every church should encourage theological reflection on the aspirations of its culture, and seek to develop a theology which gives expression to these. Yet only in such a way as to apply, not compromise, the biblical revelation.

Two problems confront a church which is seeking to “inculturate” itself, namely provincialism and syncretism. “Provincialism” asserts the local culture of a particular church to the extent that it cuts itself adrift from, and even repudiates, other churches. We are agreed that new expressions of local church life must in no way break fellowship with the wider Christian community.

Syncretism is the attempt to fuse the biblical gospel with elements of local culture which, being erroneous or evil, are incompatible with it. But the gospel’s true relation to culture is discriminating, judging some elements and welcoming others. The criteria it applies to different elements or forms include the questions whether they are under the judgment of Christ’s lordship, and whether they manifest the fruit of the Spirit.

It has to be admitted that every expression of Christian truth is inadequate and may be distorted. Hence the need for mutually respectful dialogue about the relative merits of old and new forms, in the light of both the biblical revelation and the experience of the wider community of faith.

The Second Vatican Council addressed itself to these important matters. It recognized that in every culture there are some elements which may need to be “purged of evil association” and to be restored “to Christ their source, who overthrows the rule of the devil and limits the manifold malice of evil”. In this way “the good found in people’s minds and hearts, or in particular customs and cultures, is purified, raised to a higher level and reaches its perfection ...”.³³

Hence it is not a question of adapting things which come from the world usurped by Satan, but of re-possessing them for Christ. To take them over as they are could be syncretism. “Repossession”, on the other hand, entails four steps: a) the selection of certain elements from one’s culture; b) the rejection of other elements which are incompatible with the essence of the biblical faith; c) the purification from the elements selected and adopted of everything unworthy; d) the integration of these into the faith and life of the Church.

The age to come has broken into this present age in such a way as to touch our lives with both grace and judgment. It cuts through every culture. Vatican II referred to this discontinuity, and also emphasized the need for “the spiritual qualities and endowments of every age and nation” to be fortified, completed and restored in Christ.³⁴

For Jesus Christ is lord of all, and our supreme desire vis à vis each culture is to “take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Cor 10:5).

7. The possibilities of Common Witness

We turn in our last chapter from theological exploration to practical action. We have indicated where we agree and disagree. We now consider what we can do and cannot do together. Since our discussion on this topic was incomplete, what follows awaits further development.

³³ Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity (Ad Gentes), 9 (DOV II).

³⁴ Gaudium et Spes, 58.

I) Our Unity and Disunity

We have tried to face with honesty and candour the issues which divide us as Roman Catholics and Evangelicals. We have neither ignored, nor discounted, nor even minimized them. For they are real, and in some cases serious.

At the same time, we know and have experienced that the walls of our separation do not reach to heaven. There is much that unites us, and much in each other's different manifestations of Christian faith and life which we have come to appreciate. Our concern throughout our dialogue has not been with the structural unity of churches, but rather with the possibilities of common witness. So when we write of "unity", it is this that we have in mind.

To begin with, we acknowledge in ourselves and in each other a firm belief in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This faith is for us more than a conviction; it is a commitment. We have come to the Father through the Son by the Holy Spirit (Eph 2:18).

We also recognize that the gospel is God's good news about his Son Jesus Christ (Rom 1:1–3), about his godhead and manhood, his life and teaching, his acts and promises, his death and resurrection, and about the salvation he has once accomplished and now offers. Moreover, Jesus Christ is our Saviour and our Lord, for he is the object of our personal trust, devotion and expectation. Indeed, faith, hope and love are his gifts to us, bestowed on us freely without any merit of our own.

In addition, God's Word and Spirit nourish this new life within us. We see in one another "the fruit of the Spirit", which is "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal 5:22, 23). No wonder Paul continues in this text with an exhortation that there be among us no self-conceit, no provoking of one another, no envy of one another" (v. 26).

There is therefore between us an initial if incomplete unity. Nevertheless, divisions continue, even in some doctrines of importance, as we have made clear in earlier chapters of our report. Our faith has developed in us strong convictions (as it should), some uniting us, others dividing us. The very strength of our convictions has not only drawn us together in mutual respect, but has also been a source of painful tension. This has been the price of our encounter; attempts to conceal or dilute our differences would not have been authentic dialogue, but a travesty of it. So would have been any attempt to magnify or distort our difference. We confess that in the past members of both our constituencies have been guilty of misrepresenting each other, on account of either laziness in study, unwillingness to lis-

ten, superficial judgments or pure prejudice. Whenever we have done this, we have borne false witness against our neighbour.

This, then, is the situation. Deep truths already unite us in Christ. Yet real and important convictions still divide us. In the light of this, we ask: what can we do together?

2) Common Witness

“Witness” in the New Testament normally denotes the unique testimony of the apostolic eyewitnesses who could speak of Jesus from what they had seen and heard. It is also used more generally of all Christians who commend Christ to others out of their personal experience of him, and in response to his commission. We are using the word here, however, in the even wider sense of any Christian activity which points to Christ, a usage made familiar by the two documents, jointly produced by the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, which are entitled *Common witness and Proselytism* (1970) and *Common Witness* (1980).

a) Common Witness in Bible Translation and Publishing

It is extremely important that Roman Catholics and Protestants should have an agreed, common text in each vernacular. Divergent texts breed mutual suspicion; a mutually acceptable text develops confidence and facilitates joint Bible study. The United Bible Societies have rendered valuable service in this area, and the Common Bible (RSV) published in English in 1973, marked a step forward in Roman Catholic-Protestant relationships.

The inclusion of the Old Testament Apocrypha (books written in Greek during the last two centuries before Christ), which the Roman Catholic Church includes as part of the Bible, has proved a problem, and in some countries Evangelicals have for this reason not felt free to use this version. The United Bible Societies and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity have published some guidelines in this matter,³⁵ which recommend that the Apocrypha be printed “as a separate section before the New Testament” and described as “deutero-canonical”. Many Evangelicals feel able to use a Common Bible in these circumstances, although most would prefer the Apocrypha to be omitted altogether.

³⁵ Guiding Principles for Interconfessional Cooperation in Translating the Bible (1968).

b) Common Witness in the Use of Media

Although we have put down the availability of a Common Bible as a priority need, Evangelicals and Roman Catholics are united in recognizing the importance of Christian literature in general, and of Christian audiovisual aids. In particular, it is of great value when the Common Bible is supplemented by Common Bible reading aids. In some parts of the world Bible atlases and handbooks, Bible dictionaries and commentaries, and explanatory notes for daily Bible reading, are available in a form which betrays no denominational or ecclesiastical bias. The same is true of some Christian films and filmstrips. So Evangelicals and Roman Catholics may profitably familiarize themselves with each other's materials, with a view to using them whenever possible.

In addition, the opportunity is given to the churches in some countries to use the national radio and television service for Christian programmes. We suggest, especially in countries where Christians form a small minority of the total population, that the Roman Catholic Church, the Protestant Churches and specialist organizations cooperate rather than compete with one another in the development of suitable programmes.

c) Common Witness in Community Service

The availability of welfare varies greatly from country to country. Some governments provide generous social services, although often the spiritual dimension is missing, and then Christians can bring faith, loving compassion and hope to an otherwise secular service. In other countries the government's provision is inadequate or unevenly distributed. In such a situation the churches have a particular responsibility to discover the biggest gaps and seek to fill them. In many cases the government welcomes the Church's contribution.

In the name of Christ, Roman Catholics and Evangelicals can serve human need together, providing emergency relief for the victims of flood, famine and earthquake, and shelter for refugees; promoting urban and rural development; feeding the hungry and healing the sick; caring for the elderly and the dying; providing a marriage guidance, enrichment and reconciliation service, a pregnancy advisory service and support for single parent families; arranging educational opportunities for the illiterate and job creation schemes for the unemployed; and rescuing young people from drug addiction and young women from prostitution. There seems to be no justification for organizing separate Roman Catholic and Evangelical projects of a purely humanitarian nature, and every

reason for undertaking them together. Although faith may still in part divide us, love for neighbour should unite us.

d) Common Witness in Social Thought and Action

There is a pressing need for fresh Christian thinking about the urgent social issues which confront the contemporary world. The Roman Catholic Church has done noteworthy work in this area, not least through the social encyclicals of recent Popes. Evangelicals are only now beginning to catch up after some decades of neglect. It should be to our mutual advantage to engage in Christian social debate together. A clear and united Christian witness is needed in face of such challenges as the nuclear arms race, North-South economic inequality, the environmental crisis, and the revolution in sexual mores.

Whether a common mind will lead us to common action will depend largely on how far the government of our countries is democratic or autocratic, influenced by Christian values or imbued with an ideology unfriendly to the gospel. Where a regime is oppressive, and a Christian prophetic voice needs to be heard, it should be a single voice which speaks for both Roman Catholics and Protestants. Such a united witness could also provide some stimulus to the quest for peace, justice and disarmament; testify to the sanctity of sex, marriage and family life; agitate for the reform of permissive abortion legislation; defend human rights and religious freedom, denounce the use of torture, and campaign for prisoners of conscience; promote Christian moral values in public life and in the education of children; seek to eliminate racial and sexual discrimination; contribute to the renewal of decayed inner cities; and oppose dishonesty and corruption. There are many such areas in which Roman Catholics and Evangelicals can both think together and take action together. Our witness will be stronger if it is a common witness.

e) Common Witness in Dialogue

The word “dialogue” means different things to different people. Some Christians regard it as inherently compromising, since they believe it expresses an unwillingness to affirm revealed truth, let alone to proclaim it. But to us “dialogue” means a frank and serious conversation between individuals or groups, in which each is prepared to listen respectfully to the other, with a view to increased understanding on the part of both. We see no element of compromise in this. On the contrary, we believe it is essentially Christian to meet one another face to face, rather than preserving our isolation from one another and even indifference to one another, and

to listen to one another's own statements of position, rather than relying on second-hand reports. In authentic dialogue we struggle to listen carefully not only to what the other person is saying, but to the strongly cherished concerns which lie behind his or her words. In this process our caricatures of one another become corrected.

We believe that the most fruitful kind of Evangelical-Roman Catholic dialogue arises out of joint Bible Study. For, as this report makes clear, both sides regard the Bible as God's Word, and acknowledge the need to read, study, believe and obey it. It is surely through the Word of God that, illumined by the Spirit of God, we shall progress towards greater agreement.

We also think that there is need for Evangelical-Roman Catholic dialogue on the great theological and ethical issues which are being debated in all the churches, and that an exchange of visiting scholars in seminaries could be particularly productive.

Honest and charitable dialogue is beneficial to those who take part in it; it enriches our faith, deepens our understanding, and fortifies and clarifies our convictions. It is also a witness in itself, inasmuch as it testifies to the desire for reconciliation and meanwhile expresses a love which encompasses even those who disagree.

Further, theological dialogue can sometimes lead to common affirmation, especially in relation to the unbelieving world and to new theological trends which owe more to contemporary culture than to revelation or Christian tradition. Considered and united declarations by Roman Catholics and Evangelicals could make a powerful contribution to current theological discussion.

f) Common Witness in Worship

The word "worship" is used in a wide range of senses from the spontaneous prayers of the "two or three" met in Christ's name in a home to formal liturgical services in church.

We do not think that either Evangelicals or Roman Catholics should hesitate to join in common prayer when they meet in each other's homes. Indeed, if they have gathered for a Bible study group, it would be most appropriate for them to pray together for illumination before the study and after it for grace to obey. Larger informal meetings should give no difficulty either. Indeed, in many parts of the world Evangelicals and Roman Catholics are already meeting for common praise and prayer, both in charismatic celebrations and in gatherings which would not describe themselves thus. Through such experiences they have been drawn into a deeper experience of God and so into a closer fellowship with one another. Occa-

sional participation in each other's services in church is also natural, especially for the sake of family solidarity and friendship.

It is when the possibility of common participation in the Holy Communion or Eucharist is raised, that major problems of conscience arise. Both sides of our dialogue would strongly discourage indiscriminate approaches to common sacramental worship.

The Mass lies at the heart of Roman Catholic doctrine and practice, and it has been emphasized even more in Catholic spirituality since the Second Vatican Council. Anyone is free to attend Mass. Other Christians may not receive Communion at it, however, except when they request it in certain limited cases of "spiritual necessity" specified by current Roman Catholic legislation. Roman Catholics may on occasion attend a Protestant Communion Service as an act of worship. But there is no ruling of the Roman Catholic Church which would permit its members to receive Communion in a Protestant Church service, even on ecumenical occasions. Nor would Roman Catholics feel in conscience free to do so.

Many Evangelical churches practice an "open" Communion policy, in that they announce a welcome to everybody who "is trusting in Jesus Christ for salvation and is in love and charity with all people", whatever their church affiliation. They do not exclude Roman Catholic believers. Most Evangelicals would feel conscientiously unable to present themselves at a Roman Catholic Mass, however, even assuming they were invited. This is because the doctrine of the Mass was one of the chief points at issue during the 16th century Reformation, and Evangelicals are not satisfied with the Roman Catholic explanation of the relation between the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross and the sacrifice of the Mass. But this question was not discussed at our meetings.

Since both Roman Catholics and Evangelicals believe that the Lord's Supper was instituted by Jesus as a means of grace³⁶ and agree that he commanded his disciples to "do this in remembrance" of him, it is a grief to us that we are so deeply divided in an area in which we should be united, and that we are therefore unable to obey Christ's command together. Before this becomes possible, some profound and sustained theological study of this topic will be needed; we did not even begin it at ERCDOM.

g) Common Witness in Evangelism

Although there are some differences in our definitions of evangelism, Roman Catholics and Evangelicals are agreed that evangelism involves pro-

³⁶ See Chapter 4 (3).

claiming the gospel, and that therefore any common evangelism necessarily presupposes a common commitment to the same gospel. In earlier chapters of this report we have drawn attention to certain doctrines in which our understanding is identical or very similar. We desire to affirm these truths together. In other important areas, however, substantial agreement continues to elude us, and therefore common witness in evangelism would seem to be premature, although we are aware of situations in some parts of the world in which Evangelicals and Roman Catholics have felt able to make a common proclamation.

Evangelicals are particularly sensitive in this matter, which is perhaps not surprising, since their very appellation “evangelical” includes in itself the word “evangel” (gospel). Evangelicals claim to be “gospel” people, and are usually ready, if asked, to give a summary of their understanding of the gospel. This would have at its heart what they often call “the finished work of Christ”, namely that by bearing our sins on the cross Jesus Christ did everything necessary for our salvation, and that we have only to put our trust in him in order to be saved. Although many Evangelicals will admit that their presentation of the gospel is often one-sided or defective, yet they could not contemplate any evangelism in which the good news of God’s justification of sinners by his grace in Christ through faith alone is not proclaimed.

Roman Catholics also have their problems of conscience. They would not necessarily want to deny the validity of the message which Evangelicals preach, but would say that important aspects of the gospel are missing from it. In particular, they emphasize the need both to live out the gospel in the sacramental life of the church and to respect the teaching authority of the Church. Indeed, they see evangelism as essentially a Church activity done by the Church in relation to the Church.

So long as each side regards the other’s view of the gospel as defective, there exists a formidable obstacle to be overcome. This causes us particular sorrow in our dialogue on mission, in which we have come to appreciate one another and to discover unexpected agreements. Yet we must respect one another’s integrity. We commit ourselves to further prayer, study and discussion in the hope that a way forward may be found.

3) Unworthy Witness

We feel the need to allude to the practice of seeking to evangelize people who are already church members, since this causes misunderstanding and even resentment, especially when Evangelicals are seeking to “convert” Roman Catholics. It arises from the phenomenon which Evangelicals call “nominal Christianity”, and which depends on the rather sharp distinction

they draw between the visible Church (of professing or “nominal” Christians) and the invisible Church (of committed or genuine Christians), that is, between those who are Christian only in name and those who are Christian in reality. Evangelicals see nominal Christians as needing to be won for Christ. Roman Catholics also speak of “evangelizing” such people, although they refer to them as “lapsed” or “inactive” rather than as “nominal”, because they do not make a separation between the visible and invisible Church. They are understandably offended whenever Evangelicals appear to regard all Roman Catholics as ipso facto unbelievers, and when they base their evangelism on a distorted view of Roman Catholic teaching and practice. On the other hand, since Evangelicals seek to evangelize the nominal members of their own churches, as well as of others, they see this activity as an authentic concern for the gospel, and not as a reprehensible kind of “sheep-stealing”. Roman Catholics do not accept this reasoning.

We recognize that conscientious conviction leads some people to change from Catholic to Evangelical or Evangelical to Catholic allegiance, and leads others to seek to persuade people to do so. If this happens in conscience and without coercion, we would not call it proselytism.

There are other forms of witness, however, which we would all describe as “unworthy”, and therefore as being “proselytism” rather than “evangelism”. We agree, in general, with the analysis of this given in the study document entitled *Common Witness and Proselytism* (1970), and in particular we emphasize three aspects of it.

First, proselytism takes place when our motive is unworthy, for example when our real concern in witness is not the glory of God through the salvation of human beings but rather the prestige of our own Christian community, or indeed our personal prestige.

Secondly, we are guilty of proselytism whenever our methods are unworthy, especially when we resort to any kind of “physical coercion, moral constraint or psychological pressure”, when we seek to induce conversion by the offer of material or political benefits, or when we exploit other people’s need, weakness or lack of education. These practices are an affront both to the freedom and dignity of human beings and to the Holy Spirit whose witness is gentle and not coercive.

Thirdly, we are guilty of proselytism whenever our message includes “unjust or uncharitable reference to the beliefs or practices of other religious communities in the hope of winning adherents”. If we find it necessary to make comparisons, we should compare the strengths and weaknesses of one church with those of the other, and not set what is best in the one against what is worst in the other. To descend to deliberate misrepresentation is incompatible with truth and love.

Conclusion

We who have participated in ERCDOM III are agreed that every possible opportunity for common witness should be taken, except where conscience forbids. We cannot make decisions for one another, however, because we recognize that the situation varies in different groups and places. In any case, the sad fact of our divisions on important questions of faith always puts a limit on the common witness which is possible. At one end of the spectrum are those who can contemplate no cooperation of any kind. At the other are those who desire a very full cooperation. In between are many who still find some forms of common witness conscientiously impossible, while they find others to be the natural, positive expression of common concern and conviction. In some Third World situations, for example, the divisions which originated in Europe are felt with less intensity, and mutual trust has grown through united prayer and study of the Word of God. Although all Christians should understand the historical origins and theological issues of the Reformation, yet our continuing division is a stumbling block, and the gospel calls us to repentance, renewal and reconciliation.

We believe that the Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission has now completed its task. At the same time we hope that dialogue on mission between Roman Catholics and Evangelicals will continue, preferably on a regional or local basis, in order that further progress may be made towards a common understanding, sharing and proclaiming of “the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). We commit these past and future endeavours to God, and pray that by “speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ” (Eph 4:15).

APPENDIX: The Participants

Members

Evangelical Members:

Dr Kwame Bediako
Professor Dr Peter Beyerhaus
Bishop Donald Cameron
Dr Harvie Conn
Dr Orlando Costas
Mr Martin Goldsmith
Dr David Hubbard
Reverend Gottfried Osei-Mensah
Reverend Peter Savage
Reverend John Stott
Dr David Wells

Roman-Catholic Members:

Sister Joan Chatfield
Father Matthieu Collin
Sister Joan Delaney
Father Parmananda Divarkar
Father Pierre Duprey
Father Claude Geffre
Father Rene Girault
Monsignor Basil Meeking
Monsignor Jorge Mejia
Father Dionisio Minguez Fernandez
Father John Paul Musinsky
Father John Mutiso-Mbinda
Father Waly Neven
Father John Redford
Father Philip Rosato
Monsignor Pietro Rossano
Father Robert Rweyemamu
Bishop Anselme Sanon
Father Bernard Sesboue
Father Thomas Stransky

ERCDOM I (Venice) April 1977*Evangelical Participants*

Professor Peter Beyerhaus
Bishop Donald Cameron
Dr Orlando Costas
Mr Martin Goldsmith
Dr David Hubbard
Reverend Gottfried Osei-Mensah
Reverend Peter Savage
Reverend John Stott

Roman Catholic Participants

Sister Joan Chatfield
Father Pierre Duprey
Monsignor Basil Meeking
Father Dionisio Minguez Fernandez
Father John Paul Musinsky
Father Waly Neven
Father Robert Rweyemamu
Father Thomas Stransky

ERCDOM II (Cambridge, England) March 1982*Evangelical Participants*

Dr Kwame Bediako
Professor Peter Beyerhaus
Bishop Donald Cameron
Mr Martin Goldsmith
Dr David Hubbard
Reverend Peter Savage
Reverend John Stott
Dr David Wells

Roman Catholic Participants

Sister Joan Chatfield
Father Parmananda Divarkar
Father Pierre Duprey
Father René Girault
Monsignor Basil Meeking

Monsignor Jorge Mejia
Father John Mutiso-Mbinda
Father John Redford
Monsignor Pietro Rossano
Father Thomas Stransky

ERCDOM III (Landévennec, France) April 1984

Evangelical Participants

Dr Kwame Bediako
Bishop Donald Cameron
Dr Harvie Conn
Mr Martin Goldsmith
Reverend John Stott
Dr David Wells

Roman Catholic Participants

Sister Joan Chatfield
Father Matthieu Collin
Sister Joan Delaney
Father Claude Geffré
Monsignor Basil Meeking
Father Philip Rosato
Bishop Anselme Sanon
Father Bernard Sesboué
Father Thomas Stransky

CHURCH, EVANGELISATION, AND THE BONDS OF KOINONIA (1993–2002)

A REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONSULTATION BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE¹

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Preamble

We, the representatives of two Christian traditions deeply divided from each other historically, have been involved in a substantive consultation that we hope will lead to improved relations in the future. This experience for us has been momentous. We come from strong and vital Christian communities. The Catholic Church is the largest Christian communion in the world, with now over one billion members. The Evangelical movement, with its roots in the Reformation, is one of the most dynamic expressions of Christianity today, showing rapid growth in many parts of the world. The World Evangelical Alliance represents some 150 million from among more than 200 million Evangelical Christians. Yet in spite of exceptions over the centuries, from Zinzendorf and Wesley to Schaff and Congar, both traditions have long lived in isolation from one another. Our communities have been separated by different histories and theologies as well as by un-

¹ Catholic Church and World Evangelical Alliance are the official names of the two co-sponsoring bodies. In using their official names, the co-sponsors of this Consultation are not, in any way, claiming these characteristics, respectively, of “Catholic” or “Evangelical” exclusively for themselves.

helpful stereotypes and mutual misunderstandings. This estrangement and misapprehension has occasioned hostility and conflicts that continue to divide the Body of Christ in our own time.

