

Summary of responses to Faith and Order Paper No. 198

A. CHURCH RESPONSES

Anglican

1. The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia

The Nature and Mission of the Church: A stage on the way to a common statement, Faith and Order Paper 198, World Council of Churches, Geneva, Switzerland, Response Document from The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia, March 2007, p. 10.

The present text is a church response that affirms the overall methodology of *TNMC* as an ecclesial exercise in ecclesiological reflection. Distinguishing convergent from different perspectives, it encourages theological honesty, although supports that convergences should be articulated rather too confidently, whereas the identification of the differences might be too understated. It is noted that the text uses a genuinely constructive biblical hermeneutic.

Moreover, the response indicates that the goal of visible unity still seems to hover just over the horizon of *TNMC*, as it assumes the primacy of denominational identity over theological identity, failing to offer a methodological model of how dialogue can be opened and maintained between adherents of divergent theological positions, when at the same time, theological differences exist within denominations as well. Some of the most significant contemporary divisive issues cut across traditional denominational distinctions to superimpose new forms of theological identity upon the extant ecclesial identities. It is hoped that the work of the WCC in respect to the focus of *TNMC* can achieve a significant measure of both understanding and resolution of such issues.

The analysis of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia concentrates on responding to questions posed on p12 of *TNMC*. Regarding the ecclesiological convictions enunciated in the text, the response document supports that they are correctly identified. Concerning the nature of the Church, the stress on the Church as both a divine and human institution is endorsed, whereas the statements on the mission of the church (p24) and the Church as sign and instrument (p27) are considered sound. Thus, they are commended and endorsed. Particular attention is given to box 1 (p15-16), with the analysis focusing on the following thematic areas: 1. *The Sacraments: means of salvation or witnesses to salvation?* It is noted that it is important that the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist is affirmed. 2. *The Ordained Ministry, under Episcopal authority.* The need to be guided more by principles of NT thinking rather than certain favoured NT texts that support particular denominational structures is underlined, as is the need to apply a dynamic ecumenical perspective within, and to, the churches. Also, the issue of ordination is discussed in conjunction with the exercise of episcopate. 3. *The value and importance of episcopacy.* The importance and value of episcopacy are affirmed in its history and in terms of its spiritual graces and gifts. The distinction is made between a functional and an ecclesial-ontological value.

With regard to the issues which *TNMC* identifies as continuing to be divisive for the Church, specific parts of the text are analyzed: §32, the “visible and tangible signs” of a Christian life; the boxed statements on p 52, 54, 60, differences concerning ordained ministry, governance, leadership. In addition, Section IV: In and for the World (p62), is said to raise concerns, especially §110, which speaks of evangelisation in such a way that proclamation is effectively identified with it. There is no clarification as to whether or not evangelisation is to be equated

with proselytising. (See also comments on §115). What is emphasised here is the need for the F&O perspective to be addressed on the beliefs and identities of other religions.

According to the response, much of the substantive portrayal of the nature and mission of the church in the document is uncontroversial, particularly the emphasis on the church as *koinonia*. A tension is noted in the description of the action and purpose of the Eucharist in §79. Also, it is stated that §50 appears to identify individual, cultural and historical conditioning as part of the (negative) “conditions of the world” which constrain the life of the church.

Regarding the significant matters in which the concerns of the particular church are not adequately addressed, five specific areas of concern are highlighted: 1. Cultural diversity, 2. Admission to the Eucharist, 3. Gender and Sexual orientation, 4. Reclaiming Mary, 5. The Environmental Context. Concerning the study’s assisting the ecumenical cause of unity in the particular context, it is considered that it suggests a basis for a reconciliation of difference and disagreement of interpretation and concept that respects and allows for diversity: the possibility for a wider and even more inclusive vision of what it means to be the body of Christ. In addition, the particular ecclesial experience of honouring the distinctive identities of the two predominant indigenous cultural streams, Maori and Polynesian, as well as the European, gives local expression to the theme of dynamic unity as expressed in *TNMC*.

References and Acknowledgements follow.

2. The Church of England

A response to The Nature and Mission of the Church from The Faith and Order Advisory Group of the Church of England, Council for Christian Unity, p. 14.

The first two sections of the response describe *TNMC*: 1. The nature and purpose of this study and the questions posed by it. 2. The contents of this study: I. The Church of the Triune God; II. The Church in History; III. The Life of Communion In and For the World (regarding the exercise of primacy, it is noted that in recent years there seems to have been an increasing willingness to discuss the possibility of a universal ministry in support of the mission and unity of the Church, whereas on the issue of authority, the points made by *TNMC* are considered rather disconnected); IV. In and for the World; Conclusion.

In the third section, a response to *TNMC* is attempted through six points that respond to the questions posed: First, the study does not seem to correctly identify a set of common ecclesiological convictions held by the churches involved in the ecumenical movement. This is proved by comparing what is said in this study with the ecclesiological statements, both historical and contemporary, that have been produced or agreed by the individual churches, and also with the material to be found in bilateral and multilateral ecumenical conversations and agreements. Second, there are a number of areas in which further development of the main text would be helpful: 1. The material in Chapter II does not fit together easily as a single unified chapter; 2. The material should be less abstract, with reference being made to specific examples to illustrate what is being said; 3. In §24-34 and §57-59, where extensive use of the word *koinonia* is made, there should be more clarity on the use of the word; 4. The question of who is the subject of the Church needs to be addressed; 5. There needs to be discussion about the origin and end of the Church; 6. Reference needs to be made to the importance of worship and liturgy in the life of the Church; 7. It would be helpful for the study to begin with Jesus’ proclamation of the Kingdom of God, briefly referred to in §109; 8. There should be a more extensive examination of what “church” means in the NT with the material in §13-15 considerably expanded; 9. It should be noted that the Church is a foretaste as well as sign and instrument of the kingdom; 10. A greater emphasis should be placed on the dynamic character of the Church along the lines suggested in §14; 11. There should be more reflection on the nature of the Church’s unity, including a discussion about the relation of particular theological traditions, denominations and worldwide

groups of churches to the Church as a whole; 12. §65 should be expanded to address the debate about whether the local church derives its existence from the Church universal or vice versa; 13. There needs to be discussion on the issue of the importance of the *consensus fidelium*; 14. The discussion of authority in §105-108 is far too brief.

Third, work needs to be done on the issues on which the churches are still divided. Eight areas in particular are noted that are either not covered or not covered in sufficient detail: 1. The goal of the ecumenical process; 2. The relationship between the Apostolic Faith as witnessed to by Scripture and the traditions of the churches; 3. The relationship between the different ways in which churches are ordered and their understandings of the Church's nature and mission; 4. The appropriate level(s) for decision making in the Church; 5. The issue of territoriality; 6. The relationship between Church and State; 7. The relationship between women and men in society; 8. The relationship between ethics and ecclesiology.

Fourth, while a number of areas, over which there are concerns in the Church of England and which require more adequate treatment, have already been highlighted in what has been said about the study's coverage of divisive issues, there are also two other areas of concern to Anglicans which are not necessarily divisive, but which are thought to be helpful for the study to address: a. The distinction between the Church visible and the Church invisible, and b. The question of the role of the Church in salvation. In addition, it is noted that (fifth point) the way the material is made available needs to be considered, and that (sixth point) if there was widespread study and discussion of a revised version of the material in *TNMC* in the Church of England, this would help the Church of England to continue to take concrete steps towards unity.

African Instituted Churches

3. The Church of The Lord

Response from the Church of The Lord (ALADURA WORLDWIDE), p. 1.

The paper responds briefly to the questions posed by *TNMC*, recognising that it correctly identifies the churches' common ecclesiological convictions, as well as the issues which continue to divide them. Also, it is stated that *TNMC* reflects an emerging convergence on the nature and mission of the Church. Lastly, there are a few suggestions for the future development of the ecumenical body: 1. The WCC should find a way to encourage the members of the National Council of each country to worship together. 2. It should encourage each member church to recognise each other's baptisms. 3. It should encourage member churches to celebrate and share the Lord's Supper (Holy Communion) together.

Disciples of Christ

4. Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Response of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to the Faith and Order Document 198, *The Nature and Mission of the Church* (TNMC), p. 10.

This response begins with a brief introduction on the historical, theological and cultural identity of the Disciples. It continues with the description of the reception process and approval of the response to *TNMC* overseen by the Council on Christian Unity and drafted by the biennial General Assembly in July 2009. After expressing gratitude to the F&O Commission for its

ongoing work on this document and for building upon responses to prior documents (*NPC*, *BEM*), the response strikes two notes of concern about the text and the response process.

First, a clear statement of what will be done with the responses is requested, following the questions which end §8. It is supported that if a further text is anticipated (analogous perhaps to *BEM*), that would be a powerful motivation for churches to engage in the process. Second, the text would be more likely to gain the attention it is due if it included specific suggestions for concrete actions to be taken here and now by the churches. These could be reinforced by a new paragraph 124: “Even as the churches pursue their careful work of common reflection towards visible unity, they are called to make visible the degree of agreement and mutual recognition which already exists among them. This could be done by taking practical, concrete steps, and not least at the local level, to make their unity visible. To the extent that is possible, Churches should be guided by the Lund Principle.”

The response continues by providing answers to the questions posed at p12 of *TNMC*: First, it is indicated that the study document can be said to represent in the main and in substance a very helpful exposition of widely shared ecclesiological convictions and concerns. Reservations are noted later in the response. Second, it is believed that a judgement on the extent and firmness of “convergence” reflected in the document depends primarily on the uses for which it is envisioned (Will it be an effort to bring the churches closer together? Will there be intentional effort to structure a teaching guide for congregations? Will it be the basis for a common effort to understand, claim, and live out the affirmations set forth in it or in a revised edition of it?).

Third, the response states that the text is formulated as a doctrinal declaration, and cast in terminology by and for Christians who are exceptionally well schooled in church theology. Editorial efforts should be made to signal a self-conscious awareness of the nature and limits of this form of doctrinal discourse that is in contrast to the more straightforwardly descriptive language of the boxes, as reception is a process involving the advice and consent of the entire community of the faithful and not only of church leaders with formal theological training. Perhaps preliminary remarks on diverse forms and modes of theological discourse, brief explanations of Latin and technical terminology, a glossary, and/or supplementary advice about using the study would be helpful. It is noted that Latin formulations may even contribute to an off-putting response amongst the churches’ people. Moreover, biblical warrants for traditions are considered vitally important, but the frequent use of “thus” and “therefore” is thought to be made in a simplistic way as if the theological claim is specifically derived and logically deduced from scriptural quotations.

In addition, the following sentence is proposed to be inserted before the final sentence of §9: “The Church exists not for itself but in order to participate in and further God’s redeeming and transforming mission in the world.” Maybe it would be helpful to insert between §10 and 11 a “box” in which are discussed some of the several key differences among and within the churches with regard to the language-uses and method(s) for constructing a scripturally-based theology.

What is more, it is claimed that Trinitarian language introduced at this point would represent an excellent case study. The response continues by highlighting the use of gender inclusive language in referring to God as one matter of importance in this regard. Faithfulness to apostolic teaching and continuity with tradition is not bound to a particular set of metaphysical-theological terms developed over the course of Christian history. Regarding further steps towards unity, the Disciples urge for mutual accountability of churches and suggest that further work on the theme would strengthen *TNMC*.

Furthermore, the five sections that follow that look into particular aspects of *TNMC*: 1. *The Church in History*. §25-31 of the response comment on the theme of the Church *in via*, the sections on “Justification and Sanctification”, and the issue of the Tradition of the Church. The suggestion is made that a theme worthy of further reflection is the heart’s desire to live in and by the experience of God’s beauty, God’s glory. 2. *The Eucharist*. §32-37 describe the centrality of the

celebration of the Lord's Supper in the life of the Disciples, the challenge it poses to the Church to feed the world, and the meaning of the Lord's Table, and emphasise the "fact that not all Christians share communion" as not merely "a matter of continuing concern" (box p48), but as a scandal, a wound within the Body of Christ. 3. *Ministry*. In the discussion of the threefold ordering of ordained ministry, §38-41 emphasise as vital the equality of dignity, honour, and worthiness of believers and with it, the equality and complementarity of their diverse ministries in the one ministry of the Church itself. This equality of interrelatedness runs counter to claims and practices of a hierarchical order of the Church, which by definition entails relationships of subordination and superordination. Greater mutual awareness is proposed of how authority is understood and exercised in the various churches taking into consideration the current F&O studies (*T&T*, *MDC*). Also, in §95-98 of *TNMC* concrete examples of ministry exercised in personal, communal, and collegial contexts should be given (see *BEM* §26).

4. *Mission*. §42-51 of the response note particular questions and suggestions related to mission, which is not seen as a matter to be "added on" by the Disciples, nor is it merely considered an "activity" of the church. The response urges that *TNMC* strongly affirms that mission "belongs to the very being of the Church". Thus, it is intrinsic to the Church and its life, and further, since the Church is one, the churches should engage in mission together, ecumenically. It is suggested that material should be drawn from *Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today* (section 6). In addition, explication of how mission is bound up with oneness, catholicity, holiness and apostolicity of the Church's nature is considered appropriate, as well as careful attention to the prayer of Jesus in John 17. Also, it is indicated that attention should be given to the growing need for interfaith engagement and the discussion of evangelism in the context of the world's religions. In view of §110, of "respect for the values present in other faiths", the text should avoid giving the impression of Christian triumphalism. Furthermore, the document should avoid any hint of viewing mission as a condescending Christianity offering charity to inferiors.

One more aspect of the text that is commended is 5. *Ethical Engagement*. §52-57 describe engagement in the world as central to the Church's identity. It is proposed that the text should here draw on earlier works (see *Costly Commitment*, §17). Concerning §114-118, the Disciples suggest that *TNMC* would be strengthened by showing a more concrete awareness of some specific aspects of "the world situation" with regard to poverty, oppression, and injustice of many sorts. Two issues are mentioned with serious implications for the understanding of the nature of the Church and its mission: a. The world's current economic crisis, coupled with environmental disasters affecting food production and exacerbating poverty that call for a stronger statement on the key ethical issue of poverty, and b. The variety of issues relating to human sexuality and gender that include understandings of faithful Christian identity as male and female in terms of human creaturehood and personal-social identity; issues related to ordination; and concerns related to mission and its ethical reach. Reflecting on theological anthropology and developing, within that framework, an account of important convictions may be helpful in approaching these issues. The "Ten Common Affirmations" of F&O *Theological Anthropology* (§127) could be used as a starting point. Reflection could be enriched by the study *Ethnic Identity, National Identity, and the Unity of the Church*.

Mennonite

5. Association of German Mennonite Congregations (K.d.ö.R) Response to the WCC Study on the Nature and Mission of the Church (Geneva 2005), November 2009, p. 6.

In the introduction of the response it is noted that *TNMC* is considered an important and promising continuation of the Lima process, as *BEM* does not mark a final consensus, but represents important convergences in the areas of Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, while leaving

many questions and problems open and unresolved. It is also clarified that a WCC version of the German text (dated June 2006) was used in the study process, slightly different than the version of the German text available on the WCC website. The English original was used in cases where formulations were unclear, or not accurately rendered in the German text. For example, in the case of the English word “authority”, the German text uses the word “Autorität”, where according to the response, it would be better to speak of “Vollmacht” (§105 f). Elsewhere the same term (in plural) is translated as “Machthaber” in speaking of political and economic authorities (§115). A further example is mentioned in the comments that follow (§15 of the response).

The response continues with comments on each chapter of *TNMC*. Regarding I. The Church of the Triune God (§9-47), the fact is welcomed that the close connection between faith and baptism is emphasised throughout the chapter, and §10 is considered an essential component in the understanding of what the Church of Jesus Christ is. Concerning §11, it is noted that it should be emphasised that the body of Christ is nourished and sustained not only by the Lord’s Supper, but also by other important elements such as the proclamation of God’s word in preaching, instruction and pastoral care, exchange and fellowship among church members, through which they accept responsibility for one another, strengthen and encourage each other, give and receive help and advice and keep each other right. In addition, it is stated that concerning the first box below §13, the differences outlined in section b are not systematically upheld later in the document, especially in the section on Ministry.

In §15 a problem is underlined especially with regard to the German translation. The second last sentence of the paragraph, “Eine weitere reichhaltige Quelle sind die Auslegungen der Schrift im Laufe der Jahrhunderte” (translator’s note: Literally “Another rich source is the interpretations of Scripture over the centuries”) sounds different in the English original, and poses less of a problem. In English the whole section is formulated differently. The sentence in question is third last and reads as follows: “There also exists a rich resource to be explored in the interpretation of Scripture over the centuries.” It is mentioned that it is easy to agree with the English original, as against the German translation, because the former makes it clearer that the interpretations of Scripture are subordinate to Scripture itself. Nevertheless, given the different versions of the text in the English original and the German translation, clarity of the particular sentence is demanded here.

Considering chapter II, The Church in History (§48-66), there is agreement in principle with the considerations set out in §50, but it is recommended that the final sentence be expanded, because while the Church is exposed to the power of sin, it is by no means bound to submit to it. Also, the following addition is suggested: “the Church is exposed to... the power of sin; it can submit or resist”. Overall, it is noted that the section on “the Church in via” is very good, and the last sentence of §51 in particular deserves to be highlighted. In addition, there is agreement on the box entitled §56, with the exception of the new formulation proposed in the last paragraph of the box, as it is supported that the Church too is guilty of sin and requires forgiveness, and there is no part of the Church that is exempt from this.

Concerning the last sentence of §57 which speaks of “the restoration of unity”, the term is considered questionable in that it seems to suggest that this unity once historically existed. According to the response, the NT sources show that the Church of Jesus Christ took very different forms even in its earliest times, and unity was given in the common confession of faith in Jesus Christ.

With regard to §65 of *TNMC*, the question is posed of what is meant by “common ministry”. Does it mean a ministry that goes beyond a particular denomination? It is argued that a common ministry is necessary to hold local churches in the communion of the Church. The one Gospel, the one baptism and the one Lord’s Supper are considered sufficient. Similarly, it is said that it is not helpful that, in §66, “the service of a common ministry” is set on the same footing as Scripture, Baptism and Communion. In addition, in §66, it is suggested that is mentioned that the

sentence “The goal of the search for full communion is realized when all the churches are able to recognize...” is a quotation from the Canberra Statement (cf. §122).

The response continues with chapter III. The Life of Communion in and for the World, and comments on section A. Apostolic Faith (§67-73). Agreement is expressed with the basic assumption in this section, namely the continuity of faith and life of the Church of Jesus Christ through the ages from the beginnings up to the present time. However, an addition is asked to §73 that is considered the basically correct description of the faith of the Church as an active response to the challenges of every age and place. That should include a much clearer statement on humankind, which as a whole (including the Church as it exists in all its widely differing confessions) has come to be a threat to the interlocking network of life on this earth. At the same time, it is suggested that the confession should be made that, through God in Christ, the Spirit and the power to resist this destructive trend have been sent into this world, so that Christians everywhere can join in efforts to establish conditions that will sustain life and create peace and justice at all levels.

Concerning section B. Baptism (§74-77), the underlying principle is endorsed that baptism is “a basic bond of unity”. The box on Baptism is thought to correctly present the difficulties that persist between churches which baptise infants, and those which baptise professing adults. The response emphasises that baptism is a two-fold commitment: that of God to the human person; and that of the human person to God. The difficulties explained are not considered such that they should divide the churches. They do not stand in the way of mutual acceptance by the churches.

Commenting on section C. The Eucharist (§78-81), the basic affirmation is that those sharing in the Lord’s Supper experience communion with Christ and hence communion with one another and with others around the world. §80-81, where the ethical implications of the Lord’s Supper are described with references to biblical sources, are also affirmed. It is noted that the term “Eucharist” is not used in the communities of the Association of German Mennonite Congregations, and additional points are emphasised in relation to the box of this section: “It would be in keeping with the spirit of Christ and the celebration of His Supper if the declaration on the nature of the Church were to include a statement to the effect that: We believe our lines of demarcation are not compatible with God’s all-encompassing love shown to us in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ himself invites us to share in the meal. But God in Christ has a larger heart than his Christian followers, such as ourselves”. Attempts to establish unity by means of documents, or any sort of organisational union, are approached with scepticism. Rather, it is said that if we as Christian men and women could accept one another despite all the persisting differences, the unity of Christians in reconciled diversity would already be achieved. This could be shown forth in every Christian worship service with celebration of the Lord’s Supper.

