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he again supported the interests of Christian higher education. Although suffering with cancer from 1990, Dr Schrotenboer continued to devote himself to his family, ecumenical and educational interests until his death on 16 July 1998.

Introduction

George Vandervelde

World Evangelical Fellowship/Roman Catholic Church Conversations on the nature and mission of the Church, Tantur, Jerusalem, 12–19 October, 1997

The papers published in this issue of *Evangelical Review of Theology* (ERT) were prepared for the second consultation between representatives of the World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF) and representatives of Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. The meeting took place 12–19 October, 1997, at the Tantur Ecumenical Institute for Theological Studies (located between Jerusalem and Bethlehem).

The most recent consultation is part of an ongoing conversation that began formally in 1993 but was prompted by an event that occurred more than a decade earlier. At the 1980 General Assembly of the WEF, held in Hoddesdon, England, two representatives from the Roman Catholic Church had been invited to attend the assembly as observers. Their presence, and especially their official greetings to the Assembly, triggered a heated debate. This led the WEF Theological Commission to establish a Task Force on Ecumenical Issues, which was mandated to present an Evangelical assessment of contemporary Roman Catholicism. When the resultant statement (published in ERT 10:4 (1986) 342–364; 11:1 (1987) 78–94; and in booklet form as *Roman Catholicism: A Contemporary Evangelical Perspective*, ed. Paul G. Schrotenboer (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988)) came to the attention of the Vatican office on Christian unity, it suggested further discussion of the issues raised in the statement. After some preparatory meetings between representatives of the WEF (headed by Dr. Paul Schrotenboer) and of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, the first consultation took place in Venice in 1993. The topics discussed there were Scripture and Tradition, and Justification by Faith. The papers and responses to them were subsequently published in ERT (21:2 (1997) 101–154).

During the discussion in Venice it became clear that intertwined with the topics under discussion are two others that tend to divide Evangelicals and Roman Catholics: the nature of the church as community of Christ and the nature and practice of mission and evangelism. These interrelated topics became the foci of the Tantur consultation. Each topic was addressed in a Roman Catholic and an Evangelical paper. All four papers are published in this issue.

In discussing the ecclesiological papers, various issues sprang to the fore. One of these concerns the question, What is the defining characteristic of the church? Through careful listening to one another, it became clear that it is too easy to contrast Evangelical and Roman Catholic understandings of the church in terms of ‘word’ and ‘sacrament’, respectively. The Roman Catholic discussion partners understand their ecclesiology as placing equal emphasis on both. Nevertheless, from an Evangelical viewpoint, Roman Catholic teaching appears to assign sacramentality a pivotal role in understanding, not only the nature of the church as such, but also the nature, ranking, and validity of ordained

ministry, and the relation of the sacraments to salvation. In an Evangelical conception of the church, on the other hand, the generative role of the word is so central that it cannot simply be juxtaposed with the sacrament. Rather than giving equal emphasis to word and sacrament, Evangelicals consider the sacraments to be wholly subservient to the word. Although in Evangelicalism such subservience is entirely compatible with a high view of the sacraments, it can also lead to their denigration.

A related issue of discussion at Tantur concerned the meaning of the Reformation adage, *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda est*, 'a reformed church is to be ever reforming'. This call may be seen as the critical ramification of the centrality of the word mentioned above. This reforming imperative goes to the heart of Reformational ecclesiology. The church in all its dimensions is constantly called to be accountable to the word of her Lord. It is striking that the Second Vatican Council too emphasizes the need for the constant renewal of the church. Significantly, the Council's challenge for renewal resounds most pointedly in the context of ecumenism: engagement with other ecclesial communities calls for mutual renewal, even conversion. In exploring the mutual significance of *semper reformanda* the Evangelical participants probed the scope of potential renewal within the Roman Catholic Church: in what sense is the church considered to be a divine institution; and does this divine quality quarantine any aspect of the church from the call to renewal? On the other hand, the Roman Catholic participants probed the way in which the normativity of Scripture functions in the call for the radical renewal of the church: who decides what the Scriptures demand in the way of the reformation of the church today? If each individual has this right and duty, but the community refuses to heed the self-appointed reformer, is he or she justified in splitting the church?

Another issue that arose directly from the ecclesiological discussion concerns the central question, what truth(s) do Evangelicals and Roman Catholics hold in common? The answer seems, in some sense, obvious. Both confess Jesus Christ as Saviour, as Lord, as human and divine, crucified, risen, returning; both hold a high view of Scripture as the Spirit-breathed word. In terms of confessions, both traditions affirm the contents of the Apostles' and the Nicene Creeds. While acknowledging this, Evangelicals are usually quick to insert an emphatic qualifier: 'but we interpret all these matters differently'. We did not have time to explore this issue at length, though the question arises whether the differences are such that they simply negate what is initially affirmed, namely, the truth(s) held in common. Is the commonness merely appearance? Or does the very suggestion of 'mere appearance' reveal a skewed approach to the question of what we share? Do we allow our different holding of the truth(s)—important as these are—to trump our being held by the truth? Can Evangelicals and Catholics together affirm the statement to which Pope John Paul II appeals, namely, that what unites us is much greater than what divides us? If so, what implications does this imply for our mutual relations?