In recent decades, however, a considerable number of Catholics and Evangelicals have been getting to know each other, and have discovered in the process how much they have in common. This change is due in part to situational factors: cultural and political changes in the second half of the twentieth century, the growth of democracy in countries which formerly had repressive, authoritarian governments, the mixing of peoples and confessions in our increasingly diverse cultures, the discovery of common concerns in the area of ethics and in the struggle against secularism. In part, the changing relations between Evangelical and Catholic communities are due to internal developments, for example, in Catholicism, as a result of the *Second Vatican Council* and, among Evangelicals, the impact of the *Lausanne Covenant*. Finally, new attitudes were fostered by far-sighted individuals in both traditions, together with a significant number of initiatives designed to promote greater appreciation and understanding of each other. Billy Graham's ministry stands out here. Most importantly, there is a growing recognition in both our traditions that the spread of the Gospel is hindered by our continuing divisions.

As a result of these changes in our world and in our churches, many Catholics and Evangelicals have begun talking to and co-operating with each other, including praying together. In the process, they have not only become friends; they have begun to discover each other as brothers and sisters in the Lord. It might be helpful to note some of these formal initiatives, which are described extensively in the appendix.

The first international dialogue between Catholics and Evangelicals began with participants from both sides exploring the subject of mission from 1978 to 1984. This resulted in a 1985 report on their discussions. This international dialogue was sponsored, on the Catholic side, by the *Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity*. Evangelical participants, like John Stott, while drawn from a number of churches and Christian organizations, were not official representatives of any international body.

The present consultations represent an important development in our relationship. For the first time these meetings were sponsored by international bodies on both sides: the *World Evangelical Alliance* and the *Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*. This initiative eventually resulted in formal consultations beginning in Venice in 1993, and continuing at Tantar, Jerusalem in 1997, Williams Bay, Wisconsin in 1999, Mundelein, Illinois in 2001, and Swanwick, England in 2002.

Initial meetings led us eventually to focus on two general areas: the church and her mission. As the discussion continued, it became clear that a common reflection on the biblical notion of *koinonia* would help us to clarify some convergences and differences between us on the church (Part I). The focus on mission evolved into reflection on evangelization and the related issues of religious freedom, proselytism and common witness in light of *koinonia* (Part II).

The purpose of these consultations has been to overcome misunderstandings, to seek better mutual understanding of each other's Christian life and heritage, and to promote better relations between Evangelicals and Catholics. This paper is a result of the first series of discussions and deals with a limited number of issues.

In these conversations, which were conducted in a very cordial and open atmosphere, each side has expressed clearly and candidly its own theological convictions and tradition, and listened as the other side did the same. Together they sought to discern whether there were convergences or even some agreements on theological issues over which Evangelicals and Catholics have long been divided, and also on what issues divisions clearly persist.

This consultation presents here the product of its work to the sponsoring bodies, with gratitude for the support they have given to this project.

We hope this study will be fruitful and serve the cause of the Gospel and the glory of our Lord.

The Status of this Report

The Report published here is the work of an International Consultation between the Catholic Church and the World Evangelical Alliance. It is a study document produced by participants in this Consultation. The authorities who appointed the participants have allowed the Report to be published so that it may be widely discussed. It is not an authoritative declaration of either the Catholic Church or of the World Evangelical Alliance, who will both also evaluate the document.

Part I: Catholics, Evangelicals, and *Koinonia*

A. The Church as *koinonia* (Fellowship, Communion)

(1) The use of *koinonia* brings an important biblical term to bear on ecclesiology, as it suggests those things that bind Christians together. *Koinonia* is undoubtedly “an early and important aspect of the church and its

unity.”² The biblical word *koinonia* can be translated in various ways: “fellowship,” “belonging,” “communion,” “participation,” “partnership,” or “sharing in.” Evangelicals often use the term “fellowship,” while Catholics frequently use the term “communion.”

1. New Testament “Fellowship”

(2) In the Pauline writings, the term *koinonia* often refers to the relationship of Christians to one another, grounded in their relationship to the divine persons. Paul tells the Corinthian Christians: “You were called into the fellowship of his [God’s] Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Co 1:9). He speaks of “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit” (2 Co 13:14). Elsewhere he tells his readers that he received “the right hand of fellowship” from James, Cephas, and John (Gal 2:9). On another occasion he warns the Corinthians against having fellowship with unbelievers, asking the rhetorical question: “What fellowship has light with darkness?” (2 Co 6:14). Partnership appears to be the meaning in Phil 1:5–7.

(3) The term *koinonia* occurs also in Acts 2:42, where it again has the meaning of fellowship: “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, and to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” It is debatable exactly what type of fellowship Luke here has in mind, but it is evidently some kind of association among believers, received from Christ through solidarity with the apostles. It means the sharing of material goods in 2 Co 8:4, 9:13.

(4) The Johannine writings reinforce this sense of *koinonia* as fellowship. The author of the first epistle speaks of proclaiming what he has seen “that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 Jn 1:3). Again in verses 7–8 he refers to fellowship with the Son and among Christians themselves. The fellowship with God in Christ is evidently the basis for the fellowship with other believers, all members in the Body of Christ. They are to be one as the Father and Son in the trinity are one (Jn 17:11,21).

2. Various Emphases in New Testament Interpretation

(5) For both Evangelicals and Roman Catholics communion with Christ involves a transformative union whereby believers are “*koinonoi* of the di-

² John Reumann, “Koinonia in Scripture: Survey of Biblical Texts”, *On The Way to Fuller Koinonia: Official Report of the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order*, Faith and Order Paper no. 166 (Geneva, 1994) p. 62.

vine nature and escape the corruption that is in the world by lust” (2 Pt 1:4). Catholics tend to interpret *koinonia* in this passage to mean a participation in the divine life and “nature,” while Evangelicals tend to interpret *koinonia* as covenant companionship, as it entails escaping moral corruption and the way of the world. According to many eastern Fathers of the church, the believer’s participation in the life of Christ and the church leads to the process of the believer’s divinization (*theosis, deificatio*). Evangelicals have reservations about the notion of *theosis*: the word is not found in the Bible and it suffers, they feel, from too much ambiguity. It appears to suggest that believers shall possess the essence of deity—a meaning which Catholic doctrine too denies. Evangelicals agree that the redemptive grace on the one hand restores the original godlikeness that was marred and defaced by human sin (Col 3:10), and on the other hand that the Spirit transforms believers into the likeness of the Second Adam, “from glory to glory,” (1 Co 15:48, 49; 2 Co 3:18), a process that will reach completion only when Christ, the Lord and Saviour, comes from heaven (Phil 3:20–21; 1 Thes 5:23–24).

(6) Catholics believe that sacraments are Christ’s instruments to effect the transformative union with the divine nature (1 Co 12:12–13, where they see water-baptism, and 10:16–17, Eucharist). In passages such as these they hear other (Catholics would say deeper), more sacramental and participatory connotations in the word “*koinonoi*” than are expressed by the word “fellowship.” Many Evangelicals consider the sacraments to be dominical means of grace or “ordinances” which are “visible words” that proclaim (*kataggellete*, 1 Co 11:26) or are signs and seals of the grace of union with Christ-grace to be received and enjoyed on the sole condition of personal faith.

3. Perspectives on “*communio sanctorum*”

(7) While the earliest rendering of the term *communio sanctorum* in the Apostles’ Creed has been translated as “communion of holy persons” (saints), this language has been translated as a reference to “holy things” (sacraments).³ However, the doctrinal significance of *communio sanctorum* (*koinonia ton hagion*) was not relegated to one interpretation only. Later

³ On the phrase “*communio sanctorum*” in the Apostles’ Creed see J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, 3rd ed. (New York, 1972) pp. 389–90. This sacramental interpretation is favored by Stephen Benko, *The Meaning of Communion of Saints* (Naperville, Ill, 1964) and Werner Elert, *Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries* (St. Louis, 1966), chapter 1 and excursuses 1, 2, and 3.

western appropriation of the concept of divinization emphasized it as a participation in the Eucharist. Evangelicals prefer to translate *communio sanctorum* as “the fellowship of holy persons” or “of saints,” the “saints” being all those who truly belong to Jesus Christ by faith; they understand “communion” as the bond that binds all Christians in all generations.

(8) Evangelicals, historically, have not given the same place to the sacraments nor connected sanctification so directly with them as Catholics have. They maintain the “forensic” (referring to the courts of law) meaning of justification, and tend to prefer the vocabulary of drama and law. The Bible, as they read it, is more favorable to categories such as covenant-breaking and covenant-renewal, condemnation and acquittal, enmity and reconciliation, than to the category of participation in being. But they do affirm with the apostle Paul that anyone who is in Christ is a “new creation” (2 Co 5:17; Gal 6:15). The Holy Spirit effects a radical change, a new birth from above.

(9) Catholics and Evangelicals anticipate perfect communion in the Kingdom to be ushered in with the final coming of Jesus. In the light of this expectation, Catholics and Evangelicals should look to a deeper communion in this world, even if they disagree, between and among themselves, on the means by which this might be achieved, and on the extent to which it can be realized prior to the return of Christ. Since the biblical texts are authoritative for both Catholics and Evangelicals, they provide a solid foundation for our conversations. The growing familiarity with biblical categories on both sides, combined with recent reinterpretations of sacramental theology, suggests that *koinonia* continues to be a promising topic for further explorations in our conversations.

B. Our Respective Understandings of the Church and of Other Christians

I. Recent Developments

(10) In the Second Vatican Council, Catholics elaborated their distinctive understanding of the nature of the Church and also their relationships to other Christians. Evangelicals also have explored this area in major conferences in recent decades on the topic of missions. It will be useful to describe the views in the two communities, before pointing out the implications for mutual understanding.

(11) The Second Vatican Council marked a development in the ecclesiological self-understanding of the Catholic Church. Rather than positing a

simple identity between the Church of Christ and itself, *Lumen Gentium* teaches that “the Church of Christ ... subsists in the Catholic Church” (LG 8).⁴ The Evangelical movement on the other hand, received its characteristic modern shape from the influence of the eighteenth and nineteenth century revivals (preceded by pietism and Puritanism): these revivals crossed denominational boundaries and relativized their importance. From the Roman Catholic side the recognition of the “others” as belonging to Christ, takes the form of an emphasis on truly Christian elements and endowments in their communities; and from the Evangelical side, on the acknowledged presence of true believers indwelt by Christ’s Spirit among Catholics.

2. Catholic Views

(12) Vatican II in its Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) speaks of the bonds between Catholics and other Christians in these terms:

The unique Church of Christ...constituted and organized in the world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in union with that successor, although many elements of sanctification and of truth can be found outside her visible structure (LG 8).

The Church recognizes that in many ways she is linked with those who, being baptized, are honored with the name of Christian, though they do not possess the faith in its entirety or do not preserve unity of communion with the successor of Peter. For there are many who honor sacred Scripture, taking it as a norm of belief and of action, and who show a true religious zeal. They lovingly believe in God the Father Almighty and in Christ, Son of God and Savior ...

Likewise, we can say that in some real way they are joined with us in the Holy Spirit, for to them also He gives His gifts and graces, and is thereby operative among them with His sanctifying power. Some indeed He has strengthened to the extent of the shedding of their blood (LG 15).

(13) In its *Decree on Ecumenism (Unitatis Redintegratio)*, Vatican II brings the concept of ecclesial elements into correlation with that of *koinonia*. The decree illustrates the Catholic perspective on full communion. The Holy Spirit, it affirms, “brings about that marvelous communion of the faithful and joins them together so intimately in Christ that he is the principle of the Church’s unity” (UR 2). The Decree goes on to say that the Spirit brings about and perfects this wonderful union by means of the faithful preach-

⁴ List of Abbreviations is found at the end of the Report.

ing of the Gospel, the administration of the sacraments, and the loving exercise of pastoral authority (cf. *UR* 2).

(14) In the following paragraph the *Decree on Ecumenism* clarifies relationships with other communities and broaches the notion of “imperfect communion,” which is so vital for contemporary interchurch relations. The Decree states that some Christians have become separated from full communion with the Catholic Church but remain in a real, though imperfect, communion with it because “some, even very many, of the most significant elements or endowments which together go to build up and give life to the church herself can exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church: the written word of God; the life of grace, faith, hope, and charity, along with other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit and visible elements” (*UR* 3).

(15) In a later section of the *Decree on Ecumenism* the same notion of imperfect communion is applied specifically to Protestant communities. The Council here speaks of belief in the Holy Trinity, and of confession of Jesus Christ as God and Lord, and as sole Mediator between God and man (cf. *UR* 20). It then goes on to mention love and veneration for Holy Scripture, affirming that “the sacred utterances are precious instruments in the mighty hand of God for attaining that unity which the Savior holds out to all men” (*UR* 21). Baptism properly conferred “constitutes a sacramental bond of unity linking all who have been reborn by means of it...But baptism, of itself, is only a beginning, a point of departure, for it is wholly directed toward the acquiring of fullness of life in Christ” (*UR* 22). Pope John Paul II reaffirms the teaching of Vatican II on the “many elements of sanctification and truth” in other Christian communities and on “the communion, albeit imperfect, which exists between them and the Catholic Church” (*UUS* 11).

(16) All of these factors give concreteness to the use of the concept of *koinonia* by Roman Catholics. They make it clear that the ecclesial elements in question find expression in acts of faith, hope, and charity. The degree of communion can not be measured by outward and visible means alone because communion depends on the reality of life in the Spirit.

3. Evangelical Views

(17) Evangelicals similarly emphasize that the most important bond is the life of the Spirit which flows from union with Christ. This bond is created when the Gospel is received in faith and is foundational for the visible expression of the oneness or *koinonia* of all Christians. For Evangelicals the

visibility of the church is subordinate to this primary truth. *The Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Evangelical Celebration* confesses:

All Christians are called to unity in love and unity in truth. As Evangelicals who derive our very name from the Gospel, we celebrate this great good news of God's saving work in Jesus Christ as the true bond of Christian unity, whether among organized churches and denominations or in the many transdenominational cooperative enterprises of Christians together.

The Bible declares that all who truly trust in Christ and his Gospel are sons and daughters of God through grace, and hence are our brothers and sisters in Christ.⁵

As the *Lausanne Covenant* of 1974 notes:

World evangelization requires the whole church to take the whole Gospel to the whole world. The church is at the very center of God's cosmic purpose and is his appointed means of spreading the Gospel. But a church which preaches the cross must itself be marked by the cross. It becomes a stumbling block to evangelism when it betrays the Gospel or lacks a living faith in God, a genuine love for people, or scrupulous honesty in all things including promotion and finance. The church is the community of God's people rather than an institution, and must not be identified with any particular culture, social or political system, or human ideology (Jn 17:18; 20:21; Mt 28:19,20; Acts 1:8; 20:27; Eph 1:9, 10; 3:9–11; Gal 6:14, 17; 2 Co 6:3,4; 2 Tim 2:19–21; Phil 1:27) (*Lausanne* 6).

Evangelicals adhere to the Reformation doctrine of the “invisible church” (though with varying degrees of emphasis), without diminishing the importance of the visible church, as it is implied in the *Amsterdam Declaration*:

The one, universal church is a transnational, transcultural, trans-denominational and multi-ethnic family of the household of faith. In the widest sense, the church includes all the redeemed of all the ages, being the one body of Christ extended throughout time as well as space. Here in the world, the church becomes visible in all local congregations that meet to do together the things that according to Scripture the church does (Amsterdam 9).

(18) Evangelicals insist (as do Roman Catholics) that disciplinary and doctrinal criteria should be used for expressions in ecclesial life of the unity we have in Christ. “Church discipline, biblically based and under the direction of the Holy Spirit is essential to the well being and ministry of God's

⁵ “A Call to Evangelical Unity: ‘The Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Evangelical Celebration’”, *Christianity Today* 43:7 (June 14, 1999) pp. 49–56.

people.”⁶ In a world and in churches marred by human failure, church discipline may demand the curtailing of concrete forms of fellowship even in cases where offenders against the apostolic teaching are acknowledged as brothers or sisters (cf. 2 Thes 3:14–15). This applies to deviations in all spheres of life, both in the confession of faith as well as in behavior, which cannot be ultimately separated. Some Evangelicals hold that the concrete possibilities of fellowship depend on the degrees of agreement on the apostolic testimony as handed down in the New Testament.

(19) The Manila Affirmations depict the resulting attitudes among Evangelicals today:

Our reference to “the whole church” is not a presumptuous claim that the universal church and the evangelical community are synonymous. For we recognize that there are many churches which are not part of the evangelical movement. Evangelical attitudes to the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches differ widely. Some Evangelicals are praying, talking, studying Scripture and working with these churches. Others are strongly opposed to any form of dialogue or cooperation with them. All are aware that serious theological differences between us remain. Where appropriate, and so long as biblical truth is not compromised, cooperation may be possible in such areas as Bible translation, the study of contemporary theological and ethical issues, social work and political action. We wish to make it clear, however, that common evangelism demands a common commitment to the biblical Gospel (Manila 9).

4. What of the Church Do We Recognize in One Another?

(20) We as Catholics and Evangelicals share Sacred Scripture⁷ and belief in its inspiration by the Holy Spirit. We affirm the unique mediatorial role of Christ, his incarnation, his death and resurrection for our salvation. We affirm together our faith in the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are both able to pray the Lord’s Prayer and confess the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds.⁸ We affirm the Gospel call to conversion, to a disciplined life

⁶ “The Chicago Call: An Appeal to Evangelicals” (1977), *Growing Consensus: Church Dialogues in the United States, 1962–1991*, Joseph Burgess and Jeffrey Gros eds. (New York 1995), p. 579.

⁷ We share the majority of biblical books, but the Catholic canon includes also the books Protestants call “The Apocrypha” and Catholics the “Deutero-canonical” books.

⁸ “Confessing the One Faith: An Evangelical Response by World Evangelical Fellowship Task Force on Ecumenical Issues”, *Evangelical Review of Theology* 18 (1994) pp. 35–46.

in the grace of Jesus Christ, and the ultimate promise of eternal reward. We recognize a Christian responsibility for service and the promotion of justice in the world. We share a common hope of Christ's return, as judge and redeemer, to consummate our salvation. We can commemorate together those who have witnessed by their blood to this common faith and now celebrate full communion before the face of our divine Savior.

(21) One of the results of interchurch cooperation and dialogue has been a greater appreciation by separated Christians of one another. (A gradual move towards a greater recognition of the ecclesial status of other Christian communities marks modern and contemporary developments). For centuries, in ways heavily influenced by polemics and religious wars, the identification of and the incorporation into the true church were simplistically considered to be an all-or-nothing affair. One was either in the true church or in a false institution or a sect. Either one was a member in the full sense of the word, or one was outside of the church and deprived of all hope of salvation. Yet the awareness of spiritual complexity was not entirely repressed. The Roman Catholic Church maintained the validity of the baptism performed by heretics and also acknowledged a "baptism of desire." The sixteenth century reformers did not deny the presence of elements of the true church in Roman Catholicism. Though at times Luther spoke of the pope as anti-Christ, he recognized remnants of the church in the Roman Communion. Calvin could write of his Roman Catholic opponents, "these muddlers will labor to no avail as they deck out their synagogue with the title church," yet he acknowledges traces (*vestigia*), remnants (*reliquias*), marks (*symbola*), and signs (*signa*) of the church under the papacy; churches in the Roman Communion may be called churches "to the extent that the Lord wonderfully preserves in them a remnant of his people however woefully dispersed and scattered." And early proponents of religious toleration were found among the extremely diverse groups often referred to as the "Radical Reformation." Though Anabaptists were painfully persecuted on all sides, Calvin exercised a nuanced judgment on their doctrine; later they benefited from the protection of such a prelate as the Prince-Bishop of Basel.

5. A Common Challenge

(22) In this section, we have come to recognize, with the help of God's Spirit, the *koinonia* with the life of the Trinity that both of our communities enjoy. We see it, therefore, as incumbent upon both of us to move from this singular condition of unity with the life of the Trinity into an experienced unity with one another. To that end we need to take the actions

which will move us from this rediscovery to forge the ecclesial bonds that will express this already bestowed unity. If God has not been dealing with us as if we were apart from Him, why should we continue to live as if we were apart from one another?

C. Some Dimensions of the Church

I. Origins of the Church

(23) Evangelicals and Catholics both see in the Pentecost event the emergence of the church of the new covenant (Acts 2). The presence of persons from every nation at Pentecost represents the universal mission of the Church. They agree that this church is built on the foundation of the prophet and apostles, with Christ as the cornerstone (Eph 2:20). They recognize in the evangelizing mission of the apostles the founding of local churches. The communion of local churches in the New Testament was served by the ministry of the apostles and by the meeting of the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15). Support of one another, letters of recommendation, the collections for other churches, and mutual hospitality characterize this communion among churches. Evangelicals and Roman Catholics recognize the importance of subsequent developments in the life of the church, but give different weight and appreciation to these developments.

2. The Church Local and Universal

a. Evangelical and Catholic Perspectives

(24) For Evangelicals today the “local church” designates the congregation in a particular place. For Catholics a “local” or “particular” church refers to a diocese, composed of a number of parishes, with a bishop at the center, assisted by his presbyters and other ministers of pastoral service to the faithful for the sake of the Gospel.

(25) Catholics see the work of the Holy Spirit in a number of significant developments in the early Church. These include the understanding of bishops as successors to the apostles; the emergence of the three-fold ministry of bishop, priest and deacon; the clarification of the apostolic faith especially by ecumenical councils and the universal creeds; and the gradual acknowledgement of the effective leadership of the bishop of Rome within the whole Church. Even from early times, the Bishop of Rome had a prominent role in fostering the communion of local churches over which

bishops presided, the initial expressions of a primacy that developed over the centuries. Since Vatican II there has been greater stress on the mutual relationship between the local churches and the church of Rome.

(26) For their part, Evangelicals are overwhelmingly found in Protestant and Pentecostal churches, which have generally placed primary emphasis on local congregations: the place in which the word of God is proclaimed, the sacraments are administered, and God's people are gathered. Evangelicals live in a variety of church structures. Churches whose origin lies in the "magisterial" Reformation (e. g., Lutheran, and Reformed) as well as Anglicans and Methodists, have a strong sense of the universality of the church in time and space, but the way they function stresses the regional or national body and, for example, gives significance to regional or national synods. Nearly all other churches have espoused congregationalism which concentrates responsibility in the local community. This community is the concrete embodiment of the *koinonia* of the Spirit. It is the locus of spiritual life, mutual upbuilding through the diversity of gifts, and training for service in the world. The free churches express solidarity through international agencies or alliances, denominational or interdenominational. Anabaptists in particular have had a strong tradition of community life; a vigilant discipline makes the assembly into a closely knit family of faith. Throughout history all these churches have had to fight divisive tendencies and, in the context of secularization, the destructive influences of individualism. The *Lausanne Covenant* candidly acknowledges: "We confess that our testimony has sometimes been marred by sinful individualism and needless duplication. We pledge ourselves to seek a deeper unity in truth, worship, holiness and mission" (*Lausanne* 7).

