

**The Relationship Between
The National Council of Churches of Christ
and
Roman Catholicism
In the U.S.A.**

As of 1967

By

John Emory McCaw

**Re-Issue With Comments,
June 2012**

**Vinco Publications
Des Moines, Iowa 2012**

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**Published by Vinco Publications
4210 S.W. 26th Street,
Des Moines, Iowa, 50321-2242**

Acknowledgements

Dedicated to the memory of a dear friend, Edward C. Daley, Bishop of the Diocese of Des Moines, 1948 - 1964. After attending the third session of Vatican II he was killed in a plane crash at the Fiumicino Airport, Rome.

Acknowledging some of the many who became friends while guiding my ecumenical pilgrimage into Roman Catholicism. Some in the group that follows went into leadership roles at the Vatican.

Baum, William W.*

Campion, Donald

Carberry, John J.

Cushing, Richard J.

Dingman, Maurice J.β

Ligutti, Luigi G,

McIlhon, John

Wright, John J.

***William Baum, as of March 8, 2011, became the longest in service of the Cardinals from the United States.**

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Introduction

The Sealantic Grant I received from the Association of Theological Schools was to make a study of Protestant-Catholic Relations in America with special attention to the National Council of Churches. However by hindsight I realize that it turned out to be overly focused on NCC. A large section is on the operation of NCC as it seemed to be a collection of agencies rather than a single agency. Each agency because of historical reasons had its own principal officer and the principal officer of NCC found it somewhat difficult to bring about consistent and coordinated programs with proper focus.

What follows is the publication, a half century later, of Agenda Item IV of the NCC Boston meeting held June 1-2, 1967. It serves as a reminder of the contrasting assumptions held then and now about ecumenism. My study of the Role of the Theological Faculties in the Universities of North America and Europe, a decade earlier, also marked a turning point in the the relationship of the theological faculties to universities. From clergy training to the academic study of Christianity to the academic study of "religions" became the trend. Seminaries which in many cases had been of the very founding of the university now were involved in the academic study of "religions," closed or became independent from the university.

This document does not claim to be a report of a scientific study with a sociological focus on Catholic-Protestant relations. There have been and will be many such studies. Rather it is the result of much reading, much interviewing and a lifelong involvement in ecumenical relations, actually living the history of the time.

The Contrast of the Decade of the 1960s With the First Decades of 2000

In the sixties the nation was involved in the Vietnam War and was in the midst of protests against the war. The nation was also involved in the agony of final integration of African-Americans in racist North and South . The religious mood was stimulated by significant prophetic preaching led by black preachers. Martin Luther King was assassinated during this time. The larger part of the population was involved in a war which included the draft. The anti-nicotine addiction resulted from secular concern about health. Religious concern was not apparent. There was still significant religious involvement in natural disaster relief as well concern for fratricidal wars in places like Africa. There was an almost Messianic fervor in both Catholic and Protestant Christianity over the pronouncements of Vatican II.

In the first Decades of 2000, when this report is being reissued, the nation is still at war. The office of presidency continues to include "commander and chief" as a part of the normal responsibilities of the office. Citizens are not involved in the war and view those who are as a sort of special world police force hunting down terrorists. Since there is no draft, no protests or prophetic preaching, no special taxes related to warfare, for most citizens life went on into "boom time" fueled by fraudulent contracts such as" swops and derivatives." "Moses" returned and found America worshipping the "golden calf". Then came the recession and the "morning after." College graduates were indentured by debt and no employment. Government bodies raised revenues by taxing addictions now including gambling and by "caught in the act' technology. Extreme partisanship froze the democratic process of legislation and all but made governing non functional.

American Christianity has been weakened by loss of membership and by scandal among the clergy. Loss of membership has been somewhat countered by immigration from south of the border. Assuaging of wrong has been covered up by the use money to pay for wrongful killing of citizens in war and for clerical sins in religion. Financial support of Ecumenical agencies, local, statewide, national and international have all but dried up. Staffs have been reduced to less than 5% of former strength.

The contrast above makes almost mute the report below but it will serve to contrast the two eras. It will also reveal an almost intoxication with the prospect of the "peaceful kingdom" on earth being brought about in America by the unity of Christians.

However, "Moses has, indeed, returned and found the children of the U.S. are worshipping the golden calf." The health of the nation is focused on the very young, the obese and the very old, from ADHD and autism of children, to fat young and middle aged, to dementias of the aged. The majority of the citizens are concerned about economic questions and the inability to cope with mounting debt. Secular concerns rather than religious concerns dominate.

There is also a steady erosion of the progress made in Vatican II and also in ecumenical relations. The Roman Catholic Church has chronic financial scandals at its very core, the Vatican. It will have more. This is more apt to happen because of aging Popes having to let others manage affairs and when a Pope is succeeded by the "vice" pope and there is no regime change. While the Vatican is a separate state it is still embedded in Italy!

AGENDA ITEM IV
For Presentation To the NCC General Board
Boston, June 1-2, 1967

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES
OF CHRIST IN THE USA AND ROMAN CATHOLICISM

Nature and Source of Material

The material attached is in the form of essays of varying length on topics which have become accented in the course of the study in recent months of Protestant, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic relations. The sources for the impressions come from reading diocesan and denominational papers, books, thesis, the secular press, and interviewing bureaucrats, clergy, lay people, professors, and others -- both progressive and traditionalist -- as well as attending consultations between Protestants and Catholics.

I was earlier made sensitive to such relations through the instruction of such men as John McNeill, William Pauck, Massey Shepherd, W.E. Garrison, and C.C. Morrison. I also have greatly benefited from the writings and counsel of such men as Robert Handy, Ralph Hislop, James Smylie, Martin Marty, Eugene Bianchi, William Norgren, David Bowman, Robert Dodds, and many others. None of the above should in any way be held accountable for what has been written.

What follows then, are the distillations of impressions and judgments which it is hoped will furnish a basis for further discussion and perhaps action in appropriate areas of church structure, but most of all, will enhance the increase of charity among Christians, and in turn make real the Gospel before all persons.

Changes in Protestant, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic Relations

The difference in attitudes of Protestant, Orthodox, and Roman Catholics toward each other between the three decades from 1930 to 1960 is that of night to day. The matrix of factors includes depression, wars, new generations, modern technology, diminution of sectarianism in Protestantism and ethnic varieties in Roman Catholicism, Protestant church unions, softening of regionalism, ending of rural ascendancy, and the consequent rise of urban dominance; the extension of higher education to the masses, mass communication, and particularly television; the work of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, the Civil Liberties Union, B'nai Brith, and Supreme Court decisions. By 1960 the symbols of this change were to be seen in Pope John XXIII and Vatican II, as well as in the election of John Kennedy.

Now we are trampling all over each other to be the first to proclaim acceptance of one another. Like lovers prevented by class status and family prejudice from openly seeing each other, now suddenly we are courting with minimum stigma or obstacle.

Yet all is not peaceful in local communities. Much division and tension remain. Older members of families are still torn apart when Protestants and Catholics marry. Even though there are widely heralded exceptions, such as the presence of Protestant ministers at Catholic marriages involving a Protestant, there is yet no possibility of the participation of a Roman Catholic priest in a Protestant wedding involving a Catholic. There are many communities torn apart today over legislation involving buses and textbooks for parochial and private education.

So much has happened, though, in Protestant, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic relations that church historians and theologians have left the safety of the musty records of past centuries to get in the vanguard of church reform and prediction of things to come. Orthodox and Roman Catholics are in dialogues and mutual anathemas have been lifted. Protestant Reformation scholars and leaders are being reclaimed by Roman Catholic scholars. Many Protestant leaders of today no longer fear a Roman Catholic monolithic structure, but see the Reformation

continuing on within Roman Catholicism itself, in the form of the "aggiornamento." Officially, Roman Catholicism no longer views Protestants as heretics, much less as descendants of heretics, or of clergy who left the church to get married. Protestants are fellow Christians, allies in a world going soft and mad, with Christian conversion not even keeping up with the population rate.

Christians are now praying together, even if they officially may not commune together. Christians may now work for social justice together and ameliorate man's inhumanity to man without getting a proselytizing tag or test the faith of their actions. Many Protestant scholars hold such sentiments as, "If the Roman Catholic Church of 450 years ago had looked as it does today, there never would have been a Reformation," and "An indefinite separation is now unjustified."

Some Roman Catholic scholars in addition to reclaiming Reformation leaders talk no longer of "return to Rome," but of a hopeful convergence of Christians and the absorption of each other's virtues. Roman Catholic bureaucrats and individual members of the hierarchy, including diocesan priests and religious, take the initiative in establishing fellowship with Protestants, feeling that "A lack of real contact with Catholics as persons as well as with the newer developments in Catholic theology is the basis for the continued fixity of some Protestants."

Yet, the process of Catholic Protestant relations is basically ongoing, which causes concern to some Roman Catholics primarily within Roman Catholicism, and not basically over relations with other Christians. This is not a day of unity, but a day of exploring cooperation, adjusting to the increasingly known factors about each other, and understanding the trends within each tradition so that some day within God's good time union may result. Within Roman Catholicism ecclesiastical structure remains basically slow of movement and conservative. Yet there is sufficient movement that traditionalists become so frightened that they demonstrate even during services conducted by the Pope, shouting Latin when Italian is being spoken. Extremists on the right and the left have had to be chastened.

Within Protestantism, some view Protestant ecumenists as involved in dangerous naiveté in relation to Roman Catholicism. Some still feel that the Roman Catholic Bishop is an agent of the Pope and not a representative of Christ to His people. They are doubtful that collegiality and decentralization will come off. They still doubt that clericalism will be assuaged by the increasing roles of the laity. They wonder whether religious liberty is coming about because of change of doctrine, or because of the secular climate and political necessity. They cannot believe that all baptized persons are really members of the church. They would ask in 1967: "Has 'aggiornamento' rundown, and is the trend now consolidation and even retrenchment?"

If the important phenomenon is the fact of relationship, this does exist and on an increasing scale. What is its structure, and how does it express itself? What follows is only illustrative and in no way a complete report of the rapidly multiplying exchanges and relationships taking place. I would observe that there are very few kinds of relationships being developed today, merely extensions of proven experiences. Most of the new relationships do represent discussions and joint actions together, rather than polemics apart. In order of precedence, perhaps one should observe that togetherness was brought about by war and rehabilitation. Such working together preceded theological discussion; and, of course, this happened long before the 60s. Although in Europe discussions had never really ceased since the great division.