The response is in full agreement with section D. Ministry of All the Faithful (§82-85), whereas it largely agrees with the basic thinking of section E. Ministry of the Ordained in the Community of Believers (§86-89). However, terms like “commissioning”, “blessing” and “committing” are preferred to the term “ordination”, as it is supported that those entrusted with special ministries remain on an equal footing with all other brothers and sisters, and the assembled congregation is responsible for taking decisions. With regard to section F. Oversight: Personal, Communal, Collegial (§90-98) it is said that, for a Congregationalist church, the problems do not arise in the same way. Nonetheless, the task of leadership exists and needs to ensure that congregations continue in the path of discipleship. Concerning section G. Conciliarity and Primacy (§99-104), the box is thought to accurately describe the divergence existing among the churches with regard to universal primacy. Although for some churches it is important to reach consensus on this matter, the response highlights two other questions as more important: First, how can churches in all their diversity still speak and act convincingly in the world and be seen to do so in ecumenical unity? Could the WCC be the voice of the churches on particularly important issues? Second, churches ask themselves how processes “at synodal level” can be tied

in with the living out of the faith in local congregations. Moreover, problems are expressed with many of the considerations concerning keywords in §99-104 (leaders, synods, primacy, papacy) as there is notion of primacy in the understanding of the German Mennonite Congregations.

With regard to section H. Authority, it is stated that a critical view of “authority” as exercised by Jesus is simply transposed into the formal authoritative structures of the Church . Furthermore, the problem of the misuse of authority is not touched upon. (In the German translation it is misleading to use the term “Autorität”, when it is the biblical term *exousia* that is meant). In addition, questions arise on the structure of section IV. In and for the World (§109-118): What is meant by III. LIFE IN COMMUNION IN AND FOR THE WORLD as opposed to IV: IN AND FOR THE WORLD? The headings should be more clearly formulated to distinguish the sections more clearly from one another.

The response continues with Comments on individual paragraphs (§110, 111 and 112, 113, 115) and concludes with comments on §119-123.

Religious Society of Friends

6. Christian and Interfaith Relations Committee of the Friends General Conference, April 2007, p. 1.

The response notes that the Friends General Conference has referred with interest both F&O paper 198 and PRC 01.1 Rev, *Called to be the One Church*, to its Christian and Interfaith Relations Committee (CIRC), the body responsible for ecumenical and interfaith work. It notices that significant changes have been made since F&O Paper 181, *TNPC*, and expresses gratitude for the careful attention to the approach to Baptism in *Called to be the One Church*, section 8, as well as for the great care with which the known conflicts regarding baptism are treated in *TNMC*. It is indicated that on p21 of *TNMC* both points f and g speak to strands of thought common among Friends. The opportunity is welcomed to engage the whole document and the many issues which it challenges Friends to consider.

7. Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain

The Nature and Mission of the Church. A Response from the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain to the World Council of Churches Faith and Order Paper 198, *The nature and mission of the Church: a stage on the way to a common statement*, February 2009, p. 15.

The response is submitted on behalf of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain and was prepared by the Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations after wide consultation with Friends. Its authors recognise that there is a variety of Quaker practice throughout the world. The consultation within the Yearly Meeting has shown that there are members who are uncomfortable with expressing their faith in traditional Christian language, due to their belief that faith cannot be adequately expressed in words. An attempt was made to respond to *TNMC* whilst recognising that whatever is written is partial and inadequate.

Section 2 of the response of the Religious Society of Friends is their previous response to F&O Paper 181, *TNPC*, slightly edited. New comments relating to the current document appear as Section 3. Section 2 approaches the previous F&O document starting from the Quaker theology and understanding, rather than from the questions posed. Part B of the response addresses Quaker ecclesiology: The invisible church; The visible church; The nature of the church (It is dependent on and defined by its relationship with God. The church is described in terms of the Light (of Christ) and the Holy Spirit. It is also a community under the direction of the Spirit); The purpose of the Church (The purpose of the visible church is to witness to the life of the kingdom of God within time, in our present experience); Gospel Order (Refers to the

structure, the way meetings relate to each other, to the business, the maintenance of gospel of life in the church and the world, and to the way in which the meeting is conducted, in worship seeking the will of God. At such meeting, Christ presides and leads, and the meeting submits itself to his authority).

Part C analyzes the issues raised in the boxes in *TNPC*. More specifically: The institutional dimension of the Church and the work of the Holy Spirit; The Church and Sin; Church and “Sacrament”; Koinonia, Diversity and mutual recognition of gifts; Authority and the local church; Apostolic faith; Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry, Episkope and hierarchy; Communal, personal and collegial existence, conciliarity and primacy; Service in and for the world: faith and ethics. Part D answers the questions to which a response is requested by *TNPC*.

Section 3 starts with the developments since the last Quaker Consultation. Changes in society lead to an increasing consciousness of the truths to be found in as well as the challenges posed by other major world faiths. It is mentioned that as Quakers try to be “open to new Light from whatever source it may come”, they have to struggle to see where and how it is right to change or develop their tradition and where they have to stand firm in their religious principles and practice. Growing ecumenical cooperation, growth in congregations without institutional attachments, growing tendency amongst churchgoers to regard the differences between churches and the ordinances of church discipline as irrelevant to the life of faith, the growing diversity and inclusiveness of the ecumenical movement, the broadening of the concept and experience of the church show that it is time for a shift of emphasis from the institutional to the relational.

Regarding the Biblical insights, the response welcomes the recognition of diversity and that the Bible is a witness to the Word of God rather than itself being the Word (§17), as well as the understanding of the Church as the body of Christ. It understands the Church as a prophetic sign that points beyond itself, and the use of the term “meeting” to translate *ekklesia*, as the church is an encounter between members of the community and with God, an assembly in which diverse voices are heard in a “space in which obedience to truth is practiced”. The response stresses the absence of the images of “family” and “friendship” in the account of biblical insights provided.

Contrary to their 17th century approach, the Quakers now accept and state that the Holy Spirit has guided different churches into different ways that are appropriate for their condition. This does not mean they agree with all their practices, but it is to say that the challenges coming from differences have to be taken seriously and the gifts given to other churches have to be appreciated. Secondly, it is noted that *TNMC* distinguishes between those churches that regard institutions as the guarantee of apostolicity and those that see the church manifest wherever there is witness to apostolicity. Quakers claim that to be apostolic is to be in that Spirit which the apostles were in. Thirdly, according to 1Cor 13:13 which suggests faith, hope and love to be the eternal elements, the response poses the question of what in the structures and practices of each church ceased to embody those elements. In addition, equality is emphasised as the key sign of God’s reign and greater participation of women and other marginalised groups in the institutional life of the churches is encouraged.

Concerning the discussion on sin and holiness (p14), the response emphasises that God can work with and through human sinfulness and that sin can offer no barrier to God’s Spirit. In the following paragraph, “Limits of diversity?”, the response stresses that it is not adherence to doctrine that makes us disciples, but faithfulness to the will of God. It also states that the RSF has differed from other churches in regarding positively those who doubt the historic statements of faith. As important as doctrine may be, faith is not words but lived experience.

In the paragraph on Baptism, the response welcomes the recognition of the Quakers’ position expressed in the paper under headings f and g. It emphasises that it is baptism with the Spirit that is seen as creating the community and entry into new life. The baptism of the Spirit may be confirmed by water baptism, but baptism by water in the absence of baptism in the Spirit is clearly not a proper baptism. Thus, the following question is posed: “If Quakers see the

baptism of the Spirit in the transformation of the Spirit working in their lives, how do the other churches understand Spirit baptism?”. Water baptism is seen as a symbol of equality.

Regarding the Eucharist, it is noted that the presence of Christ in the Church does not depend on a Eucharistic ritual, but rather in being “gathered in his name”, and the question is posed whether the practice of the Eucharistic rituals has become a means of exclusion. The comment in §18, on the challenge posed by the Eucharist to live justly and share equably, is considered helpful. Lastly, the response raises the question whether there is really a need for a growth in understanding between the churches, as opposed to greater humility and discernment; whether it is time to cease their concentration in the Eucharist and to focus rather on a consideration of those practices that can be shared.

As far as ordained ministry is concerned, it is stated that ministry is a function of all the faithful. In this perspective, the Quakers regret that *TNMC* omits the understanding of the ordained ministry as being “under” the people of God. The practice of ordination could be seen as a means by which churches seek to make individuals accountable to the church. The following paragraph “Episkope, bishops and apostolic succession” describes the Society’s structure and administration, whereas the one on “Conciliarity and universal primacy” deals with leadership and suggests a re-examination of the role of Peter as a model for leadership, since it is clear from the gospels’ witness that he was far from constant in faith.

Finally, Section 4 is a response to the questions posed by *TNMC* that is in general the same as in the previous statement of the RSF.

Lutheran

8. Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania

Provincial Consistory of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania, Ref. Faith and Order Study: The Nature and Mission of the Church. A stage on the Way to a common statement, April 2007, p. 3.

The response states that *TNMC* is welcome from the standpoint of Lutheran ecclesiology. It is considered to provide a good basis for further steps along the way to Christian unity. It is noted that the response is compiled as the questions posed by *TNMC* were examined. Furthermore, agreement is expressed on both the form and the content of this document. The development of certain issues is claimed to correspond to what the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania believes. (*Ecclesia Dei*, the Church of the Triune God anchored in the working of the three persons Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, *creatura Verbi* and *creatura Spiritus Sancti*; the biblical and systematic theological view of the church and its mission as sign and instrument of God’s action in the world; the church in history and the eschatological aspect of its presence in the world as a universal and particular or local entity; the concrete form the church’s life in worship, witness and service; the question of sacraments and ministry). The boxes are believed to facilitate further work on the issues described in them.

The response emphasises that there is a real theological consensus on most of the issues. On points such as pneumatology, and the understanding of the sacraments and ministry, views have drawn closer together and a convergence has emerged which is moving towards full consensus. On the other hand, the persistent differences challenge us to further reflection. What follows is a list of passages in the texts which are thought to be problematic and need to be revised (§10, 15, 70, 77, 81, 85, 93, 102, 107, 110, 112, 115).

In the response’s perspective, there are two aspects that have not received sufficient attention in *TNMC*: 1. One of the essential “marks of the church” (*nota ecclesiae*) is suffering, life under the cross. This needs to be discussed at greater length. 2. The Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania has developed a special practice of concrete acts of reconciliation. The

church's reconciling action at the different levels of the church's life (personal, parish, ecumenical, up to and including joint declarations, cf §13) has to be shown more clearly. Lastly, *TNMC* is considered to play an important role in the context of ongoing Lutheran–Orthodox dialogue, both bilaterally (Evangelical Church in Germany–Romanian Orthodox Church), and internationally (Lutheran World Federation–Orthodox Churches worldwide).

9. Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland

Statement from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland To the Faith and Order Commission on the Document *The Nature and Mission of the Church* (Faith and Order Paper no 198, Geneva: WCC 2005), Given by the Council for International Relations, March 2007, p. 7.

The *Introductory remarks* provide a brief background of *TNMC* and clarify that any ecclesiological reflection within the WCC must abstain from interfering with the binding ecclesiologies of the member churches. They remind the reader of the *Toronto Declaration* of 1950 that does not provide the WCC with the mandate to define the final nature of the one Church. *TNMC* is considered to “assist” the process launched in Porto Alegre assembly with the text on ecclesiology *Called to be the One Church*.

The *Biblical Insights into Ecclesiology* section expresses appreciation that ecumenical documents are anchored in Holy Scriptures. The Scriptures should be used as the starting point for drafting a theological document and not as a resource for verses. It is noted that *TNMC* makes wide use of biblical texts. However, some references are loosely connected to the topic at stake (§81, the social and economic dimensions of the eucharist). Other verses are taken into use of other than the original intention of the text (§10, St Mary presented as a symbol of a Christian). In addition, it is underlined that Churches and Christians might interpret very differently the normativity of the Scriptures and the totality of the witness of the Bible. Thus, it is appropriate that *TNMC* acknowledges the diversity of the Scriptures and appreciates its richness.

The Section that follows is a response to the questions posed by *TNMC*, which is preceded by a five paragraph presentation of some main features of the Lutheran understanding of ecclesiology. Concerning the first question, §9-33 are considered in many ways very balanced and good. The Word of God is highlighted as the foundation of the church, expressions emerging from the Trinitarian doctrine are considered familiar, and the Trinitarian foundation of the church is seen as an ecumenically fruitful point of departure.

Furthermore, it is stressed that it is important that baptism and the Lord's Supper are emphatically put forward as intimately belonging to the nature of the church (§11). The solution is appreciated that the ordained ministry is not so strongly elaborated in the “nature” part, but suspended to the “life” section (§86-89). Also, the other expressions in the Trinitarian framework are considered familiar, and the extensive use of the *koinonia* ecclesiology is appreciated. The notion of the church as “sign and instrument” is considered fruitful, particularly because the classical characteristics (one, holy, catholic, apostolic) are expressed in this context.

The list of divisive issues identified by *TNMC* and highlighted in the grey areas is considered to reflect the outcome of many ecumenical dialogues of the last decades: 1. institutional church – work of the Spirit, 2. church as “sacrament”, 3. church and sin, 4. limits of diversity, 5. local church, 6. baptism, 7. eucharist, 8. ordained ministry, 9. bishops, 10. conciliarity and primacy. However, there is no clear reason why points 1 and 5 should divide Lutheranism from other traditions. The points from 6-10 name topics of highest importance, with the ones from 6-7 being “constituting” elements, thus theologically prior to any subsequent ecclesiology. Concerning the grey boxes, the response comments on the all the above-mentioned points, namely pp. 15-16, 29-30, 33-34, 37-39, 41, 45-46, 47-49, 52, 54, 60.

Finally, *Concluding remarks* are made to the questions posed by *TNMC*. Regarding the first one, it is stated that the study does correctly identify common ecclesiological convictions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. Secondly, it is noted that there should be no ambivalence in presenting baptism and the Eucharist as church-constituting elements of “nature”. With regard to the second question, the document is considered to give a truthful and honest picture of the existing ecclesiological convictions. As such, it is a step forward. However, the grey boxes present an agenda of major and minor differences, rather than convergences. It may even be the case that the intensive study and confessional awareness has resulted in an increasing number of doctrinal differences pertaining to ecclesiology.

What is more, the emphasis of *TNMC* is on the nature, whereas mission is only thematically treated in §34-42. §109-118 seem also to contain material belonging to mission. More comments follow on the above-mentioned paragraphs. Concerning the third question, it is supported that it may be problematic to subsume word and sacraments under a general discussion on “The Life of Communion” (§68-108). Moreover, while the emphasis on the traditional doctrinal topics of ecclesiology is appreciated, the response calls for a more differentiated elaboration of ethical issues. The chapter on “communion in diversity” (§60-63) should be expanded.

Responding to the fourth question, *TNMC* is seen as helpful especially in the discussions with Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican traditions, since the doctrinal points of the text are believed to strongly represent their theology. It is assumed that the text in a fruitful manner represents the common essence of these three families.

On the basis of this response, three suggestions are made: 1. The precise meaning, theological extension and relative importance of ecclesiology in the ecumenical activity of various church families should be discussed in more detail. 2. The role of ethical issues in ecclesiology should be reflected in more detail, paying attention to the differences among churches. 3. The mission parts of *TNMC* text should be elaborated in a manner which is more concrete and straightforward.

10. The Church of Norway

RESPONSE FROM CHURCH OF NORWAY. To the Faith and Order Document no. 198, Geneva, WCC 2005, THE NATURE AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH By the Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations, p. 7.

In the *Introductory remarks* of the response sincere thanks are extended for the F&O doc no. 198, and the invitation to respond to it. The document is understood mainly as an expression of a stage within an ongoing ecclesiological, ecumenical process, particularly following *BEM*. What follows is the description of the process of how the document has been dealt with in the Church of Norway and the Norwegian Council of Churches. Then the response provides *General comments to the document*, and a separate section replying to the questions posed by *TNMC*.

The response considers the questions in the Introduction of the document as useful (§8), but notes that it might have been helpful to develop it more in line with the questions, thus providing methodological help in responding to it. Concerning its style and structure, the introduction is considered historical in its approach and leads into questions of what divides the churches historically and what is possible consensus. This may be an understandable and pragmatic choice of methodology, but the different views of the churches, as expressed through the grey boxes, are individualised in a general way and appear to be fragmented. It is supported that it becomes difficult for a church to recognise its self-understanding in the grey box and discern the main findings in the main text on what it has in common with other churches. The document therefore gives an impression of being written within an internal ecumenical structure, for internal use rather than for the individual church. At that point, the Church of Norway would expect specific Lutheran opinions to be more clearly expressed and explained in the boxes, particularly when diverging from what is already expressed in the main text and what is listed in

the box. When this is not the case it is said that it becomes difficult to respond to the document's two types of text.

What is more, the text represents a challenge when it comes to the purpose of the document, because of its generalising style. The question is posed: By whom, for whom and to whom is it written? The response suggests that the study would gain a clearer purpose by highlighting the concrete realities the churches are living in and relating to these. It is within a historical reality that the Church has its mission, and to which the nature and purpose of the Church must be related.

Concerning *The Nature of the Church and Koinonia* (§21-24), it is noted that the way in which God's Grace is instrumental for *koinonia* could be further explored, perhaps already in the opening paragraphs under The Nature of the Church. In doing so, the use of the term "communion of the faithful" as a constitutive term for the Church (§10) has to be reconsidered. A better option could be the concept "Communion of Believers" in describing what constitutes the Church. This is later used in §49, and it is believed it would correspond well here.

Regarding *The context of the document*, it is highlighted that it should enter fully into an analysis of how the churches, based in specific historical contexts, relate to concrete, current challenges. It is supported that the contextuality of ecclesiology is not taken sufficiently into account in the document: What is the role of the churches? How do we relate to an intercultural society and the theology of religions? What place do denominational church traditions have in a changing context? When dealing with the challenges of today, how do the churches relate to their historical self-understanding?

With regard to *The Mission of the Church*, it is mentioned that a clear reference to baptism and Mt. 28:18-20 should be added in §37. The role of baptism in mission seems to be left out almost entirely. This means that the question of non-baptised persons too is left out. It is suggested that the sacramental dimension of baptism must be dealt with, including its relation to the Eucharist. In addition, there seems to be a discrepancy between what is said in §40 and what is said in both the former and final paragraphs. Concrete expressions of mission seem to be treated as practical demands (as in §35) rather than integrated expressions of being church. The purpose of mission with regards to eschatological motives becomes unclear. Also, *TNMC* does not enter into a discussion on some of the major missional challenges of today. The response continues, insofar as they represent a challenge to the very nature of the Church, it is recommended to deal with at least a few concrete examples of current missiological and ecclesiological challenges affecting most churches (emergence of new churches, as a result of fresh expressions of church or of migration). The whole understanding of mission as crossing borders, culturally and geographically, seems to be missing in the document.

Commenting on *Chapter II, Human sin and the Failure of the Church*, the box following §56 is considered important but needs further reflection. The question is posed of how the notion of sin relates to the notion of failure when it comes to the Church. The Church's relation to sin needs to be further developed in the convergence text's treatment of the holiness of the Church (§54). Another issue to deal with is how the question of the relationship between sin, failure and holiness relates to the notion of *koinonia* – expressed as "communion of faithful" or as "communion of the holy". How do these questions relate to the role and meaning of the sacraments? §55 brings catholicity into this very difficult discussion around sin, or the inadequacy of the communion. The language of the last part of the paragraph is thought to be in striking contrast to the language of communion. It is mentioned that using colonial empire language in a time of human-made climate change is a bad choice. The response suggests that a closer reflection on the doctrine of creation and its relevance for ecclesiology should be included.

Moreover, regarding the paragraphs on Baptism and Eucharist that are closely following *BEM*, the response notes that the chapter as a whole was dealt with thoroughly in the ecumenical dialogue forum (NTSF). A basic finding in this process was the need to restructure and add grey boxes to each of the sub-chapters on Apostolic Faith, Baptism and Eucharist. This may be a

result of the chosen selection of boxes in the original text, where it seems like some matters of dispute have been left out. In addition, Chapter IV is characterised as fairly short and in danger of leaving out some important eschatological aspects. The role of Christians as actively taking part in bringing about the Reign of God has been addressed, highlighting moral and ethical values leading to concrete action, but not treated on a broader thematic basis. It is noted that the role of Christians is being dealt with only as a collective human service for the betterment of the world, while the place and the purpose of the Church in broader eschatological terms remain unclear. The link between the Reign of God and creation could be further explored. This would bring up the question of the relation between human beings and nature as part of creation. What is the destination of nature?