(27) Whereas Catholic ecclesiology reserves certain sacramental functions to bishops who are understood to have received the fullness of the sacrament of orders, most Evangelical churches concentrate leadership more specifically in the ministry of the "pastor," whose role is considered to be that of the *episkopos/presbyteros* of New Testament times. (The pastor may be the "teaching elder" in association with the "ruling elders" of the church or parish, 1 Tim 5:17). Other Evangelicals, even among a few free churches, have distinct ministries of oversight, but the difference is slight: the bishop or superintendent is charged with administrative tasks, but is not considered to have particular sacramental roles, a concept foreign to the Evangelical interpretation of ministry.

(28) Global fellowship among Evangelicals is typically expressed by means of loose networks of world-wide associations (among which the W.E.A. may lay claim to best-grounded representative legitimacy) and parachurch organizations (such as the International Fellowship of Evan-

gical Students). These entities provide valuable channels of communication and tools for cooperation.

(29) On the Catholic side, Vatican II reemphasizes the key importance of the local church (diocese) as the place where the word is preached and the sacraments are administered. The church reveals herself most clearly when the people are gathered about the altar under the presidency of the bishop, with the assistance of the other clergy (cf. *SC* 41; and also *LG* 26). At every Eucharist the unity of the whole church is indicated by the presider's expression of the union with the local bishop, other bishops, and especially the bishop of Rome as the center of the whole communion.⁹ The bishops in national and regional conferences are called upon to represent their particular churches. Catholics speak of the universal church, like the regional church, as a communion of particular churches under their respective bishops and in communion with the bishop of Rome. They recognize, however, that the Church of Christ is not exclusively identified with the Catholic Church (cf. *LG* 8).

b. *Convergences and Differences Between Catholics and Evangelicals*

(30) While certainly not eliminating the differences with evangelical Protestantism, these recent developments in Catholic ecclesiology facilitate mutual understanding. On the national and regional levels, Catholic *Episcopal Conferences* and *Synods of Oriental Catholic Churches* are able to enter into conversations with national and regional Evangelical churches, alliances and organizations. Also, diocesan bishops are able to relate to the regional evangelical officials as their counterparts, even if they are not bishops. There is a certain convergence with the renewed emphasis of Catholics on local church and of Evangelicals on worldwide fellowship.

(31) Catholics speak of a reciprocity between the universal and the particular church, but they do not view the universal church as a federation of local churches. There is a sense in which Catholics can admit the priority of the local church since, in the words of Vatican II: "In and from such individual churches there comes into being the one and only Catholic

⁹ This style of ecclesiology points to a vision of the universal church as a network of local churches in communion. According to the *Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops 1985*, "The ecclesiology of communion is the central and fundamental idea of the Council's documents. *Koinonia/communio*, founded on the Sacred Scripture, has been held in great honour in the early Church and in the Oriental Churches to this day. Thus, much was done by the Second Vatican Council so that the Church as communion might be more clearly understood and concretely incorporated into life." [*Relatio Finalis*, II, C), 1].

Church” (LG 23). But to avoid misunderstanding, the Council also affirms that each particular church is “fashioned after the model of the universal church” (*ibid.*). The biblical evidence, as interpreted in Catholic theology, indicates that the church originated as a single community, into which people are incorporated by faith and baptism.¹⁰

(32) Evangelicals understand the church to be called into being by the Word (*creatura verbi*). The Word is revealed in Christ, written in Scripture, and received through hearing. The Word calls forth faith and a community of faith in time and space, a visible church. But final judgment belongs to God as to believers and unbelievers within the visible church. God knows his own. “Here in the world, the church becomes visible in all local congregations that meet to do together the things that according to Scripture the church does. Christ is the head of the church. Everyone who is personally united to Christ by faith belongs to his body and by the Spirit is united with every other true believer in Jesus” (*Amsterdam* 9).

(33) Evangelicals, like Catholics, recognize the value of worldwide fellowship, but because of different theological presuppositions and different interpretations of certain biblical passages, they have a different view of the relationship between the universal church and local churches. Evangelicals understand by “universal church” all those everywhere and in all ages who believe and trust in Christ for salvation. “All” includes believing Roman Catholics. Evangelicals have made use of Luther’s distinction between the church invisible and the church visible. They affirm the universal church whose bond of unity, the Spirit of Christ, is invisible (Eph 4:3–4); they stress incorporation by “faith alone,” a faith by which all share in the gift of the Spirit (Gal 3:2). Christ, however, also willed the founding of visible churches into which people are incorporated by (water) baptism. While primarily local, these congregations may seek federations and alliances as means to express the universal character of the church’s nature and mission.

(34) The visible structural and organizational manifestations of the church are shaped by particular historical situations, and can change. In

¹⁰ The Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith in its letter to bishops on *Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion* emphasizes the priority of the universal over the particular church (Cf. *Origins* 22 (June 25, 1992) pp. 108–112). In his presentation on *Lumen Gentium* at the International Meeting on the reception of Vatican II, February 27, 2000, Cardinal Ratzinger explained that the community of the 120 on whom the Holy Spirit descended (Acts 2:1–4) was a renewal of the community of the Twelve, who had been commissioned to carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth. This community was the New Israel. Cf. Joseph Ratzinger, “L’ecclesiologia della Costituzione *Lumen Gentium*”, *Il Concilio Vaticano II, Recezione e attualità alla luce del Giubileo*, Rino Fisichella (ed.), (Milano, 2000) pp. 66–81.

the eyes of most Evangelicals the Bible provides no rigid pattern for organizing the church in every time and place. They find in the New Testament a considerable degree of variety in models of ministry and church order. In distinction from Catholic ecclesiology, Evangelicals thus affirm a variety of forms of church order, but these differences do not impede fellowship or membership in the invisible church.

(35) Most Evangelicals agree that the universal church, not being a visible institution, is concretely expressed in the visible churches in particular times and places, and the translocal bonds they cultivate. They acknowledge that the correspondence between visible and invisible is not perfect. For example, “false brethren” may be found (Gal 2:4) who do not really belong (1 Jn 2:19). While the relationship between membership in the visible and invisible church, and baptism varies among Evangelicals, these differences do not hamper fellowship and collaboration. Visible communities have been endowed by Christ with institutions so that they may build themselves up and fulfill their mission in the world.

3. The Combination of the Personal and Institutional in *Koinonia*

a. An Ordered Community of Persons

(36) In the New Testament witness, Evangelicals and Catholics recognize an ordered community of persons, sharing a common faith and mission, given leadership, under Christ, by the apostles (1 Co 11–14; Rom 12; Eph 4). We recognize that there are differentiated ministries articulated in the epistles (1 Pt 5; 1 Tim 3; Titus), though we value them differently, and make different judgments as to their continuity in the contemporary church. However, we both affirm order and discipline as a framework of ecclesial communion (1 Co 14:33, 40).

(37) The idea of the church as communion has emerged from a return to a rich vein of biblical and patristic material. It has also been influenced by more personalist approaches in the modern world, against exaggerated forms of institutionalism and individualism. Sociologists have long distinguished between society and community. In early twentieth-century ecclesiology this gave rise to a dualism between a church of law and a church of love. Pius XII, in his encyclical on the Mystical Body, taught that this opposition does not obtain in the church, which is both a mystical union and an organized society.¹¹

¹¹ Pius XII, Encyclical *Mystici corporis Christi* 79.

b. *Catholic Views*

(38) Vatican II in its Constitution on the Church, follows essentially the teaching of Pius XII on this matter. It describes the church as a single interlocking reality (“*unam realitatem complexam*” [LG 8]), that is both visible and invisible, mystical and hierarchical. But for the Council the visible dimension serves the invisible dimension of the Church. The church is divinely endowed with doctrines, sacraments, and ministries for the purpose of bringing about and signifying a supernatural communion of life, love, and truth among the members (cf. LG 14, 18, 20, 21). The Council presents the church itself as a sacrament (LG 1).

(39) Vatican II’s move toward a more collegial ecclesiology shows a greater emphasis on the personal. Whereas Vatican I spoke of the pope as exercising jurisdiction over the other bishops of the Catholic communion, Vatican II clarifies this earlier teaching by saying that bishops must be in “hierarchical communion” with the pope in order to exercise their powers of teaching and shepherding their flocks (cf. LG 22; CD 5). The concept of “hierarchical communion” does not eliminate the juridical aspect but requires government through dialogue and consensus rather than command.

c. *Evangelical Views*

(40) In general, Evangelicals hold that the church is primarily a community of persons and only secondarily an institution. Abraham Kuyper, for instance, declares: The church “is not a salvific agency that would supply grace as medicine, not a mystical order that would magically act on lay people. She is nothing else than *believing, confessing, persons*.”¹² The *Lausanne Covenant* of 1974 asserts: “The church is the community of God’s people rather than an institution, and must not be identified with any particular culture, social or political system or human ideology” (*Lausanne* 6). However, most Evangelicals emphatically maintain the requirement of order and discipline and affirm the institutional dimension of church life.

d. *Some Mutual Observations*

(41) Catholics and Evangelicals experience a convergence in the understanding of the way that order and discipline serve the *koinonia* of the church. Catholics have begun to reemphasize the importance of the per-

¹² Abraham Kuyper, *Het Calvinisme*, (Kampen, Kok [1899]) pp. 53–54.

sonal in understanding the church. Evangelicals show an increasing appreciation of visible expressions of unity in the life of the church beyond the bounds of their own denomination. Such a convergence in our understanding of biblical *koinonia* offers promise for a continuation of the dialogue.

D. Preparing for a Different Future

(42) There are, then, differences between the convictions of Catholics and Evangelicals. These differences, however, do not amount to simple opposition and have been fruitfully examined in our conversations. Our mutual understanding has opened avenues for further dialogue.

(43) As we complete these reflections we realize again the impact that our divisions has made on people that we serve. It is not possible to reverse history, but it is possible to prepare for a different future.

(44) We realize the need for a spirit of repentance before God because we have not made sufficient efforts to heal the divisions that are a scandal to the Gospel. We pray that God grant us a spirit of *metanoia*. We need to continue to study and face issues which have separated us. We need to examine also the practices that uncritically continue the biases of the past.

(45) Could we not ask ourselves whether we sufficiently understand the levels of unity that we already share? For example, during the Mass, when Catholics hear the words of the canon: “to strengthen in faith and love your pilgrim Church on earth, your servant Pope ..., our bishop ..., and all the bishops with the clergy and the entire people your Son has gained for you”, do they understand that among those whom the “Son has gained” for the Father, are the Christians from whom they are separated and with whom, since Christ also redeemed them, they share deep bonds of Christian life? And when Evangelicals intercede for the life, mission, and unity of “the Church”, do they genuinely understand this Church to include Catholics?

(46) In a spirit of humility, we bring our concerns and our hopes to the Lord.

Part II: Catholics, Evangelicals, and Evangelization in Light of *Koinonia*

(47) We now turn to issues of evangelization, proselytism, and religious freedom to explore them in the context of a theology of *koinonia*. In doing this we have learned from some of the insights of other dialogues on these issues and have built on them.

(48) Evangelicals and Catholics agree that every Christian has the right and obligation to share and spread the faith. “It is contrary to the message of Christ, to the ways of God’s grace and to the personal character of faith that any means be used which would reduce or impede the freedom of a person to make a basic Christian commitment” (B 34). Since evangelization is a focus of this section, we can now indicate briefly how Catholics and Evangelicals understand this responsibility.

A. Our Respective Views on Evangelization/ Evangelism

I. A Catholic View

(49) Catholics view Evangelization in the context of the one Mission of the Church. In this regard, “evangelization is a complex process involving many elements as, for example, a renewal of human nature, witness, public proclamation, wholehearted acceptance of, and entrance into, the community of the church, the adoption of the outward signs and of apostolic works” (EN 24).

(50) “Evangelization will always contain, as the foundation, the center and the apex of its whole dynamic power, this explicit declaration: In Jesus Christ ...salvation is offered to every human person as the gift of the grace and mercy of God Himself” (EN 27; cf. RM 44). It involves proclamation of this good news, aiming at Christian conversion of men and women (cf. RM 44–46). But it involves also efforts “to convert both the individual consciences of men and their collective consciences, all the attitudes in which they are engaged and, finally, their lives and the whole environment which surrounds them” (EN 18). Thus “evangelization is to be achieved...in depth, going to the very center and roots of life. The Gospel must impregnate the culture and the whole way of life of man...” (EN 20). Through inculturation the Church makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures, “transmits to them her own values, at

the same time taking the good elements that already exist in them and renewing them from within” (RM 52; cf. EN 20).

(51) There is a diversity of activities in the Church’s *one mission* according to the different circumstances in which it is carried out. Looking at today’s world from the viewpoint of evangelization, we can distinguish three situations. (a) People, groups and socio-cultural contexts in which Christ and his Gospel are not known. In such a context Catholics speak of mission *ad gentes*. (b) Christian communities with adequate and solid Ecclesial structures; they are fervent in their faith and in Christian living, in which participation in the sacraments is basic (cf. EN 47). In these communities the church carries out her activities and pastoral care. (c) The intermediate situation, for example, in countries with ancient Christian roots, where entire groups of the baptized have lost a living sense of the faith. In this case what is needed is a new evangelization or a “re-evangelization”. The boundaries between these three “are not clearly definable, and it is unthinkable to create barriers between them or to put them into water-tight compartments” (RM 34). There is a growing interdependence which exists between these various saving activities in the church.

2. An Evangelical View

(52) For Evangelicals, the heart and core of mission is proclamation. However, it is the core, not the totality of the Church mission within the divine Plan of redemption. The *Lausanne Covenant* refers to this comprehensive mission as “evangelization” (*Lausanne*, Introduction) and places it within a trinitarian framework: “We affirm our belief in the one eternal God, Creator (Is 40:28) and Lord of the world, Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19), who governs all things according to the purpose of his will (Eph 1:1). He has been sending forth a people for himself (Acts 15:14), and sending his people back into the world (Jn 17:18) to be his servants and witnesses, for the extension of his kingdom, the building up of Christ’s body, and the glory of his name (Eph 4:12)” (*Lausanne* 1).

(53) The *Lausanne Covenant* describes mission in its most inclusive sense as “Christian presence in the world” (*Lausanne* 4), which consists of “sacrificial service” and entails a “deep and costly penetration of the world”, and a permeation of “non-Christian society” (*Lausanne* 6). Because followers of Christ are engaged in the mission of the triune God, who is “both the Creator and Judge of all”, Christians “should share his concern for justice” (Gen 18:25) and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men and women from every kind of oppression (Ps 45:7; Is 1:17). Because all human beings are created in the image of God, “every person,

regardless of race, religion, color, culture, class, sex or age (Lev 19:18; Lk 6:27,35), has an intrinsic dignity because of which he or she should be respected and served, not exploited (Jas 3:9; *Lausanne* 5). When one is born again one is born into Christ's kingdom "and must seek not only to exhibit but also to spread its righteousness (Mt 5:20; Mt 6:33) in the midst of an unrighteous world" (*ibid*).

(54) Although the mission of the triune God is as broad as "God's cosmic purpose" (*Lausanne* 6) and therefore calls God's people into this all-embracing mission, Evangelicals are particularly concerned to keep proclamation front and center. Accordingly, the *Lausanne Covenant* circumscribes "evangelism itself" as "the proclamation of the historical, Biblical Christ as Savior (1 Co 1:23; 2 Co 4:5) and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and to be reconciled to God" (2 Co 5:11, 20; *Lausanne* 4). Moreover, *Lausanne* forcefully asserts the primacy of evangelism as proclamation: "In the Church's mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary". A subsequent *World Evangelical Fellowship* statement again stresses the crucial role of evangelism. Yet, the document does not treat evangelism "as a separate theme, because we see it as an integral part of our total Christian response to human need" (Mt 28:18–21; *Consultation on the Church in Response to Human Need*. Wheaton, 1983, Introduction). Clearly, the "Great Commission" is here seen as a call to holistic mission, with at its center calling all people to believe in Jesus Christ.

B. Old Tensions in a New Context of Koinonia

(55) It is our common belief that God has sent the Holy Spirit into the world to effect the reconciliation of the world to God. Those to whom the Spirit is sent participate in this mission of the Spirit. The heart of the mission of the Spirit is *koinonia*, a communion of persons in the communion of God, the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit.

(56) The real *koinonia* we already share gives rise to our mutual concern to view conjointly the issues of religious freedom and proselytism that have divided us. We believe that the two issues of religious liberty and proselytism must not be treated as totally separable areas but must be firmly linked and considered jointly as related concerns, seen in the context of the meaning of evangelization and the possibility of common witness. Evangelical and Catholic Christians can now recognize that they share a real but imperfect communion with each other, and are able to take modest steps toward a more complete communion in Christ through the Holy Spirit. The interrelated components necessary for increasing *koi-*

nonia are repentance, conversion, and commitment, in which we commit ourselves to the convergence that has already begun in our life together.

(57) The first component is *repentance*, a radical turning away from the habits of mind and heart that fall short of God's purposes and design. Those purposes are that there be a communion between persons and God, and between communities whose unity is authored by the Spirit. God intends that the Church be the main instrument for the *koinonia* of all peoples in God. Therefore, the reconciliation of our Christian communities is urgent.

(58) The second component for increasing *koinonia* is *conversion* in which by faith we turn to God in Christ and his saving message. Christian conversion itself is threefold: moral, intellectual, and religious. In moral conversion we are freed by grace to value what God values and obey what God demands. In intellectual conversion we learn and embrace the truth. In religious conversion we come to abide in the love of God.

(59) The third component that the Spirit enables is a turning to one another in our *commitment* to proclaim the Gospel. Catholics and Evangelicals are striving to learn how to love one another in our efforts at evangelization. There are signs of convergence on how we are to participate in the mission of the Spirit in our sharing of the good news. Our two traditions have insights into the contents of this inexhaustible source. These insights need to be retained in the work of evangelization that we undertake respectively, so as to complement and affirm one another's efforts.

I. Repentance: From What Are We Turning?

(60) Catholics and Evangelicals are called to pray for grace as we come to a better understanding of the will of Christ, which our past relationships have not reflected (P 108). Our divisions in the past have led to conflicts in evangelization.

But, at Manila, 1989, Evangelicals exhorted one another:

“Evangelism and unity are closely related in the New Testament. Jesus prayed that his people's oneness might reflect his own oneness with the Father, in order that the world might believe in him, and Paul exhorted the Philippians to ‘contend as one person for the faith of the Gospel’. In contrast to this biblical vision, we are ashamed of the suspicions and rivalries, the dogmatism over non-essentials, the power-struggles and empire-building which spoil our evangelistic witness” (Manila 9).

And Pope John Paul II, on behalf of Catholics, asked God' forgiveness for sins against unity with the following prayer:

“Merciful Father,
on the night before his Passion
your Son prayed for the unity of those
who believe in him:
in disobedience to his will, however,
believers have opposed one another, becoming divided,
and have mutually condemned one another and
fought against one another.
We urgently implore your forgiveness
and beseech the gift of a repentant heart,
so that all Christians, reconciled with you and with one another,
will be able, in one body and in one spirit,
to experience anew the joy of full communion.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.”¹³

(61) Concerning “proselytism,” it should be pointed out that the understanding of the word has changed considerably in recent years in some circles. In the Bible the word proselyte was devoid of negative connotations. The term referred to someone apart from Israel who, by belief in Yahweh and acceptance of the law, became a member of the Jewish community. It carried the positive meaning of being a convert to Judaism (Ex 12:48–49). Christianity took over this positive and unobjectionable meaning to describe a person who converted from paganism. Until the twentieth century, mission work and proselytism were largely synonymous and without objectionable connotations (B 32, 33). It is only in the twentieth century that the term has come to be applied to winning members from each (B 33), as an illicit form of evangelism (P 90). At least, in some Evangelical circles proselytism is not a pejorative term; in Catholic and most ecumenical circles it is. The attempt to “win members from each other” (B 33) by unworthy means is negative and pejorative proselytism. Members of our communions have been guilty of proselytism in this negative sense. It should be avoided.

(62) We affirm therefore “that the following things should be avoided: offers to temporal or material advantages ... improper use of situations of distress... using political, social and economic pressure as a means of obtaining conversion ... casting unjust and uncharitable suspicion on other

¹³ Cf. John Paul II, “Universal Prayer for Forgiveness, III. Confession of the sins which have harmed the unity of the Body of Christ”, during the Liturgy of First Sunday of Lent, St. Peter’s Basilica, (Vatican City, March 12, 2000). See: Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican City, Information Service 103 (2000/I-II) p. 56.

denominations; comparing the strengths and ideals of one community with the weakness and practices of another community” (B 36). This issue of seeking to win members from other churches has ecclesiological and missiologically significant consequences, which require further exploration.

(63) Unethical methods of evangelization must be sharply distinguished from the legitimate act of persuasively presenting the Gospel. If a Christian, after hearing a responsible presentation of the Gospel, freely chooses to join a different Christian community, it should not automatically be concluded that such a transfer is the result of proselytism (P 93, 94).

(64) Catholic-Evangelical relations have been troubled by the practice of seeking to evangelize people who are already members of a church, which causes misunderstanding and resentment, especially when Evangelicals seek to ‘convert’ baptized Catholics away from the Roman Catholic Church. This is more than a verbal conflict about different uses of terms like conversion, Christian, and church. Evangelicals speak of ‘nominal Christianity,’ referring to those who are Christians in name, but only marginally Christian in reality, even if they have been baptized. Nominal Christians are contrasted with converted believers, who can testify to a living union with Christ, whose confession is biblical and whose faith is active in love. This is a sharp distinction common among Evangelicals, who see nominal Christians as needing to be won to a personal relation with the Lord and Savior. Evangelicals seek to evangelize nominal members of their own churches, as well as of others; they see this activity as an authentic concern for the Gospel, and not as a reprehensible kind of ‘sheep-stealing’ (E sec. iii). Catholics also speak of ‘evangelizing’ such people, although they refer to them as ‘lapsed’ or ‘inactive’ rather than as ‘nominal,’ and still regard them as “Christian” since they are baptized believers. They are understandably offended whenever Evangelicals appear to regard all Roman Catholics as nominal Christians, or whenever they base their evangelism on a distorted view of Catholic teaching and practice.

(65) We agree that a distinction must be made between one’s estimate of the doctrines and practices of a church and the judgment that bears on an individual’s spiritual condition, e. g. his or her relationship to Christ and to the Church.

(66) As to an individual’s spiritual or religious condition, whether a person is nominal, lapsed, inactive, or fallen away, a negative judgment is suspect of being intrusive unless the person to be evangelized is the source of that information. The spiritual condition of a person is always a mystery. Listening should be first, together with a benevolent presumption of

charity, and in all cases we may share our perception and experience of the Good News only in a totally respectful attitude towards those we seek to evangelize. This attitude should also be the case apart from evangelization in all attempts at persuading brothers and sisters in what we believe to be true.