In the National Council of Churches the main thrust of relationships of Protestant and Orthodox to Roman Catholicism is through the Division of Christian Unity, under the leadership of Mrs. Theodore O. Wedel, particularly through the office of ecumenical affairs under Dr. Robert Dodds, who also bears responsibility for relations to Protestant nonmembers of the National Council of Churches, to Judaism, other religions, and nonbelievers. The most active expression of the National Council in terms of joint studies and materials is through the Department of Faith and Order, under the direction of the Rev. William A. Norgren. It is in the Department of Faith and Order that the first Roman Catholic staff member is located. Other areas of the National Council with Roman Catholic relationships now include Church Women United, the University Christian Movement, the Committee on Public Education of the

Department of Educational Development, the China Panel of the Asia Department, the longtime cooperation of Church World Service, and the Board of Managers of the Department of Education for Mission.

Very soon it is hoped that in light of the actions taken by the Assembly at Miami there will be named to the program boards of the divisions permanent consultant observers representing Roman Catholicism. There are many, many informal relationships, some of longer standing. They were catalogued by Ms. Leila Anderson in 1962 and by Dr. Robert Dodds in 1965.

I would observe again that no really new relationship's have developed in recent months, rather an extension in the areas of worship, dialogue, and staffing. It is within Roman Catholicism that Vatican II must have its full influence before much more may happen between Protestant, Orthodox, and Roman Catholics to bring them closer. Perhaps a quick survey of the relationships can be seen under the following arbitrary chosen headings.

Working and Study Groups:

This includes the Working Group made up of representatives from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the National Council of Churches, also the bilateral study groups between the Commission on Ecumenical and Inter-religious Affairs of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and now at least 6 Protestant communions. These groups meeting for the most part without publicity are engaged in serious discussion and study and in the case of the Working Group in mutual clearances. They parallel similar groupings on an international level. From the bilateral groups may come the publication of study papers. Included here should be the rapidly growing relations between individual scholars for purposes of joint study and even publication.

Exchange and Dialogue:

This includes the Living Room Dialogues initiated by the Division of Christian Unity of the National Council of Churches and the Paulist fathers. There are said to be up proximately 5000 groups across United States with participation varying from diocese to diocese. But there are many other exchanges initiated locally, and not of national scope. They range from open houses to ecumenical lecture series and summer schools, and Lenten ecumenical discussions.

Colloquia:

These are listed separately because they represent a more formal approach to ecumenical studies. The best example is the Annual Colloquium held under the direction of the Departmental of Faith and Order on such subjects as conversion and evangelism. Another illustration is the new Journal of Ecumenical Studies edited by Dr. Elwin Smith and Leonard Swidler at Temple University. In addition, scholarly professional societies such as the American Society of Church History are meeting jointly and in some cases reorganizing as one society.

Common Facilities:

There are projects, mainly yet in progress which are being built on the basis of common use of facilities. These include such situations as St. Mark's Parish in Kansas City, Missouri; the common worship and educational facilities in Columbia City, Maryland; joint campuses for public and parochial facilities; and joint use of university, college, and military chapels.

Common publication:

This now includes besides the Guidebook to Living Room Dialogues joint efforts in mission publications between the Maryknoll Press and the Friendship Press, acceptance and use of common Bibles, cooperation in a common translation, publication of joint worship services, as well as guest authors and membership on editorial boards and staff on publications strictly either Protestant or Catholic. The Associated

Church Press and the Catholic Press Association have agreed on professional collaboration and joint meetings.

Common standards:

This is best illustrated by the request for membership in the Protestant originated and dominated American Association of Theological Schools by some Roman Catholic seminaries and the acceptance of its standards. The A.A.T.S., yielding only to the American Bible Society, is perhaps the most inclusive Protestant organization in America, including many communions who are not members in the National Council of Churches. Another illustration of similar standards is seen in the joint award given for the best picture of the year by the National Council of Churches and the National Catholic Office for motion pictures to "Man for All Seasons."

Cooperation:

To the north, in Expo 67, Roman Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants finally have gotten together in one pavilion. There has been long-term cooperation, including not only Protestant and Roman Catholic, but also Jewish women in the WICS Program which has screened more than 60,000 girls for the Job Corps. Campus chaplains are developing cooperative ministries at such centers as Princeton, where they have formed a "United Christian Ministry." The Graduate Theological Union, a theological university on the West Coast, includes now the Jesuits and the Dominicans. Similar cooperation has existed on the East Coast for some time between Union Theological Seminary and Fordham. With the formation of the new Vatican Secretariat on Justice and Peace and national counterparts, a longtime ad hoc cooperation between Catholic and Protestant in the United States in areas of international relief, rehabilitation, peace, race, poverty, and housing will take on a more formal cooperation and a renewed focus.

Counter Lobby:

Some Protestants and Roman Catholics find themselves pressing different points of view on such issues as state constitutional

conventions, government aid to parochial schools, or permissive legislation in states to give bus transportation to private and parochial school children. Some Protestants are joined with the Civil Liberties Union, PTA, and Jewish groups in court actions to prohibit use of federal funds to aid religious schools, chiefly in New York City and Philadelphia. Roman Catholic Dioceses found it necessary to organize provincial conferences and hire an attorney as executive secretary to represent adequately their point of view where serious counter lobbying was being faced across the legislative spectrum.

This year bus transportation was granted in New Jersey, denied in Nebraska; abortion failed in New York and was passed in Colorado. There will be more confrontation, but it should be noted that Protestantism, as such, is not united on any particular issue, nor is Roman Catholicism. Occasionally one also hears the cry of "ecumenical blackmail," and i have not yet heard of any ecumenical bingo games, but a close look would probably find laypersons involved.

Pressure Points:

These involve Protestant hopes for changes in social practices and attitudes within Roman Catholicism. One area is "mixed marriage", which is a common subject of study in most bilateral groups. Another area is birth control, which has moved from confrontation in legislative halls to intense discussion within Roman Catholicism. Protestant theologians do not sign petitions to the pope to urge rethinking of birth control matters, particularly in relationship to world population problems.

Ecumenical Sharing and Staffing:

This is one of the most rapidly proliferating areas and cannot be adequately catalogued. It includes such places as: Fordham, Georgetown, Notre Dame, Seattle, Loyola of Chicago, and other catholic universities adding Protestant theologians to their staffs.Both Protestant and Catholic universities have for some time employed members of faiths other than that controlling the school in order to have competency in secular subjects.

The National Council of Churches in the Division of Christian Unity, Department of Faith and Order has in cooperation with the Jesuit Order the excellent services of Dr. David Bowman. Perhaps this will inaugurate a trend in exchange of staff between a particular denominational headquarters and counterparts in the Roman Catholic bureaucracy.

Other things of ecumenical flavor are happening. Protestant observers are being invited to Catholic mission, liturgical, lay, religious, and priestly gatherings. Cardinal Cushing addressed the Presbyterians assembled in Boston. The United Church of Christ will hold its next Christian Education Conference on the campus of Notre Dame. The Sisters of Mercy of the Chicago Province even put on a musical in the Masonic Temple in Davenport, Iowa.

Joint Litigation:

Protestants and Catholics have found themselves jointly involved even in litigation. Such was the case when St. Louis University and the Christian Board of Publication were joined in a suit for the right to urban renewal land. This was also the situation in the recent Maryland College case.

Joint Celebration:

This story has been the one told most often. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, with a program leaflet jointly issued by the National Council of Churches and the Graymoor Friars, which exceeded one and one-half million in orders this year; common Thanksgiving services and joint participation in the Festival of Faith on Reformation Sunday are other examples. There are many occasional gatherings, some of which are beyond the pale of permitted experiment. They range from a New Year's Eve Interfaith Prayer Service in the Chicago Cathedral, at which Archbishop Cody was host, to Protestant and Jewish participation in the 45th annual Massing of Colors in St. Patrick's Cathedral, with Cardinal Spelman present; indeed, on to simultaneous communion services from the same altar for Methodists and Roman Catholic students at a Methodist College, to communion given to a Protestant bride during a wedding in the Catholic Church. Some activities have received censor,

but the drive of Christians to come together even at The Lord's Table seems hardly restrainable.

Joint Membership:

One can only list some areas where joint membership has come about or is coming into being. Church Women United is encouraging days of recollection and longer retreats in which women of both spiritual traditions may share in the same spiritual experiences. Devotional practices are being shared and in many areas of the country Roman Catholic women are in Church Women United, taking part in the observance of the World Day of Prayer, World Community Day, and May Fellowship Day. The Protestant-Roman Catholic student movement last fall united into one University Christian Movement. The YMCA and Roman Catholic Diocesan officials are increasingly working together. Catholic and Protestant scholars are joining each other's professional societies and in some cases societies are combining.

The big one is the story told by Dr. Ketchum about the state and local council of churches. He has made extensive surveys to reveal the happenings at the grassroots. Led by New Mexico and Nevada, which have official Catholic members, 23 state councils have some form of cooperative activity. Twenty-three city and county councils of churches have official Catholic members and 61 are engaged in some form of cooperative activity. The cooperative activity ranges from promoting the Week of Prayer and Dialogue groups to cooperation in migrant, Indian, chaplaincy, radio and TV work. New cooperative structures to accomplish special missions have been and are being devised to meet urban problems such as race, housing, and poverty.

Semi-Protestant Groupings and Catholic Participation:

Here I merely note that Roman Catholic participation in service clubs is now broad and inclusive. Cordial relations and joint civic programs are being developed between the Knights of Columbus and the Masons. The Jesuit Emeritus President of Fordham, Robert Gannon, recently addressed the annual breakfast of some 6000 New York Masons. "He who has ears, let him hear."

Mutual Modification:

Here I append an observation simply to note that there is interpenetration of each other's "religious" culture. Liturgical reform is increasingly shared; and as Roman Catholic priests and religious are dressing less "clerical," Protestant ministers seem to be dressing more "clerical."

This is an inadequate story of the many fine encounters leading to the embrace of friendship and mutuality "leading hopefully to the place where Christians are no longer adversaries, but partners in joint enterprise, and cooperators in common concern."

Protestant and Roman Catholic Social Action

Roman Catholic social action will become more vital and more effective in the future because of the increasing involvement of all segments of the Roman Catholic Church and open criticism and democratizing. When the Church gets organized to include the layman so that the whole of the Church speaks on an issue, greater influence will result. The Roman Catholic layman, of course, is in a dilemma because he is being asked to participate and even to discuss in all areas, including theology. He admits in public discussion that he is in the habit of being told, of accepting, and deferring to the priest and bishop as the ones who have the authority directly from God. The layman is particularly perplexed and inhibited when he is asked to discuss items in the religious realm.