Finally, responses are provided to the questions posed by *TNMC*: Firstly, attempts to express the common ecclesiological convictions in the document are appreciated. It is underlined that there is a danger with ecclesiological texts that the place and role of the Church may be stressed to an extent which leaves out the wider perspective of God's action outside the Church. This is thought to have influenced the choice of themes of the document. Moreover, the methodology of the convergence text and boxes is understandable, but not it is not felt that this always helps the clarity of the text. Secondly, *TNMC* provides an advanced common ecclesiological language, which is of great help to the churches in expressing areas of convergence, and represents a positive challenge to take up ecumenical dialogue on the understanding of the Church which can lead to greater clarity in our understanding of other churches and ourselves. However, it is believed that the attempt to express convergence on such a vast subject in a limited document means that a number of issues are not dealt with in-depth. Thus, it is not clear whether a common language actually expresses convergence.

Thirdly, there are certain matters that need to be clarified, further explored or treated in more depth: Theological reflections around Creation and Communion; A clearer understanding that God's calling to the church is not only carried out in the acts of the institutional church, but also by the baptised members of the church in their daily lives. A Lutheran "theology of vocation" offers an important contribution to a better understanding of the relation between ecclesiology and the doctrine of creation; The relation between Church and Society is sometimes expressed in problematic terms. Language which gives the impression that the world is something the Church should take over and change should be avoided. Language which can be understood as expressions of "Christian sharia" can be detected in the treatment of the Church's relation to creation, and the church's role in transforming the world. It is supported that the Lutheran understanding of "the two kingdoms" may offer a valuable contribution in this area; The definition of the Church as "the Community of the Faithful" is believed to be problematic, as discussed under Chapter I. The concept of the Reign of God should be further developed as it relates to the purpose of Creation and to the eschatological understanding of the place and role of the Church.

The response notes that it is not so much concrete steps towards unity which have come out of the process, as the concrete experience of living together in diversity, and the experience of having to clarify one's own understanding and finding an appropriate language for this in a broad ecumenical context. Regarding suggestions for further work, a question to be asked is whether it is this type of text that we need. It is also questioned whether a document dealing with a much vaster theological subject than *BEM*, in less space, can provide the same helpful platform for further dialogue. A possible way forward may be to combine the document with the responses from the churches, as an expression of their ecclesiological views. Another way forward could be to simplify the convergence text, for example, more in line with *Called to be the One Church*. This may help to present a shorter but clearer convergence text. It would also open the possibility of narrowing down the study process into more specific areas to be studied in more depth.

11. The Church of Sweden

Church of Sweden , Response of the Church of Sweden to *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, p. 10.

At the Introduction of the response great appreciation is expressed that the Standing Commission of F&O has worked on ecclesiological questions since 1993, and the present text is a help in reflecting on one's own identity and understanding oneself in relation to other churches. Also, the ecclesiological background of the Church of Sweden is briefly described so that its response to the document is better understood. The visible unity sought by participating in ecumenical dialogue is considered a mutual acknowledgement of each other as churches, and sharing each other's Eucharistic table is a sign of mutual respect. It is noted, however, that *TNMC* includes more in its understanding of what visible unity involves, including an openness and willingness to accept differences that can seem problematic for others, though it does not mean that the question of the identity of the church is neglected. In the end of the introduction it is noted that the response was prepared by a working group at the National Church Offices of the Church of Sweden, discussed by the Theological Committee of the Church of Sweden, and took account of points of view from the Standing Committee of the Governing Board and from the Bishops' Conference.

What follows is the section of *Comments on various sections of TNMC* on the basis of §9-118, by critically discussing those points that are thought especially interesting or which could indicate other possible approaches. First, on chapter I. THE CHURCH OF THE TRIUNE GOD, it is suggested that its structure could be made clearer by changing the title of section A from *The Nature of the Church* to *The Church as a Gift of God*, and consequently that §9-13 are called *Creation of the Word and the Holy Spirit*. An important reason to justify this is that the term "nature" does not fully capture how the Church of Sweden would speak of the church. The concept of identity, which can be considered more open if not used statically, is proposed as a more fruitful way for the churches to reflect on a possible common self-understanding.

Second, it is noted that the text expresses a "high ecclesiology", which is also strengthened by the structure of the texts in the boxes where "low ecclesiology" alternatives can be found towards the end and can therefore seem to be "problematic". The question is posed whether the structure of the text could not have an unconscious psychological effect on readers. Third, a further consideration expressed is that the document continually uses terms that seem to be unequivocal, but after further examination probably could point in several different directions. The problem here is that one can be led to accept things where the differences are greater than the text of the document indicates. Two examples are: §10 *creatura verbi* and §12 *succession in apostolic truth*. With reference to future development of the text, it is suggested that F&O works with the problems listed in the boxes rather than develop the contents of the main text.

Fourth, the section on the Bible is considered important as it points out the great diversity of biblical images, but this is not done consistently. Certain images (people of God, body of Christ, temple of the Holy Spirit, *koinonia*) that are used in later theological traditions, are allowed to be synthetically determinative of the picture of the church. (see *koinonia* in §25-26). Fifth, the section on the mission of the church, in which the essential relationship between evangelisation and service is in focus, is thought to be very important. It is stated that §40 has a key position by speaking of the vocation of the church in a broken and bleeding world. §34-42 as well as Part IV point to something about the church which is so central that it should be given a more developed and prominent role in the text. What would have happened if the whole document had started with Part IV (the praxis of the church), something which will be discussed in the concluding part of this response? Sixth, in the last section of Part I, the terms "sign" and "instrument" are not very clear, since there are different theological understandings of human instrumentality, both individual and ecclesial, in the process of salvation. The question is posed

whether the grey box *The church as "sacrament"* is under the wrong heading (*The church in history*), and should instead be included in this section.

Chapter II THE CHURCH IN HISTORY is described as constructive and significant. The historicity of the church is a fruitful starting point for understanding the identity of the church. The history of the church teaches that changeability is an expression of the church's identity, an insight which if maintained could be a significant and fruitful opening in ecumenical conversations. In the section *The Church in via* the positive of historical development and its opportunities for finding new paths for the Gospel in new situations could be emphasised more.

Furthermore, in the box *The Church and Sin* the question is put whether the description of the relationship between sin and holiness as one between incommensurable realities can be accepted. The description is not found congenial, since this distinction between different dimensions of the church cannot be drawn so clearly in a Lutheran theological tradition. In the section on *Communion and Diversity* it is good that the theological description arises of how what eventually comes to be seen as problematic, includes social, cultural and linguistic influences on the forms of the church. It would be good to see the possibilities in diversity, that diversity could even be said to be God's will. This could be compared to the fruitful encounters in the liturgical movement between different traditions and how this has now developed into constructive mutual learning.

In addition, in section III THE LIFE OF COMMUNION IN AND FOR THE WORLD, clarity is desired on the description of the significance of the apostolic faith. In the section on Baptism and the Eucharist, it is suggested that expressions should be avoided that imply that the work of the Spirit is confined to the church, for instance talk of the privilege of the baptised to receive the Spirit (§77). Also, it is mentioned that a perspective that is consistently missing is the question of the place of women. One example here is the question of injustices that participation in the Eucharist should challenge us to oppose – whilst it is positive that what is mentioned is included, sexism is missing. Another issue brought up is the various traditional terms used for the meal, (Lord's Supper, Eucharist, Mass) without indication that they represent different Eucharistic theologies. In the box, the official restrictive line on intercommunion can be seen to be problematic in the light of unofficial praxis and even certain official exceptions, which witness to the ecumenically significant longing of many people. The question is whether such a boundary-transcending practice could lead to new openings for a deeper theological reflection, a question posed to the praxis of the Church of Sweden as well.

Furthermore, the response notes that ecumenical openings are created by the ministry of all the faithful being discussed first in §82-85 before that of the ordained in §86-89, where the historical approach in understanding the growth of the forms of ordained ministries is brought out in a constructive way in §87. In a similar way, the historical presentation in §92-93 of the development of structures of authority and oversight (*episkopé*) is considered positive. In addition, regarding conciliarity, the question is posed of what it is meant by this being an essential dimension of the life of the church which concerns all the baptised, and how it is expressed on all levels of the church – in any real church. The section on *Authority* is considered too short and idealistic and the text is thought not to indicate the complexity of the matter.

The section IV IN AND FOR THE WORLD is considered important for a complete understanding of the church. However, this perspective could be given greater systematic relevance for the interpretation of both the identity and the vocation (nature and mission) of the church. The approach advocated by the response is on the basis of §109, considered to be in line with the intentions of the document.

In the *General Comments on the Approach of the Document*, it is indicated that it is problematic that the document takes as its starting point the nature of the church, and that the title should rather be "The Identity and Vocation of the Church". Maybe a more fruitful point of departure would be the understanding of the task of the church. Another alternative could be the historical churches' actual practices that could be a solution to the linguistic unevenness of the text. In

general, changes in Church and society require a joint ecclesiological reflection on the way to visible unity in dialogue with three movements which can probably bring new impetus to the ecumenical dialogue: Liturgical Theology, Women as Theological Subjects and Spiritual Leaders, and Churches in the Global South.

Regarding the further development of the document, it is proposed that it should be simplified to be used in the work of the congregations themselves with their self-understanding. A more thoroughgoing reworking of the F&O ecclesiological work is suggested so that the starting-point for reflection on the church is the churches' understanding of their task and the praxis that has been developed in the different traditions, an inductive method instead of the deductive used in the past.

Methodist

12. Evangelical Methodist Church in Argentina

Response of the Evangelical Methodist Church of Argentina to the text produced by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, August 2009, p. 4.

The response replies concisely to the questions in the Introduction of *TNMC* and then comments on some of the paragraphs that have merited the particular attention of the Evangelical Methodist Church in Argentina.

Firstly, it is supported that the text in general does identify this particular church's understanding of the Church and clearly expresses the issues on which agreement has not yet been reached. Secondly, it is stated that *TNMC* is a convergence text in that it includes different theological perspectives and reduces differences as far as possible to a minimum. It helps to clarify what we are effectively in agreement on, and to what extent there are still different positions. Thirdly, it is noted that some points that will be brought up later in the response are thought to need to be made more specific and improved. Fourthly, the document is regarded as a basic tool for future dialogues on ecclesiology. It is said to mark the point at which churches have arrived after much journeying together and a new departure point from which they can deepen unity and theological agreements.

In section *II Comments on particular points* the response discusses §9, The nature of the Church: a. It is stated that the quotation from John 3:16 does not apply to the Church but to Christ, and can confuse readers. As it is written, what is attributed to Christ seems to be attributed to the Church, and that is precisely a risk to be avoided. It is suggested that a different quotation should be found, or it should be omitted. b. The text in Spanish indicates that it "is a creation of the Father", but the response supports it would be preferable to say "is a creation of God", since "the Father" refers to one aspect of the Trinity, and can obscure the intended meaning, which is to state that the Church did not create itself but is a gift from the Lord. c. It is noted that the Church to be a creation of God and to belong to God indicates that it is under God's authority and will be judged by God's justice. In §9-13, there is no mention of the judgement of the Church that God exercises permanently, in the manner of the prophets with the people of Israel in the OT. d. In §10 it is mentioned that those who form the Church are sinners, a theme treated in §26 and §50. This condition of being distorted by sin is believed to be part of the life of the Church, and not accidental, and thus is proposed to be taken very seriously. Thus, in §9-13 mention should be made of this condition of a community in which sin and human limitations are also present in it.

Comments follow on §10, Mary as a symbol of the Church and of the individual Christian. It is stated that this is not the case in the Methodist tradition, and the text quoted (Matt. 12:50) is an example of Jesus distancing himself from Mary and his blood brothers in

order to emphasise that his bonds are spiritual and are formed with those who do “the will of the Father”. It is supported that the text would be improved by removing this allusion to a symbol on which there is no consensus between the churches. In addition, on §12 and the Catholicity of the Church, the phrase (in the Spanish) “The Church is catholic because it is life in abundance” is not considered appropriate. The attributes that make the Church universal are different, such as those expressed in §16. It is suggested that the emphasis be placed on the presence of the Holy Spirit – who is everywhere at all times, and can be praised in thousands of human languages. It is that presence which makes the Church catholic, a situation that makes all believers brothers and sisters with believers of all times and places.

More comments follow on particular aspects of *TNMC* and the approach of the Evangelical Methodist Church in Argentina is presented with regard to: §13, Box “The institutional dimension...” point c; and §68-73, Apostolic succession; §20, The Church as the body of Christ; §26, Sin also distorts the ministry of the Church; §42, Trinitarian doctrine; §45, Visible structures of the Church; §99-104, Conciliarity and primacy; §105-107, The authority of Christ and the authority of the Church; §109-118, In and for the world.

13. The Methodist Church of New Zealand

A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement, Faith and Order Paper 198, World Council of Churches 2005, *Response of Methodist Church of New Zealand*, p. 5.

The introductory paragraph of the response sets the background of the document. Then, the process that led to the response is explained: the Mission and Ecumenical Committee, the F&O Committee, and Te Taha Maori of the Methodist Church of New Zealand worked together in developing a response to the text of this document. The names of the individuals involved in the process are mentioned. The Methodist Church of New Zealand expresses its gratitude that F&O is developing a significant text in the life of the churches.

With regard to A. The nature of the Church, the subsection I. The Church as Gift of God is affirmed. Regarding the box on The Institutional Dimension of the Church and the Work of the Holy Spirit it is pointed out that: 1. The power of the Word and Spirit of God in the Church is not confined to ordained ministry but is embodied in the whole community of faith by virtue of the baptism of its members. The ministry of the laity is as important as the ministry of the ordained. 2. God’s work is not confined to the institutional structures of the Church. God can work outside those structures in order to challenge them. The Church can exercise episcopate without being episcopal i.e. having bishops. The subsection II. Biblical Insights is affirmed. However, concern is expressed at §18 which relates to the church being seen as the “Israel of God”. Does the Church supersede Israel? Any suggestion of a supersessionist theology is considered unhelpful in the context of Christian-Jewish relations.

Concerning B. The mission of the Church, concern and uneasiness are expressed with Christian triumphalism that appears in: §34, gathering all creation under the lordship of Christ; §36, reconciling all things to God through Christ; §37, salvation of the whole world; §41, proclaiming Christ with everyone throughout the entire world. In an increasingly religiously pluralistic world where respect of the diversity of religions is demanded, it is requested that attention be paid to the reformulation of these important NT themes. In addition, Christian triumphalism is noted in section C. The Church as Sign and Instrument of God’s Intention and Plan for the World (§43, 44), and the question is posed whether this is claiming too much for the Church.

Furthermore, regarding the box “The Church as ‘Sacrament’”, it is indicated that the Methodist Church of New Zealand would not normally use the language of Church as sacrament, seeing a distinction between the Church and the sacraments for both reasons cited in

the text, but would hold to the view that the church is an instrument for God's purpose in the world. On the box "The Church and Sin", it is noted that while the Church is a holy instrument of God, it does in reality sin, and that sin can become systemic in the institutional life of the church. The proposed statement on the relationship between sin and holiness is affirmed.

Commenting on D. The Church as Communion of Local Churches, the response poses questions on §66 about the statement that the Church of Jesus Christ is to be the same yesterday, today and tomorrow: Can the Church not change through time as new insights and wisdoms emerge? Can the Church be seen as alive and dynamic and able to adapt to rapidly changing contexts? Regarding the box on the Local Church, the response affirms that each local church, however defined, is united to every other in the universal Church and contains within it the fullness of what it is to be the Church.

The response also makes the following observations: Concerning the box on Baptism, it is noted that both infants and those of an age to make profession of faith are baptised in the Methodist Church of New Zealand; other churches' baptisms are recognised; baptism is recognised as a sacrament; it is seen as both affecting and reflecting the new life in Christ; it is performed with water using the Trinitarian formula. Regarding the box on the Eucharist, it is indicated that the Eucharist is primarily a service of thanksgiving which acknowledges the sacrifice of Christ. A real presence of Christ is affirmed in the Eucharist and the invocation of the presence of the Holy Spirit throughout the celebration. Open hospitality is practised i.e. all who know and love Jesus Christ are welcome at the Eucharistic table. Moreover, Section D is thought to fail to fully recognise the importance of the role of the laity in the life of the churches. The role of the laity seems to have fallen off the ecumenical agenda. It is recommended that this section is strengthened to recognise the crucial role the laity have in the life of the Church. It is noted the word laity is not used in the text and the question is posed whether there has been a conscious move away from using that term.

The response mentions that the box on Ordained Ministry should put more emphasis on the ministry of the ordained being with and amongst the people of God rather than over them. Also, for the Methodist Church of New Zealand ordination is open to both men and women. It sees itself as being in apostolic continuity if not in episcopal succession as other churches understand that term. Regarding the box on Episcopate, Bishops and Apostolic succession, it is believed that it correctly sets out the positions of the churches. At that point, the form of episcopate exercised by the Methodist Church of New Zealand, a non-episcopal church, is explained. Moreover, issues are raised with regard to section G. Conciliarity and Primacy: A joint presiding involving more than one person (§101); The claim that "In recent years...a new climate in which a universal primacy can be seen as a gift rather than a threat to other churches" (§103) that needs to be tested; Discussion on a universal primacy (§104) that needs to be ongoing even though it is noted there would be little enthusiasm for discussing a ministry of universal primacy in that particular church.

With regard to the issue of Authority, it is noted that terms like responsibility and accountability are preferred. Authority is open to abuse, which is why responsibility and accountability must be essential parts of the exercise of authority. In addition, further questions are raised concerning wording: §110 raises concerns in the area of interreligious relations, and the sentence "Proclaiming to every creature" suggests a Christian triumphalism that may well be offensive to people of other religions. The final sentence needs some clarification if it is to remain. While it may be true in a technical sense, there are too many instances where this has not been the case in practice. Evangelisation is a term that can mean different things to different people. The text needs to take account of this. In §111 it is suggested that the reference to Acts 5:29 needs a little more elaboration. The question is posed if there is a sharp disjunction between God's truth and human truth, and how God's truth is received if not through human agency. The response notes that we can yet be mistaken even in our best convictions.

14. The Church of Scotland

Response to the WCC Text “The Nature and Mission of the Church – a stage on the Way to a Common Statement”, p. 4.

This response has been drawn up by a Working Group of representatives from a number of the Councils of the Church of Scotland General Assembly. The Group is appreciative of the revisions done to the previous text *TNPC* and expresses the view that there is little which arouses major critical comment. Also, the Working Group is grateful for honesty in delineating points of division within the boxes and affirms the need for dialogue to continue. The text then responds to the questions posed by *TNMC*.

Firstly, it is supported that *TNMC* on the whole identifies the common ecclesiological convictions of the Church of Scotland. Because of the fact that there is within it a spectrum of understanding that crosses the divisions set out in some of the boxes, the Group suggests that many of these issues should not necessarily be seen as church-dividing (For example: p. 15, 29-30, 33-34). The section on diversity and communion (§60-63) is mostly appreciated. The Church of Scotland takes seriously the question posed in section C, noting that in the end, the traditional position of reformed churches has been explicated. Also, the growing agreement on Baptism and the description and expression of the Eucharist in the document are welcome, especially the fact that several terms are used in order to refer to the Sacrament.

Secondly, it was thought important that the fourth question of *TNMC* asks about “an” emerging convergence. Appreciation is expressed of the fact that *TNMC* did not try to blur the edges between the different definitions of the word “church” in the NT, preferring rather to affirm the common ground between them. The fact that diversity is seen as intentional (§16), and the complete absence of any claim that one form of order or government has overwhelming rightness about it, are also appreciated. The Group agrees with the Section on Mission which demonstrates a growing convergence and marks the document as a document of today. In addition, it acknowledges the common challenge in the area of believing/belonging (§51) and is grateful for the sensitive dealing with the marks of the church in §52-56.