(67) Evangelicals and Catholics are challenged to repent of the practice of misrepresenting each other, either because of laziness in study, or unwillingness to listen, prejudice, or unethical judgments (E i). We repent of the culpable ignorance that neglects readily accessible knowledge of the other's tradition (P 93). We are keenly aware of the command: "Thou shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor" (Ex 20:16).

(68) We repent of those forms of evangelization prompted by competition and personal prestige, and of efforts to make unjust or uncharitable reference to the beliefs or practices of other religious communities in order to win adherents (E I, p. 91, J 19). We repent of the use of similar means for retaining adherents. We deplore competitive forms of evangelism that habitually pit ourselves against other Christians (P 93) (cf. *DH* 4, 12; John Paul II, *Tertio millennio adveniente* 35). All forms of evangelization should witness to the glory of God.

(69) We repent of unworthy forms of evangelization which aim at pressuring people to change their church affiliation in ways that dishonor the Gospel, and by methods which compromise rather than enhance the freedom of the believer and the truth of the Gospel (B 31).

(70) Thus agreeing, we commit ourselves to seeking a "newness of attitudes" in our understanding of each other's intentions (cf. Eph 4:23, UR 7).

2. Conversion: To What Are We Turning?

a. Growing in Koinonia

(71) The bonds of *koinonia*, which separated Christians already share, imply further responsibilities toward one another. Each must be concerned about the welfare and the integrity of the other. The bonds of *koinonia* imply that Christians in established churches protect the civil rights of the other Christians to free speech, press and assembly. At the same time, the bonds of *koinonia* imply that the other Christians respect the rights, integrity and history of Christians in established churches. Tensions can be reduced if Christians engaged in mission communicate with one another and seek to witness together as far as possible, rather than compete with one another.

(72) Central to our understanding of religious conversion is our belief and experience that "the love of God has been poured out into our hearts

through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Rom 5:5). “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child.” (1 Jn 5:1). Our failures in loving one another are the scandal that calls into question whether we have allowed this love to come into our hearts without obstruction. Since Evangelicals believe their church to be catholic, and Catholics believe their church to be evangelical, it would seem that our future task is to recognize better the aspects that each of us emphasizes in the others’ view as well.

(73) Evangelicals agree with Catholics, that the goal of evangelization is *koinonia* with the triune God and one another. One enters into this *koinonia* through conversion to Christ by the Spirit within the proclaiming, caring community of faith which witnesses to the Reign of God. Catholics agree with Evangelicals, that all Christians of whatever communion can have a living personal relationship with Jesus as Lord and Savior. On the basis of our real but imperfect communion we ask God to give us the grace to recommit ourselves to having a living personal relationship with Jesus as Lord and Savior and deepening our relationship to one another.

b. Religious Liberty

(74) We grow in *koinonia* when we support one another and acknowledge one another’s freedom. Religious freedom is not only a civil right but one of the principles, together with that of mutual respect, that guide relationships among members of the Body of Christ and, indeed, with the entire human family (P 99). We have been called to work together to promote freedom of conscience for all persons, and to defend civil guarantees for freedom of assembly, speech and press. Recognizing that we have often failed to respect these liberties in the past, Catholics and Evangelicals affirm the right of all persons to pursue that truth and to witness to that truth (J 15, P 104). We affirm the right of persons freely to adopt or change their religious community without duress. We deplore every attempt to impose beliefs or to manipulate others in the name of religion (J 15, P 102). Evangelicals can concur with the position of the Second Vatican Council on religious freedom, namely that all “are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that in matters religious no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs. Nor is anyone to be restrained from acting in accordance with his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits” (DH 2; cf. B 40).

(75) In the person of Pope John Paul II the Catholic Church has recognized and apologized for the violations of justice and charity for which its

members have been responsible in the course of history.¹⁴ Today it seeks to protect the religious liberty of all persons and their communities. At the same time, it is committed to spreading the message of the Gospel to all without proselytism or reliance on the state.

(76) While religious liberty has been a rallying point for Evangelicals from the earliest period, they have been called from their sectarianism to greater mutual respect and increased co-operation in mission by the catholic spirit of John Wesley, the revivals of the nineteenth century, and the challenges of world mission. Interdenominational, world-wide fellowship and co-operation in mission have been served by the Evangelical Alliance. The Alliance has always been concerned about religious liberty, indeed, as early as 1872 lobbying on behalf of oppressed Catholics in Japan.¹⁵ According to the *Manila Manifesto* (1989):

Christians earnestly desire freedom of religion for all people, not just freedom for Christianity. In predominantly Christian countries, Christians are at the forefront of those who demand freedom for religious minorities. In predominantly non-Christian countries, therefore, Christians are asking for themselves no more than they demand for others in similar circumstances. The freedom to 'profess, practice and propagate' religion, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, could and should surely be a reciprocally granted right (Manila 12.1).

We greatly regret any unworthy witness of which followers of Jesus may have been guilty (*Manila* 12.2).

(77) Religious freedom is a right which flows from the very dignity of the person as known through the revealed Word of God: it is grounded in the creation of all human beings in the image and likeness of God (P 98). Civil authorities have an obligation to respect and to protect this right (cf. *DH* 2). For Catholics this view was formally adopted at Vatican II in the *Declaration on Religious Freedom*. Evangelicals at *Lausanne* 1974, *Manila* 1989 and *Amsterdam* 2000 affirmed a similar position.

(78) Evangelicals and Roman Catholics differ somewhat in the theological and anthropological rationale for this position. Catholic social thought bases rights' theory on natural law. It sees human rights as legitimate moral claims that are God-given; free moral agents have a corresponding responsibility to act in the light of those claims. Revelation is seen to com-

¹⁴ Cf. John Paul II, "Universal Prayer for Forgiveness, e) Confession of sins committed in actions against love, peace, the rights of peoples and respect for cultures and religions", Vatican City, March 12, 2000.

¹⁵ Cf. I. Randall and D. Hilborn, *One Body in Christ: The History and Significance of the Evangelical Alliance*, (Carlisle, 2001) p. 98.

plement this understanding of rights. In evangelical teaching, primacy belongs to the divine right over conscience, the Lord's immediate claim on each individual; human rights, then, are viewed not only in creational light but also against the backdrop of the human fall into sin. The history of sin makes the mandate for rights all the more important. God continues to pursue fallen creatures in the unfolding history of grace. Catholics and Evangelicals agree that human rights should be interpreted and exercised within the framework of Scripture teaching and of rigorous moral reasoning. Due regard must be had for the needs of others, for duties towards other parties, and for the common good (P 102, *DH* 7). Human rights language, also, must guard against being turned into narcissism, self-assertiveness and ideology.

3. Turning to One Another: The Challenge of Common Witness

(79) What remains as a hope and a challenge is the prospect of our common witness. We see the communities of faith, to which we belong, as set apart and anointed for mission. We are concerned about the growing secularization of the world and efforts to marginalize Christian values. It is urgent that our evangelization be ever more effective. Is it not also urgent that Christians witness together? In this sense the Second Vatican Council called Catholics to cooperate with other Christians in this way:

“To the extent that their beliefs are common, they can make before the nations a common profession of faith in God and in Jesus Christ. They can collaborate in social and in technical projects as well as in cultural and religious ones. Let them work together especially for the sake of Christ, their common Lord. Let His Name be the bond that unites them!” (AG 15).

The core of evangelization is the apostolic faith that is found in the word of God, the creeds, and is reflected in biblical interpretations and the doctrinal consensus of the patristic age. The possibility of Evangelicals and Catholics giving common witness lies in the fact that despite their disagreements, they share much of the Christian faith. We rejoice, for example, that we can confess together the Apostles' Creed as a summary of biblical faith.

(80) While acknowledging the divergences, which remain between us, we are discerning a convergence between our two communions regarding the need and possibilities of common witness. The Amsterdam Declaration 2000 urged Evangelicals:

“to pray and work for unity in truth among all true believers in Jesus and to co-operate as fully as possible in evangelism with other brothers and sisters in Christ so that the whole church may take the whole Gospel to the whole world” (Amsterdam 14).

And Pope John Paul II asks,

“How indeed can we proclaim the Gospel of reconciliation without at the same time being committed to working for reconciliation between Christians?” (UUS 98).

Therefore, to the extent conscience and the clear recognition of agreement and disagreement allows, we commit ourselves to common witness.

(81) We conclude this report by joining together in a spirit of humility, putting our work, with whatever strengths and limitations it may have, in the hands of God. Our hope is that these efforts will be for the praise and glory of Jesus Christ.

“Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.” (Eph 3:20-21).

Abbreviations

Catholic Documents

- AG: Vatican II, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, *Ad gentes*
- CD: Vatican II, Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops, *Christus Dominus*
- DH: Vatican II, Declaration on Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*
- LG: Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*
- SC: Vatican II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*
- UR: Vatican II, Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*
- EN: Paul VI, Apostolic Letter "On the Evangelization in the Modern World" *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), Vatican Council II, More Post Conciliar Documents, Austin Flannery, O.P., ed. (Dublin, 1982), pp. 711–761
- RM: John Paul II, Encyclical Letter On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate, *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), (Vatican City, 1990)
- UUS: John Paul II, Encyclical Letter On Commitment to Ecumenism (1995), *Ut unum sint*, (Vatican City, 1995)** Cf. The Documents of Vatican II, Walter M. Abbot ed. (New York, 1966)

Evangelical Documents

- Amsterdam: "The Amsterdam Declaration: A Charter for Evangelism in the 21st Century" (2000), *The Mission of An Evangelist* (Minneapolis, 2001) pp. 449–459*
- Lausanne: "Lausanne Covenant",* 1974, *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization 1: Basic Statements 1974–1991*, James A. Scherer and Stephen Bevans, eds. (Maryknoll, 1992), pp. 253–259*
- Manila: "Manila Manifesto",* 1989, *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization 1: Basic Statements 1974–1991*, James A. Scherer and Stephen Bevans, eds. (Maryknoll, 1992), pp. 292–305

Dialogue Documents

- B: *Summons to Witness to Christ in Today's World: A Report on the Baptist-Roman Catholic International Conversations 1984–1988*, Pontifical

- Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Information Service [IS] 72 (1990/I) pp. 5–14
- E: *The Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission 1977-1984, A Report*, Basil Meeking and John Stott, eds. (Grand Rapids, 1986); see also IS 60 (1986/I-II) pp. 71–97
- J: Joint Working Group Between the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, “The Challenge of Proselytism and the Calling to Common Witness”, *The Seventh Report*, Appendix C, (Geneva, 1998), pp. 43–52; see also IS 91 (1996/I-II) pp. 77–83
- P: *Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness*, The Report from the Fourth Phase of the International Dialogue (1990–1997) Between the Roman Catholic Church and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders, IS 97 (1998/I-II) pp. 38–56; see also Pneuma21:1(1999) pp. 11–51

Appendix I

Development of this international consultation process: A brief overview

I. Historical Background

Increasing contacts between Evangelicals and Catholics during the 1970s and 1980s provide a background for the international consultations between the World Evangelical Fellowship and the Catholic Church that have taken place since 1993.

Among these contacts, an international dialogue on mission between some Evangelicals and Roman Catholics took place between 1978 and 1984. On the Catholic side it was sponsored by the Vatican's Secretariat (after 1988, Pontifical Council) for Promoting Christian Unity. Evangelical participants included some prominent leaders such as John Stott, but the participants came on their own authority, without officially representing any evangelical body. This dialogue led to an important report, published in 1985, the first in which Evangelicals and Catholics discussed together such themes as salvation, evangelization, religious liberty, and proselytism.

Another important international arena in which Evangelical and Catholic leaders have encountered one another has been the annual meetings of the Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions (CWC). This Conference, existing for more than forty years, includes the general secretaries or their equivalent, from a broad range of CWCs. The International Director of the World Evangelical Fellowship and the Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity have been among the participants in this informal annual meeting.

The need for more direct relations was evident from a specific event which also led to the present WEF-Catholic conversations. This took place when two representatives of the Catholic Church, one of them from the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, were invited as observers and brought greetings to the 1980 General Assembly of WEF held in Hoddesdon, England. Their presence led to a heated debate, after which "the Italian Evangelical Alliance withdrew its membership and the Spanish Evangelical Alliance placed its participation in abeyance". The WEF Theological Commission responded by creating a seventeen-member Ecumenical Issues Task Force. It developed a statement that was published as *Roman Catholicism: A Contemporary Evangelical Perspective* (ed. Paul G. Schrottenboer, Grand Rapids: Baker 1988) in which the details just mentioned are found (p. 9).

The CWC meeting in Jerusalem in October 1988 provided an occasion for a private conversation on the book between, on the one hand, Rev David Howard, International Director of WEF, and Dr. Paul Schrottenboer, General Secretary of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod and Chairman of the WEF Task Force, with, on the other hand, Rev. Pierre Duprey, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and Msgr. John Radano of the same Pontifical Council. They decided to hold a short meeting to discuss issues raised in the book. This meeting took place on the occasion of the CWC meeting in October 1990 in Budapest, Hungary. Two persons from each side — Dr. Paul Schrottenboer and Dr. George Vandervelde, for WEF, and Msgr. Kevin McDonald and Msgr. John Radano, for the PCPCU — met for two full days to discuss the book. This discussion helped to pinpoint some of the differences between the two communions, but it was clear that more time was required to explore these issues. It was therefore proposed that a well prepared and longer consultation be arranged for a later date. Bishop Pierre Duprey invited the consultation to meet in Venice.

2. Brief Overview of the Meetings

Starting with the one held in Venice in October 1993, several international meetings have taken place. Their general aim has been to foster greater mutual understanding and better relations.

An initial assessment from the 1990 meeting ascertained that the important topics to discuss in Venice were Scripture, tradition (including the development of doctrine), and the nature of the church as communion. It became clear that the doctrine of justification, too would have to be treated. Papers were prepared by Rev. Avery Dulles, S.J. (“Revelation as the Basis for Scripture and Tradition”) with a response by Dr. Henri Blocher, and by Dr. George Vandervelde (“Justification between Scripture and Tradition”). The exploratory nature and delicacy of this encounter was reflected in the fact that no common statement or communique was published. Eventually the papers were published in 1997 in the *Evangelical Review of Theology*. The meeting confirmed the importance of the issues taken up for discussion but lifted up especially two issues that tend to divide Evangelicals and Catholics. Besides the nature of the church as communion, the other issue was the nature and practice of mission and evangelism.

These topics were taken up at the next consultation, held in October 1997 at the Tantur Ecumenical Institute in Jerusalem. Papers were given by Rev. Avery Dulles, S.J. (“The Church as One, Holy, Catholic, and Apos-

tolic”), Dr. George Vandervelde (“Ecclesiology in the Breach: Evangelical Soundings”), Rev. Thomas Stransky, C.S.P. (“The Mission of the Church”), and Dr. Samuel Escobar (“Missionary Dynamism in Search of Missiological Discernment”). Co-secretaries for this meeting were Dr. Paul Schrotenboer and Rev. Timothy Galligan.

Increasing mutual confidence between the two partners was reflected in the fact that for the first time a communique about this meeting was published. The papers were published both in the *Evangelical Review of Theology* and in *One in Christ*, a Roman Catholic journal. Some months after this meeting we received the sad news of the death of Dr. Paul Schrotenboer. His deep commitment to the process was reflected in the fact that as early as the Venice meeting, he participated despite the discomfort caused by the illness that was increasingly testing his strength. In 1997 he co-chaired the Tantur meeting, despite having had his leg amputated some months earlier. We give thanks to God for the firm witness of Dr. Schrotenboer to overcoming misunderstanding and hostilities between Evangelicals and Catholics, which have persisted for so long.

The third meeting was held at Williams Bay, Wisconsin, November 1999, at the invitation of WEF. By this time it was agreed to proceed with these meetings on a regular basis. The Williams Bay session focused on the theme of the church as communion. Rev. Avery Dulles developed this theme on the Catholic side and Dr. Henry Blocher on the Evangelical side. Rev. Thomas Stransky, C.S.P. presented a paper highlighting aspects of several reports dealing with “Religious Freedom, Common Witness, and Proselytism.” Daniel M. Carroll Rodas presented a paper on the same issues as they affect Roman Catholic—Evangelical relations in Latin America. Dr. George Vandervelde and Msgr. Timothy Galligan served the meeting as co-secretaries.

A new development in the conversations was marked by the request for the preparation of two collaboratively developed papers. Rev. Avery Dulles, S.J. and Prof. Henri Blocher were requested to prepare a unified summary on the convergences and differences on the church as *koinonia*. Dr. Thomas Oden, Rev. Thomas Stransky, C.S.P. and Rev. John Haughey, S.J. were asked to prepare a paper on the themes of religious freedom, common witness, and proselytism.

Besides the discussion of the papers, several important events took place during this Williams Bay meeting which helped to deepen our mutual understanding. The dialogue members together visited important Evangelical schools, including Wheaton College and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. The participants met and had informal discussions with some of the faculty of both institutions. At Wheaton, they visited the Insti-

tute for the Study of American Evangelicals and had conversations with the director, and also visited the Billy Graham Museum, with its display of the history of Evangelicalism in the USA. At Trinity, they were welcomed at a reception by the Academic Dean, Dr. Bingham Hunter and addressed by Dr. Kenneth Kantzer, a former president, after which they had the opportunity for informal discussions with the faculty. The members of the consultation also visited the Seminary of the Archdiocese of Chicago at Mundelein, where Cardinal Francis George, Archbishop of Chicago hosted a dinner. Here the consultation team also met the local Catholic-Evangelical “Common Root” project. These various meetings and events gave the dialogue participants deeper insights into the life of their partner, and showed a broader view of Evangelical—Catholic contacts, all of which encouraged the dialogue in its important work.

Indicative of the growth of fellowship was the fact that WEF accepted the invitation of Pope John Paul II, conveyed by the PCPCU, and extended also to many other churches and Christian World Communions, to send a representative to the “Ecumenical Commemoration of Witnesses to the Faith in the Twentieth Century,” held at the Colosseum in Rome on May 7, 2000, one of the Ecumenical events of the Jubilee Year 2000. Dr. George Vandervelde and Rev. Johan Candelin participated in this event on behalf of WEF.

The fourth meeting took place at Mundelein, Illinois, Feb. 18–24, 2001. The evolution of this dialogue was reflected in the fact that for the first time it had before it an initial draft of a common text, namely, on the theme of *koinonia*, developed by Avery Dulles in cooperation with Henry Blocher (Rev. Dulles, S.J. was unable to attend this meeting because he was in Rome for his investiture as Cardinal by Pope John Paul II). Another text, prepared by Dr. Thomas Oden, gathered representative aspects from previous dialogue documents on the themes of religious liberty and proselytism. This and a number of brief theses reflecting on this material, prepared by Rev. John Haughey, S.J. were discussed as well.

A Fifth Meeting took place in Swanwick, England, February 17–26, 2002. Significant changes had taken place in both sponsoring bodies in the time between the previous meeting and this. WEF’s name was changed to *World Evangelical Alliance* (WEA), and it was in process of seeking new leadership. At the *Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*, changes in its leadership took place and a new president and secretary took office. Also, when Msgr. Timothy Galligan, Co-Secretary of this Consultation, completed his term of service to the PCPUC in 2001, Rev. Juan Usma Gómez was appointed to that responsibility on the Catholic side. Three new participants on the Evangelical side attended for the first time: Rev. Dr. Rolf Hille, Chairman of

the *Theological Commission of WEA*, Rev. Dr. David Hilborn, Theological Advisor to the *Evangelical Alliance UK*, and Rev. Carlos Rodríguez Mansur, *Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana* in Brazil. While preparations for this meeting were slowed down because of these changes in both administrations, the Consultation had before it at Swanwick an integrated draft of a proposed common report; and aimed at bringing it to a completed form. The text achieved at the end of the week included two main parts. Part I focused on convergences between Catholics and Evangelicals on *Koinonia*; and Part II on the relationship of *koinonia* to evangelization.

It was agreed that the completed report would be presented to the sponsoring bodies requesting approval for its publication as a study text. The completion of this text brought a phase of conversations to a close. As they completed their work, the participants expressed the hope that this consultation between the World Evangelical Alliance and the Catholic Church would continue.

Appendix 2

List of participants

1. Venice, Italy, 21–25 October, 1993

World Evangelical Alliance

Dr. Henri Blocher, France
 Dr. Pablo Perez, U.S.A.
 Dr. Paul Schrotenboer, U.S.A.
 Dr. George Vandervelde, Canada

Catholic Church

Bishop Jorge Mejía, Rome
 Rev. Karl Muller, S.V.D., Germany
 Rev. John Redford, England
 Rev. Thomas Stransky, C.S.P., Jerusalem
 Msgr. John Radano, Rome
 Rev. Timothy Galligan, Rome

2. Jerusalem, 13–19 October, 1997

World Evangelical Alliance

Dr. Paul Schrotenboer, U.S.A., *Secretary*
 Dr. Henri Blocher, France
 Dr. Samuel Escobar, U.S.A.
 Dr. George Vandervelde, Canada
 Dr. Stanley Mutunga, Kenya
 Dr. Thomas Oden, U.S.A.
 Dr. Peter Kusmic, U.S.A. (unable to attend)

Catholic Church

Rev. Timothy Galligan, Rome, *Secretary*
 Rev. Frans Bouwen, M. Afr., Jerusalem
 Msgr. Joseph Dinh Duc Dao, Rome
 Rev. Avery Dulles, S.J., U.S.A.
 Sr. Maria Ko, F.M.A., Hong Kong/Rome
 Msgr. John Radano, Rome
 Rev. Thomas Stransky, C.S.P., Jerusalem

Rev. Juan Usma Gómez, Rome

3. Williams Bay, WI, 7–13 November, 1999

World Evangelical Alliance

Dr. George Vandervelde, Canada, *Secretary*

Dr. Henri Blocher, France

Dr. Thomas Oden, U.S.A.

Dr. M. Daniel Carroll Rodas, U.S.A.

Dr. Tite Tienou, U.S.A.

Dr. James Stamoolis, U.S.A.

Catholic Church

Rev. Timothy Galligan, Rome, *Secretary*

Rev. Avery Dulles, S.J., U.S.A.

Rev. John Haughey, S.J., U.S.A.

Sr. Maria Ko, F.M.A., Hong Kong/Rome

Msgr. John Radano, Rome

Rev. Thomas Stransky, C.S.P., Jerusalem

Rev. Juan Usma Gómez, Rome

Br. Jeffrey Gros, F.S.C., U.S.A.

4. Mundelein, IL, 18–24 February, 2001

World Evangelical Alliance

Dr. George Vandervelde, Canada, *Secretary*

Dr. Henri Blocher, France

Dr. Thomas Oden, U.S.A.