The new-found freedom in the Church will not be easily taken away, and after some stumbling attempts, the Roman Catholic Church will find the kind of strength which Protestantism had in its "heyday" in such campaigns as the Prohibition movement and even the action leading to the reversal of isolationism and membership of the United States in the United Nations. One of the areas of constructive forward motion will

come in the Catholic University as the Catholic lay faculty member finds himself on a par with the clerical faculty member. From this will come real power.

Protestantism at the same time is in the doldrums of having "passed the buck" of social action to specialists. With the exception of the Pentecostals and people involved in small church groups, Protestantism of this generation has not inherited its own tradition of the total people being involved in reforming culture. Will the initiative for Christian action in the present cultural scene increasingly be conceded to Roman Catholicism by Protestantism?

A byproduct of Catholic development may be the loss of awe for the clergy and his automatic right to leadership and social matters. This will not be good if the clergy are considered irrelevant for important questions in today's life, except Sunday's Mass and for weddings and funerals. But it will be good when the clergy have been accepted within the very bosom of society and speak increasingly as the parson or as a symbolic person of a democratic, liberal society. He will be able to do this to the degree that he lives in and among and with the people, and senses their needs and desires, and speaks their voice, corrected, refined, augmented by the voice of God, as he with them comes to hear it through worship and service, Scripture and tradition.

On more formal levels, it seems definite that the National Conference of Catholic Bishops will not in the immediate future join officially with the National Council of Churches in statements or pronouncements, particularly in those areas where National Council of Churches has to respond to cultural crises in the United States. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops evidently does not respond to headline crises but takes a longer look and lets subsidiary groups, individuals, and freelance groups particularly within the broader Roman Catholic family do the "quick-shooting." The National Council of Churches seems to be more responsive to pressure groups.

This does not say that the bishops are 100 percent united, but nevertheless, their trend is toward joint decisions and follow-through. Furthermore, in their social action they leave room for sufficient variety

of positions that they can seem to be where the mass of the people are. This is true even in matters of war and peace and civil rights. For instance, at the present time both Orthodox and Roman Catholic Bishops are to the right of the NCC position on Vietnam.

Protestantism on the other hand has found in recent years that its more forward expressions are in its denominational and ecumenical bureaus of social action. So that in effect, a minority opinion, often representing the best thinking and most conscientious positions of the communion, but not representing the real allegiances and commitments of the members, is expressed as the position of Protestantism. Thus professionals who are expert and conscience-driven in various areas of social forwardness testify and present themselves to such agencies as Congress even ahead of their constituencies. In some cases they are repudiated by a wide segment of the church membership, if not officially, eventually and effectively through failure of members to act on the basis of proclaimed ideals.

Roman Catholic higher echelons are generally protected from being repudiated in quite this fashion. Rather, individuals such as sisters and priests, or various action groups of which there are many in Roman Catholicism, reach out. When they over-reach, they are assimilated back into the fold. So it seems that at the present time within the denominational and ecumenical headquarters of Protestantism social action leaders are significantly ahead of the membership receiving their cues from society's crises.

In Roman Catholicism the leaders of the church, though they may tend in some cases to be behind the people, try in all cases as much as possible to be with the people. This mitigates against a policy of joint statements by the National Council of Churches and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. There is also the problem of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops as a church joining with the National Council of Churches, which is a council of churches rather than a church, in a joint statement. Furthermore, the National Council of Churches cannot control its statements as easily as can the National Conference of Catholic Bishops; that is, its various departments may

issue statements which, while not carrying the weight of policy, are accepted by the public as National Council of Churches' statements.

If one would list the joint actions he would find that the National Council of Churches is joined with the Paulists or the Grayfriars or the Maryknoll Fathers or such groups as this, in joint activities and these relationships are not in controversial areas and not with a major segment of American Catholicism. Even in diocesan relations the Bishop generally carefully authenticates a Catholic action program to run concurrently and maybe cooperatively with a Protestant or interfaith program. This is probably necessary at this time in order to obtain maximum support from Roman Catholic layman and clergy.

Education -- Confrontation or Common Cause

Even with much yet to be done before common cause is established, there are some interesting signs. Except for local confrontations, which may continue and even increase for a while, and which include such issues as the bus question in Nebraska and the effort to scuttle the Blaine Amendment in New York, there seems to be a pattern developing of making common cause with as many Protestants as possible by "ecumenizing" the staffs of strictly Catholic institutions which operate within the public milieu. This includes eleemosynary institutions and schools. The appointment of Protestants to these staffs gives the Catholic institutions an ecumenical flavor and may make it possible for state and federal aid to be given more easily to support such efforts.

The development of ecumenical relations including Catholic personnel on the staffs of formerly Protestant ecumenical organizations such as the National Council of Churches and state Councils of Churches will tend to give opportunity for much of the skirmishing over public aid to happen within the doors of ecumenical organizations, so that increasingly there may be joint efforts in certain mutually acceptable areas with the public schools being the last area for such efforts. These new relations and this new type of working may cause a large segment of Protestantism to join with the Roman Catholics even in areas such as education. They may in turn be opposed by public school professionals,

some of Judaism, and the secularists. If an alliance between Roman Catholicism and much of Protestantism should be formed and hold together, even the courts will begin to reflect the preponderance of this sentiment.

There will be, however, a significant modification of the Roman Catholic school system particularly in the direction of more laypeople and parents on Catholic school boards and less direct clerical control except for professionally-trained clergy educators. It is quite conceivable that the future will see a semi-adoption of the Roman Catholic school system by public authority and a Canadian type of designated tax system.

The Roman Catholic schools will find the religious part of the teaching being restricted more to a department which will be manned by the religious or the clergy, and which probably will be supported directly by the church with the rest of the educational program being supported by state funds. It is conceivable that these same schools will set up Protestant departments, so that all of the children may opt for religious instruction. Even Judaism may be taught within the formerly strict Roman Catholic parochial school. Yet, as a required part of the curriculum, elementary through high school, religious core courses will be in the religious school.

This would mean, however, a semi-reversal of Supreme Court decisions, and it would also mean Roman Catholicism moving back to the position of Protestantism in relation to public schools prior to World War II. The end result may be somewhat similar to the way religion is taught in the schools of England.

Protestants, Catholics, and Birth Control

If the fellowship of Protestants and Catholics may be modifying Protestant attitudes toward parochial education, then the fellowship of Protestants and Catholics is certainly weakening the possibility of American Roman Catholicism maintaining a strong position on birth control. As it becomes easier for Protestant and Catholic laywomen to have fellowship with each other, Protestant wives are going to share with

Catholic wives methods of birth control and probably even facilitate their introduction to doctors who will help them. In this case Protestant practice will undermine Catholic ideals.

The present position of the Vatican may be a deliberately assumed dilemma. What may be an impasse may be an impasse deliberately sought, because the Roman Catholic Church feels that it cannot move back to a conservative, pre-rhythm position on birth control, but must instead move as much as possible to bolt down certain areas such as extreme eugenic proposals, and abortion, worse demons which might come through the door with the birth control door is opened. When the door ultimately is opened a little, the pressure will be so great that it will be forced wide. In fact, it has been opened a little through the rhythm compromise.

It would be well to look at the development of the Protestant practice of birth control to see what could happen to Roman Catholicism. One must remember that the strict laws on birth control were put into effect by Protestants back in the era when the thwarting of birth was related chiefly to illegitimate experiences, prostitution, and promiscuity, before medical science had advanced to the present day and before Protestant theology had been humanized. How did that change come about? It was not because of deliberate church policy or because of study commissions, or progressive effort on the part of social action within ecumenical agencies such as the National Council of Churches. The education such as it was, was mainly through secular sources and also through the Protestant tradition of individualistic effort, associating together in voluntary societies for this purpose. This is the way much Protestant activism began in the past.

However, the real break-through came a generation ago, when birth control began to be practiced by the Protestant clergy after World War I, and especially in the generation that came of marriageable age in the last of the 1930s and early 1940s. It is interesting that while the American birthrate was pressing up, nevertheless birth control was being practiced even by those who would have four and five children. The almost universal practice of birth control by the Protestant clergy, unknown and unheralded, yet nevertheless known by each other,

particularly as they knew and discussed such things in seminaries, muted the voice of Protestantism. Protestant ministers as they increasingly became marriage counselors actually advised their constituents to go to the doctor before marriage for purposes of being able to practice family planning. The clergy by personal practice and commitment were in the vanguard of birth control.

Roman Catholicism because of celibacy is not in such a situation. The clergy are not in a position of being compromised on this issue by their own personal practice. Thus their voice will not be so easily muted. However, Catholic clergy are aware through the confessional how widely birth control is practiced, particularly in Europe and in America, or wherever the standards of living and education allow the populace to have access and the ability to participate in the use of birth control measures.

Just as Protestantism did not deliberately set out on a program to change the practice of birth control but simply grew into it and accepted it, so it is that Roman Catholicism, the longer it waits to be definitive, will find it harder to close the door and therefore, as unofficially Roman Catholics practice birth control, will ultimately recognize a "fait accompli." The church will then re-emphasize the ground rules for wholesome Catholic family life and the rubrics of responsible parenthood in the training of the good Catholic.

From the point of view of some, it is unfortunate that the Catholic Church cannot speak authoritatively now. To do so, however, would be so psychologically jolting to the average pious Catholic family, particularly in other parts of the world, that it might destroy the last remnants of the authoritarian system and the practice of obedience. While if birth control practice can be expanded within Catholicism with the restraints of the hang-over sense of sin, then the hierarchy can recognize the earthly condition of the faithful, can accommodate to their earthiness, and still hold onto its authority.

One cannot predict what the Pope will say in this area. The trend seems conservative right now, but Roman Catholicism has not

maintained a puritanical attitude in areas where social practice and custom made certain activities widely acceptable.

Catholic Clerical Exposure and Changing Patterns

The exposure of Catholic clergy and religious to the American cultural scene and their domestication within it, especially as this is intensified by exposure to Protestant clergy by way of close and intimate fellowship, is creating some real problems, chiefly on the Catholic clerical side. It is true that many Protestant ministers are acting more clerical. It is paradoxical that as Catholic clergy are trying to bridge the gap to the layman, Protestant clergy because of uncertainty of role are taking compensatory actions such as the wearing of clerical garb.