Thirdly, in welcoming the inclusion of Section 4, it is recognised that this is an area which has only recently begun to be developed in the bilateral dialogues. Moreover, the inclusion of full reference to the place of the preaching of the Word is welcomed.

Fourthly, the document is seen as a helpful way of showing what the churches can do and say together. It would be a useful tool to take into bilateral and multilateral dialogues with other churches. It could also be used within the Church of Scotland itself as an aid to its own reflection on the nature, mission, sacraments and ministry of the Church, and also in broadening and deepening the parameters of the people’s understanding of faith. Another area of the document that could challenge the Church of Scotland is the section on Conciliarity and Universal Primacy (§99-104).

Regarding suggestions, the final section should be further developed, teasing out the sentence “Evangelization is thus the foremost task of the church in obedience to the command of Jesus” (§110-111). Another suggestion is ongoing work on a Christological understanding of other faiths which will assist in the development of the reference to other faiths. Moreover, the distinction should be explored made in the text between the Church and the people so that it was possible for people to sin and not the Church. Furthermore, the slippage in language should be improved (specific examples are detected in §48, 57, 59, 26, 66). The response concludes with two questions: How will the church be church? What are the horizons of the mission in which we share?

15. Reformed Church of France

Reformed Church of France (Eglise Reformee de France, or ERF), National Council, Theology Group, Opinion of the National Council of the Reformed Church of France on the paper of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches *The Nature and Mission of the Church – A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement*, p. 7.

The National Council of ERF expresses its gratitude to the WCC for consulting its member churches on such an important paper that is considered a guidance paper, and hopes that the final wording will retain the momentum seen in its subtitle. It also notes its new title and the sensitive changes made to its wording. Although the new document is thought to essentially say more or less the same thing as its predecessor, the Council is pleased to note a number of alterations. A list follows of four reasons the ERF decided to reply to *TNMC*.

As the response continues, in the *Overall assessment of the issues arising from the paper*, first comes the linguistic problem with WCC texts and their translation drawing attention to the fact that certain English constructions cannot be rendered in French. The WCC is requested to take a stand on this matter. The new translation of §12 is given as an example.

Regarding the title of *TNMC*, it is stated that the new title is hardly a cosmetic change. It gives expression to the collaboration by the two great Commissions: F&O and CWME. The emphasis on mission gives the paper a less speculative and more dynamic edge. However, the order of the factors (nature, mission) is unchanged which could pose a number of conceptual problems. The ERF continues with an explanation of why it considers *The Nature of the Church is Mission* a truer title for the document.

Moreover, it is noted that in *TNMC* it is repeatedly recalled that unity is a gift from God and the church is a creation of the Word of God, while this unity is just as strongly presented as a goal to aspire to. While ERF appreciates this paradox, it suggests we should lay more stress on the concept of gift, and thus that of grace. Furthermore, the ERF is pleased to see in the paper an increased use of boxed text, which has an educational usefulness in that it highlights the points of both agreement and disagreement and is no longer shy about emphasising the latter. The document does a good job overall of setting out the “points of ecumenical consensus and fundamental differences”.

The section that follows on *Agreements and differences between the paper TNMC and the texts and positions of the Reformed Church in France* develops the ensuing paragraphs: “Concerning its concept of the church”, “Concerning its concept of the sacraments”, “Concerning its concept of church membership”, “Concerning its concept of its relationship to society”, “Concerning its idea of the Scriptures”, “Concerning its concept of ordained ministry”.

In the last section, the response provides *Summary answers of the ERF National Council to the four questions in the document*. Regarding the first question, the ERF sees no fundamental incompatibility between the theological convictions expressed in the WCC paper and those by which it is governed. However, the ecclesiological issues raised in §3 may set it apart from other churches as regards the way in which its convictions are worked out in the real world. The church does not think of itself as having been clothed with divine nature, but understands itself in terms of the mission to serve entrusted to it by the triune God.

Secondly, the ERF believes that the churches have lacked an adequate ecclesiological framework on which to base and build their communion ever since the formation of the WCC. This paper is therefore a “good start”, and could flesh out the minimum basis adopted at New Delhi in 1961. Thirdly, the document’s main shortcoming has to do with the context in which it is written. It makes no reference to the context of the ERF – a secularised world with a minority church. The suspicion arises that the paper’s implicit frame of reference is a world in which the church enjoys a recognised or even dominant position.

Lastly, it is believed that *TNMC* can only be taken forward if we make sure it is accepted at the local level. Particular attention should be paid to ensure the idiomatic translation of the final text into target languages other than English, and also to simplify the text or create a version for “dummies”. The writers need to make it clear what sort of audience they are intending to reach.

16. Presbyterian Church (USA)

The Nature and Mission of the Church, A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement, Faith and Order Paper No. 198, *A Response from the Presbyterian Church (USA) through its General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical Relations*, September 2009, p. 6.

The response begins with thanking the F&O for its work on this and previous drafts, and for the many improvements. It continues by noting that it will offer concrete feedback on content and style, but also some snapshots of the lived experience of the Presbyterian Church in the US by addressing four overarching issues that still remain unsettled or problematic, and then providing some suggestions that will strengthen the document and move it further toward a point of convergence.

In the first part of the response, *1. The Church as Sacrament, Instrument, and Holy*, it is indicated that grouping the sacramentality, instrumentality and holiness of the Church together under one does not imply these three elements of the nature of the Church are conflated. From a Presbyterian perspective, the treatment of each in *TNMC* points to similar and ongoing questions about the Church and sin. In addition, the response notices ongoing reference to the “instrumentality” of the Church, that is, a theme that it develops, and refers to the reality of sin in the life of the Church that calls us to avoid the danger of idealistic construct of the Church’s being. Then, there is mention of the example of the WARC that revisited the sins of its past during its 2004 General Council in Accra, Ghana. Finally, it is clarified that hesitations are harboured when language that idealises elements becomes the normative way of expressing the nature of the Church as we experience it in our broken world. Further expression of God’s work through the Church *in spite* of our sin and brokenness would be welcomed.

Regarding *2. The Mission of the Church*, the addition of the sections related to mission is appreciated. Thus, comments on mission generally respond to the overall balance and emphasis of the document. Based on the *Book of Order*, and the understanding of apostolic faith centered around “sent-ness” (being sent in to the world as witnesses to God’s work in Jesus Christ), the response notes some divergence in the understandings of how the document gives importance and prominence to particular understandings of “mission” (§67-108). In addition, section IV seems vague and thin by comparison, whereas its title, “In and for the World” seems an odd choice. It is suggested that it would benefit from another box highlighting how the Church has not come to agreement about the ways we engage the global issues. Furthermore, it is thought the whole §110 requires a more nuanced approach that more fully reflects the diverse views and approaches to evangelism taken, and the challenges in dealing with evangelism and religious pluralism in lived experience.

With regard to *3. Ordained ministry and episcopate*, it is explained that the emphasis in Section III on authority and ordained ministry seem to overshadow the work of the full membership of Christ’s body. Further, the language in this section seems to elevate the role of the community over the role of the Holy Spirit in the calling to ministry. Also, disappointment is expressed by the relegation of the issue of the ordination of women to a single bullet point in the grey box entitled “Ordained Ministry”. For the Presbyterian Church (USA), the ordination of women is not simply an issue of practice or even justice, but of confession.

The response continues with 4. *Obedience and Discipleship, Grace and Gratitude* supporting that it rightly demonstrates the call to faithful discipleship and obedience and service to God in Jesus Christ as central to the mission of the Church. However, it notes the seeming absence of a key concept: that obedience emanates from *gratitude* for God's grace. It is through our renewal and transformation by God's grace that we are able to respond to God's call to obedience at all, and in gratitude for what God has done for us we are then moved to serve God and all of God's creation.

What follows is a section on *General notes regarding language* (examples of theologically - and ecclesiology - loaded words, but with no clarification of their meaning; the terms "ethics" and "morals" are sometimes used interchangeably; "Christians" are referred to in the third person, with "they" or "their"; it seems appropriate to use the first person "we" in describing Christian activity), and *overall style* (the inclusion of story and image is proposed to punctuate and give life to a sometimes dense and esoteric text in order to create a more reader-friendly document and allow a broader spectrum of the members of the churches to see themselves and their experiences within it. Finally, there is a request for a listing of the topics covered in the grey boxes included in the final draft, along with page and/or paragraph numbers, for easy reference.

Roman Catholic

17. Roman Catholic Church

A Catholic Contribution Toward Revising *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, p. 20.

The response begins with emphasising the positive qualities of *TNMC* that were built on many earlier steps toward agreement about the Church, through the work of both F&O itself, and the many bilateral dialogues: The change in title with the inclusion of and treatment of mission; the reorganisation of the chapters by integrating the *koinonia* material into four chapters; the way the text begins by recalling the goal of visible unity; the enriched use of scripture; the relation of the Church to the persons of the Trinity; the embrace of the language of instrument and sign; the effort to maintain balance between a historical and an eschatological understanding of the Church; the text's communal rather than individualistic view of salvation; the additions about ministry of the whole people of God; the additions about conciliarity and primacy.

The Catholic Church is convinced that the ecumenical dialogue needs to focus more on ecclesiology and the current F&O project is considered to be one of the most promising results of the whole *BEM* process. In the following pages the response takes into consideration the questions posed by *TNMC* except the first part of the fourth question concerning concrete steps toward unity in light of this text, because the text is still in the state of revision. Moreover, it is noted that there seems to be a certain similarity between the first two questions (which call for an assessment of the text's positive qualities), and the last two, which call for the identification of points not adequately treated and suggestions for improvement. Thus, the PCPCU does not follow the questions slavishly, but instead reflects on them as it addresses the basic content of the *TNMC*.

Four general suggestions as overall observations are offered before the comments on the individual chapters and numbered paragraphs. Firstly, the response suggests that there be an analysis of the way that the three themes included in the F&O summary of the *BEM* process. (These themes can be found in the chapter entitled *Major Issues Demanding Further Study: Provisional Considerations*: A. Scripture and Tradition, B. Sacrament and Sacramentality, C. Perspectives on Ecclesiology in the Churches' Responses). It is suggested that the Commission examines whether further progress toward greater convergence could be achieved about sacrament, tradition, authority, and other ecclesiological issues. If further convergence does not seem possible on these topics, could further detail about the precise areas of difference be sought?

Secondly, the response comments on the methodology used by *TNMC*, namely the separation of the main body of the text containing common affirmations from the boxes illustrating remaining differences or disagreements. Although it is considered useful, it is desirable to reflect upon, and if possible make explicit, the relation between these two levels of discourse. Thirdly, it is indicated that there should be a more extensive use of the previous work of F&O and of the bilateral documents. Fourthly, perhaps a bit more attention to eschatology and to the Church's relation to the Kingdom of God throughout the four chapters of the text would deepen its theological content and allow for a more hopeful vision of Church.

The response continues with detailed *Comments on the Text* starting from the Introduction and proceeding to the analysis of the four chapters of *TNMC*. The following paragraphs are thoroughly explored: 5-7, 9-13, 16-21, 24, 30, 34-41, 45, 50, 51-59, 62, 64-66, 69-75, 77, 81-82, 87, 89, 92-93, 95-98, 102-111, 115, 118 (See response).

The Salvation Army

18. The Salvation Army Response on “The Nature and Mission of the Church” A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement Faith and Order Paper 198, World Council of Churches (WCC), p. 7.

The Preface of the response provides information regarding the Salvation Army international movement and its association with the WCC. Then the different parts of the study document are discussed one by one. With regard to the Introduction and the search for visible unity, §1, it is noted that the Salvation Army does not adhere to the belief that the Church universal depends for its existence or validity upon any particular ecclesiastical structure, any particular form of worship, or any particular observance of ritual. Rather, it understands the Church universal is the whole of the worshipping, witnessing Christian community throughout the centuries comprised of whatever groupings, large or small, accepted or persecuted, wealthy or poor, into which her members may have been gathered in the past or in the present. Furthermore, comments are offered on §4, 7, 12, 16, and especially on the metaphor of the Church as a “pilgrim people” that is found to correspond to the nature of the Christian life.

Also, emphasis is given to another biblical metaphor which captures both the mobility of the pilgrim Church and its focus on the world: that of the military, an “army”. The concept of the soldier at war is a fitting analogy of the Christian who is committed to mission in the world and whose whole life is wrapped up in that mission. Strong agreement is expressed on the statement that “The church is called and empowered to share the suffering of all by advocacy and care for the poor, the needy and the marginalized” (§40). In addition, comments are offered on A. The Church in via, C. Communion and Diversity, as well as on Chapter III A. Apostolic Faith, B. Baptism, C. Eucharist, D. Ministry of the Faithful, E. Ministry of the Ordained, and particularly on IV. In and for the World where the issue is discussed of how the missionary Church fights its battles, that is the issue of evangelism and social action.

What is more, the document provides responses on the questions posed by *TNMC*. Regarding the first one, it is accepted that this study document does fundamentally identify Salvationist ecclesiological convictions, with the exception of repeated use of “sacramental” language. In addition to the Eucharist and Baptism this is especially evident when speaking of the sacrament of ordination and the church as sacrament. Also, it is noted that the Salvation Army does not regard church tradition and order as part of its key beliefs. It believes that it has been raised up by God as an instrument for spreading the gospel in the world. This does not mean that it has been given a special revelation by God which gives it a status above other churches. It sees itself as a legitimate part of the Church universal – no less, but no more. Its ecclesiology arises out of the legitimacy of its mission. It is simple – being independent of outer structures and

rituals – and inclusive – acknowledging all Christians as brothers and sisters in Christ no matter which church they belong to.

Concerning question 2, the Salvation Army identifies with the church universal and also considers itself to be an integral part of the church and its mission of going into the world and making disciples. In so doing it challenges classical ecclesiology by embracing a mission essence as the foundation of our mission ecclesiology. In this sense, it concurs that the document reflects a convergence on the nature and mission of the church. In addition, with regard to question 3, it is noted that the significance of the sacrament – and particularly the Lord’s Supper – is constantly present. It is indicated that the thinking is established early and remains throughout the document. Examples that support this claim are offered here. Thus, it is expressed that although *TNMC* truly attempts to be inclusive, when it repeatedly includes strong statements on understanding the church through classical sacramental ecclesiology, it marginalises the Salvation Army.

It is recommended that the following statement already appears in F&O documents and it could be included in the concluding report of *TNMC*: “It should be noted that there are those churches – such as the Salvation Army - whose vocation does not include the ministering of the outer sacraments, but who, nevertheless, see themselves as fully part of the Body of Christ and therefore included in the sacramental life of the Church”.

Regarding question 4, the response notes that it does not see differences in church structures, traditions, liturgy and rites as being “issues that continue to divide us”. It is supported that as long as churches do not use them as instruments of exclusion such items can be legitimate expressions of different aspects and interpretations of the Christian faith. Further suggestions for the future development of the text are: 1. The inclusion of mission ecclesiology into the description of *TNMC* instead of the current emphasis on classical ecclesiology. It is stressed that the current text readily acknowledges diversity but appears to limit this diversity by an insistence on the Sacrament as a central tenet of the church. A mission ecclesiology, on the other hand, focuses on the proclamation of the gospel and would enable the Salvation Army to be acknowledged on equal terms with all missional expressions of the church. 2. The document should be easily accessible and understandable by parishioners. While it is recognised that a formal and classical statement needs to be established as a source, without theological facility or comprehension of the history of the traditional churches the average reader is greatly handicapped. The response concludes with providing bibliography.

United and Uniting Churches

19. Evangelical Church in Hessen and Nassau

Comments from the Evangelical Church in Hessen and Nassau on the Study of the WCC Commission on Faith and Order “The Nature and Mission of the Church. A Stage on the way to a common statement”, September 2008, p. 5.

The Evangelical Church in Hessen and Nassau (EKHN) welcomes the response of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) to *TNMC* and responds to the critical questions raised by the EKD. The fact that the churches work together on ecclesiological issues is very much welcomed, and section A of *TNMC* is considered to express fundamental convictions about the Church. However, it is supported that the use of the expression “visible unity” to describe the ecumenical goal does not seem to help to create clarity because those involved in the process all mean something completely different by it. It is noted that the study fails to address this problem in the Introduction and clearly assumes that the concept requires no explanation in section A.

The response continues with a more detailed analysis of specific sections of *TNMC* (§9-13). The explication of ecclesiology in the context of God's Trinitarian action is considered ecumenically helpful. However, the relationship of Word and Spirit remains to be clarified. In addition, Mary as the symbol of the Church, and linking ecclesiology and Mariology, are seen as problematic. Concerning §14-33, the question is raised of in what sense Scripture is normative. Also, the need is emphasised for the relationship of the unity of the Church and the diversity of local churches to be strengthened. Moreover, it is suggested that a short reflection should be included on how the relationship of Christ and the Church is determined in the ecumenical view. In addition, the consequences of communion, with regard to responsibility in the world and its social-ethical implications, need to be spelled out more specifically.

Regarding §43-47, it is noted that the statement made in §43, as well as the term "mysterion", are differently understood and interpreted by the different churches. This theological difference should be made clear. Either the disagreement on the question of a sacramental understanding of the Church has to be presented theologically, and not just linguistically, or the misleading word "mysterion" should be removed from §45. On §48-56 two comments are made on the different positions on the question "church of sinners or sinful church", whereas concerning §57-66 it is stressed that the term "visible communion" focuses more on the living experience of ecumenical reality and less on theoretical considerations on the nature of the church and its ministry.

Furthermore, the *General remarks on the content of Section III* underline the absence of a section on "Apostolic Proclamation". The study seems to contradict its own presentation of the place and purpose of the Church in Section I A. Thus, in §67-73 faith and sacraments can then only be defined and described in the framework of and assuming the prior existence of the Church, as a *depositum* inherent in it which is completely incompatible with a Protestant understanding of the Church. In §82-89, the discussion of the theme of "The Ministry of the Faithful" and "The Ministry of the Ordained" in two separate sub-sections, despite the reference to the community of the faithful in the title of III. E, tacitly assumes the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Anglican understandings of the ordained ministry as "special" ministry, especially i.e. ontologically different from the general priesthood of all believers. It is supported that the two chapters must be combined, and a description needs to be added of the theological disagreements underlying the very question of separate or combined chapters.

The same problematic line of thinking is thought to be detected in Section III. F on "episkope". §90 does not express the Protestant view that the Church is built up by Word and Sacrament, which gifts and ministries are there to serve. This should be noted in *TNMC*, or the existing disagreement should be properly described. Moreover, it is claimed that in §90-98, a biblical-theological foundation of "episkope" is lacking. This needs to be clearly set out. Emphasis should be given to the question of whether there is *de jure divino* (only one definite form for "episkope"), or whether it can take many different social forms that develop and change, as can readily be seen in the NT. Lastly, the response raises further questions and discusses a further set of problems connected with the understanding of "episkope" that emerges in §95-98, as well as §99-104 and §105-108.

20. United Protestant Church in Belgium

United Protestant Church in Belgium , Position on Faith and Order Paper no. 198, *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, p. 2.

The response claims that *TNMC* is of no little interest in terms of its relation to previous thinking in the WCC. It puts forward a number of innovations and improvements, although some of these are outlined only rather briefly. Before answering the four questions posed by *TNMC* the response sets out the main strengths and weaknesses of this document.

Regarding the strengths, it is noted that: 1. The text clearly takes seriously the recent crisis of confidence in the WCC on the part of the Orthodox Churches. It therefore makes a constructive effort to draw out new perspectives that are acceptable to both Protestant and Orthodox Christians. This is at least part of the explanation for the evolution of thought with regard to “The Church and Sin” (p14) – a question that has caused problems with Orthodox Christians since the F&O Commission was established – and that concerning apostolic succession (p25). 2. Concerning ordained ministry, (p23-24), the text introduces some additional elements that are of interest in terms of how they relate to the classic definitions received from Reformation and Barthian theology. In particular, it recognises that those in ministry need the support of their community (p23), and stresses that pastors must care for their community in return. 3. The document seems to express some reservations with regard to the current rage for interreligious dialogue. Indeed, recalling the importance of evangelism, it states that the Church is not merely a partner in dialogue; her true mandate, which needs to be reemphasised, is missionary and evangelistic.