Prof. Lilia Solano, Colombia

Dr. James Stamoolis, U.S.A.

Dr. Daniel H. Williams, U.S.A.

Catholic Church

Rev. Timothy Galligan, Rome, *Secretary*

Card. Avery Dulles, S.J., U.S.A. (unable to attend)

Rev. John Haughey, S.J., U.S.A.

Sr. Maria Ko, F.M.A., Hong Kong/Rome

Msgr. John Radano, Rome

Rev. Juan Usma Gómez, Rome

Br. Jeffrey Gros, F.S.C., U.S.A.

Rev. Thomas Rausch, S.J., U.S.A.

5. Swanwick, UK, 17–26 February, 2002

World Evangelical Alliance

Dr. George Vandervelde, Canada, *Secretary*

Dr. Henri Blocher, France

Dr. Thomas Oden, U.S.A.

Dr. Rolf Hille, Germany

Dr. David Hilborn, U.K.

Rev. Carlos Rodríguez Mansur, Brasil

Dr. James Stamoelis (unable to attend)

Dr. Daniel H. Williams, U.S.A. (unable to attend)

Catholic Church

Rev. Juan Usma Gómez, Rome, *Secretary*

Card. Avery Dulles, S.J., U.S.A. (unable to attend)

Rev. John Haughey, S.J., U.S.A.

Sr. Maria Ko, F.M.A., Hong Kong (unable to attend)

Msgr. John Radano, Rome

Br. Jeffrey Gros, F.S.C., U.S.A.

Rev. Thomas Rausch, S.J., U.S.A.

CHRISTIAN WITNESS IN A MULTI-RELIGIOUS WORLD (2011)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONDUCT

Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue
World Council of Churches
World Evangelical Alliance

Published 2011 at

- https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_20111110_testimonianza-cristiana_en.html [also in French, German, Italian, Korean, Portuguese, Spanish, Swahili] and
- <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/christian-witness-in-a-multi-religious-world> [in English, French, German, Spanish]

The original launch is archived under

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H6WcNBAz13Y>

Preamble

Mission belongs to the very being of the church. Proclaiming the word of God and witnessing to the world is essential for every Christian. At the same time, it is necessary to do so according to gospel principles, with full respect and love for all human beings.

Aware of the tensions between people and communities of different religious convictions and the varied interpretations of Christian witness, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID), the World Council of Churches (WCC) and, at the invitation of the WCC, the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), met over a period of 5 years to reflect and produce this document to serve as a set of recommendations for conduct on Christian witness around the world. This document does not intend to be a theological statement on mission but to address practical issues associated with Christian witness in a multi-religious world.

The purpose of this document is to encourage churches, church councils and mission agencies to reflect on their current practices and to use

the recommendations in this document to prepare, where appropriate, their own guidelines for their witness and mission among those of different religions and among those who do not profess any particular religion. It is hoped that Christians across the world will study this document in the light of their own practices in witnessing to their faith in Christ, both by word and deed.

A basis for Christian witness

1. For Christians it is a privilege and joy to give an accounting for the hope that is within them and to do so with gentleness and respect (cf. 1 Peter 3:15).
2. Jesus Christ is the supreme witness (cf. John 18:37). Christian witness is always a sharing in his witness, which takes the form of proclamation of the kingdom, service to neighbour and the total gift of self even if that act of giving leads to the cross. Just as the Father sent the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit, so believers are sent in mission to witness in word and action to the love of the triune God.
3. The example and teaching of Jesus Christ and of the early church must be the guides for Christian mission. For two millennia Christians have sought to follow Christ's way by sharing the good news of God's kingdom (cf. Luke 4:16-20).
4. Christian witness in a pluralistic world includes engaging in dialogue with people of different religions and cultures (cf. Acts 17:22-28).
5. In some contexts, living and proclaiming the gospel is difficult, hindered or even prohibited, yet Christians are commissioned by Christ to continue faithfully in solidarity with one another in their witness to him (cf. Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:44-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8).
6. If Christians engage in inappropriate methods of exercising mission by resorting to deception and coercive means, they betray the gospel and may cause suffering to others. Such departures call for repentance and remind us of our need for God's continuing grace (cf. Romans 3:23).
7. Christians affirm that while it is their responsibility to witness to Christ, conversion is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 16:7-9; Acts 10:44-47). They recognize that the Spirit blows where the Spirit wills in ways over which no human being has control (cf. John 3:8).

Principles

Christians are called to adhere to the following principles as they seek to fulfil Christ's commission in an appropriate manner, particularly within interreligious contexts.

1. **Acting in God's love.** Christians believe that God is the source of all love and, accordingly, in their witness they are called to live lives of love and to love their neighbour as themselves (cf. Matthew 22:34-40; John 14:15).
2. **Imitating Jesus Christ.** In all aspects of life, and especially in their witness, Christians are called to follow the example and teachings of Jesus Christ, sharing his love, giving glory and honour to God the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 20:21-23).
3. **Christian virtues.** Christians are called to conduct themselves with integrity, charity, compassion and humility, and to overcome all arrogance, condescension and disparagement (cf. Galatians 5:22).
4. **Acts of service and justice.** Christians are called to act justly and to love tenderly (cf. Micah 6:8). They are further called to serve others and in so doing to recognize Christ in the least of their sisters and brothers (cf. Matthew 25:45). Acts of service, such as providing education, health care, relief services and acts of justice and advocacy are an integral part of witnessing to the gospel. The exploitation of situations of poverty and need has no place in Christian outreach. Christians should denounce and refrain from offering all forms of allurements, including financial incentives and rewards, in their acts of service.
5. **Discernment in ministries of healing.** As an integral part of their witness to the gospel, Christians exercise ministries of healing. They are called to exercise discernment as they carry out these ministries, fully respecting human dignity and ensuring that the vulnerability of people and their need for healing are not exploited.
6. **Rejection of violence.** Christians are called to reject all forms of violence, even psychological or social, including the abuse of power in their witness. They also reject violence, unjust discrimination or repression by any religious or secular authority, including the violation or destruction of places of worship, sacred symbols or texts.
7. **Freedom of religion and belief.** Religious freedom including the right to publicly profess, practice, propagate and change one's religion flows from the very dignity of the human person which is

grounded in the creation of all human beings in the image and likeness of God (cf. Genesis 1:26). Thus, all human beings have equal rights and responsibilities. Where any religion is instrumentalized for political ends, or where religious persecution occurs, Christians are called to engage in a prophetic witness denouncing such actions.

8. **Mutual respect and solidarity.** Christians are called to commit themselves to work with all people in mutual respect, promoting together justice, peace and the common good. Interreligious cooperation is an essential dimension of such commitment.
9. **Respect for all people.** Christians recognize that the gospel both challenges and enriches cultures. Even when the gospel challenges certain aspects of cultures, Christians are called to respect all people. Christians are also called to discern elements in their own cultures that are challenged by the gospel.
10. **Renouncing false witness.** Christians are to speak sincerely and respectfully; they are to listen in order to learn about and understand others' beliefs and practices, and are encouraged to acknowledge and appreciate what is true and good in them. Any comment or critical approach should be made in a spirit of mutual respect, making sure not to bear false witness concerning other religions.
11. **Ensuring personal discernment.** Christians are to acknowledge that changing one's religion is a decisive step that must be accompanied by sufficient time for adequate reflection and preparation, through a process ensuring full personal freedom.
12. **Building interreligious relationships.** Christians should continue to build relationships of respect and trust with people of different religions so as to facilitate deeper mutual understanding, reconciliation and cooperation for the common good.

Recommendations

The Third Consultation organized by the World Council of Churches and the PCID of the Holy See in collaboration with World Evangelical Alliance with participation from the largest Christian families of faith (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Evangelical and Pentecostal), having acted in a spirit of ecumenical cooperation to prepare this document for consideration by churches, national and regional confessional bodies and mission organizations, and especially those working in interreligious contexts, **recommends** that these bodies:

1. **study** the issues set out in this document and where appropriate **formulate guidelines for conduct** regarding Christian witness applicable to their particular contexts. Where possible this should be done ecumenically, and in consultation with representatives of other religions.
2. **build** relationships of respect and trust with people of all religions, in particular at institutional levels between churches and other religious communities, engaging in on-going interreligious dialogue as part of their Christian commitment. In certain contexts, where years of tension and conflict have created deep suspicions and breaches of trust between and among communities, interreligious dialogue can provide new opportunities for resolving conflicts, restoring justice, healing of memories, reconciliation and peace-building.
3. **encourage** Christians to **strengthen** their own religious identity and faith while **deepening** their knowledge and understanding of different religions, and to do so also taking into account the perspectives of the adherents of those religions. Christians should avoid misrepresenting the beliefs and practices of people of different religions.
4. **cooperate** with other religious communities engaging in interreligious advocacy towards justice and the common good and, wherever possible, standing together in solidarity with people who are in situations of conflict.
5. **call** on their governments to ensure that freedom of religion is properly and comprehensively respected, recognizing that in many countries religious institutions and persons are inhibited from exercising their mission.
6. **pray** for their neighbours and their well-being, recognizing that prayer is integral to who we are and what we do, as well as to Christ's mission.

Appendix: Background to the document

1. In today's world there is increasing collaboration among Christians and between Christians and followers of different religions. The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) of the Holy See and the World Council of Churches' Programme on Interreligious Dialogue and Co-operation (WCC-IRDC) have a history of such collaboration. Examples of themes on which the PCID/IRDC have collaborated in the past are: Interreligious Marriage (1994–1997), In-

terreligious Prayer (1997–1998) and African Religiosity (2000–2004). This document is a result of their work together.

2. There are increasing interreligious tensions in the world today, including violence and the loss of human life. Politics, economics and other factors play a role in these tensions. Christians too are sometimes involved in these conflicts, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, either as those who are persecuted or as those participating in violence. In response to this the PCID and IRDC decided to address the issues involved in a joint process towards producing shared recommendations for conduct on Christian witness. The WCC-IRDC invited the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) to participate in this process, and they have gladly done so.
3. Initially two consultations were held: the first, in Lariano, Italy, in 2006, was entitled “Assessing the Reality” where representatives of different religions shared their views and experiences on the question of conversion. A statement from the consultation reads in part: “We affirm that, while everyone has a right to invite others to an understanding of their faith, it should not be exercised by violating others’ rights and religious sensibilities. Freedom of religion enjoins upon all of us the equally non-negotiable responsibility to respect faiths other than our own, and never to denigrate, vilify or misrepresent them for the purpose of affirming superiority of our faith.”
4. The second, an inter-Christian consultation, was held in Toulouse, France, in 2007, to reflect on these same issues. Questions on *Family and Community, Respect for Others, Economy, Marketing and Competition, and Violence and Politics* were thoroughly discussed. The pastoral and missionary issues around these topics became the background for theological reflection and for the principles developed in this document. Each issue is important in its own right and deserves more attention that can be given in these recommendations.
5. The participants of the third (inter-Christian) consultation met in Bangkok, Thailand, from the 25th to 28th of January 2011 and finalized this document.

‘SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION’ AND ‘THE CHURCH IN SALVATION’ – CATHOLICS AND EVANGELICALS EXPLORE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES (2009–2016)

A REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONSULTATION BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE

Originally published in Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Information Service¹ No 150, 2017. pp. 233-267 and in Evangelical Review of Theology 42 (2018) 2: 100-130, 233-267 <https://theology.worlddea.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ERT-Vol-42-No-2-April-2018.pdf> (the whole edition circles around the document)

The Status of this Report

The Report published here is the work of the International Consultation between the Catholic Church and the World Evangelical Alliance. It is a study document produced by participants in the Consultation. The authorities who appointed the participants have allowed the Report to be published so that it may be widely discussed. It is not an authoritative declaration of either the Catholic Church or of the World Evangelical Alliance, who will both also evaluate the document.

¹ Download under http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/it/dialoghi/sezione-occidentale/evangelici/dialogo/documenti-di-dialogo/2016-_scrittura-e-tradizione--e-la-chiesa-nella-salvezza--cattol/testo-in-inglese.html, see also https://www.prounione.urbe.it/dia-int/e-rc/doc/e_rc_report2002.html

Introduction: Setting the Frame for our Consultation

The Biblical Foundations for this Consultation

1. The love of God has been poured out by the Holy Spirit into the hearts of believers (Rom 5:5). This love summons Christians to follow Christ, embracing the way of the cross in humble self-giving (Phil 2:1–11). In this spirit of love all are called to strive for what makes for peace and for building up the body, with all concerned for the whole community, the strong caring for the weak (Rom 14:19–15:2). Being joined to Christ through faith, each person is personally associated with Christ and becomes a member of his body. But what is the Church, and who belongs to the Church, which is his body? We take consolation in knowing that the Lord knows his own and his own know him (Jn 10:14). Evangelicals understand that through the power of the Holy Spirit, the very moment one enters into a relationship with Christ through a personal commitment in confessing Jesus as Lord and Savior (Mt 16: 16) and is baptized, one belongs to the Church, the community which he established (Mt 16:18).² As a fruit of this faith, the Christian undertakes the path of life-long discipleship. Catholics understand that a person is received into the Church at the moment of Baptism, whether as an infant or an adult, and it is expected that the person's initiation into the church will be deepened through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ that is sealed through confirmation and participation in the Eucharist, as they seek to live as his disciples.

2. The unity of the body of Christ is founded on "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all" (Eph 4:5). The church celebrates unity with Christ and with one another in the Lord's Supper/Eucharist in which his death and resurrection are proclaimed and celebrated until he comes in glory. At his second coming it will then be revealed in the heavenly community who belongs to the unity of the body of Christ throughout the ages and from all countries and languages. Then, the whole creation

² As stated in the document *Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission* (ERCDOM): "Conversion and baptism are the gateway into the new community of God, although Evangelicals distinguish between the visible and invisible aspects of this community. They see conversion as the means of entry into the invisible church and baptism as the consequently appropriate means of entry into the visible church" (4.3).

will be incorporated into the eternal doxology of praise to God (Rev 5:11–14; Phil 2:10–11; Rom 8:19–23; 1 Cor 15:28). While we look forward to the final consummation of all things, we are called in the Church to be Christ's body in the here and now.

3. Christ's prayer for unity in John 17 takes as its premise that his present and future disciples be brought into the unity that he shares with the Father and the Holy Spirit. This unity testifies to the world that "you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (Jn 17:23). There is a unity which the church receives, and which God has given.³ But unity also comes to us as a task, one that can only be accomplished by the Spirit working in and through us. The Apostle Paul makes an appeal "that there be no dissensions among you and that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment" (1 Cor 1:10).

4. We realize that in the history of the Church, continuing even to today, divisions have damaged the visible unity of the Church and shaken the credibility of the Gospel that is to be preached in the world. Unity is something deeply desired by our Lord and empowered by his Spirit. Therefore, the Church may not remain comfortable when the body of Christ is divided (cf. 1 Cor 12:25), but is called to strive for the greatest possible unity which Christ himself calls for (Jn 17:20–23; Phil 2:5). In doing so, we are agreed that the Church must make every effort to preach the Gospel in its truth and purity, though we have not always understood what that means in the same way. We recognize that in the history of the Church, striving for the truth of the Gospel has not always resulted in unity or resolved all of our differences. But we also welcome the renewed effort to address these divisions in our present consultation.

The Challenges Encountered Among Evangelicals and Catholics

5. According to the reports our consultation commissioned from 22 countries and from five continents, relations between Catholics and Evangelicals vary according to the regions, local history, public recognition and role in society as well as other new and emerging circumstances. While mutual ignorance and mistrust, fears and prejudices, as well as majority/

³ As affirmed in the WEA Statement of Faith: "We believe in ... The Unity of the Spirit of all true believers, the Church, the Body of Christ" and in the Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio* 1: "Christ the Lord founded one Church and one Church only."

minority dynamics have prevented relations from being improved in certain countries, in other areas where Catholics and Evangelicals are challenged by the contemporary society, or exist as minorities threatened by religious persecutions, or work in common efforts to confront poverty or various natural disasters, collaboration has been established at different levels.

6. There is a wide range in the quality of local relationships. Sometimes relations are characterized by open rivalry and opposition in the missionary field, marred by accusations and counter-accusations of proselytism, persecution, inequality, idolatry, and/or rejection of the recognition of the Christian identity of the other. At other times or places, relationships are characterized by open collaboration in the public sphere, especially in family matters and ethical and moral campaigns at every level, as well as prayer initiatives and evangelistic and common charitable campaigns inspired by the Bible.

7. Members of the Consultation are happy to note that in most parts of the world there is a consciousness of the need to improve our relationship. Catholics and Evangelicals are convinced that "Mission belongs to the very being of the church. Proclaiming the word of God and witnessing to the world is essential for every Christian. At the same time, it is necessary to do so according to gospel principles, with full respect and love for all human beings."⁴ In accordance with the principles of the Gospel, important steps can be taken together through mutual knowledge and recognition, healing of memories, theological dialogue, as well as encouraging local collaboration between Catholics and Evangelicals wherever possible and appropriate.

The Contemporary Challenges to the Christian Witness

8. Neither Catholics nor Evangelicals can escape the challenges that an increasingly globalized context poses, where the paradigm is shifting more and more to a secular view of society and culture. This raises the question of how the gospel can be preached adequately in this context

⁴ Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, World Council of Churches and World Evangelical Alliance, *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct*, Preamble, Geneva, 28 June 2011.

without giving in to the pressure to conform to the world. Challenges come to us in different forms:

- There is a creeping secularism that is antagonistic to the Christian faith as we live as strangers in an increasingly strange land (1 Pet 1:1). In many places religion has been relegated largely to the private sphere of the individual with little or no public presence of religion allowed. Many people have forgotten that they have forgotten God. There is an increasing erosion of the churches themselves which affects their impact on society and culture. This erosion is not only in the West; this is a global challenge. It is an erosion whose long-term effects are not yet fully understood.
- Our age is experiencing an ethical disorientation, one that often disallows God and his revelation to serve as any type of reference point for ethical discussion. In sexual morality, there is an underlying assumption that everyone is free to do what is perceived to be right in their own eyes; there is no longer basic agreement on the definition of marriage; sexual orientation now is the accepted way of defining who we are as human beings and the redefinition of marriage to include same-sex unions is more and more common. The dignity and sanctity of human life at all stages is under attack. Euthanasia, assisted suicide, abortion, and some genetic and reproductive technologies threaten and undermine the basic understanding of what it means to be human. This in turn also has repercussions for the primary foundation of society – the family.
- Religious and ideological diversity is the norm in many societies and cultures around the globe. Although that is not necessarily problematic, it does serve as a challenge to the church because the truth of the Gospel can be seen as just one option among many. The exclusive claims of Christ himself (Jn 14:6) are perceived by some as a direct affront to the dominant controlling ethos of toleration. Religious pluralism has had the unintended consequence of intensified violence caused by an increasingly polarized religious environment. A perceived lack of conviction on the one hand is met with religious radicalization on the other. In such a polarized context, those on the extremes use their religious convictions to justify violence against those with whom they disagree. In this context, we note with dismay and sadness that Christians are persecuted in many countries around the world today. It is our duty to pray for the persecuted church and to stand up for religious freedom wherever it is denied.

Response to these Challenges and Our Shared Beliefs

9. To what extent can Evangelicals and Catholics continue to face such challenges alone and apart from one another? What of our present situation? The participants in this consultation, appointed by the World Evangelical Alliance and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, are convinced that the urgency of the present situation makes it imperative that we as Evangelicals and Catholics speak and act together wherever we can to confront these challenges. We are called together by Christ so that the world may come to realize his presence in a world that is fractured and fragmented – a world which he loved even to the point of death and still loves (Jn 3:16; 17:20–23). One purpose of this consultation has been to explore areas of common concern. Part of discerning what we can do together has been learning more about each other's personal faith and commitment to Christ's Gospel and his mission to save a dying world. We have also sought to explore more deeply those issues which continue to divide us. We do so because our divided witness weakens our response to these challenges in the eyes of the world. While we recognize our enduring divisions, we can acknowledge the work that each other is doing and even consider working together in as many areas as possible.

10. We as Catholics and Evangelicals are in agreement that Christians believe: that God is triune, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three persons in one God (Gen 1:1–3; Mt 28:19; Jn 1:1; 10:30, etc.); that he created all things, both visible and invisible, by his Word (Gen 1; Jn 1:3; Col 1:16–17); that human beings brought sin into this world, and as a result, all are born sinful and in need of forgiveness and reconciliation with God (Rom 3:20–23); that the Word, the second person of the Trinity, became flesh (Jn 1:14) as our Lord and Savior, true God and true man in one person (Col 1:19); that he came to earth as both God and man to save us from our sins (Phil 2:5–11; Col 2:9), that he was born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified for our sins, died, and was buried, he descended into hell (1 Pt 3:18–19) and rose again on the third day and ascended into heaven where he sits at the right hand of the Father and will judge the living and the dead on the last day. We believe in the Holy Spirit who leads us to repentance, calls us to faith, justifies us by grace through faith, and enlightens us with the Word of God as he inspired the Apostles and prophets; therefore we believe that all Christians of any community can have a living relationship with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit which the Spirit himself enables; it is the responsibility and privilege of all Christians to proclaim the saving Gospel to all who have not repented, believed and committed their lives to

Jesus Christ (2 Cor 5:18); we also believe that the Spirit calls and gathers all believers into his one, holy, catholic,⁵ apostolic Church where we strengthen and build one another up in the body of Christ as we receive his gifts of Baptism and the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:23–34; 1 Cor 12:12; Mt 28:19; Mk 16:16; Mt 26: 26–29). We look forward to the resurrection of the body and to the time when we will see God face to face and live with him forever (1 Cor 15; 1 Cor 13:12).

11. While we rejoice in holding these elements of faith in common, we also recognize that we are called to grow in understanding of those areas where there has not been full agreement, and address them directly. Two long-standing differences of great significance have been our understandings of the authority of Scripture and Tradition, and the role of the Church in salvation. There are other important areas of disagreement which we hope to address in future discussions, but due to limits of time and resources, in this text we will address only these two historically divisive issues.

12. Finally, in this introduction it is important to note that the Evangelical movement itself constitutes a highly differentiated ecumenical network. The World Evangelical Alliance brings together Evangelical Christians from Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed, Anabaptist and Pentecostal traditions. This diversity has significant consequences particularly for ecclesiology – that is, questions pertaining to ministry, authority and ecclesial structures, sacraments, and the nature of the church. These Churches differ greatly in their relationship to the Catholic Church. In view of the doctrinal issues raised in our dialogue, such differences were clearly in evidence. The challenge is made more complex when considering that the Evangelical movement has chosen not to address ecclesiological differences among the members of the WEA, but rather, to focus on cooperation in common prayer, evangelism, and witness.⁶

Method of the Consultation

13. The current round of consultations has built upon the Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission (1977–84), the 1993 Venice Consultation

⁵ The word “catholic” in the creed means “universal.”