On the Roman Catholic side there are several interesting things happening. The drive of the female religious to come back into the world is producing such developments as charm schools run by airline hostess supervisors for postulantes of religious orders. Increasing numbers of Roman Catholic priests and religious are traveling in mufti except when they are theoretically on duty.

There are effects of the increasing fellowship between Roman Catholic priests and their Protestant counterparts which are indirect, yet very real. Roman Catholic priests are in effect accepting the non-laymanship of Protestant clergy and are reinforcing in their Protestant counterparts the "clericalness" of themselves. This seems to give validity to the ordination of the Protestant ministry. The Protestant minister may still feel inferior before the ordination of the priest. The Catholic priest has only the alternative of "Doctor" in addressing the Protestant. He can hardly say "Reverend," for this would infer a certain quality to the Protestant ordination. There are yet some Protestants who prefer the term "Brother," to "Reverend" for this very reason. Nevertheless, some Catholic priests are calling Protestant ministers, "Reverend." As soon as friendship has been established priests and ministers call each other by their first names. The priest does not like to be called "Mister" at all, certainly not publicly, but privately he will prefer being called by his first name.

This fellowship is also modifying the celibate character of the Catholic priest. His association with married clergymen, particularly within Lutheranism and Episcopalianism, is putting great pressures on the Catholic priest. They are pressures he cannot withstand as easily today because, in contrast to the situation 30 to 50 years ago, when the culture denied sex or at least kept it under cover, today the heterosexual character of human relationships is thoroughly exposed and the Catholic priest finds himself constantly reminded on every hand of his masculinity. So also is the Catholic sister reminded of her femininity. This has developed a psychological hunger so intense as to be a sickness in vast areas of the celibate life. There is much direct witness to this, both from priests and from theological students who have dropped training for the priesthood in order to be married. This is not to deny, however, the holiness of the Catholic clergy who are still able to persist in the face of the extreme sexual emphasis of the present day. This same emphasis is particularly hard on the young people of America and is even breaking into the monogamous family life of Protestantism.

The association of celibate clergy with married clergy is having an influence on Roman Catholicism and could well lead to the ultimate breakdown of the requirement of celibacy. This same requirement is related to the difficulty of recruiting for religious vocations.

On the other hand, Roman Catholic clergy reinforce Protestant clergy in the areas of certain public exemption. These range from reduced charges and discounts for clergy to clergy fares, from parsonage exemption in the tax structure to special draft treatment. One of the important witnesses that it may even now be too late to make would be for Protestant clergy as such to agree that they should work to clear the laws and customs of this special treatment in order to help reduce the gap between the clergy and the layman. Failure to do so will not only increase the gap, but may allow the secular age to cyst off the clergy to the place where they become increasingly irrelevant because they are not of "us". Eventually, the day may come when these rights will be denied with a vengeance in a revolutionary situation, much to the stigma and perhaps physical harm of clergyman.

Therefore it would seem best that there be set in motion a deliberate policy by the Department of Ministry of the National Council of Churches to wipe out all special status so that both Catholic and Protestant clergy may walk as real persons in the present day. This one action and strategy would do more even than some present programs of social action.

Authority and Obedience

An important pattern change is related to the internal revolution in the realm of authority and obedience within Roman Catholicism. The centering of Roman Catholicism within the context of modern democracy throughout Europe and America, rather than in a hierarchal, monarchical, or authoritarian political context is having its effect. Roman Catholics are becoming increasingly aware of the mode of operation within that church life of other Christians with their various deliberative bodies, and their parliamentary procedures resulting in rules and codes. Through the "reformed" tradition which so definitely influenced the constitutional form of American government, American Catholicism is being in turn molded. It is also being affected by secular social forms such as the labor movement and organizations of professionals such as teachers and social workers as these groups attempt to improve their standards of living and get personal recognition, rights, and dignity.

All this is having effect upon the internal organization of the Catholic Church and is being expressed in efforts to develop priest-groups, senates, and dialogue between the priests and their hierarchy. This is also having some effect in terms of the layman's relationship to the priest and the bishop. In the midst of this, however, has been the continuing tradition of obedience whereby the next echelon lower down is obedient to the authorities over it. Certainly, obedience obtains for the average layman who is so conditioned he never expects to have anything to say or to ask a question about any religious concept. The answers are there, and they are given to him to believe without question. But there is also a dilemma for other layman today as they ask, "Is it possible for us to remain in the church and question?"

Priests are having some of the same problems particularly in the area of social action when they go outside of diocesan control to demonstrate or to back up certain lay actions in the realm of justice-seeking. However, the priests perhaps do not realize that even within Protestantism there is a certain voluntaristic censorship and control of a minister who may be fired by his congregation and thus be without any livelihood if he strays too far from the mind of his laypeople. The priest is increasingly finding he is not yet a free agent, although he attempts in many ways to act so. Some Protestant ministers on the other hand, having been kicked around so much by their congregations, are seeking to develop professional immunity and protection. All of this points to a crisis within both Protestantism and Roman Catholicism in terms of hierarchal structure and consequent obedience to that authority. It also highlights the main dilemma of the clergy in their role in and among the people. The National Council of Churches needs to be very candid about this crisis and help to restore the concept of the clergy and the people, that is, the clergy being lifted up from the people and being responsive to them. This may mean that clergy-led ecumenical organizations might choose to take a less aggressive social action stance and return to the voluntary associations, (similar to the early missionary, anti-slavery, temperance, and humanitarian movements) for purposes of social action. It might be necessary for Christians to support and leaven voluntary organizations throughout the life of their culture, rather than to professionalize and departmentalize social action programs which are channeled down through the ministers who in turn then try to channel them into the people. There is ample evidence that the Catholic obedience factor is slipping rapidly and that Protestants, because tradition is against it, are not ever going to be able to capture the obedience of their laypeople for programs proposed from the top.

Protestants should be aware of the crisis of obedience in Roman Catholicism and relate to it so as not to be a threat. Rather, they should support a constructive evolution away from paternalistic and hierarchical authoritarianism to collegiality throughout Roman Catholicism. The best support to the current controversy would be for Protestants not to erode their own traditions of social concern, but to demonstrate by revitalizing and making economically possible lay involvement in decision-making

and total constituency involvement in ecumenical decisions even if the process restricted somewhat the scope of “ecumenical” social action.

Roman Catholic Scholarship

With the number of persons in Roman Catholicism whose vocation is scholarship, and whose very life allows scholarship, and with the doors open widely now to the study of all fields, including all of church history, Bible, social structures of Christianity, and Protestant theology as well as the whole area of worship and devotional literature, Protestants will find themselves leaning on and even depending on Roman Catholic scholarship. Such Roman Catholic scholars along with some conservative and fundamentalist Protestant scholars will perhaps dominate the traditional fields of seminary training. For the Roman Catholics, the uniqueness of their contribution to scholarship may be diminished if Latin is dropped for the average seminarian.

Roman Catholic scholars, freed from the dominance of Neo-Thomism, with all the verve of new disciples, are entering the gates of empiricism and pragmatism, and setting up a whole new line of “saints”, including such figures as Whitehead, Dewey, Mead, Pratt, Coe, Ames, and many others who in a sense, become a family tree in which Chardin can be included.

An increasingly obvious corollary is the fact that the Roman Catholic higher education system, rapidly being forced into mediocrity by contemporary economics and bursting out all over from the authoritarian control patterns, will follow the Protestant pattern of yielding to lay and secular control to attract both private and public funds, as well as to get and hold lay faculty in the secular disciplines. Roman Catholicism will agonize on how to make religion the very essence and leaven of the whole higher education system, but in effect it will eventually be driven back into the same ghettos that Protestant religion enjoys, namely, a department of religion and perhaps one or two personalities in other departments such as Philosophy and English. This is an area where Protestants and Roman Catholics could sincerely work together to see

how they might develop new methods, new ways by which higher education might be leavened, perhaps through interesting lay personalities who are Christian in their vocation as teachers in the higher education system.

A Definition of Mixed Marriage

A real mixed marriage is only between two persons who are both loyal to different Christian traditions. In discussing mixed marriages one should not count all marriages of young people who have differing traditions in their background. Only those whose own church relationship is so active and vital that a real problem of competing loyalties is presented should be considered mixed. Others, even if there is the formality of a church ceremony, do not necessarily have a genuinely mixed marriage. Two secularly minded young people who do not intend to become active in the church, or a couple, one of whom has no prevailing church interest, do not constitute a mixed marriage of the type that creates a problem for ecumenicity. They rather present a need for conversion.

However, sincere church young people in this age of dialogue are being thrown together and are finding in each other the kind of person who would sustain their own ideals and have love of God as the basis for family life. The obstacle that yet remains to their marriage is their loyalty to their church. The churches in turn do not make it possible for them both in good conscience to be married. It is easier for a good Christian to marry a secularist than a fellow Christian if they be of differing traditions.

The end result of this dilemma is not a case of either a Protestant or a Roman Catholic home but a disillusioned, divided, and an inactive church home. Mixed marriage as a union between the churches' faithful is more of a barrier to genuinely effective ecumenicity than even birth control, abortion, divorce, or questions of doctrine. Continuous attention must be given to this problem from both within and outside of the Roman Church.

Revolution in the Student Movement

Recent happenings in the religious student movements on American campuses cause one, depending upon his point of view, either to wring his hands and exclaim, "The dying efforts of religion among the student," or to shout for joy and say, "A great new day for religious witness on the campus." The Protestant and Roman Catholic student movements taking the theme, "This one thing we do," namely, "unite," have done so, much to the consternation of the bureaucrats and the hierarchy. The students have said that there should be on the modern campus, one believing presence, and that it should find its common expression in action and study. Notice the new order -- action and study -- not study and action.

For subsidiary groups to act as though subsidiarity did not exist has been jolting to the Roman Catholic authorities and for Protestants who remember the past "hey-day" of the Protestant movements for whom the student center and the denominational fellowship were the norm, Student Christian Association nostalgia is having a rocky road. The "home away from home" is lost in the assertion that the university is home, the only home, the "pads" it furnishes maybe without innersprings, and the comforts certainly different from the suburban origin of so many of the students.

The new situation is setting up some interesting possibilities. In one woman's school the chaplain is finding that the new rapport with Roman Catholics and their participation in the campus program with the Roman Catholic chaplain being located in the campus chapel, is now furnishing the basis for reviving the dead and passed-by Student Christian Association program on the campus and will probably also furnish a basis to include in some way the Inter-varsity expression on the campus.