As far as the “Problematic points” are concerned, the response makes the following points: 1. In doctrinal terms, the text uses a purely “deductive” approach; that is to say, it takes a fully fledged Trinitarian theology as its starting point, and works its way back from there to deal with real world problems. Some pastors and theologians, however, prefer the exact opposite approach (to start with concrete issues and then work upwards to a confession of the faith, if possible – this approach is known as “inductive”). The question [as to which is preferable] remains unanswered. 2. The text is sometimes not specific enough. This is particularly the case in the “boxes”, where it gives no more detail than, “some believe that...”, “they” etc. The text in the boxes is always too coy to refer to the opposing traditions by name; this could give rise to some misleading assumptions. 3. The text includes some elements from academic theological history that presuppose a degree of technical familiarity. This is particularly true with regard to the paper’s pronouncements on *koinonia* (p8 et seq) and *anamnesis* (p21-22). The usefulness of these concepts can only really be understood if one already has a certain level of prior knowledge.

On the basis of what was noted above, the following answers are given to the questions posed by *TNMC*: First, this paper does correctly identify our common ecclesiological convictions, but sometimes does so in a manner that is too allusive. Second, the perspectives it introduces on apostolic succession, the question of “episkopé” and the theology of the [ordained] ministries may represent an emerging convergence on the nature and mission of the Church. Third, in terms of concrete steps towards unity, the text encourages Protestants to be more attentive to the quality of their relationships with other WCC member churches locally, including the Orthodox, and to ensure that they and these other local churches gain greater awareness about each other. In addition, it urges WCC member churches to unite around joint missionary projects at a local level, while making it clear that a large part of “mission” has to do with serving the poor and the excluded. Fourth, the greatest priority for improvement in this paper is the depth of the information provided in the boxes. Firstly, they should be made more explicit, and, secondly, they should go beyond a basic “inventory” of the problems and properly explain each of the challenges faced.

21. Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD)

Response of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) to the Commission on Faith and Order Study The Nature and Mission of the Church. A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement, June 2007, p. 11.

The Council welcomes the fact that F&O has reflected theologically on the similarities and differences in the understanding of the Church by the churches. It recognises helpful aspects in *TNMC*, but also sees the need for further theological work on other points. Moreover, the

response points out that in a convergence statement there can be no presentation of a particular ecclesiology as the only valid one, but a representation of a genuine convergence on ecclesiological issues. The theological basis of the response is *The Church of Jesus Christ. The Reformation churches' contribution to the ecumenical dialogue on church unity* (Leuenberg documents 1) that sets out the basic features of Protestant ecclesiology. The Church defined as *creatura Verbi et creatura Spiritus* is considered as one of the main strong points of the paper, although the exact ordering of Word and Spirit remains unclear. However, *TNMC* reflects a lack of clarity about the goal of ecumenical endeavour. The standard phrase “visible unity” is used repeatedly, but what is meant by it in the text is shifting. The question of consensus as to the end goal of ecumenical efforts should have been addressed by the document. A good starting point for this could be the commentaries contained under b in the box following §63.

On the whole, the response is guided by the questions asked by *TNMC*. Although they are not dealt with one by one, they are linked to one another and answered as central passages of the text are examined. The response focuses in particular on how far, from the standpoint of Reformation ecclesiology, the text allows the EKD to speak of “common ecclesiological convictions” and so to identify where, from its point of view, there might actually be an “emerging convergence”. The points where there are shortcomings in *TNMC*, and likewise suggestions for improvements, are highlighted in this process.

The analysis starts with I. The Church of the Triune God and the I. A. The Nature of the Church, and continues with a detailed annotation of section I. A. (I) The Church as a Gift of God: Creation of the Word and of the Holy Spirit (*Creatura Verbi et Creatura Spiritus*), namely §9-13. Regarding section I. A. (II) “Biblical Insights” the response notes that it sets the ecclesiological considerations, especially those on the communion of the churches, on a good biblical foundation. The fact is welcomed that it allows the great variety of biblical statements and images to stand and does not compress them into a systematic corset. More comments follow on §15, 24-26.

Concerning section I. B. The Mission of the Church, it is noted that the EKD can broadly agree with it, but there is a danger that in some of the phrasing the role of the Church is exaggerated. Specific comments follow on §34-36. Furthermore, section I. C. The Church as Sign and Instrument of God’s Intention and Plan for the World is said to be in agreement with the EKD way of describing the Church as sign and instrument. Thus, the concessive clause in the relevant box is considered correct. Special attention is given to §45, 9, 10, 12.

In addition, §48, 50, 52-56 and the box after §56 are analyzed with regard to section II. A. The Church in via. Moving to section II. B. In Christ - but not yet in full Communion, the EKD response comments on §57-59, whereas with regard to section “II. C. Communion and Diversity,” it deals with §60-61, and the box after §63. Also, §66 and its following box are dealt with in the context of section II. D. The Church as Communion of Local Churches.

Concerning section III. The Life of Communion in and for the World, the response notes that it draws on earlier F&O papers, notably the *BEM*, and shares their strengths and weaknesses. The EKD stresses that more attention should have been given to the churches’ responses to these papers. Also, the reliance is discussed on previous texts that is seen in the subjects of *TNMC*. Further, it is suggested that the title of section III. A. Apostolic Faith should be changed to “Apostolic Proclamation” and the text modified accordingly. Comments follow on §67, 69, 70, 73.

Moreover, §76 and the box after §77 are discussed in the context of section III. B. Baptism, whereas in the following section, III. C. Eucharist, special attention is given to §79 and the box after §81. The response here emphasises that even though *TNMC* does try to employ all the terms used for Holy Communion in the different churches, there is still a clear tendency to prefer the term “Eucharist”. This reflects the language of the Lima document, which was regretted by various churches in their responses. As each of the terms used in the churches carries a particular theological interpretation, EKD urges that a good path to follow is that

chosen in bilateral dialogues, where the term “the Lord’s Supper” is used throughout. This term is confessionally neutral, as well as biblical, and expresses the fundamental theological characteristic of this Sacrament, which all the churches accept.

When discussing the sections on III. D. Ministry of all the Faithful and E. Ministry of the Ordained, it is suggested that these two chapters should be combined. EKD welcomes the fact that *TNMC* starts with the ministry of all the faithful (priesthood of all believers), but considers that the link with the ordained ministry is not clear. The calling and sending of the Apostles with which section E begins, cannot be taken quite so directly as the one historical line of descent of the ordained ministry as it is here (§86). Furthermore, the box after §89 is considered to also show that the questions dealt with here and the ecumenical difficulties belong together. Other paragraphs discussed are: §87, 89, and the box after §89.

Regarding section III. F. Oversight: Personal, Communal, Collegial, EKD considers that the presentation of the development in the Reformation is inappropriately tendentious, especially in comparison to the favourable outline devoted to the previous period (§91-92). The focus of the response is on §93, the box that follows it and §94. §96-97, 100, 103, and the box after §104 are discussed in the context of section III. G. Conciliarity and Primacy. Furthermore, concerning section III. H. Authority, the response notes that it seems inappropriate to conclude chapter III with the topic of “authority”, thus lending it the highest ecclesiological importance. Moreover, the treatment of the subject is incomplete and patchy. It is suggested that from the Protestant point of view, it has to be stressed as a matter of principle that all authority in the Church lies with God and God’s truth. God uses the Church, including its ministry, to establish truth, but truth is not inherent in the ordained ministry, nor guaranteed by it. More comments follow on §107 and 108.

What is more, regarding section IV. In and For the World, EKD approves the fact that this chapter highlights the ethical consequences of proclamation. The concrete situations in the contemporary world seem excellent examples of areas for Christian ethical engagement. It must however be admitted that Christians draw different ethical conclusions from the one faith, and these may be equally legitimate. §114 and §116/117 are given particular attention. Lastly, concerning the Conclusion, §119-123 are commented upon.

22. United Church of Christ (USA)

Response by the United Church of Christ (USA), p. 7.

In its introduction the response describes the United Church of Christ in the United States, which is a church of the united/uniting family, with strong roots in the Reformed traditions of the Christian family. After expressing appreciation for the opportunity to respond to *TNMC*, it emphasises the specific context (a united and uniting church, with strong strains in the Reformed tradition, located in the United States) within which the current paper is formed. Also, it clarifies that the method used is responding to the questions posed by *TNMC*, and highlighting the issues which emerge from the questions.

Questions 1 and 3 are responded to together because they are thought to be closely enough related that they cannot usefully be separated. The convictions and differences named in *TNMC* are indeed important ones and essential for study throughout the life of the church. Issues which are irrelevant or passé, either confessionally or ecumenically, are not detected. What follows is a list of five topics which are considered either insufficiently addressed or missing, from which further work a future draft might benefit.

1. The Church. It is noted that the theme of the church as God’s “task force” in the world seems to overshadow the motif of the church as the gift of God’s loving presence. The emphasis on the missional nature of the church is appreciated, but it is stated that the church at times seems to be defined in terms of “doing” at the expense of “being”. Also, the absence of

Missio Dei language is puzzling as it could correct some of this imbalance. Ecclesial responsibilities become the foundation of the church's identity. Consequently, the church as the enactment of human "faithful responsiveness" gets highlighted to the detriment of the church as a site where God's faithful love is encountered. It is felt that the church's vocation seems in this text to eclipse the church's location for the celebration of God's unconditional love. The document tends to focus more on the church as an instrument in the transformation of the world, and to diminish a focus on the church as a comfort to anxious, guilty, and alienated individuals. It is emphasised that in the conversation about the nature of the church, the church is never defined by *our* faith, *our* faith's strength or weakness, *our* actions or inactions, *our* practices of liturgical expression, etc.

2. The limits of diversity. The sustained attention to the legitimate confessional diversity in the Christian community is applauded. However, it is mentioned that this is an aspect that needs more sophisticated attention. Appreciation of the text's focus on the gifts to the church universal offered by confessional particularity is expressed, but it is felt that the question framed in *TNMC* is not nuanced enough to reflect the lived reality of many churches, at least in the US. The response suggests that talking about confessional and other particularities in the context of the common heritage of the *apostolic faith* is helpful. Rather than speaking of the "limits of diversity", it also asks what we are called to be by such a witness within the construct of "confessional tradition", as if such a thing existed in a pure way in any given place. While the text doesn't claim this explicitly, it is believed it can be inferred in the absence of any deeper analysis. Therefore, the language of conciliarity in §64ff is appreciated, and the discussion of locality, particularity, universality and fullness is considered helpful constructs for the conversation about diversity.

3. The use of the creeds. It is noted that in this same section of *TNMC* there is a very ambiguous and easily misinterpreted adjective: "Nevertheless, the existence of such differences suggest that churches need to be attentive to the tolerable limits to diversity in confessing one faith." It is supported that the language of "tolerable" is far too prone to parochial interpretation and therefore not useful in a document of this sort. What is "tolerable" to one tradition may not be to another, and the implied criteria with the use of this sort of language does not advance the ecumenical discussion at all.

4. Episcopate. It is claimed that issues of ministry require far more attention. Identification of episcopal succession as a necessary condition for apostolicity is contrary to the church's instincts and historic tradition. The response continues, succession can be an important enabling condition for apostolicity, perhaps even part of the *bene esse* of the church, but not the *esse* of the church. It is argued that faithfulness to the apostolic tradition has been maintained through elements other than the witness of the historic succession of bishops, and that while this may be a sign for some, it is not believed that it is of the essence of the church.

4. Interfaith Relations. It is believed that the question of the role of the mission of church *vis-a-vis* relationships with people of other faith traditions has not yet been addressed adequately. It is a topic which cannot be avoided in the context of a text on the "mission" of the church, and it is hoped that the open questions from the 1989 meeting in San Antonio can be reprised. The response supports that interfaith dialogue and cooperation are areas of increasing activity in the life of the United Church of Christ, and theological consideration about these relationships as churches consider the mission of the church – with its good and bad history – is critical. It is seen also a topic which can (and does) divide Christians. Therefore, it is an area where there is much ecumenical territory to explore and much understanding to be gained.

With regard to question 2, it is felt that it is not possible to respond to it until initial reactions are seen from other churches. Asking this question, however, is related with the issue of who the primary audience for the text is or should be and also with the use of reflections by F&O. Further, responding to question 3, four points are discussed: 1. The notion of *Adiaphora*. (It is suggested that in some of the remaining differences – particularly in baptism and the

Eucharist – emphasis on the notion of adiaphora might help rather than on establishing most of the differences as “church-dividing”). 2. The Eucharist. (The box on p48 feels to be a very weak statement that “It is a matter of continuing concern that not all Christians share the communion”. It is believed to be *far* greater than “a matter of continuing concern”. It seen as a scandal that testifies to our alienation from each other, and something about which Christians should never feel complacent. Unless the severity of the division is felt, Christians won’t be helped to make concrete steps toward unity). 3. Confessionalism and the measure of ecumenical progress. (It is supported that what would facilitate concrete steps toward unity is not to abandon our particularity but to ask questions about the unity of the church which are measured by *more* than just our confessional standards. The focus should be on how we have given witness to the *fullness* of the testimony of the gospel, rather than how Christians adhere faithfully to our particular expression of it). 4. “Best practices”. (It is proposed that F&O compile examples of how churches are engaging in dialogue about important issues, thereby providing “best practice” examples for each other to be replicated where possible. This may help with concrete steps toward unity).

In addition, Section III: TEXTUAL STYLE, responds to question 4 of *TNMC* by raising a significant concern about the limitations of the format used in the study. If the audience for such a teaching and study document is the seminary, or those who have theological training (pastors and teachers), the language and format is useful. However, if the audience is intended to be broader, it is suggested that the text is overly filled with terminology in which are embedded layers of meaning which would not be accessible to those without theological training or a setting in which to be taught it. Also, the accessibility of the text format for those who are not accustomed to both the style and the content of the material is questioned. Further, much appreciation is expressed for the material in the grey boxes which was felt “very direct, clear and unencumbered”. This was seen in contrast to the other portions of the text. It is noted though that in the box on the “Limits of Diversity?” the language is nearly incomprehensible. Finally, the response raises the issue of whether there are also other questions about the nature and mission of the church, and the divisions we continue to experience, which are asked by those who are not ecclesiastical professionals. A reading of the text through this sort of lens may unearth new and important questions – not to supplant the ones found in *TNMC*, but to add to them.

23. The Uniting Church in Australia

“The Nature and Mission of the Church” (WCC Faith and Order Paper No. 198), Response from the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA), p. 8.

The response begins with a quotation from the *Basis of Union* (BoU) 2, the foundation document of the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA). More quotations follow in boxes throughout the response that show the understanding and commitment of the UCA on certain matters at the time of union (1977). The UCA welcomes *TNMC*, values the degree of consensus being sought in this text and believes that it is a very helpful formulation of basic ecclesiological convictions which it can wholeheartedly endorse, particularly when read in conjunction with the text *Called to be the One Church*. The formulations of points of continuing disagreement are considered to be mostly pertinent and helpful as a stimulus to seek an understanding of other traditions and approaches. The first two questions asked by *TNMC* are answered in the affirmative as the study correctly identifies the common convictions of the UCA and an emerging convergence on the nature and mission of the Church.

What follows is a section of comments on aspects of the text which reflect matters that are not currently addressed in it, or matters on which the UCA sees a need for further work. In terms of what might be added, more emphasis is suggested on the theme of human freedom as an aspect of the gifts of God given through the Holy Spirit. It could be discussed in §10, 11, 12

and/or 13, 26 (where the possibility of sin bears witness to this real freedom), or 81 (it is noted here that it is also connected to the role of Eucharist in the work of God in “restoring human dignity”).

The response then turns to the material which addresses ongoing disagreements. In addition to the ten issues of continuing disagreement discussed in *TNMC*, the tensions are named that surround ethical issues as worthy of systematic reflection concerning their proper role and impact on the UCA’s ecclesiological understanding. Furthermore, the response underlines sections of *TNMC* that would be clarified by expansion or by more attention to definitions. These are: 1. §13 needs more positive expression of the paradoxical nature of the Church as both a divine and a human reality. 2. §54-56 need more definition of the key terms “holy”, “catholic”, and “apostolic”. 3. §62-needs more articulation of the criteria for “authentic diversity” and “authentic unity”. 4. §98 needs the addition of comment on the value of shared, collegial oversight of arrangements for ecclesial cooperation as well as shared witness and action in the world. 5. §105-108 need some recognition of the pivotal character of a culture revolt against authority in mainline western churches and the consequent need for rehabilitation of this theologically important theme. 6. §116 could helpfully address criteria for when ethical differences might be thought to be “church-dividing”.

In addition, the response notes the important shift away from the goal of “organic unity of the church” to that of “communion of local churches” (§65). It sees real value in working towards and within a communion of local churches at whatever level of “locality” this communion can be achieved. What is more, the UCA welcomes the clear statement of the issues of disagreement as an opportunity to note how its own understanding is articulated and to see how far it can also welcome other views. It suggests that clearer distinction should be made between judgements about church and judgements about the maintenance of present divisions.

In the section on “The institutional Dimension of the Church and the Work of the Holy Spirit”, in response to point a, the UCA understands that the preaching and sacraments of the church are means used by the Holy Spirit through the divine Word to call, challenge and sustain believers. This does not negate the witness of Word and Sacrament to the direct action of the Holy Spirit on the hearts of believers. Both are aspects of Christ’s feeding of the Church. In response to point b the UCA stands with those who emphasise the fact that all believers remain subject to error and sin throughout life, so that the power and reliability of God’s truth is grounded in the active sovereignty of God’s Word and Spirit, working through, but also, if necessary, counter to the established institutional structures of the churches. Taking its stand upon the continuing work of God as the only secure basis for the faithfulness of the church, in response to point c, the UCA is unable to affirm institutional continuity as a sufficient guarantee of the church’s continuity in the apostolic faith, though it affirms it as an indication and result of God’s faithfulness to the church.

In the “Church as Sacrament?” section, it is stated that though the traditions from which the UCA was formed do not speak of the church as itself a sacrament, the person of Christ can be properly seen as the great sacrament, leading to a recognition of the Church, as Christ’s body, having a sacramental character. Regarding “The Church and Sin”, it is agreed that “the relationship between sin and holiness in the Church is not a relationship of two equal realities” (§56). In addition, in the “Limits of Diversity” section it is noted that “reconciled diversity” (§63) is seen as a most important proximate goal in the search for Christian unity. The limit that is seen to acceptable diversity is given by departures from the faithful preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments, though it is acknowledged that this can lead to a wide variety of views about what is determining these matters in the life of the church.

With regard to the “Local Church” section, the UCA understands the term to refer to the local congregation as the manifestation in one place of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, though it recognises the validity of the use of this phrase for regional forms of the church such as a diocese. Concerning “Baptism”, it is noted that it is understood to be a

sacrament which is the point of entry into the body of the church for the baptised individual. Furthermore, in the section on the “Eucharist”, the UCA mentions that it understands this to be a sacrament in which the Lord feeds his people with his own body and blood, as a symbolic but also real event which restores the unity of Christ’s body where it is broken and strengthens it for loving communion and service. It is a re-presentation of the death of Christ which is the effective sacrifice, leading to our thanksgiving.

As far as “Ordained Ministry” is concerned, it is understood to be the church’s ordering response to the call of God in the lives of certain individual church members. Ordination is not seen as a sacrament, whereas it is understood that women and men are being called by Christ into the ordained ministry. Furthermore, the UCA does not accept that the church is constituted by ordination; nor does it accept that ordination is simply the creation of the church. In the section “*Episkope*, Bishops and Apostolic Succession” it is noted that the UCA historically stands with those who see no special reason for privileging Episcopal structure based upon personal episcopacy. It exercises a collegial and collective form of episcopate through its conciliar structures (presbyteries, synods and assembly), and acknowledges that it is on the way to recognising valuable aspects of the episcopal ordering of church life in episcopal churches. At this point, the need is mentioned of discussion of re-ordination.

Lastly, in the “Conciliarity and Universal Primacy” section, the UCA states that it stands with those who are not persuaded of the necessity for a universal ministry of primacy. It has come to recognise the potential value of the papal role as a global focus of unity which can serve Christian mission, noting the special attention the Pope can command from the world media when there is a word to deliver. It would regard this as potentially resolvable if the positive spiritual dimensions of the papal office can crowd out the administrative exercise of ecclesial power which seems inseparable from the papal role.

24. United Church of Canada

Response of the United Church of Canada to *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, March 2010, p. 9.