⁶ On the ecclesiological convergences and differences between the Evangelical and Catholic understandings, see Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of Koinonia; A Report of the International Consultation between the Catholic Church and the World Evangelical Alliance (1993–2002), especially Part 1, “Catholics, Evangelicals, and Koinonia”, Sections B and C.

between the World Evangelical Fellowship and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and the Church, Evangelization and the Bonds of Koinonia document (2002). The current consultation brought together 13 participants from 10 different countries on 5 continents, ensuring that many different perspectives would be given voice in our discussions.

14. The members of this consultation were given the mandate to enter into conversation representing our diverse communities, seeking greater mutual understanding, and attempting to identify the state of our relations and how they might proceed appropriately and responsibly. Over the past six years, we met in São Paulo, Brazil; Rome, Italy; Chicago, USA; Guatemala City, Guatemala; Bad Blankenburg, Germany; and Saskatoon, Canada. In all of these places we met with local Evangelicals and Catholics and heard areas of concern and examples of cooperation in each of their regions. At our meetings, we presented papers, explained our positions, argued, asked questions, prayed together (and separately) for God's reconciling grace, gained insights – and asked more questions. We were not in the business of compromise and negotiation, but rather of respectful and frank conversation, aware that nothing other than a deep honesty, graciously articulated, would serve our communities well. When we gathered, we sought to be faithful to Jesus Christ even when we encountered disagreements. The way forward was for us firstly to map out convergences, building on previous consultations, and on the basis of our respective teachings and practices; secondly, to name aspects of the other tradition which give us encouragement, where we rejoice in seeing God at work, and where we may learn from the other; thirdly, with the help of the dialogue partner, to formulate questions to each other in a respectful and intelligent way (hence the term 'fraternal'), thus identifying issues we were not able to resolve in this round of consultation, which still need to be addressed by our respective communities. With mutual trust and respect, we have sought to undertake this task in a way which also records the understanding we have gained, the insights which allow us to pose the questions differently than we may have done prior to the current round of consultation. With prayer and a desire to be true to our calling and our convictions, we have posed questions that are intended to stimulate further discussion between Catholics and Evangelicals that will spill over into our own respective communities where we would like to see the conversation continue. It is our fervent hope that the Holy Spirit would enable us to go deeper in our self-understanding as we learn from each other about the God who loves us all and gave himself for us.

Part I: The Word of God is Living and Active

Evangelicals and Catholics Reflect Together on the Scriptures and the Apostolic Tradition

Introduction

15. Catholics and Evangelicals have long seen ourselves as standing in opposition to each other regarding the authority of Scripture, and its relation to Tradition. From the time of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, our respective positions seemed well summarized by two radically distinct alternatives: *Scripture alone* or *Scripture and Tradition*. Churches of the Reformation, which are an important part of an Evangelical inheritance, continue to be convinced that the Bible will always be the ultimate authority in matters of faith, doctrine and practice, that the church can and has erred, and that authority is only to be sought in the Word of God. Catholics have stressed the *need for* and the authority *of the* Church's teaching office in the interpretation of the Bible.⁷

16. Meeting in our present context, five hundred years after the beginning of the Reformation era, Evangelicals and Catholics taking part in this consultation were able to discern that we have come a long way from the disputes and battle lines of the 16th century. This is not to say that we are now in or nearing full agreement, but we have come to realize that we can rejoice in the growing centrality of the Scriptures in the lives of Catholics as well as Evangelicals. We also rejoice in the convergences apparent to us in our understanding of the significance of the Apostolic Tradition and the transmission of faith through the generations.⁸

17. Under the headings of "Scripture," "Apostolic Tradition," and "Scripture and Tradition", we begin by identifying common ground or convergences; then proceed, in light of a deeper understanding of the other, by indicating areas where each finds encouraging developments within the ecclesial life of the other; then by posing, in a friendly but direct way, remaining questions that challenge the other community to articulate the theological foundations of its convictions in order to search for common ground.

⁷ Regarding the use of the word "Church" in this document, see paragraphs 50 and following.

⁸ See section 2 on the Apostolic Tradition, beginning with paragraph 29.

I. The Scriptures

A. Our Common Ground

18. Through discussion, and a study of our respective documents, Evangelicals and Catholics have come to find much common ground regarding the revelation of God and the place of the Scriptures in the Church. We as Evangelicals and Catholics firmly believe that God has spoken to humanity, revealing his divine self – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – to us, and also revealing God’s will for the human race. Together, we believe that the fullness of revelation is found in Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man, the eternal Word made flesh. In Jesus, the innermost truth about God is revealed. Through his words and deeds, his miracles and teaching, and above all in his death for our sins and his resurrection he has freed us from sin and has brought redemption, has shown us the face of God, and has taught us what it is to be human.

19. After Jesus’ resurrection and ascension to the Father, the Holy Spirit descended upon the community of his disciples, who went forth proclaiming what they had received from and witnessed in Jesus. This proclamation was faithfully recorded in the books which eventually comprised the New Testament. Jesus himself had understood the Old Testament to be the written Word of God, revealed to the chosen people of Israel (Jn 5:39). By his authority, the Christian Church from its very beginning accepted the Old Testament (eventually alongside the New Testament) as the only written Word of God.⁹ The Bible is the written Word of God in an altogether singular way (2 Tim 3:16).

20. Catholics and Evangelicals rejoice in affirming together that the Scriptures are the highest authority in matters of faith and practice (2 Pet 1:20–21).¹⁰ The purpose of the Scriptures, consistent with the purpose of God’s revelation, is to lead people into faith in Christ, who is “the way, the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6).

Christians approach the Scriptures mindful of their internal coherence as the speech of God, and that they are to be read in light of the fullness of God’s revelation in Christ. We hold that the books of both the Old and New

⁹ As stated in Lausanne Movement, *Cape Town Commitment*, 2010. Part 1.6: “We affirm that the Bible is the final written word of God, not surpassed by any further revelation, but we also rejoice that the Holy Spirit illumines the minds of God’s people so that the Bible continues to speak God’s truth in fresh ways to people in every culture.”

¹⁰ Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint* 79.

Testaments in their entirety were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. God uses human authors with human language to communicate his Word through the sacred texts of Scripture. It follows that the Scriptures teach solidly, faithfully, without error and efficaciously leading us into all truth. We agree that we know Christ through the Scriptures with the help of the Holy Spirit, and hold the authenticity and historicity of what the Gospels record of the life, teaching and deeds, death and resurrection of Jesus. We await no further public revelation before the glorious coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (Heb 1: 1–2).

21. The Bible has a central role in all Christian ministry and in the worship and life of the Church. The use of the Scriptures in worship and teaching was essential to the shaping of the canon. In the first centuries, the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, recognized and received from among many writings these 27 books as the canon of the New Testament. Although Evangelicals and Catholics have different views of the extent of the Old Testament canon that has been recognized, we can nonetheless agree that the Old Testament Scriptures testify to the promise of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ (Lk 24:27; Jn 5:39). These Scriptures are authoritative for the Church.

22. Evangelicals and Catholics are in agreement that prayer should accompany the reading and study of the Scriptures and that the Holy Spirit can and will lead us into all truth (Jn 16:13). We also agree that the written Word of God is foundational to theology and catechesis. As the Church Father Jerome said, “ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of God.”¹¹ Finally, Catholics and Evangelicals believe that we are called to shape our lives in all their dimensions according to the Scriptures. We firmly believe that the closer we come to Christ, the closer we come to one another; so too, the more we attend to the Scriptures and live by them, the closer we draw to God and to one another, as individuals and as communities.

B. Words of Encouragement to Each Other

23. As **Catholics**, we are encouraged by ...

- The Evangelicals’ faithfulness to the great commission, their engagement in proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ and their zeal for evangelizing;

¹¹ Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah*, Book 18, Prologue; PL 24: 17b.

- The Evangelical commitment to a morality and ethics based on the Scriptures, and to a moral life lived according to the Scriptures;
- The place of Scripture in the devotional and theological life of Evangelicals;
- The recognition that Scripture needs to be read in community;
- The move among some Evangelicals towards reading Patristic interpretations of Scriptures (such as that found in the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* or *The Church's Bible*);
- Finally, the role the Bible has in shaping community among Evangelicals.

24. As **Evangelicals**, we are encouraged by ...

- The stronger witness to the Word of God in the Catholic Church of today. We rejoice in the renewed emphasis on Scripture as the foundation for faith and practice as found, for instance, in parts of Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum* (1965) and in the Apostolic Exhortation from Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini* (2010);
- Seeing that the Scriptures are considered as "the highest authority in matters of faith" (*Ut Unum Sint* 79) in the Catholic Church;
- The fact that Catholics see the written Word of God as authoritative and as the standard and foundation for all matters of faith and life;
- Finally, the Catholic Church's efforts with regard to the translation and distribution of the Scriptures among both clergy and laity and the further pastoral encouragement to not only have the Scriptures but to read and study them.

C. Fraternal Questions of Concern

25. As **Catholics**, we believe along with Evangelicals that the Scriptures are the normative account of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. With you, we believe that Jesus Christ is the definitive Word spoken by God. Catholics are also encouraged by the Evangelical acknowledgement of the oral tradition (*kerygma, viva vox evangelii*, the preached Word of God) preceding the written New Testament. Nonetheless, we would like to ask:

- Whether the Evangelicals' equation at times of the Word of God with the Sacred Scripture adequately takes into consideration the Incarnation of the Word as a person rather than as a text?

- Does the principle of *sola Scriptura* and its identification of the Word with Scripture, with seemingly no reference to Tradition, unduly limit our receiving of God's revelation?
- Does the Evangelical stance on Scripture alone sufficiently account for the ongoing value and work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church in preserving her doctrine and teaching, especially in the articulation and development of the Tradition?
- We observe diverse interpretations of the Scriptures even among well-intentioned Christians. If the sense of the Sacred Scripture were plainly evident, as Evangelicals maintain, would it not be easier than it is to maintain unity among Christians?

26. Nonetheless, we are grateful that Evangelicals take the Scriptures and the challenges they present to us seriously in forming our understanding of who God is and how God works in the world, and have avoided relativizing the Scriptural message in addressing the modern world.

27. As **Evangelicals**, rejoicing in the growing role that Scripture has taken in the life of the Catholic Church, we would nonetheless like to ask Catholics ...

- We both agree that the holy Scriptures are the inspired Word of God and, therefore, are the true, unchangeable revelation of God. However, we continue to struggle with how, according to Vatican II's *Dei Verbum* 9, "both sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence" – a basic restatement of the fourth session of the Council of Trent (1546). How are these positions compatible?
- Regarding the inerrancy of the Scriptures in *Dei Verbum* 11, with which we joyfully concur, we would like clarification on the implications of this stance on inerrancy and what it means in relationship to the challenges that the modern historical-critical method poses and which a number of interpreters within the contemporary Catholic Church seem to favor;
- How their understanding that the Bible is the supreme authority for faith and doctrine can be reconciled with the most recent dogmatic pronouncements since the 19th century (for instance, the 1854 dogma of the Immaculate Conception, or the 1950 dogma of the bodily assumption of Mary) which seem to us as Evangelicals to have little, if any, clear explicit Biblical support;

- And finally, we would like to ask Catholics about the authority given to Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament in the formation of doctrine when it seems that many in the ancient church distinguished the Apocryphal books from the canonical books as not being authoritative in matters of doctrine or practice.

28. None of these questions should take away from the fact that we are truly grateful for the stronger witness that Catholics have shown in their defense of Scriptural truth and our united appeal to the authority of Scripture in matters of faith and life. The fact that Scripture has become a growing focus in Catholic piety and church life is extremely encouraging to us as Evangelicals.

2. Apostolic Tradition

A. Our Common Ground

29. Catholics and Evangelicals, while looking back to the history of the spreading of the Gospel, recognize and rejoice in the action of the Holy Spirit in the mission of the church, evangelizing people and transforming cultures. The Holy Spirit has a history. We have witnessed that the Holy Spirit has never ceased to act in history by giving birth to true believers and summoning us to remain faithful to the revealed truth, “No one can say that ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 12:3). Therefore, we listen to what our predecessors in faith have received from God, how they have understood the Scriptures, and how they have lived the Christian life (Heb 11).

30. Paul says, “what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim 2:2). This passing on of the faith is a dynamic process that continues in the life of the church at different times and places, with constant reference to the Scriptures, which remain the highest authority in matters of faith and life (cf. *Ut Unum Sint* 79). Catholics and Evangelicals believe that the revealed Word of God to which the apostolic church once and for all bore witness in the Scriptures is received and communicated through the ongoing life of the whole Christian community. As a church, led by the Spirit, generation after generation we pass on the apostolic witness that we have received from our forebears and teachers in the faith.

31. This Consultation has been able to affirm the above as valued and appreciated by Evangelicals and Catholics alike. We have defined “tradition”

differently, but we have all done so with reference to this dynamic process of passing on the apostolic faith in time. In this context, it is important to look back to the period of the Reformation. The Reformers were seeking to deal with traditions and practices that had arisen in the church that they believed not only had no Scriptural warrant but were in contradiction to Scripture. They were not seeking to jettison tradition altogether. Luther, and to a certain extent, Calvin, had a critical, but overall favorable view of the tradition.¹² They saw much value in the creeds and the confessions of the church and often appealed to the ancient church as an authority for their interpretation of Scripture. All of these fell within the purview of their understanding of tradition.

32. In our contemporary context, there is a shared sense of the post-modern critique of individualism by both Evangelicals and Catholics that realizes and recognizes the importance of community in strengthening and supporting the individual members of the body of Christ. Both Evangelicals and Catholics understand that the individual in concert with the whole community throughout space and time – past, present and future – are important components for supporting the body of Christ and remaining in the faith that has been passed on from generation to generation through the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit.

33. Evangelicals and Catholics both can have a critical appreciation of the contributions the Church Fathers have made to the Christian faith, even as we continue to grow in our understanding of tradition's role in the subsequent articulation of the faith of the Apostolic community. Further exploration is needed into the role of the historic liturgy in explicating and internalizing Scripture, and aspects of the sacramental life of the church which have had such an enduring history; these are also areas where there is much more we can learn from one another.

34. While giving thanks for some common ground in this dialogue, we need to note that Evangelicals and Catholics also have significant differences in their understanding of tradition and that these remain matters for further discussion.

¹² The Reformers confessed the three ecumenical Creeds, Melancthon and Luther often quoted the Church Fathers, including many citations of them in the Lutheran *Book of Concord*, which later included a *Catalog of Testimonies* compiled by Jakob Andreae and Martin Chemnitz; for Calvin's use of the Church Fathers, see also Anthony Lane's *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers* (New York: Continuum International Publishing, 1991).

35. The Catholic Church makes a key distinction when it treats the subject of tradition. In its primary sense, Tradition is the living transmission of what the apostles, empowered by the Holy Spirit, learned and handed down to us from Jesus' teaching and life. This "is to be distinguished from the various theological, disciplinary, liturgical or devotional traditions, born in the local churches over time ... (and) adapted to different places and times, in which the great Tradition is expressed. In the light of Tradition, these traditions can be retained, modified or even abandoned" under the guidance of the Church's teaching office,¹³ which "is not above the Word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on" (*Dei Verbum* 10).

36. Evangelicals remain uncomfortable with any concept of tradition that could possibly elevate tradition above Scripture. Catholics would agree. However, how this works out in our different communities continues to be a point of contention. Nonetheless, we all want to affirm an openness to tradition that does not contradict Scripture.

B. Words of Encouragement to Each Other

37. As **Evangelicals**, we are encouraged by and have benefited from ...

- The fact that the Catholic Church has fostered the *ressourcement* movement¹⁴ in a recovery of the full patristic tradition for the whole church;
- The Catholic Church's commitment to upholding the historic deposit of faith (*depositum Fidei*) – the unchanging truth of the Christian faith (Jude 3; 1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:13–14) – in the face of the challenges that modern secularism and its philosophical values pose;
- The fact that Reformation emphases, such as the centrality of the Word and the importance of preaching in worship, are considered and recognized as part of the rich tradition of the whole church.

38. As **Catholics**, we are encouraged by and have benefited from ...

- The increasing Evangelical recognition of the continuous action of the Holy Spirit in the 2,000 year history of the church;

¹³ Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) 84.

¹⁴ A movement in the 20th century among Catholic scholars that engaged in a recovery of the ancient sources for use in liturgy, theology, and Biblical interpretation.

- The Evangelical engagement with patristic writings and other sources of the Church of the first centuries (*ad fontes*) by some Evangelical scholars and their communities;
- Seeing among some Evangelicals an understanding of the differentiation between Apostolic Tradition and local traditions.

C. Fraternal Questions of Concern

39. As **Evangelicals**, we have learned the reasons for some aspects of Catholic popular piety that may have positive benefit. We have also been pleased to hear that in many instances Catholics have sought to address some of the excesses in their piety.¹⁵ We would nonetheless like to discern from Catholics ...

- Whether there is a critical principle that Catholics use to address what Evangelicals view as extra-biblical teachings that form the basis for certain aspects of Catholic Tradition, for example, the doctrines of purgatory and indulgences, and the dogma of the Immaculate Conception?
- How do you ensure that the development of doctrine and the appearance of new traditions remain faithful to the teaching of the whole of Scripture if some doctrines and traditions seem to be attested more from an implicit Scriptural attestation rather than an explicit Scriptural witness?
- Mindful that Evangelical piety has its own share of questions concerning our own practices, Evangelicals nonetheless would like to ask Catholics how they deal with a piety that often seems to be shaped more by tradition(s) than by Scripture (for example, Marian piety and the cult of the saints)?

40. Again, these questions should not detract from what we can say and do together as we rejoice in the faith once received and passed on throughout all generations under the guidance of the Holy Spirit who has promised to lead us into all truth (Jn 16:13).

41. As **Catholics**, we have come to a new appreciation of how Evangelicals increasingly speak of the work of the Holy Spirit in the history of

¹⁵ Cf. Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy* (Vatican City, 2001).

the Church, and how some Evangelicals are turning to the Church Fathers. But we would ask:

- How does the evaluation of whether to accept or reject what the Church Fathers have to say occur? For example, in addition to Baptism and Eucharist, why are what Catholics refer to as other sacraments a challenge for Evangelicals to accept when the church in the first centuries accepted them as such (and some of them have explicit Scriptural warrant, for instance, forgiveness of sins, Jn 20:23 and Mt 16:19, and the sacrament of the sick, James 5:14–15)?
- Is the tendency to rediscover the Church Fathers a Global North development, or is this trend shared by Evangelicals in the Global South? In what sense is the teaching of the Church Fathers affecting the life of the Church?
- We have been made aware through our consultation that the World Evangelical Alliance brings together Christian communities with a common statement of faith, but also with great diversity, including diverging understandings of tradition. There are those who see tradition as of minimal importance to the present and future life of the church and those who are increasingly attentive to tradition. What are the values at stake in this process? Given your vision of unity and the diversity among Evangelicals, how do you discern whether the unity you uphold is a sufficient response to the summons to unity in the New Testament (Jn 17:20–21; 1 Cor 1:10)?

42. Even as we ask these questions of brotherly concern, seeking further clarification, we rejoice in the faithful witness we have seen among Evangelicals to the unchanging truth of the Gospel.

3. Scripture and Tradition

A. Our Common Ground

43. There has been mutual suspicion and distrust, and perhaps a bit of caricature of one another's views regarding Scripture and tradition and the relationship between the two. Behind such criticism and distrust lie not only misrepresentations and misinterpretations but also real differences in doctrine and practice that have divided us and continue to prevent us from testifying to our unity in faith (Jn 17:11). As Evangelicals and Catholics, we seek to live as disciples of Jesus and come together in the

task of mutual conversation, consolation, and the search for reconciliation. Our goal is to come to a clearer understanding of the truth of God's Word even as we acknowledge the need to be taught by our mutual, as well as our separated pasts. The words of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI, remind us, however, that "our quarrelling ancestors were in reality much closer to each other when in all their disputes they still knew that they could only be servants of one truth which must be acknowledged as being as great and as pure as it has been intended for us by God."¹⁶

44. There is a realization among both Evangelicals and Catholics that Scripture need not necessarily be pitted over against tradition or over against the Church, nor need tradition and church teaching be opposed to Scripture. Both Evangelicals and Catholics have seen progress in moving beyond the disputes of the 16th century with the Reformers and Trent, even while acknowledging the continuing validity of many of their critical insights. In the context of conversations with other worldwide communions deriving from the Reformation, the Catholic Church has gained insights and come to a greater appreciation of the Reformers. These dialogues have made significant progress in articulating a shared understanding of the relationship between Scripture and tradition.¹⁷ There is a noticeable return among many Evangelicals to the sources (*ad fontes*), which includes reading the ancient Christian writers, gaining a new appreciation for the Creeds of the church, and becoming reacquainted with their Christian past before the 16th century. In an increasing number of Evangelical circles at the beginning of the 21st century, the tradition and insights of the Fathers, as well as those who came after, are being appealed to in aiding Biblical interpretation and doctrinal exegesis, albeit with a critical eye, something Catholics also would affirm. Evangelicals would stop short of saying that the interpretation of the Fathers is authoritative, but have also begun to realize that they ignore the interpretation of the Fathers to their own peril. The Fathers knew their Bibles better than most of us. They are our teachers in the faith, teachers who have years if not, cumulatively, centuries of experience. We can also learn much from their doctrinal treatises which were, more often than not, simply focused exegesis that took into account the whole of Scripture in explicating a particular doctrine. We have to-

¹⁶ Joseph Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 98.

¹⁷ Cf. Walter Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits: Basic Aspects of Christian Faith in Ecumenical Dialogue* (London: Continuum, 2009), 87–89.

gether identified what might be called an interweaving and interconnection between Scripture and tradition.¹⁸ Tradition can serve as an important touchstone for the interpretation of Scripture and its explication of doctrine, even as Evangelicals remain committed to *sola scriptura*.

B. Words of Encouragement to Each Other

45. As **Evangelicals**, we are encouraged by ...

- The movement we perceive occurring with many – both laity and clergy – in the Catholic Church who see the increasing importance of Scriptural study in their worship and devotional lives;
- The insistence of Catholics on the importance of the community of the church in our encounter with Scripture, while still recognizing the importance of individual conscience, personal conversion and the value of our own Evangelical sense of a deepening personal relationship with Jesus Christ;
- The discerning eye of the Catholic reading of the Church Fathers, in whom there is much wisdom to be found, notably in their exegesis of Scripture. They are our common teachers, but Scripture is the authoritative text.

