

## THE THIRD WORLD CONFERENCE ON FAITH AND ORDER, LUND (1952)

*The Lund Conference was held in 1952. The report was approved by Conference in 1953.*

### I. SUMMARY OF REPORT

Chapter I points to the degree of mutual understanding now reached, and urges that the only way forward is to *act* in obedience to the unity already achieved.

Chapter II, on 'Christ and His Church', asserts the inseparable union between Christ and His Church, and the inseparable connexion between the nature and the mission of the Church. It treats of the Church as a pilgrim people in a strange land, waiting for the consummation of its redemption, but already sharing through the presence of the Holy Spirit in the power of the resurrection. It calls on all the Churches to submit themselves to the judgement of Christ; and lays upon the Faith and Order Movement the task of studying the doctrine of the Church in close relation to the doctrines of Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Chapter III, on 'Continuity and Unity', reaffirming the unity of the Church, states that the Pauline image of the Church as the Body of Christ is a living reality, not a mere metaphor. It points out the different conceptions of continuity within the Body held by the various communions, notes certain small advances in the direction of reconciliation and calls for the setting up of an ecumenical Commission to study the history which all the Churches have in common. It discusses the notion of schism, with especial reference to the current doctrine of internal schism, which not all members of the Conference could accept. It draws attention to the social and cultural factors which sometimes cause and often accentuate our divisions, and gives many examples of profitable co-operation which are possible and necessary now. It recommends the further study of the conception of a covenant relation between the Churches as a means to the end of organic union.

Chapter IV, on 'Ways of Worship', treats largely of the divisions within the Church between those who practise liturgical worship and those whose worship is spontaneous, and between those who give primacy to the Sacrament and those who give it to the preaching of the Word; in each case it asserts that the two apparent opposites are in fact complementary, and welcomes an unexpected approach towards agreement on the sacrificial aspect of the Holy Communion. It goes on to show the great importance of non-theological factors in the matter of divergences in worship, and makes many recommendations for study and practical experiment with the end of greater mutual understanding and agreement.

Chapter V, on 'Intercommunion', propounds a definitive terminology for the discussion of this and cognate issues. It records the deep difference between those, in a large majority, who consider that an extension of the practice of intercommunion would be a valuable preparation for the fuller unity to which we look forward, and those who believe that fellowship in the Sacrament should be postponed until the time of organic unity or the presence of mutually acceptable ministries. But it acknowledges that the Sacrament in all the divided Churches is a real means of grace

through which Christ gives Himself to the believer. It calls on all the Churches to look further into their doctrine and practice, in view of certain inconsistencies which are observable. It concludes by making the recommendation that united Communion Services at Ecumenical Gatherings should be held at the invitation of the local church or churches which sanction such services.

Chapter VI summarizes the findings of the Conference and calls on all Christians to throw off their apathy, to take part in the tasks of study and service which lie before us, and to be ready to receive what God is waiting to give us.

Appendices give the new constitution and membership of the Faith and Order Commission within the World Council of Churches.

## II. COMMENTS OF THE COMMITTEE

1. The Committee commends to the Methodist people, the careful study of the Report of the Third World Conference on Faith and Order: also the preparatory Reports of the Commissions on 'the Church' 'ways of Worship' and 'Intercommunion', and of the three volumes prepared in connexion with them.

2. The Committee welcomes the complete integration of the Faith and Order movement with the World Council of Churches but deplors the smallness of the new Faith and Order Commission with the consequently inadequate representation of Methodism and other communions.

3. The Committee while valuing the stress laid by the Report on the union between Christ and His Church, which is His body, regrets the almost complete exclusion of the other New Testament descriptions of the Church. Thus conceived, almost solely as the Body of Christ, the Church may usurp some of the functions of the Holy Spirit. The Committee therefore welcomes the recommendation that further study be given to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as well as to the doctrine of Christ in relation to the Church.

4. The Committee regrets that there is no reference in the Report to the chief differences between the Churches on the nature of the Church and particularly on the question of authority (as indicated in the preparatory volume entitled 'The Church') and consequently no clear statement of the problem with which the Theological Commission was confronted. For this reason, it commends to the attention of our people the preparatory report on the Church which was in the hands of the delegates at Lund and should be studied side by side with the larger volume on the nature of the Church.

5. The Committee regards as especially valuable the emphasis throughout the Report on the relation of social, cultural and economic factors to Church Unity and hopes that this matter will be more fully explored. It considers that where these factors are allowed to determine our attitude towards other communions, they become symptoms of a denial of our common fellowship in Christ and potent instruments of disunity.

6. The Committee notes that in spite of certain tendencies towards an undue sacramentalism and towards an exclusive emphasis on liturgical worship in the preparatory report of the Theological Commission on 'Ways of Worship', the Report of the Conference preserves the balance between 'liturgical' and 'free worship', giving to each a place and that it asserts that differences as to the relation of word and

Sacrament should never be more than a matter of emphasis within the one worship of the whole Church.

7. The Committee welcomes as a clear sign of advance in mutual understanding by the Churches represented at Lund the statement: 'We are agreed in recognising the administration of the Lord's Supper in the divided Churches, when controlled by the words of institution, as real means of grace through which Christ gives Himself to those who in faith receive the appointed elements of bread and wine'.

8. The Committee willingly accedes to the statement of doctrine about the Holy Communion which the Report believes to be acceptable to the great majority of the Churches represented at the Conference: 'This dominical sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood, controlled by the words of institutions, with the use of the appointed elements of bread and wine, is: (a) a memorial of Christ's incarnation and earthly ministry, of His death and resurrection; (b) a sacrament in which He is truly present to give Himself to us, uniting us to Himself, to His eternal sacrifice, and to one another; and (c) eschatologically, an anticipation of our fellowship with Christ in His eternal kingdom.' It is hoped that the understanding already reached in relation to Holy Communion will be fostered and increased by common study and worship within the ecumenical movement; and that every opportunity will be taken by the members of the various communions to experience and appreciate modes of worship not familiar to them.

9. The Committee wholeheartedly accepts the majority view in the Report that a 'valuable preparation for the fuller unity to which we look forward would be the extension of the practice of intercommunion between different Churches'; and that intercommunion, when agreed without sacrifice of principle, 'may properly and beneficially precede reunion'.

10. The Committee agrees to the suggestion that all Churches should re-examine their ways of ordering and administering the Lord's Supper, in the hope of fuller agreement between them; but is convinced of the great spiritual advantages of opening the Table to all true believers in Christ.

11. The Committee agrees to and will help to carry out the recommendations made by the Report in respect of Communion Services at Ecumenical gatherings, the chief of which is that the local church or churches which sanction such services should invite all members of the gathering to an Open Communion Service.

12. The Committee pledges itself without reserve to full participation in the future conversations of the Faith and Order Movement, and calls upon all Circuits and Churches in Methodism, and all its ministers and members, to act together with other Churches in obedience to the unity which is already ours, and to co-operate with them in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel us to act separately. It prays that by expressing in action the unity already achieved all the Churches may be led forward by the Holy Spirit into a deeper and fuller unity.

*(Agenda 1953, pp. 31-4)*

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The Conference of 1985 adopted a response to the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order Commission's *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (see Volume 2, pp. 412-429).