The introductory paragraph explains the process that led to the present response. *TNMC* was sent to the Theology and Faith Committee and the Interchurch and Interfaith Committee of the General Council of the United Church of Canada (UCC) requesting a response. These two committees formed a task group of members from both groups, plus two staff persons from the national General Council Office. In a number of meetings this task group has carefully looked at the document and discussed its theological relevance to the UCC and the Canadian context. The group welcomes the opportunity to study the text and receives it as a basis for a common ecclesiology.

However, in light of the contextual experiences and the relationships of the UCC with its interchurch and interfaith partners, clarification on statements is requested pertaining to mission and evangelism as the church. The question is posed of how the mission of the church can best be furthered in light of the *Missio Dei* and interfaith relations. In addition, it is said that there are essential pieces of its current self-understanding as church which are missing from this document. How is the nature of the church affected by the dialectical tension between being and doing and by the emerging church movement? How will ecclesiology reflect the challenges of fundamental shifts in church and society, calling Christians from crisis to transformation?

The response is developed in two different sections: The first, *I. Mission of the Church: Missio Dei and Interfaith Relations*, approaches engagement in mission as rooted in the commitment to witness to and participate in God’s mission of wholeness of life for all people and all of creation. Norms of partnership, right relations and transformative justice are underlined as foundational for the participation in God’s mission. In addition, the response considers an

uncritical use of the term “mission” is unacceptable because of the tremendous harm that has been propagated throughout church history in the name of Christ and the mission of the church. Furthermore, it is stated that the church cannot be defined apart from its relationship to our neighbours of different faiths. The interfaith reality and its challenge to the Christian churches is identified as a significant matter which is not adequately addressed in *TNMC*.

The understanding of mission by the UCC is close to the one reflected on p10 of *TNMC* in that relations with other faiths constitute an important context for mission. A proselytising faith, which seeks to convert people of other faiths to Christianity, is resisted. To this end, further clarification is requested of sentences in the main text of *TNMC* in certain paragraphs, and comments are offered on § 33, 34, 40, 42, 110.

The second section of the response: *II. The Nature of the Church: Dialectical Tension of Being and Doing; Emerging Church Movement*, refers to succinct statements of ecclesiology produced by the UCC throughout its history including those contained in the Basis of Union (1925), the 1940 Statement of Faith, and A Song of Faith (2006), and the statement on the nature of the church (see Appendix II: An Affirmation) produced in one of its interfaith documents, *Mending the World*. In addition, an example is provided of how the understanding of church evolves out of lived experience of it and it is always linked to purpose and action that is the description of the church through verbs in A New Creed (1968). The response continues with reflecting upon the four marks of the church; sin; doing and action; what it means to be an emerging church with reference to Emerging Spirit; and a major campaign in the UCC that addressed the visibility and relevance of the church for younger generations today and showed that for them a culture of “listening” is more important than a culture of “telling”.

The response also refers to the “Emerging Church Movement” and poses the question of how the process of being reshaped will impact the way to do and be church in the future. It notes that in the document there is little mention of this time of transition and change for the Christian Church and suggests it would be helpful if the recent developments and shifting understandings in ecclesiology could be included so as to carry much weight and foster greater understanding and unity in the future. An example is the language of the document which is far removed from the UCC’s commitment to inclusive and non-hierarchical expressions of church and theology. This in itself is seen as a significant barrier to the appeal of the document within UCC circles.

Further, clarification is asked of terms and sections relating to mission and evangelism. In addition, it is noted that more attention could be given to the historical actions of the church, such as the Canadian Indian residential schools experience, and their impact on the understanding of the church as a locus of both sin and grace. Furthermore, emphasis is desired on what the church is called to do in this world. This would honour the dialectical tension of the being and doing aspects of the nature of the church. Finally, it is requested that *TNMC* recognises that the known structures of church (in the case of the UCC) are in a process of profound transformation and new forms of ecclesial expression are emerging.

25. The Evangelical Church of the River Plate

The Nature and Mission of the Church, Faith and Order Paper 198, Response by the Committee on Ecumenism of the Evangelical Church of the River Plate, p. 27.

The response comments on every part of *TNMC*, starting from its *Introduction*, where it notes that it is short in length and concise in content. It aims to present the material of the study, to introduce the contents and guide the readers in their reading. It also gives in a quite complete way the history of ecumenical ecclesiology, which is important as an ecclesiological understanding is essential for building up the ecumenical movement. It is maintained that there is no ecclesiology that is not, in a strict sense, fully ecumenical. Thus, it is relevant to be clear, when we speak of ecclesiology, on which way of being church we are referring to. Regarding the initial paragraphs, there are aspects that are appreciated, but it is noted that they have been written from

the viewpoint of the northern hemisphere, for nothing is said about the changes and challenges arising from the neoliberal globalised economy and its reduction of life to the two elements of money and power. It is vital to ask how to avoid the church falling into and being held in this double captivity. One example given is the diaconal institutions that have the habit of adopting the language of multi-national organisations.

The response continues with a description of the content of the study (§1-9), and moves to specific comments on certain paragraphs: §10. The "... responsiveness of Mary to the angel of the annunciation..." and her role are discussed. §12. The issue of the apostolicity of the Church is discussed. The Church is apostolic in that *all* baptised Christians are sent out into the world to proclaim the Gospel, and it is inspired by the Holy Spirit and believes in Jesus Christ: "For there is one God and one mediator between God and humankind, the man Christ Jesus" (1Tim. 2:5). The apostolicity of all Christians does not give a "normative" position in the life of the Church only to those who are considered to stand in the "apostolic succession", which appears to be an issue that has been included because it is of interest to those who compiled this document. That becomes very evident in §89, where it is appropriate to ask what happens in churches in various historical situations where the "succession" has been broken, as, for example, in the churches of the Soviet Union, North Korea, China, etc.

Regarding the box on "The Institutional Dimension of the Church and the Work of the Holy Spirit" the response emphasises the points that are closer to its protestant theology: the first position; the statement that "the power and reliability of God's truth [is] grounded in the sovereignty of his Word and Spirit which works through – but if necessary also counter to – the given institutional structures of the Church."; the statement that "continuity in apostolic faith is, under certain circumstances, being kept in spite of – and even through – the break of institutional continuity." That latter point, C, is considered very important: if the Church is *creatura Verbi* and *creatura Spiritus*, then its existence does not necessarily depend on "continuity in episcopacy". These are seen as real disagreements and not merely differences in emphasis. They are considered as mutually irreconcilable.

Moving on to section II. *Biblical Insights*, particular paragraphs are examined: §16; §18 (Linguistic aspects are brought up here that should be reformulated in a future text); §19 (It is considered a basically positive paragraph, but its language in part is seen as strange); §20 (It is regarded an obscure paragraph containing tautologies whose aim is not clear. The choice of biblical texts here is considered arbitrary); §21 (The question of gender language in [the Spanish version] is raised: "its vocation to be the female servant of the Lord." Is there no masculine form of the word "servant"?); §22 and §23 (These paragraphs are thought to give the impression that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is a relationship within the inner life of the Church. There is no mention of the relationship of that indwelling with the biblical idea of the Holy Spirit as sustaining creation and the whole of humankind. There should be mention of the biblical text John 3:8, which has particular importance for an understanding of the wider oikoumene.); §32. With the ending: "The communion of the Church consists... of persons in community, all of whom contribute to its flourishing", the paragraph loses the force it had and the following paragraph becomes a mere wish list.

In addition, in §34, the phrase "... and to bring humanity to its purpose..." is considered inadequate, since the Church cannot claim to have such a task. To avoid misunderstanding it is suggested that it should be deleted; §36. The word "participate" seems problematic as participation in "the mission of Christ" and "the reality of the Kingdom of God" is presented as an established fact. It would be more correct to place this participation within the grace and work of the Holy Spirit; §37. The expression: "... the Church cannot be true to itself without giving witness (*martyria*) to God's will for the salvation and transformation of the world" is discussed with concern; §38. The problem emphasised is that the starting point of the paragraph is an abstraction. The question is posed whether it is possible here to ask who the subject of the Church is. Is it the ecumenical movement, or the confessions, or the major historical traditions?

Since no explanation is given of the basis on which this ecclesiology is being constructed, it falls into abstractions that again deny the sovereignty and grace of God. The lack of humility in this text is also noted. The same problem is thought to be confronted in §40 with the formulation “The Church is called and empowered to share the suffering of all by advocacy and care for the poor...”, as well as §41 within the sentence “to proclaim faithfully the whole teaching of Christ”.

Moreover, it is noted that §43 is a statement of faith that says nothing. In §44 the document does not explain “who” is understood by the word Church nor where the Church is to be found, and §45 is seen as highly problematic because it uses Roman language to define the Church, biblical texts that contradict the sentence that they are intended to support, and it still shows no understanding of what the statements in these five paragraphs have to do with being a sign and instrument of God in the world.

The response views chapter A. “The Church *in via*” as being of fundamental importance since both God and the Church are only realised in history. Emphasis is given here to what is considered to be the greatest weakness of the whole document: it fails to develop a Christology that would be the foundation for the statements on the Church. Out of an incarnational Christology it is possible to construct an historical ecclesiology. Specific comments are made on §48-56, and the box that follows, “The Church and Sin”.

Regarding §57-59, the unexplained presuppositions are thought to be too numerous. It is not clear what is meant by *koinonia* or communion. No explanation is given of what the “scandal of division” consists of. The term “restoration” is not understood in this context. What ecclesiastical model is an attempt being made to restore under the pretext of unity? Also, the eschatology of §58 is considered incomprehensible. What is the connection between the fulfilment of the eschatological promises and the growth in communion “between our churches”? Is it a sign, an instrument, is it a feature of the Church in history, *in via*? It is mentioned that in the following paragraph, the power of the eschatological imagery is diluted by the (too late) acknowledgment that the body of Christ is divided by sin.

Furthermore, in §60-63 it is proposed that the term “theology” should be used instead of “culture”. The response discussed the box on “The Limits of Diversity” and continues with specific comments on D. The Church as Communion of Local Churches (§64-66 and the box on the Local Church); III. The Life of Communion in and for the World (§67); A. Apostolic Faith (§68-72); B. Baptism (§74-77 and the box on Baptism); C. Eucharist (§79-81 and the box on The Eucharist); D. Ministry of All the Faithful (§82-85); E. Ministry of the Ordained (§86-89); F. Oversight: Personal, Communal, Collegial (§90-93), the box on Episkopé, Bishops and Apostolic Succession and §94-98; G. Conciliarity and Primacy (§99-104); the box on Conciliarity and Universal Primacy; H. Authority (§105-108); IV. In and for the World (§109, 112-116, 118).

In the *Final considerations of the group* it is stated that the need to arrive at agreements of churches results in the ecumenical document being very general. This sort of document is believed to tend more towards Orthodox theology than to the theologies of the Protestant Reformation, whether Lutheran or Reformed, and it is felt that a balance is very difficult to achieve. In general, it is considered that *TNMC* does not represent an advance on what has already been approved by F&O more than twenty years ago.

Reservations are expressed on a search for unity that claims that there is only one way leading to unity, as fidelity to the Good News of life in its fullness for all is felt to be the basis, and that on the basis of that fidelity the greatest visible unity possible has to be sought. The response indicates that is not believed that unity with all churches should be the aim, as there are churches that do not wish to be united with what the Evangelical Church of the River Plate represents, and it wonders whether what it represents as an ecclesiastical option desires, or rather is able, to be united with the proclamation of those churches.

Concerns are expressed at the concept of “nature” in the actual title of the document. In what sense is it being used? Philosophical, ontological, theological, popular, etc? Is it a reference to the being, the *esse* (timeless, spiritual, etc.) of the Church, or is it a reference to what the

Church actually does (contemporary, practical, daily, etc.)? It is indicated that out of Latin American Protestant theology it is decisive to stress the second aspect, which, is said to be almost absent from the document. Discussion is raised on the vision of the nature of the Church in the document.

According to the response, *TNMC* seems to have been formulated to conciliate Catholicism and the Orthodox, while including some classic elements from the theology of the Reformation. But it totally excludes the Latin American vision, or that of the people not included in the party, or the parts of the body that are unseemly or unrepresentable. The result is that the Evangelical Church of the River Plate does not feel that it is included with what it feels it is, a church coming out of the Reformation, driven out of Europe, having taken refuge in the underdeveloped and exploited world, almost a minority among the minorities (and although not poor, definitely having a commitment and a clear awareness of the place that Christ, being himself poor, gave to the poor). In addition, the response develops the issue of apostolic succession and the danger in the quest for consensus; it discusses the biblical and theological reflection in the document and poses the following questions concerning *TNMC*: Consensus between whom? Consensus for what? Is consensus on apostolicity essential for us to act together in the conflict in Zimbabwe? Would the work and witness of the WCC be made more effective and better understood if we reached a common understanding on the nature of the Church?

Finally, two particular contributions are suggested to be made, in addition to the response in its entirety. The Evangelical Church of the River Plate could: 1. provide elements for an ecclesiology based on the local church in the context of the Latin American situation, and 2. provide elements for a Latin American biblical hermeneutic, focussed on the perspective of the weak, poor, excluded and marginalised, which is precisely the perspective of the Bible itself and the perspective of the ministry of Jesus himself, whose cross gives meaning and relevance to the Church itself.

A Bilateral Response

26. The Joint Anglican Lutheran Commission of the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

A Response to The Nature and Mission of the Church: *A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement* Faith and Order Paper 198, World Council of Churches, Geneva, By the Joint Anglican Lutheran Commission of the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, p. 3.

The response characterises *TNMC* as a constructive document that will be of broad service to the church catholic and provides answers to the questions posed by it.

Regarding question 1, it is noted that *TNMC* clearly identifies points of convergence and divergences in the lives of the churches. In a succinct manner it helpfully sketches out the state of affairs in ecumenical conversations about the nature of the church, and is commended for the use of boxes to outline points of continuing difference. This way of framing the task diverges slightly from the statement in the By-Laws of the F&O Commission, which outlines the Commission's aim: "to proclaim the oneness of the Church of Jesus Christ...in order that the world may believe". (p1). The key distinction is the introduction of the theme of recognition and the omission of proclaimed oneness. Furthermore, the response continues, it is to be noted that *TNMC* seems to move beyond its earlier stated goal and the ecclesiological convictions of certain member churches for whom it is not enough to ground visible unity in the ability of one church to recognise in another the Church of Jesus Christ.

Thus, it is suggested that it might better serve its end by highlighting the movement from confession of the unity of the church to recognition of marks of the church catholic in other

churches in order to advance the mission of the church. Moreover, the statement that mission has “as its ultimate goal the *koinonia* of all” (p14) deserves further nuance especially since the document then goes on to identify division as a scandal for effective mission. The question is posed whether the *koinonia* of all points to the goal of evangelism or the goal of ecumenism. While ecclesial *koinonia* is certainly strained because of sin, its foundational character precludes its identity as a goal *per se*. *Koinonia* as an ecumenical reality is not the goal of mission but the condition for its possibility.

With regard to question 2, it is indicated that *TNMC* helpfully identifies the four major biblical images and insights of the church (p6). It is noted that the theme of *koinonia* “has become central in the quest of a common understanding of the nature of the Church and its visible unity” (p8). This too is significant and of utility for ecumenical discussions. Thus, this description of the Church might best be listed first among the four primary descriptions. Moreover, it would be helpful to clarify that the images of the church as people, body and temple admit a tropological/metaphorical quality that is not predicated of *koinonia*. In addition, *koinonia* is the ground of these three images and is for that reason overarching in ecclesiology. Using this insight as the primary way whereby the Church can understand itself provides a helpful point of departure. For this reason, framers of the document are encouraged to consider underscoring this foundational nature of the theme of *koinonia*: the church as the location of God’s action of drawing together for the sake of mission.

In the next paragraph that is a response to question 3, it is stated that *TNMC* very clearly articulates the common priesthood of Christians in §82-85. It is supported that it would be helpful for the document to explore further this ministry of all—in concert with the ministry of the ordained (§86-89) —as the ministry of the Church proper, in other words, to underscore that the Church too has a vocation. This vocation is two-fold in character; the Church simultaneously has a unique voice and a voice like others.

The response concludes by replying to the final questions posed by *TNMC*. It is proposed that more might be made of the relationship between diversity and unity. Framers of the document might consider further exploring the consequences of an affirmation of diversity in unity. In the first instance, diversity is a gift of creation and a significant gift for the church. But the next step has to be the question of how the churches understand diversity in their locations. Also, the question is posed of the existence of resources in the Christian tradition for seeing how the church can faithfully embrace diversity in unity precisely toward the end of the *missio Dei*. It is said that the document explores the “Limits of Diversity” with an eye toward its expression in ecclesial life, yet it is recognised that the Church experiences diversity in its common life with creation and other religious expressions. The question is posed of how we are to understand further the gifts and limits of diversity in unity.

Finally, the question is explored of whether it is possible in the 21st century to have an ecclesiology that does not locate the Church in its diversity/unity with creation and the religions.

B. WCC COMMISSION ON FAITH AND ORDER

27-38 Group Reports

C. COUNCILS OF CHURCHES / ECUMENICAL ORGANISATIONS

39. Visser’t Hooft Group, June 2009 being translated

40. The Norwegian Theological Dialogue Forum

A Norwegian Ecumenical Response to The Nature and Mission of the Church (Faith and Order Paper 198) from the Norwegian Theological Dialogue Forum, The Christian Council of Norway, June 2009, p. 9.

The first paragraph of the response introduces and describes the Norwegian Theological Dialogue Forum (Norsk teologisk samtaleforum, NTSF) and its work. Since 2000, NTSF has, in dialogue with the Christian Council of Norway, been defined as the permanent Norwegian ecumenical “Faith and Order group”, with the goal of contributing draft responses and statements to documents from the international ecumenical milieu, on behalf of the board of the Christian Council of Norway. Then, the long working procedure that led to the present response is described.

What follows is the section titled “Response” that summarises the most important changes to and viewpoints concerning *TNMC* that have been brought to light in the dialogue in the NTSF. Even though the NTSF has not translated its entire document into English, the references to changes made in the Norwegian text can be useful for F&O in the process of further revising the document. It is noted that the entire Norwegian document is attached. (See also Attachment A: “Translation of passages that are new or have been substantially changed in the Norwegian version”; and Attachment B: “Translation of the table of contents of the Norwegian dialogue document”).

Briefly, the comments and suggested changes are: 1. The structure of the document should be simplified. 2. The language should be simplified. 3. In the Norwegian document, other words are often used instead of “Church” where the English text uses “Church”. 4. In the further revision of the document, F&O should discuss the role of the boxes in the document as a whole, as they are considered important. 5. Some of the remaining theological viewpoints are raised concerning *TNMC* that have come to light in the dialogue in NTSF (points a-l).

The response continues with a description of the confessional mixture of the members that participated in the group: the Anglican Church, the Baptist Union of Norway, the Catholic Church – Diocese of Oslo, the Church of Norway, the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church, the German-speaking Evangelical Congregation in Norway, the Mission Covenant Church of Norway, the Salvation Army, the United Methodist Church, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Norway, the Orthodox Church in Norway - Holy Nikolai Church, the Pentecostal Movement in Norway and the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is also clarified that NTSF is a dialogue forum and not an inter-ecclesiastical doctrinal organ. Thus, the dialogue document produced is not ratified by the various churches.

Finally, the two above-mentioned attachments follow. A third attachment – the full text of the Norwegian ecumenical dialogue document – comes as a separate document.

41. Southern California Ecumenical Council

Southern California Ecumenical Council, Faith & Order Commission, Summary and Report of Discussion of *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, June 2007, p. 9.

The response provides one-paragraph background information on the work of the council concerning F&O until 2007 and lists the denominational affiliations of its 12 group members: Lutheran (ELCA and Missouri Synod), Wesleyan, Pentecostal, Roman Catholic, Episcopal, United Church of Christ, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), of which four were seminary faculty, two were laypersons and six were ordained pastors.

The *General Observations/Reactions* section is a response to the four questions posed by *TNMC*. In general, *TNMC* is considered a useful document for reflection on ecclesiological issues. Its specific sections are thought to provide adequate material for discussion, and provoked a useful

and enlightening exchange among the various members of the council. Responding to the first question, the council thinks *TNMC* is optimistic in describing *common* convictions. It is noted that it is an over-reaching to say that the views described are commonly held; they are held in various parts of the church. Thus the boxes could be more plentiful.