46. As **Catholics**, we are encouraged by ...

- The Evangelical reading of the Church Fathers and the recognition by them of the reverence the Fathers held for the Sacred Scripture; the growing Evangelical recognition of the importance of the patristic interpretation in engaging Sacred Scripture;
- The value of fraternal correction by prominent Evangelical leaders as a “sort of authority” in the Evangelical world;
- The keeping of a *sensus fidelium* among those in the Evangelical movement witnessing to a continuity of the Biblical witness;
- A growing attentiveness among Evangelicals regarding the importance of community particularly in strengthening the individual members within the context of the Christian community.

¹⁸ Another term that has been used is ‘coinherence.’ See *Evangelicals and Catholics Together, Your Word is Truth* (2002) for further explanation.

C. Fraternal Questions of Concern

47. **Evangelicals** realize in light of all these encouraging signs and the convergences we have found, there is much to celebrate. And yet questions still remain that must be addressed. We would still like to ask Catholics ...

- How the statement that “the relationship between Sacred Scripture, as the highest authority in matters of faith, and Sacred Tradition, as indispensable to the interpretation of the Word of God” (*Ut Unum Sint* 79) can be reconciled with the statement of *Dei Verbum* that “both Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of devotion and reverence” (*Dei Verbum* 9), the latter of which to us seems to put Scripture and Tradition on the same level?
- In light of new relationships developing between Evangelicals and Catholics, how the principle of *Sola Scriptura* has been received and incorporated into the life of contemporary Catholics and Catholic theology?
- Recognizing our own sinfulness and need for correction, Evangelicals would further like to ask Catholics if the Church can recognize mistakes in its tradition expressed in its devotional piety, in light of human fallibility, and if so, could those mistakes be corrected in the light of Scripture?
- Since Paul exhorts us “not to go beyond what is written” (1 Cor 4:6) and even the people of Berea in Acts 17:11 examined the Scriptures to see if everything the Apostles said was true, how therefore would Catholics reconcile this with papal infallibility?
- Understanding that on the one hand Christ has promised that his Holy Spirit would lead his church “into all truth” (Jn 16:13), but on the other hand that Scripture itself declares that “all Scripture is inspired by God” (2 Tim 3:16), Evangelicals would want to ask Catholics if the guidance of the Holy Spirit works in the same way in the subsequent life of tradition as it does in Scriptural inspiration of the written text?
- Is there a sense of what Evangelicals call *Ecclesia semper reformanda* (the church always reforming) in the Catholic Church today?
- In light of the Catholic stance on Scripture and Tradition, how do Catholics deal with clergy and lay members, nuns and professors at Universities, for instance, who disagree with Scripture and the Church? What is the process for dissent and is it followed?

48. **Catholics** also realize the helpful convergence that is developing between Evangelicals and Catholics in the mutual affirmation of the authoritative nature of Scripture and an increasing appreciation of tradition. We still wish to ask Evangelicals the following questions:

- We see the strong Evangelical practice of using Scripture to interpret Scripture, working with an understanding of the internal coherence of the biblical message. We also appreciate your understanding that the Scriptures are read in the context of the Christian community while stressing the role of the Holy Spirit in the reading and interpretation of Scripture. Yet we note that among Evangelicals, just as among Catholics, differing and sometimes conflicting interpretations of the Scriptures arise. Without reference to a magisterium, how do Evangelicals maintain unity and guard against internal conflict in their interpretation of Sacred Scripture? What role does tradition play in the interpretation of Scripture? Faced with differing interpretations of Scripture, what is the methodology for discernment and discipline within the Church?
- Evangelicals have maintained a strong traditional morality, for which we are grateful. We nonetheless want to ask how you guard against moral relativism when it arises in the teaching of individual pastors or lay people?
- Given that Evangelicals believe that the Holy Spirit is active in history and that the Spirit leads us to unity, where do you see the Spirit at work in the Reformation period which brought about division in the Church? Is the Holy Spirit active solely in the Reformers and their communities or also in the Catholic Church of that period? How are the 16th century Reformers viewed by Evangelicals today, and what role do their teachings play in the life of Evangelicals? How do communities formed after the Reformation period link themselves to the Reformation?
- Liturgical renewal has been a pronounced feature of ecclesial life over the past century. We see a diversity of liturgical and spiritual practices within Evangelical worship and devotional life, at times drawing on practices that derive from the early church. Could Evangelicals look to the sacramental and liturgical forms expressed in the period of the Church Fathers as an expression of the Word of God in the life of the Church? If so, how might this affect doctrine and practice?

49. Rejoicing in the saving message of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, who died for sinners to bring them forgiveness and life, Catholics and Evangelicals together affirm that Scripture is the authoritative rule and norm for faith and life. Jesus Christ, the Word through whom God has revealed himself, speaks through and in his Word to a world in urgent need of the Gospel. God has also given his church his Holy Spirit who not only inspired the Scriptures but ensures that the truth of the Gospel endures and is transmitted in the life of the church as it proclaims that Gospel truth anew in every day and age. Differences remain concerning how we perceive Tradition and its relationship to Scripture and concerning the level of authority Tradition holds. Ongoing mutual questioning does not, however, bring our conversation to an end, but should motivate each of us to dig deeper into our theology, practice, and piety, and continue our discussion for the sake of the Gospel and its mission. Only as we stand together with the Word facing the world through the power of the Spirit can we hope to offer a message that has stood the test of time and remains unchanging. To this world, we offer Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb 13:8).

Part 2: God's Gift of Salvation in the Church

Evangelicals and Catholics Reflect together on Salvation and the Church

A. Our Common Ground

50. Christ's redeeming death and resurrection took place once and for all in history. Christ's death on the cross, the culmination of his whole life of obedience, was the one, perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the world. There can be no repetition of or addition to what was then accomplished once for all by Christ.¹⁹ The gift of salvation is freely given, freely received (Rom 3:24; 1 Cor 2:12). For Catholics and Evangelicals alike, the question of salvation in Jesus Christ is of supreme importance; it plays a defining role in our lives of faith and in the shaping of our theologies. Salvation is a free gift of God (Eph 2:8–9). It does not come simply by being born of a Christian family, not even by being a formal member of a Christian church; it is God's gracious initiative. "Salvation belongs to the Lord"

¹⁹ Neither Catholics nor Evangelicals hold to the idea that Christ is re-sacrificed in the Eucharist by the presiding priest.

(Ps 3:8). Salvation denotes God's total plan and desire for humanity and responds to the fundamental human need for redemption. Acts of the Apostles assures us that this salvation comes to us through Jesus, and that "there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

51. Wherever two or three come together in that name, Christ is there (Mt 18:20). The Scriptures tell us that from the very beginning the Church was part of God's plan of salvation (Eph 1:4–10, 22–23). Beginning with Adam and Eve and extending throughout the covenant history recorded in Scripture, God has formed for himself a people, Israel, who are called out (*ekklesia*) from the world into a community that is then sent back out to be a light to the nations (Is 60:3). The fullness of this community is found in Christ the Word Incarnate, Israel reduced to One, who came to earth to redeem his people by saving them from their sins through his suffering, death on the cross, and his resurrection to life. God made known to the world this plan of salvation in his Son (Jn 3:16) who has brought forth a new covenant people (Jer 31:31–34; Rom 9) in the community of His Church. He tells us that he himself will build this Church and that the gates of hell will not prevail against it (Mt 16:18). Christ tells us later how he provides for his Church in Matthew 18: 15–20 and John 20:23 by ensuring that the forgiveness of sins that he won for us and for our salvation is and always will be central to the purpose and message of the church. He has given the gift of ministers to his Church (1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11–13) who are then called to be stewards of the mysteries and servants of God's people (1 Cor 4:1). The primary task to which Christ has called the Church, its ministers, and people is to go and make disciples, baptizing and teaching all that Christ has commanded us (Mt 28:19–20). He gave the promised Holy Spirit to his Church at Pentecost to empower the Church in its mission. As such, the Church is evangelized by God, but it also evangelizes for God. The disciples who are created by this work of God the Holy Spirit are then cultivated and grow in their faith as a community of believers (Acts 2:42–47) whose faith and trust is in the One who has saved them. The Spirit flourishes in this community, which Christ has called his Church, enlivening it with his gifts (Acts 2:1–4; 1 Cor 12; Rom 8:10–11) to witness to the world the love of God while also strengthening and building one another up in the body of Christ (1 Thess 5:11).

52. The Apostle Paul provides two primary metaphors (there are others) which describe this community. 1 Corinthians 12 describes the Church as the body of Christ with Christ himself as the head. Apart from the head, there

is no body, just as there are no branches without a vine (Jn 15). Salvation comes by being grafted on to the body of Christ through the work of the Spirit since no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12: 3) and a branch cut off from the vine will wither and die (Jn 15:1-6). As Jesus said, apart from him we can do nothing (Jn 15:5). The body cannot exist apart from the Spirit, nor can it exist apart from the head which is Christ. But with the head and the Spirit there is indeed a body, a communion of forgiven saints who, animated by the Spirit, produce works which God prepared in advance for us to do, not to merit salvation but to give glory to him (Eph 2:10) and to draw still others to his body, the Church (Mt 5:16; 28:19-20).

53. A second metaphor for the Church related to that of the body is what Paul presents in Ephesians 5. There he presents the imagery of the Church as the bride of Christ, with Christ, again "as the head of the Church, his body, of which he is the Savior ... who loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless" (Eph 5:23, 25-27). In this metaphor, we see the sacrificial giving of the Bridegroom's very life in order to present the bride as his own by virtue of giving his own flesh on the cross. Through his sacrifice of himself, Christ has cleansed his bride, presenting her pure and undefiled, so that he also may take her to be his own to live with him in holiness and righteousness. The Church is not the one who sacrificed, nor is it the one who cleanses. Rather it is the Bridegroom who sacrifices himself for his bride and cleanses her, he is the one who feeds and cares for her, i. e., for the members of his body (Eph 5:29-30). The bride, the Church, is in this sense joined to and submits to her Beloved; as such, she does what he himself has given her to do, promising that he will be with her until the very end of the age (Mt 28:19-20).

54. The Church, then, is God's gift to the world. While not all Evangelicals agree that the Creeds are authoritative, Catholics and Evangelicals can affirm that in the Creeds we found an expression of core Biblical teaching in many areas of doctrine, including the Church. After professing the Christian faith in God the Father and his work, in our Lord Jesus Christ and his life, and in the Holy Spirit and his sanctification of believers, we say that we believe "in one, holy, catholic and apostolic church". Christians profess faith in the Church which exhibits the marks of unity, holiness, catholicity²⁰ and adherence to the apostolic faith and teaching. But we do not be-

²⁰ See footnote 4.

lieve in the Church in the same way that we believe in the divine persons of the Trinity confessed earlier in the Creed.²¹ When we say “we believe in God the Father ... in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God ... and in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life,” we profess our faith in the work of salvation of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit. We put our confidence and faith in our triune God. We trust him and commit ourselves totally to him, our rock and our salvation. Our faith is in God alone, our salvation comes from him (Ps 62:2). The Church and its ministers are in service to this salvation wherever the marks of the true Church are found. The pure preaching of the Gospel and the right use of the sacraments/ordinances which Christ commanded his Church to observe (Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15–16; Lk 22:19–20; 1 Cor 11:23–25) are life-giving gifts for the nurturing and feeding of his flock.²²

55. The Church is in service to the Gospel, as Paul says, because when Christ has reconciled us to himself he has also given to us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation” (2 Cor 5:19). The world will not hear this message of reconciliation apart from the Church, her ministers, and her people, who are to proclaim this message so that people may hear it (Rom 10:14–17; Mt 28:19–20). “But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?” (Rom 10:14 NRSV). Therefore, the Church has the obligation and privilege to preach the Good News of Jesus Christ. The Church, as the body of Christ, is the usual place where the offer of salvation is heard and extended. By the power of the Holy Spirit, she proclaims Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, with a view to persuading people to repent and come to him personally and so be reconciled to God and become part of his community of faith (Mt 4:17). Salvation presupposes a conversion, a turning to God, and regeneration as we receive God’s grace, resulting in a reorientation of life according

²¹ The English translation of the Creed can be misleading, because in Latin we say: *Credo in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem ... Et in unum Dominum Iesum Christum ... Et in Spiritum Sanctum ... Et unam, sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam*. We “believe in” the Divine Persons, but the Latin text does not include “in” before “the Church.”

²² Catholics would also point to Acts 2:11 (Confirmation); In 20:22–23 (Penance and Reconciliation); Jn 5:14–15 (Anointing of the sick); Num 11:25; 1Tim 2:5; Heb 5:10 (Holy Orders); Matt 19:6; Gen 1:28; Mk 10:9 (Matrimony) to refer to the other five sacraments.

to the new life revealed in Jesus Christ. For many if not most Evangelicals, baptism is the primary means by which God incorporates people into his Church (Mt 28:19). Once in the Church, it is expected that members of Christ's body will live out their Christian life in faithful service to him and one another.

B. Words of Encouragement to Each Other

56. As **Evangelicals** we are encouraged by:

- The seriousness shown by Catholics in upholding the Apostles' Creed especially as it speaks of the glorious reality of the Triune God and his gracious work that brings about "the remission of sins";
- The renewed emphasis in Catholic teaching on the biblical metaphors of the church as they also relate to salvation (e. g. the people of God, the body of Christ, the temple of the Spirit), the diminished role of past understandings of the church that seemed to exclude other Christians from the possibility of salvation (e. g. *societas perfecta*, *ark of salvation*); and the view that "separated churches and ecclesial communities" are used by Christ as a means of salvation;
- The more recent focus of the church and her ministers on the ministry and preaching of the Word as an increasingly important aspect of Christian faith and life both corporately and individually;
- The communal dimension of salvation we see evidenced over against individualistic tendencies which have characterized some trends in Protestantism;
- The insistence on the centrality of conversion, the many Catholic initiatives to take the Gospel of salvation to the whole world, as well as the more recent emphasis on a personal encounter with Jesus Christ for salvation.

57. As **Catholics**, we are encouraged by ...

- The Evangelical trust and confidence in what God has done for us in Jesus Christ and the continuous loyalty of Evangelicals to the biblical teaching regarding God's promise of salvation as a matter of primary importance;
- The recognition that the strong Evangelical focus on the saving character of Christ's death is coupled with an equally strong focus on his resurrection from the dead and the hope which comes from it;

- The Evangelical conviction that there is no such a thing as a completely private Christianity; in other words, their understanding of salvation as relational, linking conversion and regeneration by water and the Word, leading to new life in Christ; and the conviction that conversion to Jesus Christ necessarily entails incorporation into the Church;
- The Evangelical conviction that salvation is not reducible to such things as formal church membership, but summons forth an active life of discipleship;
- The Evangelical understanding that Christian faith leads to a strong commitment to evangelization and mission for the sake of the salvation of all.

C. Fraternal Comments and Questions of Concern

58. As foregrounding for our questions, we as Evangelicals would like to, first of all, make the following observation. We have noted and appreciated the Catholic emphasis in our discussions on the love and mercy of God when dealing with the question of the assurance of salvation. We can see that Catholics are convinced of both the love of God and the mercy of God, as well as the fact that God takes sin seriously. Therefore, when Catholics are asked about whether they can be sure of salvation, they will respond in hope and trust but also with what appears to Evangelicals as uncertainty. The uncertainty stems from the fact, they tell us, of being confronted by almighty God who is transcendent and holy but also all merciful, and yet still before whom we are unworthy because of our sin; this is the cause for the Catholic reticence about language of assurance of salvation, whereas Evangelicals speak of their confidence in being saved. But Evangelicals have come to realize that when Catholics speak of hope, they do so in the context of Romans 5:1–5 and 8:24–25 where it speaks of a hope that does not disappoint which is grounded in Christ. We also understand that Catholics are also concerned that the doctrine of the assurance of salvation of which Evangelicals speak can be misused to imply that those who do not express such assurance do not have faith, which is indeed what some Evangelicals often mean to say.

59. As Evangelicals, we appreciate the insight into the mercy of God and the humility that Catholics express in the face of the holiness of God. We understand that they do not feel it is their place to speak for God in saying that they can be sure of their own personal salvation: they would consider this as presuming on God. When Catholics are asked whether they are

saved, they often will say “I hope,” or “I trust.” As Evangelicals, we have come to realize through our discussion that when Catholics say they hope they are saved, they are not necessarily saying “I hope I can do something to please God” or “I hope I’m good enough,” but they may well be saying that they trust that God is love and that God is faithful, and they are putting their hope in that love and faithfulness which is beyond anything they or we deserve. This love is revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And they hope for salvation, then, because they have experienced the mercy of God through the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives, and trust in his promise. To say, however, that they are saved as an accomplished fact, we understand, would be perceived as presumption on their part and is not in line with Catholic teaching.

60. Evangelicals would still like to ask Catholics, however:

- What practical hope and comfort can you give to those with troubled consciences or those who have fear concerning their eternal destiny, if they can only offer hope (Abraham’s “hope against hope”, Rom 4:18)? Can Catholics live with the hope of the promise without the assurance of the fulfillment? What makes Catholics hesitate or *doubt* when we have the clear promises in Scripture that forgiveness is ours in Christ Jesus and that Christ himself wills our salvation (see *Gen* 3:15; *Ex* 15:2–3; *Pss* 62:2–3, 6–9; *Is* 53:3–12; *Jn* 3:16, 10:27–30; *Rom* 8:1–5, 26–39; *2 Cor* 5:17–21; *Eph* 1:1–14, 2:8–10; *1 Thess* 5:9–11; *1 Tim* 2:4; as well as many others)?
- In the Second Vatican Council, you speak of the possibility of God offering salvation even to those who have not received the Gospel (*Lumen Gentium* 16) and that this belief is grounded in God’s mercy. We Evangelicals have come to appreciate through our discussions the fact that you want to emphasize the mercy and love of God and that this view is grounded in the confidence you have that God loves all and wants all to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim 2:4). The fact that Scripture does say that God is love (1 Jn 4:8), that God will be all in all (Eph 1:23), and every knee will bow in heaven and earth and under the earth (Phil 2:10–11) do emphasize the mercy of God, which we would also want to emphasize. And yet we still wonder if saying something on which Scripture has not spoken, i. e., the view that even those who have not received the Gospel can be saved, could still be misconstrued by some Catholics to lead to the conclusion that there is no need to evangelize (Mt 28:19–20)?

- From the Evangelical point of view, Christ's forgiveness, in view of the Last Judgement and beyond, not only does away with sin as enmity against God but also all the consequences of sin. There is no further need for cleansing after death because that cleansing has occurred by Christ on the cross which we appropriate by faith. In our discussions, when Evangelicals heard Catholics speak of purgatory, we heard you speak about the transforming work of God's mercy that you believe goes on even after death, where the purging of the effects of sin still needs to occur before one approaches the throne of God. While we understand that you do not see this purging as meritorious, we still would like to ask on the one hand where this can be found in Scripture, but also why purgatory is still needed if Christ has redeemed us completely in both soul and body? In this connection, we would also like to ask: If you truly believe in an all merciful and loving God who redeems us in Christ and that it is not by your merits that you are saved and salvation is given why do you continue to use the language of the treasury of merit, satisfaction, and indulgences?
- As far as churches which baptize infants, we require preparation for baptism. We Evangelicals understand that Catholics too require preparation for baptism and spiritual formation for the parents of the children, which is very important. But we also understand that the family many times does not appear in church after the Baptism which seems to make Baptism simply into a work that is performed. We would like to ask what follow-up occurs when an infant is baptized? Is the impression given that Baptism is just simply a work that needs to be performed? We were glad to hear that there is an emphasis on catechesis which needs to occur with the baptismal family, but what is the role of discipleship in relation to Baptism? Is the Church doing enough after the child is baptized to ensure disciples are being made? What is the role of the clergy in this as well as the larger Church community?
- We have come to understand in our discussions that the sacraments play a central role in salvation, especially Baptism and the celebration of the Eucharist. We also have discerned that the efficacy of the sacraments in the Catholic Church is largely bound and tied together with the sacraments of ordination and more specifically episcopal ordination. On the one hand, we are grateful to hear you saying that our sacramental acts do accomplish something, although you are unclear what that something is. We also

want to reaffirm that we know you do recognize our baptisms as valid and do not require a rebaptism. Nonetheless, because you tie the efficacy and benefit of the sacraments to the episcopal orders we still need to ask: Does not the way that your church restricts the full benefit of church acts to the ordained clergy of the Catholic Church still end up devaluing and ultimately calling into question what, if any, benefit occurs for the salvation of members in Evangelical churches? In other words, if the sacraments are central to the life of the church, but the sacraments of Evangelical churches (at least those which have them) do not accomplish as much in our churches as they do in Catholic churches, does not that end up saying that our ministry is less effective than the ministry which occurs in the Catholic Church? This also becomes a key issue with regard to absolution. Can Evangelicals who confess their sins and receives forgiveness from their pastor – or from a fellow Christian in those without ordained clergy – know for sure that their sins are forgiven?

61. As foregrounding to our questions, we as Catholics would note that our conversations have brought us much clarity into the Evangelical understanding of the assurance of salvation. As Catholics, we had thought that when you spoke of having been saved, you were saying that there was nothing further to be done; that you had a “once saved always saved” mentality; and that you believed that you could then do whatever you wished and it wouldn’t affect your salvation. We have now come to understand that this moment of assurance of salvation is a decisive point to be followed by turning back to Christ day by day, trusting in him only and referring daily to what God has done for you by his grace. We have been grateful to learn that you stress the need to be diligent in daily living your faithfulness to Christ through repentance and faith.

62. We have also learned that Evangelicals distinguish between certainty and security. In terms of a morally rational self-awareness of Christians, there may never be a certainty of salvation in the formal sense, but a certainty which gives peace with God to the conscience burdened with temptations. This happens when with faith you boldly appeal to God’s promise in his Word in the face of your own weakness and temptation. We had heard in your claim of assurance or certainty a presumption, perhaps even an arrogance, in the self-referential claim that “you have decided” to follow Jesus and were thus saved. Now we hear your focus on the promise of God, and your trust in that promise, which places things squarely on

Christ's shoulders. Your assurance doesn't come from yourself, but from the work that God has done in Jesus Christ and in his paschal mystery. The Gospel is the Good News of the promise of salvation, and you trust God and his promises, and thus have assurance and certainty. There is not as big a gap between Catholic language of trust and hope and Evangelical language of assurance as we had thought. We too believe that God wants to forgive and redeem us, that God the Son died to forgive us and to reveal a boundless mercy to us. We too have heard this promise in the Scriptures, have felt it stirring in our inmost being, and hear in the Gospel an invitation to live in joy because God is doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves, in all of this, we have found more common ground than we had anticipated.