Students have always been somewhat impulsively ahead of the church. The women cannot be far behind. Students and women are perhaps the most impulsive and independent segments of the church. This leaves only the men and clergy and the children to maintain tradition.

Are the churches prepared to face the increasing problem of mixed marriage as a bi-product of campus togetherness of the religiously loyal? Relentless pressure should be exerted for a mutually acceptable mixed marriage policy. This area of ambiguity will drive even the active religious college student into indifferentism if the churches do not clear the air. Further, is the "student movement" becoming malnourished religiously because common action seems easier than common worship? Will even Roman Catholic and Protestant together be able to mount a program sufficiently "orthodox" in witness to attract the evangelical groupings on the campus.

Semi-secular Lay Groups and Protestant-Roman Catholic Relations

When Pius XII issued a directive requesting that all priests remove themselves from service clubs and other secular groupings and also frowned on even lay participation, a shockwave ran across the face of the world. Layman used to meeting each other in secular enterprises had come to feel that there should be no differentiation at all, except in matters peculiar to their faith and its practice, particularly on Sunday. The pope seemed to be afraid of the "protestantizing" of his adherents because the service clubs seemed to be an addendum of the Protestant piety and ethic. At the same time, within the Roman Church there was concern about those programs which allowed priests to enter into the secular life, such as the worker priest movement in France. The fear that orthodoxy would be diminished, and that large groups of believers would think differently from the hierarchy and modify their sense of obedience was the basis for alarm. Even though reorientation was ahead, the church was attempting to hold to the past.

Vatican II was an admission that the church had to face toward the future and come to grips with layman now more educated in all areas, even in theology. Laymen were becoming even better educated than the clergy because specialization had allowed individuals to go far deeper into the exploding body of knowledge of the new age than ever a clergyman, high or low, would be able to go, except for some religious in an area such as seismology.

Since Vatican II there has been a resurgence of openness toward each other by Protestant and Roman Catholic layman. This has been aided and abetted by a stepped up program of inter-church visitation, brotherhood weeks, and living room dialogues. There are many other church-sponsored programs to bring people together. However, more basic than any of these is the activity going on in the secular world through service organizations which now include an increasing Roman Catholic membership with priests and religious included within the professional quota of clergy.

Spontaneously cooperative programs are shaping up between such fraternal orders as the Knights of Columbus and the Masons. It may be some time before all parts of the country get over the mutual antagonism which has existed between Masonry and Roman Catholicism, and the Knights of Columbus and Protestantism. Nevertheless, social activities between chapters and lodges in several parts of the country have been programmed. Now there is a significant trend toward mutual endorsement of programs promoting patriotism, broad civic causes, and idealism.

Although many of the Protestant clergy are members of fraternal orders, especially the Masons, there has been little recent formal relationship to such orders as auxiliary elements of the life of Protestantism in the way that the Knights of Columbus are an arm of the Roman Catholic Church. In fact, in Protestantism there has been considerable antagonism between some of the clergy and fraternal orders, particularly at funerals. Yet there have been times when even such groups as the KKK in certain areas of the country were closely related to local Protestant churches and took part in their religious services.

The dynamic and future of fraternal orders in today's world is perhaps subject to question. In some areas of the country men's orders and clubs, along with the ladies auxiliary's, are vital, and in other areas they are hard-pressed to secure funds, even to maintain lodge halls. Those lodges which are most successful seem to have been able to combine not only the element of exclusiveness, but the element of an oasis for fun and play. The labor movement and veteran's organizations

have also cut into the time of the men for their fraternal work. Yet even if men's clubs and orders, with their ladies auxiliaries, should be on a plateau of dynamism, they are still an important channel for the secular and lay expressions of idealism. Ecumenical agencies of the church have ignored, or at most paid little attention to these phases of American life, even though many of the clergy, in some areas the majority, are involved.

One gains the impression that secretaries and staff members of ecumenical bodies on the whole are not involved in such organizations. Maybe their failure to participate is partly because the kind of life they live, including much traveling, does not allow them to be good members of a local lodge chapter. But more likely they do not belong because of temperament and conviction. Also, they do not find themselves very much at home in a typical lay experience.

Nevertheless, it is important that such organizations as the NCC recognize the dynamic and the resources within this aspect of American lay life and seek to relate to it. It is perhaps unfortunate that at this time in the life of the NCC, the layman's work should be practically extinguished. Layman's work probably aborted because it was conceived in the narrow fashion of a special men's club within the church. These clubs necessarily had to draw on men whose vitality and time had already been preempted by other lay groups, such as fraternal, veterans, labor, and service organizations. Would it not be wise to reconsider the NCC department of United Church Men in terms of a secretariat not in charge of church clubs for men, but in charge of relationships with service clubs, fraternal orders, veteran's organizations, labor unions, commercial chambers, and professional fraternities? Should not such a reconstructed department strive to understand and facilitate the mutual endorsement of ideals and action of such groups as the Masons and Knights of Columbus?

Major Obstacles to Common Cause between Protestantism And Roman Catholicism

There are two main uncertainties that will have to be delivered by each to the other in order to have confidence between Protestants and

Roman Catholics. First, Roman Catholicism would have to be certain that the very nature or genus of Protestantism was, is, and will include the transcendent dimensions of Christianity: or, to put the case negatively, assurance is needed that Protestantism is not just a source of syncretism and indifferentism. If Protestantism should be misunderstood to be the matrix for the God is dead, non God, atheistic,, and purely humanistic types of religion, then this will tend to convince Roman Catholicism that the Protestant system of loose organization, democratic procedure in the church, and freedom for the individual conscience are devastating for Christian orthodoxy and promote heresy.

Therefore to the degree that Protestantism supports and evangelizes for, theologizing, and teaches for the transcendent characteristics of God and the Christian religion, and to the degree that Protestantism can show that freedom of conscience and permissive democratic church expressions can in the long run produce genuine converts who support main tenets of the Christian way, to that degree Protestants will be acceptable to Roman Catholicism. Actually, there is no halfway point between Christianity with transcendent characteristics and even an enlightened humanism. Probably such assurance of orthodoxy will not come so much from theologically latitudinarian Protestantism, but from middle-of-the-road conservative, and, fundamentalist Protestantism. It is with these groups that Roman Catholicism may well feel most at home.

Protestantism, in turn, will have to be certain that Roman Catholicism accepts freedom of individual conscience and democratic procedure in the local parish and between churches, including the principal of collegiality and varieties of religious experience. Protestantism will desire a sympathy for the concept of the priesthood of all believers and the mutual ministry. To the degree that this is done within Roman Catholicism there will be a possibility for Protestantism to make common cause with them. Extremes of hierarchical plateaus, assertion of qualitative religious difference between priests and laymen, refusal to accept the layman within the teaching role of the church, and maintenance by fiat and excommunication, rather than by example and voluntary support of doctrines fundamental to the concept of transcendence will serve as barriers for Protestants.

Sentimentality and Oversimplification

Another factor affecting the relationships of Catholic and Protestants today is sentimentality. One of the leading writers in the area of the Catholic riddle has forcefully described much of the current optimistic Protestant attitude toward Roman Catholicism as sheer sentimentality. An institution doesn't change that quickly and that much. There are bishops who are not yet allowing joint prayers and liturgical reform. Even the Bishop of Rome found his right hand not knowing what his left hand was doing when joint prayers were denied in his own diocese, and he had to reverse himself publicly. Catholics are finding that there is no such thing as "The Protestant." As one has described him: "A Protestant ranged from those who see Christianity as a useful myth to Anglicans who find the Bishop of Rome distressingly low church."

Another has observed that Roman Catholicism itself still has much of the two-level spirituality, that is, docility to cope with the Pope's sayings and cunning exegesis to get beyond them. The Roman Catholic still has strong traces of an ancestral dependency upon a sacral-society to shore up, promote, and honor religious values.

At the same time, many Protestants identify God with something in man and would rather run the risk of error than the danger of spiritual tyranny. There are vast differences in the traditions of Roman Catholic and Protestant, and sentimentality cannot bridge them immediately. It is important, then, that those who work in ecumenical realms formally realize the sub-strata, the sub-conscious accumulations over the years which will have an effect on the relationships of Protestants and Catholics. If there is hybridization these spiritual genes may break out in strange ways. Is there a possibility that the glamour of meeting each other and moving in one another's precincts is going beyond realism? Are the relations really legitimate, or still somewhat illicit? Do Protestants practice a hierarchy of status: That is, one is "one up" on his fellow if he has a good friend who is a monsignor, a bishop, an archbishop, a cardinal, apostolic delegate, or a private audience with the Pope with a picture to show for it? Are we even yet relating as persons, rather than as positions?

The Diminution of Pluralism

The old theme of pluralism as an explanation or "raison d'être" for American religious behavior has been overworked. I speak of pluralism as the point of view which opposes centrality, sovereignty, or union by asserting their uniqueness and importance of groups within a state, an organization, or a religious tradition. In very recent years the term has been used in almost fetish fashion, certainly as a slogan to rally support for the inevitability and sovereignty of minority opinions, practices, and groups.

The present period could be the ushering in of a new age of religious consensus in America, the formal expression of which will be Christian, even though shallow. America was conceived in pluralism but its history has been the constant reaching for consensus. Originally there were 13 colonies, diversified interests among the immigrants, diversified interests in terms of religious backgrounds; but all the way through the development of the nation, including the constitutional period, there was a push toward consensus and the diminishing of pluralism. Religiously, even the Great Awakening, while it helped to sponsor sects, at the same time brought great numbers of people within the Protestant fold. The Civil War, as disrupting as it was, was nevertheless a reach toward consensus.

The whole history of America, then, should be viewed as moving from greater pluralism to lesser pluralism, to the place that today the variety in religious pluralism has been reduced essentially to what might be called secular, Protestant, Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and other religions, chief of which is Judaism. Can it not be that in this new day of Catholic openness and the domestication of Catholicism in America, there is also a possibility for Protestantism and Catholicism to make common cause in a very important and profound sense?

The diminution of religious pluralism is a supportive factor in the coming into being of the American Church. Is there in popular tradition in the United States that which says that Protestantism is duty-bound to resist the creation of a new civilization and the development of a cultural

structure which would bear witness to the diminution of religious pluralism and the increase of religious consensus, particularly when it finds such objectives being championed by the largest sector of Christian America, namely, Roman Catholicism? In 1959, Jacques Maritain suggested that a new Christian civilization, a new Christianity, might yet emerge from American soil.