Concerning the second question, the council notes that the text represents a step forward, but it has some trouble with the language of “emerging convergence”. It would be perhaps more tentative to suggest “pre-emergent”. In addition, there are two primary areas in which the council’s concerns are not adequately addressed: 1. The centrality of evangelisation to the mission of the church, and 2. The absence in the discussions of sacraments of acknowledgments of those (Quakers, Pentecostals) who interpret baptism in spiritual or non-material ways. Nevertheless, the study of the document in groups of congregations could lead to more mutual accountability among churches, as well as new common initiatives in evangelisation and social action.

With regard to the suggestions, a study guide is proposed with suggested discussion questions and/or process. The response supports that attention needs to be given to ways of helping readers reflect on the text from their particular social location. Also, *TNMC* is thought to be too extensive, thus it is suggested that it be shortened or abbreviated, or maybe broken up into more specific segments. In addition, a more disciplined biblical hermeneutic is proposed as immensely helpful, whilst a more modest (bottom-up) way of describing the church is considered useful.

Finally, the section of the *Specific Comments and/or Suggestions* follows the outline and paragraph numbering of the document commenting on different parts of *TNMC*.

42. German Ecumenical Study Committee (DÖSTA)

The Fellowship of Christian Churches in Germany (ACK), German Ecumenical Study Committee (DÖSTA), Response to Faith and Order Paper no. 198 “The Nature and Mission of the Church” 2005, November 2007, p. 17.

The paper begins with explaining the purpose and context of this response. The German Ecumenical Study Committee (DÖSTA), which is accountable to the Fellowship of Christian Churches in Germany (ACK), is a multilateral body, thus providing a response that reveals which critical issues raised by individual DÖSTA members are also understandable by others, considers local and national factors in the reception process (with regard to cultural and psychological, and not simply confessional aspects), and also perceives concerns raised by minority churches.

Concerning the context, the response stresses the following points that should be taken into consideration: 1. Ecclesiological questions have to reckon with resistance from established church structures, which in Germany are very varied, particularly within the protestant churches. 2. It is now possible for European churches in the Reformation tradition to speak with one voice on ecclesiological issues in the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe. 3. Ecclesiological differences in Germany always have implications for the day-to-day life of Christians. That is noticeable with regard to the table fellowship in the eucharist. 4. Beyond differences, all confessions agree that spiritual renewal of the ecumenical movement is necessary in the form of a recovery of the Christological and soteriological foundations of the ecumenical movement and can have effective results.

Section 2 of the response, *A critical evaluation of the Nature and Mission of the Church within ecumenical studies on ecclesiology as a whole*, refers to the importance of hermeneutical questions in today’s critical situation of the ecumenical movement. DÖSTA appreciates the F&O efforts to contribute to an overall view of the achievements reached by those involved in bilateral and multilateral dialogues throughout the world as they have grown closer together in their ecclesiology. It is noted that *TNMC* serves to keep the ecumenical ecclesiological memory alive, which in the present situation is particularly valuable.

Regarding the contents of *TNMC*, the response indicates central issues which DÖSTA will have to deal with and approve: Linking ecclesiology with the Trinity, even though further clarification is needed in particular areas; the use of the diversity of metaphors in the Bible to describe the Church seems promising for future ecclesiological study; the missionary dimension of the Church's work should be a central ecumenical concern; it seems appropriate to give doctrines of ministry a place subordinate to the celebration of the faith in both baptism and the Eucharist. Further, issues are raised that are given little attention by the document: In the study of ecclesiological issues it might be helpful to request the confessional communities to give a short presentation of themselves; "The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification" and preceding bilateral studies are of great importance to the reception process; the Church's mission to serve is of considerable importance in addition to the basic missionary aspect of church work; the concept of admission of guilt in light of our lost unity and the call to all churches to repent of it would also be an enrichment.

Moreover, section 3 of the response consists of comments on *TNMC*: a. The method of boxes is welcomed, even though the fact that it is not clear which statements reflect which confessional position is a hindrance to reception. b. In the overall assessment of the document, comments are made on specific aspects of it, and the question is posed whether unity in ecclesiological questions should remain the sole means of testifying to the Christian faith. Also, reference to the importance of Holy Scripture for determining the nature and mission of the Church is proposed.

Section C of the response includes comments on particular points of the document. Regarding the Introduction (§1-8) no comments are noted, whereas the ensuing sections are analyzed step-by-step: Section I. A "The Nature of the Church", §9-33. Section 1 B "The Mission of the Church", §34-42. Section I C "Church as Sign and Instrument of God's Intention and Plan for the World", §43-47. Section II A "The Church *in via*", §48-56. Section II. B "In Christ – but not yet in Full Communion" §57-59. Section II. C "Communion and Diversity" paras . Section II. D "The Church as Communion of Local Churches", §64-66. Section III. "The Life of Communion in and for the World", §67-108. Section III. B "Baptism", §74-77. Section III. C. "Eucharist", §78-81. Section III. D "Ministry of all the Faithful", §82-85, and Section III E. "Ministry of the Ordained", §86-89. Section III. G "Conciliarity and Primacy", §99-104. Section III. H "Authority", §105-108. Section IV. "In the World and for the World", §109-118. Conclusion, §119-123. Comments follow on the improvement of the German translation. (See response).

The response continues with Section 4, *Proposals to F&O for further Reflection and Work*. Considering developments in the WCC and theological debate in the ecumenical movement, the question is posed why certain discussions in *TNMC* have not already been taken up. This applies particularly in the following areas: basic types of ecclesiology, worship and ecclesiology, and hermeneutics.

43. Conference of European Churches

Responses from some members of the Churches in Dialogue Commission to the Faith and Order Paper *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, p. 11.

The Churches in Dialogue Commission (CiD) of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) discussed in depth *TNMC* together with some European members of the F&O Commission. In that context CiD decided to ask four of its members to respond from their respective church traditions to the four questions in the paper. The initial intention of the CiD was to elaborate the four answers towards a consensus document. This perspective proved not to be helpful, so the four papers are presented to F&O.

First comes *An Anglican Response* (based on the Council for Christian Unity paper) reminding of the purpose of *TNMC* (§10), describing its method and repeating the questions posed by it. Responding to the first question, the author indicates that *TNMC* does identify in the main text common ecclesiological convictions held by churches who take part in the ecumenical movement. In this text agreements are seen both with the recent ecumenical documents which have already been signed and the historic formularies. Furthermore, it is noted that §24 rightly indicates that *koinonia* is to be found in the NT as well as in later periods though it fell out of use, and that it is important not to overload this word. In §15 more work needs to be done on how *koinonia* embraces diversity. Further, more work is needed on the goal of the ecumenical movement itself. The question is posed whether the goal of the ecumenical process is a form of reconciled diversity in which separate churches continue to exist or the emergence of a united church with a common faith, structure and reconciled ministry.

The response indicates that a continuing area of significant differences between the churches is the relationship between the apostolic faith as witnessed to by Scripture and the traditions of the churches (§61, 70, see also §65). In addition, when the matter of decision-making is discussed in chapter III it is supported that there is no real discussion about who has the authority to make decisions. There is a real issue between a more centralised approach to decision-making in some churches and the more dispersed patterns in other churches. Also, in chapter IV the relationship between ecclesiology and ethics (§112) should be given more attention.

Regarding the second question, it is stated that the view that the Church has a vital role in salvation (§34) can be clearly agreed by all but further specificity would have helped. Some of the marks of mission that *TNMC* could take up are: to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom; to teach and baptise new believers; to respond to human need by service; to seek to transform unjust structures in society; to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation.

As far as the third question is concerned, the response encourages a greater emphasis on the role of Scripture (§13-15). Also, worship is underlined as central to the life of the Church, thus the brief quotation of §36 is suggested to be amplified. Commenting on §51, it is noted that *TNMC* could helpfully address more adequately the relationship between Church and State than it does in the discussion in Part IV. In addition, the discussion of the distinction between the Church visible and the Church invisible should be included, and some reference to the communion of the saints. Moreover, in the section on ministry, the question of whether women should be ordained is one area of disagreement, but there is also the further matter of the relation of the genders in theological anthropology. Lastly, it is proposed that the issue of territoriality be discussed.

Responding to the fourth question, the author suggests that if a revised version of this document is widely published in a form more suitable for discussion at every level of the church, then people even where this stimulus has already borne fruit will be more aware of the consensus that now exists, and where further work needs to be done to reach a full convergence. Moreover, it is stated that the material in its present form is not of the sort that can be used by the ordinary churchgoer. If it could be adapted in style and in presentation for a wider readership with examples of how ecumenical progress has been made in some localities, it would give impetus to the ecumenical movement in the EU countries.

Concerning the first question posed by *TNMC*, the section entitled *A Lutheran Response* indicates that generally this document describes most of the themes and results of multilateral and bilateral dialogues during the last decades. It uses solid scriptural basis for describing the Church and tries to link the mission of Church to actual needs and situations of the world. It is noted that Lutherans may not have had as many common convictions as *TNMC* lays out, but ecumenically involved churches should by now have received them. Nevertheless, there is lot of room for clearer identification in the document. An example may be the relationship between Scripture and later/continuing tradition of the Church. Most of the dividing issues are quite well described in this study document.

The author finds that *TNMC* reflects an emerging convergence when it comes to convergence of Reformation churches (Lutheran-Anglican, Lutheran-Reformed). More complicated and less convergent is the ecclesiological dialogue between Reformation churches, and Orthodox or/and Roman Catholic. It may even be the case that the intensive study and confessional awareness has resulted in an increasing number of doctrinal differences in ecclesiology. But continuation of those dialogues is still important mark of emerging convergence.

What is more, it is thought that the issue of “believing without belonging-belonging without believing” needs theological reflection, also ecumenically/internationally. Moreover, many ethical issues need to be dealt with, but distinguished from proper ecclesiology. In addition, the two sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist do not only primarily manifest Christian life, but they constitute communion, which is lived. Lastly, the text requires more dialogue and clearer identifications in positive statements and dividing questions between the churches. Improved and concrete document will be good help for continuing dialogue. It is believed that *TNMC* could be helpful especially in Lutheran discussions with Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican traditions. The document can provide more for worldwide agreements, and encourage more focussed dialogue with the Evangelical and Charismatic traditions and hearing of their contribution to this dialogue. Suggestions for future development of *TNMC* include answers from the churches, new theological contribution from different bilateral dialogues, “translating” to the language used on the grass-roots level of churches, more extension of ecclesiological and ethical reflection during the process.

Moreover, the section called *An Orthodox Response* follows that sees the text as a synthesis of all the results achieved in the ecumenical field during the last few decades. Thus, it is said that it manages to identify the common ecclesiological convictions of churches, as well as the issues which still divide them and which demand further reflection and theological analysis. Moreover, it is noted that *TNMC* names the attributes of the Church, but provides incomplete description of the holiness, the catholicity, and the apostolicity. In addition, it is clarified that the term *koinonia* cannot be used with respect to the relationship with other Christian churches or denominations, unless they have reached the same doctrinarian teaching. Also, the response supports that among the issues that differentiate the Orthodox churches from the Protestant ones is the fact that the Holy Sacraments are seven in number.

Replying to the second question of *TNMC*, it is noted that one or several terms of comparison are requisite here. Whereas the dialogue between the Protestant churches has known important progress in ecclesiology during the last few years, in the form of the Leuenberg and Porvoo Agreements, the same cannot be said regarding the dialogue with the Orthodox churches. It is noticed that at the end of the 16th century, the ecclesiological differences between Orthodoxy and Protestantism were mostly identified, differences that have remained unsolved ever since. The response underlines that the only merit of *TNMC* is that it provides a more comprehensive and explicit systematisation of issues-conditions for the achievement of unity (*regula fidei*, the Holy Sacraments, the sacramental priesthood, the apostolic succession of episcopacy, the reception of ecumenical councils and the authority within the church).

Concerning the third question, the response notes that with regard to the mission of the church, this text mirrors a broader unity of perspectives than it does with regard to the nature of the church. However, from an Orthodox point of view, the emphasis has to be laid on the fact that the fundamental mission of the church in the world is the salvation of humankind, attainable through the Holy Sacraments, that is, the person’s sanctification, which goes all the way to deification, seen as the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in the human heart. Although *TNMC* never fails to consider the eschatological component of ecclesiology, it reduces this component to the external transformation of the world, and to the intervention of the church wherever there is injustice on Earth (thus, presenting the church in its social dimension), leaving aside humanity’s inner transformation and sanctification. Also, it is supported that the text does not clearly state the fact that the Church was founded on Christ’s Passion on the Cross. With respect to the

Communion of Local Churches, the document does not fully accord with the Orthodox view, which demands the unity in doctrine, practice and canon law of the local churches held in communion.

Responding to the fourth question, the issue of the limits of diversity is brought up: Regarding the limits of diversity, it is stated that reflection within the Orthodox Church –the most traditional of the Christian churches– has to be maintained. Questions need to be raised with respect to the level of diversity allowed in practice, ethics and organisation, because these aspects are closely related to the teaching of faith (doctrine). Thus, the Orthodox Church has to first clarify these limits, reflecting on the doctrinal implications of the above-mentioned issues. It is noted that *TNMC* cannot help the church take concrete steps towards unity, unless the dividing issues mentioned are surpassed either through the reaching of a consensus, or through the affirmation of their neutral character for the unity of the church.

As far as the development of the text is concerned, the response indicates that it would be desirable that the much often mentioned the role of the church in the world –as it appears in parts I B, I C, IV and elsewhere– should be reduced. Likewise, the text should be restructured, on the basis of the concepts of nature and mission. The fact that it is divided into two chapters (“The Church of the Triune God” and “The Church in History”) introduces a clear distinction between the eternal and the historical aspects of the church, which should be avoided through the restructuring of the entire text.

Moreover, it is claimed that although *TNMC* mentions the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Symbol, it subjects it to the *sola scriptura* principle too. It would be desirable that beside the ecclesiological teachings of the Bible, the patristic ecclesiology of the first millennium should be mentioned too. Lastly, with respect to the recognition of baptism, the text which led the Christian churches in Germany to mutual recognition of the validity of baptism (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen*) should be consulted. The response concludes by emphasising that ecclesiology is the theme *par excellence* on which depends the final success or failure of the ecumenical dialogue.

What follows is the section entitled *A Reformed Response*, developed in seven sections: 1. In “The Church as *Creatura Verbi*?” it is supported that if the basic principle of *TNMC* is that the church is a creature of the Word of God, as communicated by the Holy Spirit, the document can be considered as highly promising in the ecumenical process. Consensus on it, however, has to be complemented by consensus about its theological consequences. One test of the basic principle is the role of the *Bible* in the theological argument. In *TNMC* biblical texts have a prominent place in terms of plurality of biblical metaphors, but also of drawing the important insights from the biblical material that diversity appears as an aspect of catholicity (p6/15). The response supports that when the role of the Bible is affirmed, the role of *tradition* over against the Bible has to be clearly reflected. In *TNMC* the role of tradition is addressed on p6/15. Missing is a more profound reflection on the relationship between Bible and tradition. Furthermore, a negative test of the basic principle is the critical role the Bible plays in theological discourse and in the life of the church. On p11/45 (“Therefore the visible organizational structures... in the Liturgy”), further clarification is required of the criteria for criticism within the church.

In section 2 of the response “*Creatura Verbi* and episcopacy”, it is illustrated that the fundamental dividing issue of ministry is correctly identified in *TNMC* (p5 cf p25). For the reformed churches, the issue is directly linked to the basic principle, the fundamental role of the Bible in the making of church doctrine. If a plurality of church structures in the NT is acknowledged (cf 1), there remains no biblical foundation for episcopacy as the *exclusive* institutional realization of the people of God. A strong doctrine of tradition seems to be the logical presupposition of a strong doctrine of episcopacy. From a reformed perspective, both stand in contradiction to the basic principle of *sola scriptura*.

Regarding section 3, “Ecclesiology and other communities”, it is noted that *TNMC* identifies three different types of ecclesiologies, all of them with different implications for the

acknowledgement of other communities *as* churches (p16-17). While types 1 and 2 affirm that only one community (and in some areas a few more) can be considered as churches, type 3 allows for a theologically legitimate plurality of churches. The response describes the problems of all three types and states that no church should definitely negate another church's ecclesial character on the basis of its own ecclesiology.

Section 4 on "Ministry" underlines that *TNMC* identifies the ministry as one, if not *the*, dividing issue between the churches. In that light, it is interesting that among "the gifts and resources needed for its life and mission in and for the world" given by God to the Church, the document only mentions "the grace of the apostolic faith, baptism and Eucharist as means of grace to create and sustain *koinonia*" (p19/67). Not mentioned under the means of grace is the ministry. Another weakness of *TNMC* listed is that the *Ordained Ministry* in it is not linked to the Ministry of all the Faithful, but is considered as being founded in the calling and sending of the apostles by Jesus (p23/86). The statement that "there is no single pattern of conferring ministry in the NT" (p3/87) can gladly be affirmed from within reformed theology. However, in the whole document there is no mention of the issue of the *ordination of women*, which is considered a problem of fundamental hermeneutical and theological significance. Although it is one of the most intriguing ecumenical questions, under no circumstances can it be excluded from a basic ecumenical document on the church.

Regarding Section 5 on "Episcopal and non-episcopal churches", it is demonstrated that *TNMC* correctly states that the ecumenical process has brought episcopal and non-episcopal churches to discover "hitherto unrecognized parallels (...) in the way oversight is exercised" (p25). It is emphasised that no single concept of the ministry of leadership should be formulated. *TNMC* is right in simply stating the remaining differences (p25). It would again be helpful to point more critically to Scripture as the criterion to judge between the differing concepts. Further, it is noted that for reformed theology a sentence like the following is irritating: "There seems to be an increasing openness to discuss a universal ministry... need to be exercised in communal and collegial ways" (p28/104). The sentence suggests a drive towards a universal ministry that does not seem justified by the evidence.

Section 6 of the response on "Israel" commends on the fact that *TNMC* speaks of the election of Israel and suggests that the point of the loyalty of God to his people needs to be formulated more clearly. Lastly, in section 7, "The Mission of the Church", it is stated that *TNMC* expresses many promising aspects in search of an ecumenical view of the Church. As *TNMC* states, the only *raison d'être* of the Church is its apostolicity. Therefore, there is no nature of the church apart from its mission – the Church's mission *is* the nature of the Church. Thus, the title should more adequately read: "The Mission of the Church".

The response by the CEC Commission CiD concludes by indicating that having discussed the above four responses, although it could not come to one agreed statement, it trusts that it has expressed views from the European perspective and will help on the way to a common statement on *TNMC*.

44. The Vermont Ecumenical Council

Response to the Document "The Nature and Mission of the Church" from The Faith and Order Committee of The Vermont Ecumenical Council (VEC), October 2009, p. 5.

The response begins with a mention of the previous work of the Council on *TNPC*, and the confessional synthesis of the group that participated in the process of formulating the response: Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, American Baptist, Episcopal, United Methodist, United Church of Christ —with occasional participation by United Presbyterian and Lutheran communities. The method used is also explained: The response is directed first to the four questions posed in the document, and then more detailed comments follow on the chapters and

subsections of the text. The response concludes with suggestions for future development of the text.

First, it is believed that the document does correctly identify common ecclesiological convictions, invoking as it does traditional language about the Church as a creation of Word and Spirit, the four marks of the Church, some key images of the Church in Scripture, and the mission of the Church as sign and instrument of God's mission in the world. It succinctly names the usual issues which continue to divide Christians. However, it is believed it is not as forthcoming and specific about important ecclesiological and other issues (e.g., ordination of women or homosexuals) where sharp differences are often within ecclesial communities as well as between them.

Second, it is supported that the document in its attempt to present the traditional terms mentioned under the theme of *koinonia*, reflects an emerging convergence on the nature and mission of the Church. However, a bold and coherent statement of this vision is missing. Also, *TNMC* needs to expand its vision to include such phenomena as the "emergent church", African independent churches, Pentecostal churches, and megachurches in various countries and continents.

Third, it is wished that an affirmation be listed of the human reality of the church and of the work of the Holy Spirit, as well as the perennial tension between change and continuity, and the question of authority. Fourth, it is stated that the document could help the member churches of the VEC take concrete steps towards unity if ecumenical interest is renewed and the energy is discovered among members to engage one another in discussion of it, and thus fulfil the covenant to embrace the Lund Principle in living together.