Many of these issues crystallized when one of the Evangelical participants described the struggle with theological liberalism in his church as a struggle for the soul of the church. This assessment prompted another Evangelical participant to observe that, although the Roman Catholic church too has within it what may be called 'liberal' theologians, one would hardly describe the problem this entails as a struggle for the soul of the Roman Catholic Church. In fact, one explanation for the remarkable development of the U.S. phenomenon called 'Evangelicals and Catholics Together' lies in the fact that, in spite of all the accretions that, in the Roman Catholic tradition, seem to mute the sound of the gospel, Evangelicals observe that the Roman Catholic Church functions in some sense as a mighty bulwark against liberalism. The realization of even this negative commonality in turn gave rise to an obvious question: How has the Roman Catholic Church managed to

maintain a solid core of orthodoxy, while Protestant churches have either slidden into liberalism, or maintained orthodoxy at the cost of ever further splintering? Has the institution which the Evangelicals consider to place itself between the authority of the Scripture and the church, namely, the teaching authority of the Roman Catholic Church, in fact, served to safeguard basic orthodoxy? Here the discussion has come full circle, it seems, returning to the issue of the Venice Consultation: the relation between Scripture and tradition. The next consultations will attempt to move more deeply into the issue of the nature, extent, and significance of communion between separated ecclesial communities.

At the Tantur consultation, mission issues made themselves felt long before they were explicitly discussed on the basis of the papers on mission. Both the intrinsic relation between mission and church and the variety of cultures and peoples represented by those involved in the consultations placed mission-related issues on the agenda from the outset. Sister Maria Ko is a Chinese Professor who teaches theology for half of the year in Rome, while she divides the other half between teaching in Hong Kong and mainland China. Reverend Joseph Duc Dao, who is vice-president of an international missionary centre in Rome, is Vietnamese. Although Father Thomas Stransky is North American and Father Frans Bouwen Belgian, both have made Israel their permanent home, and have been deeply involved in Palestinian/Muslim—Jewish—Christian relations. Among the Evangelical participants Dr. Samuel Escobar teaches in his native Peru, as well as in the USA, and has written extensively on the mission of the church. Dr. Stanley Mutunga is from Kenya, where he teaches at the Nairobi Graduate School of Theology.

Given their richly variegated background, together with the culture and experience of the European and North American based participants, it is hardly surprising that mission-related issues arose throughout the consultation. We were reminded at critical points that the 'Asian mind' resists approaching issues such as 'salvation' or 'church' in piecemeal fashion but deals with them holistically. Moreover, the presence of Asian participants made it impossible to forget how the church there faces a challenge that is strikingly different. We became aware how different the setting for church and mission is in China, for example, where Christians comprise only a small percentage of that huge population, as compared, on the one hand, to the situation in Europe, where Christianity has been a majority religion but now faces a largely secularized society, and as compared, on the other hand, to the situation in many Latin American countries which are predominantly Roman Catholic, and where the Church may feel beleaguered simultaneously by the rapid growth of Evangelicalism and the encroachment of secularism.

The papers on mission led to a discussion on the urgency of the call to mission and on the issue of the relationship of the uniqueness and the universal significance of Jesus Christ. The Roman Catholic and the Evangelical traditions both express great passion for mission. Moreover, in both communions this commitment flows from the same source. It springs from a deep conviction regarding the uniqueness and all-sufficiency of Christ's person and work. Yet, Evangelicals and Roman Catholics tend to draw different conclusions regarding the universal scope of Christ's work. For the Second Vatican Council the conviction that no one is saved apart from Christ, does not lead to the conclusion that all who do not know Christ are lost, but rather that those adherents of other religions who are saved can be saved, in a mysterious way, only through Christ. Evangelicals, by contrast, tend to draw the conclusion that only those who know and believe explicitly in Christ can be saved. Interestingly, it became clear that the Catholic position does not entail soteriological universalism, the notion that every one will be saved.

The other major issue related to mission surrounds the terms ‘proselytism’ and ‘sect’ both of which are frequently used to describe the Evangelical activities and communities by the majority church, such as Roman Catholicism in Latin America and Orthodoxy in Russia. These terms refer to missionary practice and attitude, i.e., to the practical matters of ‘sheep stealing’, of competition versus cooperation, and usually to the relation of a majority church to minority churches. The discussion of these issues, however, quickly zeroed in on the profound theological questions that undergird these practical matters. How does one establish who is an ‘authentic Christian’? In determining ‘authenticity’, what is the relation of the sacraments to a ‘personal, saving relationship’ with Jesus Christ? What are the assumptions behind calling a group of Christians who have separated from a particular church a ‘sect’. At Tantur we made a beginning in clarifying issues such as these, while at the same we heard reports of painful discrepancies between official teaching and policy and the practical relations between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics in various regions.

The first aim of a consultation such as this is greater understanding, both of points of division and of commonness. The second aim is more practical: how do these communities relate to one another in circumstances as different as Africa, Asia, Latin America, and North America? Drawing on the fruits of the previous meetings, the next consultation, to be held in Wheaton, Illinois, will attempt to obtain greater clarity on the relationship of that which unites and that which divides in both faith and practice. As the close of the Communique indicates, the proposed topics are ‘communion and cooperation in mission’ and ‘proselytism and religious freedom in relation to Christian unity’.

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Evangelicals and Catholics Converse About Church and Mission

Communiqué from conversations between members of the World Evangelical Fellowship and the nature and mission of the Church, Tantur, Jerusalem, October 12–19, 1997

In 1993 there was a first meeting in Venice (Italy) for conversations between Evangelical and Roman Catholic representatives, co-sponsored by the World Evangelical Fellowship and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. The themes were Justification, Scripture and Tradition. As a follow up to it, a second meeting for conversations was held in the Ecumenical Institute of Tantur (Jerusalem), October 12–19, 1997. Participants represented different regions of the world and a variety of Christian ministries.

The main themes for these conversations—agreed upon during the Venice meeting—were issues related to the nature and mission of the Church. Representatives of each