This whole question of the treatment of pluralism as a diminishing factor in American life, at least for the present time, needs further consideration. Any strategy should be aware of the concept of consensus and not be based solely on the inevitability of pluralism as such. The possibility of a "Christian" voice coming into real dominance in America has already proved somewhat alarming to Judaism and could be exploited by a political demagogue.

Religious pluralism began its demise in the United States, with the end of extreme sectarianism among denominations and the birth and the growth of the interdenominational movements. One might affirm that with the election of John Kennedy as President, the Americanization of all religious groups including Roman Catholicism and the event of Vatican II, America could come as close to a uniform expression of Christianity on the part of the mass of people as any nation in the world. The conclusion can be drawn, readily, that we can no longer trust pluralism to guarantee the rights of minorities.

When increasing numbers of people avow the same orthodoxy, even though that orthodoxy be diluted, pluralism becomes a chimera. It cannot be adduced as the main reason for recognizing variety in our society and consequent exceptions in treatment. We need to recapture the day of the vertical philosophy; i.e., a return to the philosophy that the individual is the key unit in society, rather than the philosophy of pluralism which is based on a supposed primacy of the group. This would mean respecting the rights of one individual out of 100, or even to the rights of one out of 200 million. This has been the tension within the "Pilgrim's Progress" of America, with the pendulum swinging first one way and then the other. The weight of the philosopher, the scientists, and even the humorist has been needed to maintain a proper respect for the tension between the one and the many.

American destiny has gone forward, and must go forward, but not on opportunistic politics based on pluralism. It is basically a term of hindsight to be used, if at all, by historians and never should have become a political slogan.

The diminution of pluralism in society may come about in two ways: First by the coming together of peoples from different cultural or religious backgrounds and the dimming of differences; second, by the unity of peoples in terms of a common fear. America finds the first constantly expressing itself in a drive for consensus and stands always in danger of the second. The problems of amalgamation are alleviated by the dynamic operation of the democratic process by which antagonisms and objections found in groups and between groups are drained off in the electoral process. The dialogues and debates prior to elections and in the legislative halls always are a time of great diminution of pluralism. The contrived unity of the people in the name of fear is that most easily exploited by political demagoguery and dictators, a condition which could happen here.

Pluralism actually is not a viable rationale for democracy. When it becomes obvious that pluralism has ceased to exist with sufficient influence, or a point has been reached at which minorities can be overwhelmed, the politicians or leaders will think in terms of the "great consensus." Economic activity will be predicated upon depersonalized generalizations and culture reduced to bread and circuses. Then the individual will be lost in terms of sociological generalization that will be seen only as a part of the exceptions to the generalizations. These exceptions, to the degree that they actually disturb the peace, will receive sufficient governmental attention so as to remove the threat and move that section of the lagging populace back up into the common denominator. The great consensus, the great peace, the great hallelujah chorus on earth will be the objective to the degree that it is discovered that pluralism no longer exists.

Today, if Protestants and Catholics should get together in a really significant way, and if, when they do get together, they are undergirded by a truly humble Christian devotion, then it is conceivable that in

America, at least, the stewardship of the churches and the clergy for the national morale will be beginning in a new and significant way.

The possibility must be entertained, of course, that the end of religious pluralism in America signifies not genuine unity, but that which comes in the loss of vitality on the part of the groups that originally made up the living matrix of religious pluralism.

If this is the case, then the diminution of religious pluralism into a common denominator is only the dying echo of the claims of Christianity, in the formal sense, upon American life. But the new era will also not be pluralistic, but will be united in a materialistic thrust for security, the good things: Health, retirement, safety on the streets, minimum amount of labor for maximum amount of return, appreciation of the arts, safety in transportation, maximum use of the tax dollar, opportunities for citizens to move upward, peace, the perfection of the "great society" in America, and exporting of its physical and ideological surplus throughout the world. Rule by consensus rather than bipartisanship and dynamic compromise will become the norm.

The American Church

Has there ever been "the American Church?" In Colonial times both the Reformed and Anglican traditions attempted to attain establishment, but the pietist and deist traditions prevailed in the First Amendment. The migration of the Tories to Canada weakened the Anglican position. In certain localities in what came to be the United States settlements of immigrants with a particular church background dominated for a generation or two, but the move west, the melting pot and the English language nibbled away their homogeneity. The Great Awakening following the frontier gained full areas of influence for Methodists and the Baptists. But later immigration countered with Lutherans and Roman Catholics. The churches of Anglo-Saxon derivation have at periods almost dominated the American culture, but there has been no one church of sufficient numbers and power to dominate the American culture.

Such a body would need to be organized as well as any American denomination, have its face cast responsibly into the culture and its social problems, have adherents throughout the country, be strong in the cities, have followers throughout the economic, cultural, and political levels of American life. It also needs a clergy united with the people, leading them spiritually, sharing their joys and anxieties, and laboring with them on the firing line of contemporary revolution. In addition, there would need to be adherents numbering between one-fourth and one-third of the population.

It is my conviction that we are approaching, if not actually in, the time of the American Church, and the very center of the church could well be the Roman Catholic Church.

It has yet to fulfill some of the criteria, but it is the leading candidate, providing it continues to develop national unity within itself, and providing the renewal initiated through Vatican II is fulfilled in the American expression of Roman Catholicism.

American Roman Catholicism is domesticated now. Its voice was heard first at the sessions of Vatican II and increasingly is heard in the United States. No longer will it speak primarily in the voice of one bishop, or one cleric, but increasingly as an American Church; notice the joint statements of bishops. Even now, it is developing the typical denominational structure which gave strength to the various sects as they have developed in the United States, and which preserved strength for the church-type groups as they were disestablished. The Roman Catholic Press is less a parochial press and is read by non-Catholics. The secular news services increasingly use Catholic-generated news as the source of headlines and front-page stories. This church has a sufficient voice to influence large cities and whole states. Protestantism found with the Vatican II that it was no longer the sole defender of American democracy.

In a sense, the American Roman Catholic Church will have its role emphasized as it demonstrates to the rest of the Catholic world the strength which lies in what was considered to be the worst product of the "liberal" tradition, namely democracy. In the total work of Roman

Catholicism, what is happening is a change in relationship to fellow Christians and a change of stance in relationship to the present world. This world has dropped its special regard for clergy and the religious. This world has forced Catholicism to consort with democracy. This world has forced on Catholicism an updating of its education and its science.

Catholicism around the world is fighting not only to come up to age, but also to maintain itself. The one exception to this, or the best example of an exception is in America, where the American Roman Catholic Church has not had any of the protections that traditionally are expected for Roman Catholicism in other places. As a result, this church is now able to stand on its own reputation and, like other American denominations, has gained in strength from a voluntaristic society. In the United States of America it has the further strength of diminished old country loyalties and a developing national coherence increasing unity. Moreover, the vastness of its very being, namely, nearly five million people, adds weight. So the Roman Catholic Church has matured in the American scene and really could become Exhibit A to the rest of Catholicism of what "The Church" can be in a democratic country, and in a voluntaristic atmosphere.

There are other contenders for American allegiance which are not religious but secular in nature, and it may be that in the long run the real issue is not whether churches or "The Church" can dominate American culture, but the very existence of faith for the individual man in a secular age. The issue of faith, however, is more of a mood than an organization.

Even a consortium of churches, such as CCCU or a union of Methodists and Baptists would not have a matching presence to Roman Catholicism. Protestantism has not had such a presence except on certain issues, even in its best interdenominational expressions. In fact, to think of offsetting or balancing Roman Catholicism by Protestantism is perhaps not the most progressive thinking for today. The role of Christians should not be any longer that of offsetting each other, but rather that of witnessing together in unity of spirit and purpose.

Yet, some questions remain to be asked in relationship to "An American Church":

1. Are there now such entities as Protestantism and a Protestant voice in the United States?

2. In the future how will the denominations and sects relate to "The American Church?"

Dangers in an American Church

As well as hope, there may be some dangers in the coming of an American Church. The diminution of pluralism and the growth of consensus leading to an American Church may set up a situation in which ecumenism may be caricatured, extreme nationalism enthroned, and a major part of the genius of Protestantism as expressed in the pietistic wing of the Reformation overlaid.

Ecumenism certainly will not be guaranteed even by support of central religious bureaucracies, as noble and necessary as they are, and even though their scope be nationwide. If an American Church should in its strength lose all humility and hold that Christianity in other parts of the world exists largely because of the generosity of America and its great sense of nation, and that, God forbid, Geneva and even Rome should be extensions of American Christianity, then we will have lost the art of ministry because we no longer will feel the need of being ministered unto.

Thus there is a danger that an American Church could be too narrow and suffer from a lack of genuine ecumenism in the world wide meaning of the term. Such a church would need to think beyond its own shores in terms of standing in the need of prayer and service from other Christians. Asia, Africa, Latin America, as well as Europe and North America must remain in mind as the habitat of the sons of God. Christianity has universal characteristics which stretch from soul to soul.

An American Church could also be captured by despotic political leadership. Caesaro-Papism might find fertile soil. National self interests, now grown diabolical, might allow few if any "Nathans to confront David." National cause might become the American Church

cause. The priestly function might become easier than the prophetic and the people without devout, fearless, and charismatic religious leaders might find themselves led by politicians, who surround themselves with cultic symbols of office, speak the "only words." Dissent, even in the name of God, would be disloyal. Caesar would seize the centers, offices, and bureaus of the religiously elite and play the Piper's song of national goals, chosen race, or even special servant of God to bring peace and order on earth. The Kingdom of God cannot come to America unless it is allowed to come to the world in God's own terms.

There is another danger and that is the pietistic, spontaneous, popular and even eccentric expressions of religious need and hunger may be neglected or overlaid by the preoccupation of the religious elite. These elite are those who are caught up in the program of church life and activity, corporately and institutionally. These are the members of church boards, sessions, delegates to conventions and assemblies, the vanguard of the ecumenical movement, inter-confessional and interfaith activities -- many of whom have done something about the social mess we are in at least by making a contribution to NAACP. They have read or have mouthed the names of the Bishop of Woolwich, Bishop Pike, Drs. Cox, Hamilton, and Altizer. They are familiar with the social program and the denominational workings of the church to which they belong.