63. Catholics nonetheless would like to ask Evangelicals the following questions:

- We often find the language that we hear from you – in the personal claim that “I am saved” and in the hymn refrains “Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine,” and “I have decided to follow Jesus” – seems to place the focus on the person's decision and personal conviction, and not God's decision. The subsequent question to others “are you saved?” often lacks the nuance of the way in which God calls and converts us. In practice, how does this language move past a self-referential focus to place the emphasis on the great mercy and faithfulness of God?
- We have come to understand that there is some divergence among Evangelicals about whether or not you can lose your salvation and that there is no one definition of “assurance of salvation”. Addressing in particular Evangelicals who hold that the gift once received cannot be lost, how do you deal with those who turn away from the faith or don't seem to take seriously the daily challenge to be faithful to the Gospel? How do you deal with sin committed after giving your life to the Lord? And how do you interpret Heb 6:4–6, which speaks of turning away from the Gospel after having “tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come”?
- How does the confidence that comes with the assurance of salvation allow you, in your evangelizing efforts, to recognize with humility the many ways that God has been at work in the other (mindful that God's engagement with others is always larger than our efforts); in particular, what is an appropriate pastoral approach to those who do not claim the same assurance of salvation, although they confess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and profess the Gospel of salvation?

- When Catholics listen to Evangelicals, we understand the desire for an explicit biblical warrant for doctrines such as purgatory. We also understand that Evangelicals wish to affirm the efficacy of the saving action of Jesus' death on the cross. For Catholics, purgatory is the state of those who die in God's friendship, assured of their eternal salvation, but who still have need of purification to enter into the happiness of heaven. We believe that because of the communion of saints, the faithful who are still pilgrims on earth are able to help the souls in purgatory by offering prayers in suffrage for them, especially the Eucharist. While the explicit scriptural warrant for purgatory is in the book of Maccabees in the Septuagint (2 Macc 12:46), which is not accepted as Scriptural by Evangelicals, there is reference in the Old Testament to punishment for sin even after one has received forgiveness (2 Sam 12:13–18). In the New Testament, as well as in the Old Testament (Ps 15:1–2), there is reference to the need for purification because nothing unclean will enter the presence of God in heaven (Rev 21:27 and Mt 5:48). Heb 12:22–23 speaks about a way, a process, through which the spirits of the “just” are “made perfect.” 1 Cor 3:13–15 and Mt 12:32 affirm there is a place or state of being other than Heaven or Hell. While affirming the once for all saving power of the cross, which Catholics also affirm, might there be an openness from Evangelicals to the possibility of recognizing such an intermediate state of purification as compatible with Scripture? Could you understand the communion of saints as having a role to play in this period of purification?
- Regarding the possibility of salvation for the non-Christians, we have heard from you that Evangelicals do not want to presume on the mercy of God and extend hope beyond what Scripture explicitly states in this regard. We also appreciate and agree that the Gospel is to be proclaimed to all creatures, and share a sense of obligation and privilege to preach Jesus Christ to those who have never heard the Gospel message. Yet faced with those who died without having heard the Gospel preached, or heard it proclaimed in a way that lacked integrity, we would suggest that the great mercy revealed in the Paschal Mystery of Jesus' dying and rising gives us grounds for a profound hope that such persons should not be automatically excluded from God's salvific plan and they too can obtain eternal salvation through Jesus Christ. The Second Vatican Council noted that a sharing in the paschal mystery is made possible “not only to Christians but to all people of good will in whose hearts grace is secretly

at work. Since Christ died for everyone, and since the ultimate calling of each of us comes from God and is, therefore, a universal one, we are obliged to hold that the holy Spirit offers everyone the possibility of sharing in this paschal mystery in a manner known to God” (*Gaudium et Spes* 22; cf. *Lumen Gentium* 16, *Ad Gentes* 7). While it is neither our mission nor our biblical calling to give a definite answer to what God will do, we trust that God’s mercy is much greater than ours and dare to hope that God’s offer of salvation will extend well beyond the parameters of the Church. This affirmation, however, does not exempt Christians from proclaiming the Gospel unto the ends of the earth; this mission remains of utmost importance. We would ask Evangelicals if the same paschal mystery which allows you to speak of an assurance of salvation for believers would not allow you to have a more hope-filled view of the possibility of God offering salvation to non-believers in a way that is known only to God?

- In our conversations, we have appreciated the emphasis Evangelicals place on eternal salvation, which of course is central to the Scriptures. And yet in our conversations, we often heard an emphasis on salvation in the next life without much consideration for the human condition in this life. Perhaps this was due to the limited number of topics discussed. Still, we would want to ask: does the fact that you are saved make any difference for this life (Is 58:6–7; Heb 13:1–3; Mt 25:31–46)? Could there be some benefit to balancing your concern for the next life with Jesus’ teaching on the Kingdom of God for this life with its concerns for social justice and the welfare of humanity? Might we look for transformation in the present world as well as the world to come?
- There is much to appreciate among Evangelicals with their vibrant worship life and the commitment many of the churches seek from their membership. We understand that there are differences among Evangelicals regarding the role of the sacraments in the life of the Church. There does seem to be at least some agreement that Baptism and the Lord’s Supper play an important part in our Lord’s teaching about the Church and the benefits they bring to the believer (Mt 28:19; Mk 16:16; Jn 3:3; Tit 3:4–7; Mt 26:26–29; Mk 14:22–25; Lk 22:14–23; Jn 6; 1 Cor 11:17–34).²³ Mindful of the differences

²³ Catholics understand that there are seven sacraments, all instituted by Jesus Christ our Lord, though the Church identifies Baptism and Eucharist as major sacraments. The sacraments are “the masterworks of God” (St Augustine, *De civo Dei*.

between various Evangelicals about the place of the sacraments in the life of the Church, Catholics would want to ask differing questions to different Evangelical churches, including the following: Why have the sacraments lost their primary role, and what might you be missing by not celebrating the sacraments? How can they be recovered as gifts of God to his people as expressed in the New Testament? Do all forms of worship and sacred actions have the same value in your tradition? Is it contrary to the New Testament to define sacred actions as signs and instruments of salvation? Is the Sunday celebration of the Lord's Supper not a privileged place where the Gospel is heard and the faith is lived, proclaimed and professed? Could Evangelicals gain insight about the sacraments/ordinances by retrieving the teachings of the different Reformers? Could Evangelicals begin to study how these gifts of God might be put to a deeper and more prominent use in the life of the Church?

64. Catholics and Evangelicals rejoice in the gifts of salvation and the Church which God has given to the world he loves so much. They are gifts freely given, and freely received. The Scriptures tell us that from the beginning the Church has been a part of God's plan for salvation (Eph 1:4-10, 22-23). Christ has told us how he provides for his Church ensuring that the forgiveness of sins he won for us and for our salvation will always remain central to the purpose and message of the Church. Both Evangelicals and Catholics rejoice in the gift of the ministry of reconciliation which is given to the Church by Jesus Christ. "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12 NRSV). Having received this gift from the crucified and risen Lord, the Church is then entrusted and empowered by the Holy Spirit to deliver that message of hope and forgiveness to our world in desperate need of reconciliation with its creator. In the words of the Samuel J. Stone hymn sung by many Catholics and Evangelicals:

The Church's one foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord,
She is His new creation

22,17) "powers that come forth from the Body of Christ, which is ever-living and life-giving" (CCC 1116; cf. Lk 5: 17,6:19; 8:46). The sacraments are for the Church and they make the Church, since "they manifest and communicate... the mystery of communion with the God who is love, One in three persons" (CCC 1118). Catholics are convinced that in a sacrament, the Church does more than profess and express its faith; it makes present the mystery it is celebrating.

By water and the Word.
From heaven He came and sought her
To be His holy bride;
With His own blood He bought her
And for her life He died.

Conclusion

65. We are committed Christians – Catholics and Evangelicals – from Guatemala, Colombia, Brazil, the Philippines, Ghana/Kenya, Spain, Italy, Germany, Canada and the USA. We come from places where there are very good relations and places where the relations are marred by tension and mistrust. But we were entrusted to represent our own ecclesial traditions faithfully and to reflect the realities of Catholic and Evangelical relations around the globe. It became clear early on that Evangelicals represent a wide diversity of Christian communities. Each community had its own perspective to offer which, while challenging at times, also offered the opportunity to discover the rich and legitimate diversity of the people of God, as well as the bonds of communion.

66. One purpose of this consultation was to learn from one another and also to challenge one another in what we believe, teach and confess. A second purpose was to clarify the current state of relations between us and to provide a way forward that would help us to improve those relations where there are difficulties and to support and encourage those places where the situation is more positive. During the consultation, we also had the opportunity to see the deep and committed faith of our partner even as we also were able to share our own faith experiences in an open and candid way. We also sought to address issues of doctrine and practice, always attentive to the perspective of the local communities.

67. Over the past six years, we have built up trust with our dialogue partners, allowing us to address difficult issues in a frank but gracious way. We invite our churches to take time to engage in a process of study and reflection on the issues, challenges, and questions they will encounter in this document. Our consultation has learned that it is when we respect and treat one another in a Christian manner that our communities are able to make progress in our relationships with one another in Christ. In humility, we have learned that we must put aside our own self-assurances and focus on Jesus Christ, “the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn 14:6). We have also learned that we need to understand the words of the other as they are in-

tended. We each came with preconceptions of the other, but we have opened up to listen to and discover how the other views the doctrines chosen for discussion in this consultation: Scripture and Tradition, and the Church and salvation. We entered into new experiences and insights that we might not have had otherwise. Through these experiences, we have come to know one another and ourselves better.

68. Our consultation has confirmed that real differences remain between Evangelicals and Catholics about certain aspects of the life of faith, but also that we share convictions about Jesus that ground our call to mission. As well, our communities share similar convictions about the Christian life: Christ is forming us by the Holy Spirit into a faithful people called together and sent into the world to obey and serve Him by participating in his life and mission. The Lord calls us not only to enter into conversation but to live out the implications of that conversation. The unity he desires for his disciples is not a theoretical unity but a lived one, “so that the world may believe” (Jn 17:21).

69. In this concluding section, it is our intent to address local communities of Evangelicals and Catholics worldwide, mindful of very diverse contexts and states of relations. We would invite them to consider both the convergences noted in the text above and the areas of divergence and mutual questioning. Where there have points of agreement or convergence, we would invite local communities to ask: what does this then make possible for us? What can we appropriately and responsibly undertake together, without compromising our convictions, without overstating our current level of agreement? How is the Lord asking us to grow together at this moment in time?

70. There are limits to what can be said in response to each of these questions. Furthermore, there will be differences from place to place. What is possible in Canada may not be possible in Guatemala; what is possible in Germany may not be possible in Spain.²⁴ We also recognize that it took our international consultation years of getting to know each other and engaging in discussion before some of these convergences could be confirmed.

²⁴ In some parts of the world, Catholics and Evangelicals speak of engaging in “common mission.” By this they are not speaking about planting churches together, but rather, jointly pursuing humanitarian objectives, working together for justice, peace, human rights, and the common good. In other parts of the world, Evangelicals and Catholics would be very uncomfortable with language of common mission.

If at first glance in your local situation, significant steps forward do not seem possible, or the convergences named seem problematic, we would encourage you to ask each other the questions you have and to discuss them; and we would nevertheless encourage you to ask what small steps are possible here and now. In all of this, we are mindful that reconciliation is always the work of God, not us; but the Lord has invited us to play our part in our reconciliation towards one another.

71. In those areas where our conversation has noted convergences, we would invite you to ask the following questions:

- In light of those convergences, how is it possible to cooperate in building up the common good and strengthening the community? Are there things that are critical for our communities to do together now?
- In light of social and moral upheaval in the world around us, and of the world's need to hear the Gospel of Christ, how can we responsibly witness together to our shared values, addressing some of the social and political questions in our world that we are facing today? Should we take the opportunity of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation to reflect together afresh on what the Gospel means for us and how it brings good news to our needy world?
- While for some Evangelicals and Catholics, praying together is not seen to be acceptable, many would want to ask: Are there any times and places where it would be appropriate for us to pray together? If yes, what ought to shape our common prayer?

72. We would also invite you to ponder the divergences and questions which our document has noted. As we have stated, divergences and remaining questions need not signify the end of our relations, but can fruitfully set the agenda for future discussions. While convergences may appropriately lead us to common action and growth in our relations, further clarity about convergences and divergences alike can lead us to study, especially at a local level, so that what we hold in common and what separates us might be better understood. A key feature of this document was the mutual questioning in a spirit of striving to understand. Some of these questions we asked could be fruitfully discussed on a congregational level; others might be better discussed in ministerial associations or in seminaries and theology faculties. The questions that we have asked each other are not exhaustive. We have asked them in part to stimulate discussion, self-understanding, and learning, about the other, and about ourselves.

73. Perhaps we haven't been asking your questions at all. Perhaps your local experience suggests more convergences than we have named; perhaps less. We encourage you to ask further questions in your own context, using the methodology which we used. We invite you to consider gathering together a group of interested Evangelicals and Catholics in your area to hold a series of discussions on matters of importance in your own contexts. It needn't be complicated. Choose a subject that you would like to address, of mutual interest, and invite participants to offer presentations or share on what is being discussed. Enter into the process with your convictions, but also with humility and an open heart. Ask each other questions, and listen deeply to the responses of your conversation partner. Look for areas where you can encourage each other, where you can learn from the other. Try to answer each other's questions, and ask new questions. Pray that the Holy Spirit guide your conversations. The World Evangelical Alliance and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity would be grateful to hear the results of your conversations.

74. Finally, we invite you to view dialogue and consultation as a way of engaging your faith, and as a standing together before Christ. Christ is the truth and the fullness of truth can only be found in him. We invite you to consider joining us in pledging ourselves to mutual conversation, consolation, and continuation in admonishing and encouraging one another to remain faithful to the Word who gave us his word that he would be with us to the end of the age (Mt 28:20).

75. "Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen" (Eph 3:20-21).

Appendix I: Participants

Catholic Participants

- Monsignor Juan Usma Gómez, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican/Colombia, Coordinator (2009–2016) [P S D]
- Most Reverend Donald Bolen, Archbishop of Regina, Canada, (2009–2016) [S D]
- Monsignor Gregory J. Fairbanks, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity – Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary, Philadelphia, USA (2009–2016)
- Ms Beatriz Sarkis Simões, Focolare Movement, Brasil (2009–2016)
- Most Reverend Rodolfo Valenzuela Núñez, Bishop of La Vera Paz, Guatemala (2009–2016)
- Dr Nicholas Jesson, (Local Participant), Ecumenical Officer, Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon, Canada (2015–2016)

Evangelical Participants

- Rev Prof Dr Rolf Hille, Director of Ecumenical Affairs of WEA, Germany, Coordinator (2009–2016) [P S D]
- Rev Dr Leonardo De Chirico, Alleanza Evangelica Italiana, Italia (2009–2016)
- Rev José De Segovia Barrón, Alianza Evangélica Española, España (2009–2013)
- Rev Prof Dr Joel C. Elowsky, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO (LC-MS), USA (LC-MS), USA, (2009–2016) [S D]
- Rev Prof Dr Timoteo D. Gener, Asian Theological Seminary, The Philippines (2009–2016)
- Rev Jaime Llenas, Alianza Evangélica Española, España (2014–2016)
- Rev Prof Dr James Nkansah-Obrempong, Vice-Chair, WEA Theological Commission, Kenya (2009–2016)
- Rev Prof Dr Claus Schwambach, General Director FLT – Faculdade Luterana de Teologia in São Bento do Sul, SC, Brasil, (2009–2016)
- Rev Dr Salomo Strauss, Evangelical Church of Württemberg, Germany (2009–2016)
- Rev James Kautt (Observer), International Christian Church Tübingen, Germany/USA (2009–2014)

Appendix 2: Places and Papers

2008 Rome: Planning Committee Meeting

2009 São Paulo (Brazil)

- “The Common Ground on Dogmatic Questions and on Ethical Issues”
- Gregory Fairbanks, “Foundations of Catholic Social Teaching”
- James Nkansah-Obrempong, “Evangelical Views of Ethical Principles: Insights and Perspectives from Africa”
- Beatriz Sarkis Simões, “Economy of Communion: A Catholic Experience” (communication)
- **Local contacts** with the Evangelical Ministry in São Paulo

2011 Rome (Italy)

- “Scripture and Tradition”, and “The Authoritative Interpretation on the Word of God”
- Donald Bolen, “Scripture and Tradition in Catholic Doctrinal Understanding”
- Joel Elowsky, “Scripture and Tradition in an Evangelical Context.” *Concordia Journal* Winter 2016, 41–62
- José de Segovia, “The Question of Scripture and Tradition in Traditional Catholic Countries in Europe, like Spain”
- “Scriptures in the Life and Mission of the Church” (communications)
- Rodolfo Valenzuela “A Catholic Perspective from Latin America”
- Prof. James Nkansah-Obrempong “Reflections from Africa”
- Carlo Maria Martini, SJ, “The Central Role of the Word of God in the Life of the Church. The Bible in Pastoral Ministry”, (Excerpts from the Congress on Dei Verbum, Rome 2005)
- Gregory J. Fairbanks, “Scriptures in the Life and Mission of the Church: An Historical Examination”
- Beatriz Sarkis Simoes, “The Bible and Me: Christian Spiritual Journey”
- Claus Schwambach, “Scriptures in the Life and Mission of the Brazilian Church” 22
- Thomas Oden with Joel Elowsky, “Scripture in the Life and Mission of the American Church”
- **Local contacts** with the President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Cardinal Walter Kasper

2012 Chicago (USA)

- “The Role of the Church in Salvation and Preparation of the Questionnaires”
- Leonardo DeChirico, “Salvation Belongs to the Lord: Evangelical Consensus in Dialogue with Roman Catholicism” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 39:4 (2015) 292–310
- Jean-Marie Tillard, “Church and Salvation”, (On the sacramentality of the Church), ARCIC II.
- **Local contacts.** Visit to the Billy Graham Center and Meeting with representatives of the Wheaton College

2013 Ciudad de Guatemala (Guatemala)

- First Evangelical Responses to the Questionnaires
- Rolf Hille, “Some Fundamental Ecumenical Considerations Concerning Dialogue Between Roman Catholic And Evangelical Theologians”
- **Local contacts** with Evangelical leaders from Guatemala and with the Apostolic Nuncio in Guatemala, the Most Reverend Nicolas Henry Marie Denis Thevenin
- Working on the Draft
- *Drafting Committee:* Rome, March 2014

2014 Bad Blankenburg (Germany)

- At the sources of the Reformation New First Completed Draft
- *Meeting with Evangelical leaders* at the Allianz Haus in Bad Blankenburg
- Study tour to some important historical sites of the Lutheran Reformation (Erfurt, Wittenberg, and Eisleben)
- *Drafting Committee:* Boston (USA), March 2015

2015 Saskatoon (Canada)

- Working of the Final Draft
- **Local contacts** with members of the “Saskatoon Evangelical-Catholic Dialogue”
- *Drafting Committee* mandated with finalizing the text after consultation with all participants

Appendix 3: Questionnaires

Catholic Questionnaire on Evangelical – Catholic Relations

Kindly answer this questionnaire openly and honestly

Bishops Conference of

1. What is the breakdown (percentage) of Evangelical and Catholic populations in your area? Any further statistical information about Evangelicals in your area would be helpful. What contacts do you have with them?
2. Identify three common concerns jointly facing Evangelicals and Catholics in your region that could provide opportunities for common public witness. Have you engaged in common witness on those questions? 23
3. Are there occasions where Evangelicals and Catholics gather together in common prayer in your region, whether as the two communities, at broader ecumenical celebrations, or alongside other faith communities?
4. Do you have occasions to engage together in initiatives aimed at advocating the common good, or promoting justice and peace?
5. Are there any instances where Evangelicals and Catholics are engaging in common study (e. g. of the Bible) or dialogue in your area? Are you aware of the international consultations between Evangelicals and Catholics or national discussions which have taken place in some countries in recent decades?
6. Are there instances of cooperation between Evangelicals and Catholics in educational institutions or theological colleges/seminaries in your region? Do you do anything within your churches to deepen our understanding of the other, in order to move past misunderstandings and misconceptions?
7. Are there opportunities for Evangelical and Catholic leadership to regularly meet in your region? If so, do you take part? Are Evangelicals and Catholics fellow participants in ecumenical organizations in your area?
8. Have you had any other interaction with Evangelicals? How has your relationship been in the past (both positive and negative), and have those relations changed in recent years?

9. Has there been any noticeable change within Evangelical churches in recent decades? What are the implications of those changes for relations in your region?
10. What are the main challenges that you see in your context for Evangelical-Catholic relations and dialogue? What hinders our working together?
11. To what extent are Evangelical efforts at proclaiming the Gospel – evangelizing, looking to deepen the personal faith of the hearer – perceived on the Catholic side as proselytism? Do you feel proselytism complicates Evangelical-Catholic relations in your region, and is there anything you are doing to address this?
12. How do you regard Evangelical communities – as ecclesial communities are as sects? How do you regard individual Evangelicals? Do you see them as fellow Christians, as brothers and sisters in Christ?

Evangelical Questionnaire on Catholic – Evangelical Relations

National Evangelical Alliance of

1. To the best of your knowledge, what would you say is the approximate number of Evangelicals in your country?
2. What has been the tension between Evangelicals and Catholics in the past? What are the tensions today, if any? Have you seen any improvement in relations between the two?
3. Has your community (church) had contact with Catholics in the past? Is there contact with Catholics in the present? If so, what have they been (or what are they)?
4. Would your community (church) see Catholics as brothers and sisters in (insert term for geographical area) in Christ? Why or why not?
5. If you can, list three common concerns jointly facing Evangelicals and Roman Catholics in your region, which provide opportunities for common public witness (e. g., life issues, justice issues, political controversies)? Have you or your national alliance engaged in common witness on those questions?
6. In your experience, have you noticed any change in the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) in recent decades, for instance, since Vatican II? What are the implications of those changes for relations with Catholics in your region, if any?

7. Are there any instances where Evangelicals and Catholics are engaging in common study (i. e., of the Bible) or dialogue in your area?
8. Are you aware of the international consultations between Evangelicals and Catholics or national discussions which have taken place in some countries in recent decades?
9. Are Evangelicals and Catholics fellow participants in ecumenical or inter-Christian organizations in your area?
10. Are there opportunities for Evangelical and Catholic leadership to regularly meet in your region? If so, do you take part?
11. Would you urge a born-again Catholic to remain in his/her church or not?
12. What are the main challenges that you see in your context for Evangelicals-Catholic relations and dialogue? What hinders our working together?
13. What do national alliances expect regarding the role of the World Alliance (WEA) in contact and dialogue with the RCC in helping national alliances? How can we (of the WEA) help national and regional alliances in facilitating dialogue with the Catholics on a national or regional level?

Evangelical – Roman Catholic Dialogue

The official documents of the dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Evangelical Alliance

- The Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission (1977–1984)
- Church, Evangelisation, and the Bonds of Koinonia (1993–2002)
- Christian Witness in a Multi Religious World (2011)
- ‘Scripture and Tradition’ and ‘the Church in Salvation’ – Catholics and Evangelicals Explore Challenges and Opportunities (2009–2016)

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