Outside this expression of the religiously elite is a vast group of persons generally religious who may be ignored, and even disparaged, yet who, in the history of Christianity, have spilled out over local communities with very persistent pleas and actions obnoxious to the more formal expressions of Christianity. These people do not have a sophisticated theology, but a partisan ideology. They tend to belong to the "right" way and earnestly desire to bring others to that way. You will find them on television programs, radio programs, and street corners, disturbing the peace and calling for realignment. They range from prophets of doom to forecasters of the Holy City on earth. God is alive and awesome. His judgment and His mercy, His love and His demands are real, and have been felt by each one. The Scriptures and the writings of early leaders of particular movements are haystacks full of needles and abundant thread to sew together the smallest bits of cloth into coats of many colors which give comfort and security.

Such persons gather in small communities, sharing one another's burdens, strengthening the weak, chastising the fallen, and raising up leadership to lead them in evangelism which includes proselyting. They follow a ritual which fulfills a total hunger for right believes and fullness of emotion. Into this milieu occasionally stride individuals who make history, such as: Peter Waldo, Francis of Assisi, Ignatius of Loyola, Gerhart Groot, George Fox, John and Charles Wesley, Count Zinzendorf, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Finney, and Dwight L. Moody. They generally love to sing not only hymns, but simplistic gospel songs; are suspicious of the world and worldliness. They not only launch missions out upon the face of the earth, when established churches know better than to do such a thing, but they believe in the power of healing and gifts of the Spirit.

There is a vast danger if it has not happened already that the religiously elite will not even acknowledge the existence and presence of a spirit, and a way among those generally considered more conservative, fundamentalistic, evangelistic, pietistic, and given to holiness. Nor will they recognize that this spirit also exists, even within the established denominations, including Roman Catholicism.

Thus the drive toward the American Church may cause disregard for and even ridicule of the sect, the congregation or parish, the mystic, the prophet, and the individual whose allegiance is to ultimates in personal piety and morality; for whom the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures are authoritative; who naïvely seeks the City of God on earth, or, abandoning hope in the present, seeks a pure life as preparation for the eschaton. These are people who minister through Service Committees, Heifer Projects, independent missions, and act like fools for God. Many forswear not, take not up the sword and bow the knee to none save God. In their memories are places like Waldens, Assisi, and Hernhutt, and whose contemporary allies may be at Taize, or with the Focolari and the Cursillo. To some, the Pentecostal tongues, healing, and holiness are yet real. Such people, from a broad base of devotion and belief, have mounted voluntary societies for reform, amelioration, education, and salvation.

The popular yet conservative expression of Christianity, a sort of people's catholicity could be in danger of being disregarded by the religiously elite in the American Church.

Christian Holiness as the Matrix for Christian Unity

There is a malaise affecting Roman Catholic and Protestant adherents which promotes schism, encourages individuals to fall away from the churches and builds a barrier of hypocrisy in converting the world. As a sickness, it is a far greater handicap even than the ecclesiological disunity of the various branches of Christianity. It is the lack of real piety. By holiness and piety is not meant a formal manner of expression, a particular stance assumed during religious exercises, but an Eucharistic attitude toward life, and attitude of thanksgiving to God for the stewardship one has in this life, as well as an earnest striving in all human relations to carry out undertakings as one feels God would have him do. Life is conducted as though God has revealed himself in the life and conduct of Jesus Christ, and as though God gives guidance today through the Holy Spirit.

Christianity and its influence for such a person is built not upon mass, corporate, and bureaucratic expressions, but upon the cumulative influence of individual after individual who strives mightily, God helping him, to be a good steward in his life. It is from this wealth of holiness that individuals come to the surface to lead and inspire, to goad and judge Christians and others concerning their social obligations. A true prophet is a holy man, not a purveyor of four-letter words. The God destroyer, the nose thumper, the false prophet is actually a misleader of the young, and it would be better that a millstone be hung about his neck, and that he be cast into the mid-sea. Even disgust with the hypercritical action of so-called fellow Christians is not best expressed by irreverence to God, or by repudiating the aspects that are necessary for good human relations.

Only those persons who in prayer, physical and mental discipline to equip themselves for such an action, are best qualified to lay down their

lives on the cross of action in the name of Christ. Protestants and Catholics can do much to present a united and effective witness if their leaders prove to be the examples of holy persons, dedicated and disciplined, and if their followers in all walks of life live the difference between holiness and unholiness. This must be done without a smugness or self-righteousness. No righteousness avails before the mercy and holiness of God, who simultaneously set the example and becomes continuously fully human and living among us.

One has said that "today mankind is entering new stages of development, asking new questions that have never been heard in this way before. Whether Christianity is able to make God's answers to modern man credible will depend on how deeply Christians understand, live, and love their own truth, on the ardor with which they let themselves be seized by the spirit...."

Fear of false piety leads to an overcompensation of anti-piety, which is assuaged in some instances by formalism, that is: liturgy, processions, and 15 minute opening worship services. Today's anti-evangelism, anti-conversion, and anti-personal-holiness mood is separating church institutional staff from the parishioner, whose innate desire is for total commitment, for leadership to higher planes, and for programmed discipline resulting in achievement. National staffs must not be a refuge for the disenchanting person, the irreverent person, the undisciplined person, the uncommitted person, the person unhappy religiously, the impious person, or the person who would use his office to advance his own cause primarily for egotistic satisfaction.

As the Church of today is backing off from aggressive conversion to and discipline for the Christian life, the world continues through advertising to exact total commitments to products and ways of life, to political parties and other human alignments with the greatest persistence, even to the detriment of the persons being committed.

There would seem to be no technique which can be mass produced to increase holiness on the part of the clergy and religious bureaucrats, Protestants or Catholics. Perhaps by more careful screening and selection of personnel, more respect for the awesome responsibility of

leadership, encouragement for regular participation in retreats over a period of a week or more, and awareness concerning the ego intoxication of the speaking and writing circuit will help. Nepotism, misappropriation, and loose living in the world is unfortunately matched by the lack of holiness (demonstrated respect for God and man) on the part of some religious leaders today.

Suggested Procedure for the Study of Protestant-Orthodox and Roman Catholic relations within the NCC

There has now been enough time since Vatican II and enough experience in Protestant-Roman Catholic relations for an assessment. The experiences and types of relationships are multiplying so rapidly throughout the departments of the NCC that it is important that a continual assessment be made and a regular reporting procedure be established which can be channeled into the Office of Ecumenical Affairs to be summarized and delivered to the General Secretary of the President of the NCC Board on a semi-annual basis. In the belief that consultation should occur first among the NCC staff before outside resources are called in, I suggest the following procedure:

- a. **Inner Staff Conference on NCC -- Roman Catholic Relations:**
First, all the departments with Roman Catholic relations should prepare a paper which would cite past relationships, projections into the future and judgments as to ways in which these relationships should develop, expressing reservations and concerns. (Roman Catholic staff members of NCC should be included in their own departmental discussions.) These should be real staff meetings and should not include board members or other outsiders.

These papers should be completed by the head of the department with due consultation with members of his

department, having farmed out various sections of the report to appropriate members. The reports should then be sent to the head of the division who would report on behalf of the whole division and submit his summary of the departmental reports to the Office of Ecumenical Affairs to be digested, reproduced and circulated throughout the staff for study. Two weeks later an all-day hearing would solicit oral and written comments from all the staff who care to react to various aspects of the report submitted. These reactions should be recorded and collated. Two weeks later there should be an all-day conference of department heads, division heads and administrative staff to discuss the implications of what has been discovered to be going on within the life of the NCC. The process I have suggested should stimulate attitudes and programs as a basis for recommendations to the Board for the future of Protestant-Roman Catholic relations as far as the NCC is concerned. The object of such a process would be to develop within the NCC an understanding of itself in such an important relationship, so that the NCC would be able better to serve its constituency members as well as its related groups.

This kind of double-edged pattern of staff study might inspire similar efforts among the staff of denominations. Material from the denominational conferences could be fed into the Office of Ecumenical Affairs and related to the program of the NCC. This is a time when the NCC and Protestant bureaucratic leadership need to be self-conscious about the opportunities, the difficulties, and the responsibilities of this new era of relationship among Christians.

There should be similar procedure with the state councils, developed on a regional basis, conducted under Dr. Ketchum as a study of State and Local Councils of Churches and Roman Catholic Relations. I would suggest that each state staff and each local council staff prepare papers and that these be duplicated and circulated prior to

a conference in the seven regions of the Association of Council Secretaries. The results should be fed to the Office of Ecumenical Affairs.

B. Regular Report Procedure: Each staff member should receive semi-annually a report request form which would allow him to list simply and not elaborately the program and contacts through which he is currently related to Roman Catholicism. There will be some duplication; however, all should report. The listing should include sufficient data, such as the particular designation of the relationship, names and addresses of persons, religious orders, diocese, parishes, et cetera. Names of continuing grouping should be listed, including dates when important meetings and conferences were held. Brief paragraphs describing the nature of the occasion, where further data, minutes or papers could be secured should also be listed. Illustrative material should be attached to the report. Why is this recommended?

- 1. An almost conflicting variety of attitudes and positions exists among NCC staff. Members of the staff differ widely in their information and experience and in the openness of their prospective.**
- 2. Impulsive programming and current enthusiasms tend to compete with and nullify one another.**
- 3. The staff itself needs more experience in working together, and this subject should not cause basic jealousies or raise questions of hegemony.**
- 4. The NCC staff may be passed over inadvertently for outside opinions. The deep indigenous resources in the staff should first be tapped revealing plentitude of deficiency.**

The Future of the National Council of Churches

Catholic-Protestant association in America is highlighting another problem for NCC. It is a problem that cannot be solved by restructure, even though the NCC recently has gone through all the birth pains of restructure. It is a problem which points to the actual reasons for being, the philosophy, the theology of NCC. Supposedly, NCC is an ecumenical institution. It was born, however, because of various cooperative efforts among Christians and between denominations, most of them on a voluntaristic basis to accomplish certain common goals such as publishing church school literature, missionary effort and education, men's and women's work, temperance and other social actions. These originally voluntary and individualistic efforts could be brought together because they had become bureaucratic and had lost much of their original animating nature. In a sense, the NCC is an accumulation of practical, functional, more or less pragmatic organisms which took upon themselves certain ecumenical symbols and vocabulary. The symbols are expressed through ceremony and public presence, their chief ceremony being gowned public processions and passing of resolutions.

NCC got its activist nature from the reformed and sectarian tradition of the typical Protestant denomination of America represented by such groups as the Baptists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Methodists. In a sense, the predecessors of NCC were protestant Protestant. One might even argue that the influence of the NCC is less today in the area of social pronouncements than it was back in the time of the Federal Council of Churches.

In any event, with major Protestant unions in the making, the main problem today for the NCC is whether it is any longer ecumenical in terms of being a Protestant voice and program, or whether in association with Roman Catholicism it will become more pan-Christian in its expression. In seeking more common denominators, the NCC may find itself less and less able to be more than ceremonial in its appearance and less distinctly unique in its functions. It may be reduced to a convener of conferences and study groups.

Even the pan-Christian era and NCC may be a rather short period, as ecumenism comes to have pan-religious meanings. If the NCC should take on functions such as those carried by NCCJ and develop close relations with Jews, Moslems, and perhaps others, this could mean in the long run that, to the degree that there is to be a Protestant voice, the NCC will not be able to express it and still play fair with Roman Catholicism and with Judaism, etc.

The NCC might no longer be considered in many of its functions as important to certain uniquely Protestant groups. Some sources of support may be preempted by constituted groups of the NCC. Unless endowment can be secured the general budget might be significantly reduced. There is much in the air which suggests that financial support is motivated by quite real partisanship. It would seem important that a candid study be made of the future of the NCC within the historical context suggested above and that some decisions be made as a matter of deliberate choice.

May there still come a new church consciousness that is both an inclusive historical consciousness and an indwelling spiritual consciousness, in affect the bringing together into a new community, a gathered community, even beyond the various confessions and traditions to a renewed charismatic reality. The extreme of rejecting the institution must be avoided, for it must necessarily exist to provide a continuum and momentum when the charismatic is not so evident. The local church, the local congregation, the local parish for both Protestant and Catholic is the place where ecumenicity must have its real expressions even though the grass roots may be highly compromised by the culture and the humanity of the people who belong to these local parishes. It is also the place where the ecumenically emancipated must return to work and from which the clergy must stop fleeing.

Overall Catholic-Protestant relations bring up the question, "What do Christians want for the United States?" Have Protestants given up the desire that ultimately all should become Protestants? Have Roman Catholics given up the desire that ultimately all should be Roman Catholics? To what extent are there Protestants and Roman Catholics

who, while wanting Americans to belong to their communities, are more eager to see the whole life of America under the sovereignty of God?

SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS

We should remember that the previous position of Roman Catholicism, as expressed by Pius XII in Humani Generis, was to give assistance to ecumenical endeavor through the Bishops so that the separated Christians could be guided back, being careful of indifferentism and protecting the faithful. Those who seek after the truth must be helped.

For this position we move to Lund, where there were four accredited Catholic visitors, and to the present day when we meet as equals. Yet we should know that the informed and devout Roman Catholic still has as his ideal that all Christians should come to see that in the Roman Catholic Church is the most authentic and full expression of the Church, and they should return in God's good time to its fold.

We should note also that religious encounter is very much before the public eye. The secular press has done as much -- or more -- to inform the public about changing patterns and relationships between religious groups as the religious press. General public knowledge about items of religion in the news precludes any retrogression to religious privacy. Even though the secular press at times sees relations between Christians more optimistically than is warranted and perhaps lifts up the "fringe-nicks" unduly, yet secular press coverage of religious news has created an atmosphere of religious freedom and tolerance, tending to keep people impartially informed. More than we care to admit, the layman forms his opinions about religious matters from stories in his local newspaper, The New York Times, Look, or one of the other weekly magazines.

Protestant, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic relations thus present interesting potential, possible dangers and important questions. The potential is the realization of consensus and the effect of an American Church. The danger is the neglect of the spiritual vitalities, including

those of the conservative wing of Protestantism, and an immobility in the field of genuine evangelism; also, that in social action, the voluntaristic tradition of movements in, of and among the people will be neglected for pronouncements and the work of specialized bureaus and experts.

Some of the questions are as follows:

1. **What will Be the pattern of recognition of Roman Catholicism by the National Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches by Roman Catholicism? Will the movement be from the observer status to recognition of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States, to permanent observer Consultant Status, Then to Membership on Division program units, eventually to membership as another American denomination? Would this be by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops or first by individual dioceses? Or will relation be by counterpart Catholic agencies to program divisions and departments of the National Council of Churches, with recognition by Roman Catholicism being tacit and not formal? What will voice and vote by Roman Catholics in National Council program areas do to National Council positions on such as Church and State? Fundamentally, will the Roman Catholic Church find relationship to individual Protestant denominations better than official entrance as another church into the National Council and the World Council? In a sense, are the National Council and the World Council not ultimately superfluous in the "one church?" Is Roman Catholicism ready to have ecumenical Christianity centered at Riverside and Geneva?**
2. **Will preoccupation with Roman Catholic relations tend to distract the National Council from relations with conservative and non-member Protestants and even denominations within the National Council? Will it leave unattended the differences between Protestants? Has the glamour of Protestant-Orthodox Roman Catholic encounter dimmed the luster of inter-Protestant encounter or intensified it? Is there a trend to drop the term "Protestant" as dated and too polemical? What effect will Protestant-union efforts, i.e., COCU, have on patterns of**

Protestant-Orthodox Roman Catholic relations in the United States? Are some Protestants, in their desire to move ahead in their experimentation with inter-communion, over-exposing their Catholic colleagues to discipline and possible regression in other types of more possible relations?

3. **Will Protestantism view its role as that of remaining loyal to Reformation themes and building a contrast as long as possible to Roman Catholicism, as a sort of theological measuring stick, or will it move into Roman Catholicism and try to be a part of the continually reforming leaven? Will Protestants become a remnant and, reeling from "secular City" and radical theology, in effect seek comfort in the "Mother Church," or will Protestantism just drift off the place of importance in today's culture? Yet is there a feeling of hope held by Protestant, Orthodox and Catholic that they have a calling to present a common witness in these critical times and bring the Gospel of Christ to bear in the solutions of problems common to all men?**

Below are some practical considerations for the National Council:

1. **The National Council should expand such forums as the Living Room Dialogues and devise other avenues of confrontation so that an even broader spectrum of Protestants, Orthodox and Roman Catholics may become aware of the opportunities and obstacles present in growing relationships.**
2. **The Council should, with foresight, determine whether its emphasis at the present and in the near future shall be as "the voice of Protestantism" or the "voice of Christianity" in the United States.**
3. **The Council needs to ask itself about its role in relation to Roman Catholic social action. Will Protestants and Roman Catholics just react to each other's initiatives, or can action be mutual? What is the effect and procedure when the actions of each are opposed -- being on opposite sides of the question? Are**

guidelines to be set up to guide or restrict one another? Will one view differences with the other as threatening ecumenicity?

- 4. If the constituencies of the National Council have feelings about birth control they should be reemphasized now, but within the context of shoring up and stabilizing American family life, including support for uniform divorce laws and child support laws.**
- 5. The field of education is wide open now in that positions are mixed among both Protestants and Roman Catholics. Mutual study concerning what should happen in American education should be undertaken before positions harden again or intoxication with maintaining present educational institutions as they are because of vested interests takes over.**
- 6. An immediate emphasis should be launched to remove from the draft laws, now being revised, all special treatment of pre-theological and theological students. Special tax treatment of ministers, particularly deductible parsonage, should be removed.**
- 7. A study should be made and action taken on how the church, ecumenically and denominationally, really promotes scholarship. What other programs are there other than support of seminaries to develop and maintain scholars in the religious field?**
- 8. The Council should aggressively enter into conversations with an important aspect of the semi-secular and lay ecumenical field, namely service clubs, fraternal orders, professional organizations, labor unions, chambers of commerce, veterans' organizations -- both men's and women's. The National Council may discover ways in which to undergird the work of such groups congenial to the ideals of the Council, and to secure their help in very vital areas of work.**
- 9. What about the possibility of an association of Bishops and area officials of Protestantism, Orthodoxy and Catholicism? Is a congress of such persons plausible? Would some constituencies**

**denounce their state officials for associating with Bishops?
Would all Bishops accept each other? Would such a fellowship
threaten the need to emphasize the layman's role in the Church?**

10. Finally if the National Council of Churches becomes "pan-Christian" and becomes the secretariat for mutual undertakings for Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Conservative Evangelicals and most Protestants; if it can sense rightly the religious hunger of the masses and can raise up imaginative and dedicated leadership for them, potentially great power is in its hands. However, the constituency of the National Council of Churches must decide what the National Council of Churches is to be.

**NCC "Working Group" Held at Marble Collegiate Church, NYC,
Oct.30-Nov.3,1967**

A few months, after the meeting of the National Council of Churches, General Board in Boston, June 1-2 1967, Edwin Espy, Executive Secretary, invited the NCC member churches to meet as a "Working Group" in a retreat held in Marble Collegiate Church in New York City under the patronage of Mrs. Norman Vincent Peale. Gathered there were the NCC staff, denominational staffs and other ecumenical "bureaucrats." The task was to discuss ways in which the NCC could reestablish and deepen its roots with the broader Protestant constituency throughout the United States. Mr. Espy asked me to address the group along the lines of my proposals in the Boston report.

I addressed the group along the lines of spiritual and evangelistic ecumenism. I suggested that the national and regional "bureaucrats" were losing contact with the bread-and-butter, salt-and-pepper sources of support for their budgets and the causes they exposed. I pointed out that historically most social causes began with the grassroots and then bureaucracies developed which then determined the themes and publicized them from the top down. This resulted in the "grassroots"

loosing its sense of possession and viewing the national proposals as too radical.

Therefore, I suggested that there be a series or campaign of inspirational mass meetings held across the United States sponsored by the National Council of Churches with teams of inspirational preachers giving inspiring sermons surrounded by the singing of evangelistic hymns with massed choirs and all the “hoop la.” There would be no altar call but a symbolic act of recommitment to to support and practice of Christian values in all aspects of American life. It would be a combination of political rally and Billy Graham - Billy Sunday mass meetings.

I am certain that it sounded corny but I pointed out that if they did not revitalize the grassroots support for NCC and all regional ecumenical agencies they would soon starve to death and mainline Protestantism would also go into full retreat.

The discussion to say the least was very intense. The group split apart. NCC had only too recently abolished its Department of Evangelism when Jesse Bader retired. The theme of “you can’t preach to empty stomachs” dominated and social action along with passing resolutions was the fad of the moment. The Lutherans, the Quakers, Mennonites, and others of the more pietistic traditions supported my proposal.

I remembered that in a senatorial hearing Sen. Lucas of Illinois responded to a witness from the National Council of Churches who had said “I represent 30 million people” by saying that you do not represent them, many of them are my constituents and I know what they think of the National Council of Churches.

Ed Espy, I'm sure, was disappointed when he retired from the leadership of the National Council of Churches.