Commenting on specific parts of *TNMC*, the response notes that the point in §8: "... to participate in a council of churches does not imply that all members regard all other members as church in the same sense in which they regard themselves" appears to be a pragmatic acceptance of division rather than the assumption that there is one Church which is unfortunately divided. The VEC strongly supports that we are one Church and our divisions are manifest in the ways we regard each other's ecclesial reality and integrity. Therefore no ecclesial body has the right to say to another: "You do not belong to the Church".

Regarding Chapter I A (I): The Nature of the Church, several parts are said to be appreciated. Nevertheless, two concerns are expressed: First, care needs to be taken that the relation of the divine and human realities is clearly distinguished from that in Jesus Christ. Second, the chapter as a whole seems to stress the divine nature and lacks a theological affirmation of the human nature of the church. In addition, concerning Chapter I A (II): Biblical Insights, a question raised about the earlier text still lingered: with the exception of the material on *koinonia*, what do these biblical insights really add to the document? It is suggested that one way one might make the images more integral to the argument might be to show how the first three illuminate *koinonia*, or how *koinonia* illuminates them. The very diversity of scriptural images of the Church provide different visions of the same reality, yet they do not contradict one another. The variety found in scripture may be echoed in the diverse visions we have today. Specific comments follow on §14, 15, 20.

With regard to Chapter I B: The Mission of the Church, the inclusion is appreciated of the "integrity of creation" within God's vision of *koinonia*, as well as the Church's mission (§34, 40). This is seen as especially important in view of the growing environmental crisis, and the question is posed of why the references to creation were deleted in the Nature and Mission revision (See old §57 in *TNPC* vs. *TNMC* §33; old §43 vs. new §44). Specific comments follow on the issue of universalism (§35), and §40. Moreover, concerning Chapter II A: The Church *in via*, it is noted that it does not name or discuss the necessary tension between continuity and change as well as it does the tension between unity and diversity. Both tensions characterise the Church as a historical reality. Once again the question is posed: what is the positive theological

function of the human/historical aspect of ecclesiology? Specific comments follow on §50, 56, 62.

Furthermore, in Chapter III, it is considered instructive that the ordained ministry is clearly seen as a subset of the ministry of all the faithful. This is an important corrective to the more familiar and tension-ridden distinction between clergy and laity, where it is assumed that priesthood belongs to the clergy rather than to the whole Church. In addition, the paragraphs on baptism, Eucharist and episcopate are thought to have sparked deep and mutually enlightening sharing of the varied understandings and practices of them. Yet, overall the chapter is thought to be slow-moving and uninspiring. It reads as a dutiful and instructive presentation of traditional categories rather than a fresh statement of church order in the light of the *koinonia* theme. It is noted that this reaction may say more about the readers than the text: the notions of personal, communal and collegial forms of oversight, not to mention conciliarity and primacy, were new to low-church Protestants, and made them acutely aware of the vast differences that remain between Christian communions.

The language of Chapter IV about the mission of the Church is considered more familiar. The response notes that what aroused the most discussion, as relevant to the present situation, was §116 which speaks of the challenge that divisive ethical issues pose for the Christian community. The counsel of the last sentence that Christians (and churches) engage in dialogue to discern whether such issues are really church dividing spoke to the situation in Vermont. Some ethical issues are divisive within churches rather than reflecting present divisions. This leads one to ponder how VEC members might speak together rather than separately on controversial issues.

The response concludes with suggestions for further development of the text: 1. The document is neither consistent nor courageous enough in the use of the *koinonia* model that it strains to validate. The concept is never clarified, nor is it applied as itself a possible clarifier and resolver of such issues as diversity, conciliarity, primacy, or the explication of the Church's "marks". *Koinonia* is believed to have this potential since it is so central to the works of the "church fathers" of the undivided church. It is manifest in their treatment of ecclesiology, pneumatology, and anthropology. 2. A more fully articulated theological anthropology is desired in the document. Ecclesiology is essential for anthropology, for it deals with the essential relationality of human beings; but it is not dealt with in this manner in the document. The "humanness" of the church is, for the most part, dealt with negatively. The question is posed of what is the positive role of humanity in ecclesiology. It may be that this lack compromises the effectiveness of the *koinonia* model. 3. The lack of anthropology also contributes to the a-historical character of the present document. 4. The document also needs to deal courageously and forthrightly with questions of hermeneutics and authority. The question needs to be asked of what the limits are to differences within the Church with regard to authority.

45. The Council of Churches in the Netherlands (Raad Van Kerken in Nederland)

The Council of Churches in the Netherlands, Reflections on "*The Nature and Mission of the Church*", May 2009, p. 3.

The Council of Churches in the Netherlands states that it submits its reaction to *TNMC* so that F&O has an impression of the reception of the text in their country. The discussion was prepared by the Commission on Faith and Church Community. Later on the Council drew some final conclusions.

First, the response affirms the central lines drawn in *TNMC*. It is seen as the fruit of the continuing discussion within the Commission of F&O about the central themes of ecclesiology, formerly represented by *BEM*. The fact is received with gratitude that the common thoughts within the different Churches about them are coming closer to each other. This convergence is

detected in different themes (§18-19, 20-21, 22-23, 45, 43). The biblical theme of *koinonia* is thought to be a good starting point for the discussion, defining it as a community with God and each other; the word perhaps assists as a way to look for a mutual understanding of the concept of the Church (§24).

The response continues by noting that the more is realised, the more depressing it is that there are so many different points of view about the institutional dimensions of the Church (box in §12). In *TNMC* there are different ecclesiological points of view, which do not exclude one another, but to a certain extent show some kind of convergence. The consequences, however, of this convergence for the specific questions about ministry and sacraments, are not elaborated in this report. On the contrary, it is supported that in the so-called boxes these questions return. So, on the specific points of ministry and sacraments there has not been much progress.

What is more, what is emphasised is the necessity of the continuing discussion about baptism which is called correctly the fundamental liaison of unity (§74 onwards). Mutual acceptance between Churches about baptism has stimulated the vivid contacts between Churches and the ecumenical discussions. In addition, reading about the institutional divergence on the several places it is important that *TNMC* introduces the four *notae ecclesiae* from the Credo of Nicea-Constantinople. The response suggests that these *notae* should be worked out eschatologically: the Church lives *in statu viae*.

The Council recognises the emphasis of the question saying how the Churches “understand and claim their own ecclesial identity and how they regard the ecclesial status of other churches and other Christians” (after box §63), and poses the question why the history of separation has not been described. Also, while recognising the three types of ecclesiology in box §63, it is emphasised that it is not clear which kind of ecclesiology is at stake here. There has to be a clear starting point, which is shared by all partners. It is recommended that *TNMC* should discuss the programmatic differences on the different points, at the same time using the results of the ecumenical dialogue (Roman Catholic Church and LWF dialogue with the Jewish partners).

Furthermore, the response indicates that the classical ecclesiological questions discussed in the report sometimes are far away from the world people live in today and the problems the Churches are facing. *TNMC* should focus more on the actual context of Churches, as §4 explicitly asks. In §121 *TNMC* is said to reveal signs of reconessionalisation and even signs of anti-ecumenical attitudes within certain Churches. Differences in Church vision and Church forms go back on old and new Christological questions, on the way people want to follow Christ, and on the interpretation of the preaching of Jesus of Kingdom of God and the implications for the Christian way of life and the ethics for a good life and community. The question remains how the empirical experience of the Church works through in the brokenness of the vision of a united Church. The response suggests that this aspect could have been worked out better, if *TNMC* had started with the mission of the church, as it is realised by Christians giving a testimony in the actual situation in their own society.

The theme of the context raises another last point: the discussions between the Churches in order to come to common decisions. Regarding the issue of conciliarity and universal primacy, the response suggests that it might be better not to connect these topics in an early phase. Otherwise we will stop to investigate the concept of conciliarity while speaking too soon about “the universal primacy of the bishop of Rome” (§102-104). The concept of “conciliar community” will be useful in order to reach a common understanding of the gospel about the Kingdom of God for the whole of the living world, it will help in many situations of crises within Christianity and might help to prepare an agenda in order to reconcile the separated Churches.

46. The National Council of Churches in Denmark

THE NATURE AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH Response by the National Council of Churches in Denmark (prepared by a Working Group within the Council), September 2009, p. 4.

The response begins with providing *Methodological Considerations*. It develops how the basic point of departure in *TNMC* is obviously confessional separations. This can be misleading. It is supported that it might be more constructive to start with what all Christian churches have in common –the living tradition as it is expressed in the communion of worship and action. All Christians have a common language rooted in Scripture and articulated in the ancient creed. This can be conceived as a kind of Christian *Ursprache* that continues to be used in the worship of practically all churches. In addition, the response continues, it may be argued that we cannot but apply our separate grammars and hermeneutics if we want to speak of our faith at all. But inter-confessional endeavours must start where we are one with Christ and therefore one with one another. In the ecumenical dialogue *lex orandi* precedes *lex credendi*. Christian worship embraces all hermeneutics and grammars in a vigorous effort to reconcile them so that the *lex credendi* may ever more reflect the living tradition as it is actually manifested when Christian churches worship and pray.

With regard to *Section A: The Nature of the Church*, §9-33, the response resonates with the attempts (also in §49) to formulate an ecclesiology that holds the Giver and the gift together. It is supported that the initial paragraphs on the nature of the Church demand an explicit reference to the worship setting in which this ecclesiology makes sense as the triune God is a God first praised and prayed to, first worshipped and narrated. Speaking about God is also a matter of bodily actions such as eating and drinking, washing sins away in baptismal water, participating in worship and serving our neighbour. It is the actual worship in community that gives content to what Christians mean by “God”, although such living confession often falls short of the community’s words and the self-understanding expressed in creedal statements, cf. the box following §13. Similarly, it is stated that the paragraphs in A II (Biblical Insights) presuppose not merely an “and” (Bible *and* living tradition), but a hermeneutical circle as it is in interpreting the Scriptures that the Christian community interprets itself. It is noted that there is a wide diversity of Bible readings and ecclesiologies (cf. §16) that cannot be fully and unequivocally grasped by theological statements (cf. §45 and §60).

What is more, the document’s focus on mission is affirmed as integral to being God’s Church serving God’s reign (*Section B: The Mission of the Church*, §34-42). In conjunction with the study it is also affirmed that a credible, apostolic Church is a missional Church (§35) at a specific time and in a specific location. A missional Church is a way of living –in worship, proclamation, and service (*leitourgia*, *kerygma* and *diakonia*; cf. §36)– within a particular historical setting. And although following the crucified and resurrected Christ equals seeking life in abundance for all, in a brutal world persecution and martyrdom might become the fate of missional Christian communities.

Commenting on Chapter II: The Church in History, the response resonates with the description in §51 of an existing gap between “believing” and “belonging”. In addition, it is indicated that §50-56, including the pertinent box, highlight the fact that the theological debate on “Church and sin” is inconclusive. It seems that Christian believers deal most appropriately with the power of individual and collective sin by approaching the merciful, triune God with the supplication of a contrite heart: “*Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church*”. Christians need “the repentance, mutual forgiveness and restoration” (§59) that will identify our local communities as not merely our church, but also the Church of Jesus Christ (§66, including box, and the New Delhi Statement). Regarding sections B, C and D, §57-66 “Communion and Diversity” (including the boxes) and Chapter III, Section B and C, §74-81 “Baptism” and “Eucharist” (including the boxes), it is noted that they show the continuing divergences in ecclesiology and ecclesial *ordo* as articulated in the study. Also, there are churches whose vocation

does not include the ministering of the liturgical sacraments, but who, nevertheless, see themselves as included in the sacramental life of the Church. Viewed as a whole these sections of the text seem to be without friction.

When dealing with Chapter III: The Life of Communion in and for the World, the response affirms that the apostolic ministry of all the faithful (§82-89, including the box) is carried out both by laity and the ordained, and underlines: a. Some Protestant traditions' emphasis on linking the ministry of all believers with specific ecclesial functions and obligations attributed to lay people, women and men; b. The Orthodox and Roman Catholic monastic tradition as a specific form of testimony; c. The intertwining of a historic episcopal succession (men only), valid eucharistic presidency, and transmittance of the one apostolic faith within the Orthodox and Roman Catholic tradition; d. The different forms of a threefold ministry (cf. §87); e. The Lutheran tradition's lack of a common worldwide practice and a commonly held understanding of ordination, and f. The discrepancy, felt in all churches, between the practice and the theory of the apostolic ministry of *all* believers.

Moreover, deliberations are expressed on “authority” (§105-108) in connection with “conciliarity and primacy” focused on authority as a necessarily embodied authority –whether the embodiment is manifested in hierarchical ways or entrusted to more horizontal structures. It is said that neither the Bible nor the early Christian creedal statements or the inherited, written “Confessions” interpret themselves. Further, it is mentioned that instead of forging one institutionalised way of exercising ecclesial authority, the key question seems to be: From whom does a Christian faith community expect guidance as to whether or not its current thinking and practice continue the faith of the apostles?

Finally, commenting on Chapter IV: In and for the World the response highlights that *TNMC* identifies differences in ethical positions as a potential church-dividing issue that threatens progress in the ecumenical movement. The churches have not achieved a common understanding on the concept of ethical heresy, and much more has to be done in order to avoid further divisions among the churches. It is proposed that the study clarifies whether or not –and if so to what degree– ethics should be regarded as an integral part of ecclesiology. According to the response, the text goes too lightly over this issue.

47. Group of Roman Catholics, Lutherans and Episcopalians in New York

Report on the Study of *The Nature and Mission of the Church* by a group of Group of Roman Catholics, Lutherans and Episcopalians in New York, p. 5.

The response begins with the description of the synthesis of the group that participated in drafting the document submitted to F&O and listing of names of representatives from the ecumenical commissions: ARCNY (Anglican Roman Catholic New York); LEDNY (Lutheran Episcopal Dialogue New York); LRCNY (Lutheran Roman Catholic New York); and LRC (Lutheran Roman Catholic).

In the first section of the response, I. THE CHURCH OF THE TRIUNE GOD, the points are mentioned of convergence of the group with *TNMC*: the four marks of the Church in the Nicene Creed, despite the different views on what each “mark” contains or embodies. (It is noted that it would be helpful to reassert the eschatological “holiness” of the Church, particularly as it relates to mission); the effort to view diversity as an aspect of catholicity, even though members celebrate this diversity in the life of their individual churches a bit differently. In addition, points of divergence are also brought up: the interpretation and use of Scripture; *koinonia* (although it is an appreciated expression for each of the churches, the bonds of communion which determine the extent of that *koinonia* differ one from another); disagreement about the subordination of the charismatic gifts given to the people of God *vis-a-vis* the role of the bishops in their governance of the Church; the mission of the Church. (While in broad terms

it? is agreed upon, wide divergence is noted in more practical areas. For example, to what degree do we challenge the political establishments? To what degree, and in what manner, do we compete with each other in the mission field?).

The third part of the section titled “Critique” emphasises the need for a stronger effort to find criteria for discerning when differences represent reconcilable emphases and when they indicate real disagreements. Some are tolerant of different points of view within the church, while others are more concerned that those empowered in determining the dogma and doctrine of the Church be acknowledged as the final authority. It is claimed that the relationship between the degree of permissible diversity and authority is a constant consideration which needs a more clear discernment.

The same method of study of Convergence-Divergence-Critique applies to chapter II. THE CHURCH IN HISTORY of *TNMC*. Points of convergence noted here are: the tension between “that which is already given” and “that which is not yet fully realized” and the presentation of the Church as an eschatological reality, in constant need of repentance and renewal; the need to discern the abiding from the historically and culturally contingent aspects of our churches; the acknowledgment that a particularly prickly area of diversity resides in the methodology used toward arriving at truth itself and in the boundaries of moral diversity in particular. Furthermore, points of divergence are: the understanding of diversity in the life of the church (theological, ethical and moral). In addition, the “Critique” paragraph focuses on mutual accountability. Specific examples are requested of churches’ mutual discernment of adiaphora. Also, the view is expressed that re-evaluation of the evolving term *subsistit in* is considered helpful for the ecumenical dialogue. It is supported that change exists even in the Church, but the degree to which the truth of the Church changes or develops is interpreted differently.

With regard to chapter III. THE LIFE OF COMMUNION IN AND WITH THE WORLD (the title as indicated in the response), convergences noticed are: the centrality of the Creeds and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist, and the need for episcopate for the Church’s life and mission; also, the idea of the development of doctrine or teaching. Comments follow on various aspects of *TNMC* from the perspective of the different confessions of the members of the group. Regarding divergence, the following points are noted: the issue of adiaphora; the succession in apostolicity and the idea of a single office (presbyter) that remains very strong; the Order of Deacons; and the role of universal primacy.

Commenting on chapter IV. IN AND FOR THE WORLD, it is observed that this shortest section of the document is the only section in which there are not boxed matters which indicate differences. However, the absence of boxes may create an impression of greater unity than actually exists. Furthermore, it is noted that persons of good will and strong faith may disagree on how to approach a particular social injustice. There also needs to be an understanding that the Church’s social mission may vary significantly according to the conditions existing in different parts of the world. There is convergence on the observation that *diakonia* (service) belongs to the very being of the Church and acknowledgement that the churches’ dealing with war, economic injustice, violence and nationalism, must be discerned in a particular cultural and political context.

Divergence concerning this section is noticed on divisive social issues such as: abortion, birth control, the role of women in the church, sexuality, the effects of colonialism, the overwhelming prevalence of disease in certain parts of the world, and the difference in values in the several parts of the world. It is also noted that there are different ways of determining what is the social teaching of “the Church”, and that mutual accountability, while desirable, has certainly not always been practiced, or in some cases, not even considered. Moreover, the “Critique” here is that this is the least developed section of the document in that it generalises the ethical situation without concern for, or mentioning, the explosive areas of disagreement. Examples of discussion are desired regarding the status of “natural law” as a basis for the formulation of Christian contributions to issues of justice and public policy.

The response is completed with a section on “Conclusions”: First, the breadth of this document is enormous. Second, compared to *BEM* it is considered less challenging and less persuasive, particularly because the boxed materials contain such an indiscriminating diversity of thought and belief. Third, “ministry” and “authority” are highlighted as the largest obstacles to unity. The document is considered to simply posit the pluralism that is modern Christianity. Fourth, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church and within individual Christians is likewise thought to be a controversial subject. Fifth, the text is believed not to explicitly deal with the premise (supported by some Christians) that organic unity is not an ideal to be attained. Sixth, it does not consider the “matter” of the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Some churches use only wine, while others forbid its usage and use only grape juice. Finally, three things are seen as missing from the text: 1. a discussion of the roots of the “re-confessionalisation” that some churches are now experiencing; 2. a section dealing with any “lessons learned” in the practice of ecumenism that might aid us on our eschatological ecumenical journey, and 3. an appreciation of what the liturgical movement has accomplished for ecumenism.

D. MISSION

48. Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany

Evangelisches Missionswerk in Deutschland (EMW), Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany, The Nature and Mission of the Church. A response from the Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany, February 2008, p. 2.

A response coming from the EMW, an ecumenical body, with the help of its Theological Commission, particularly focusing on certain aspects of the document, especially significant in terms of mission theology. To begin with, it is noted that the word “mission” is used in a very broad sense which corresponds to the everyday use of the word “mission” in German and is therefore translated with the word “auftrag” (task/commission). Regarding §35, it is supported that “mission belongs to the very being of the church”. The fact is welcomed that the affirmation of apostolicity of the church is seen as the affirmation of the Church’s mission.

According to the response, the missionary dimension of the *notae ecclesiae* could have been brought out more strongly if it was viewed as rooted in Christ’s commission, thereby emphasising the Christological foundation of the ecclesiology. The question is posed whether it is still possible today to distinguish between nature and mission, as well as whether it would not be useful and necessary to consider the nature of the Church as deriving from its mission. Moreover, it is believed that the content of the Church’s mission is not described fully. Examples are given and the parts of the document are mentioned that need to be developed.

When talking about the significance of the Church in “God’s plan” for the world, (§43, 34, 109), the response supports that *TNMC* sounds rather triumphalistic and does not take account of the fact that the Church encounters resistance in its mission and is also a suffering church. The fact that it also fails as a church is fortunately addressed with regard to theological differences in speaking of the church. Furthermore, the response suggests that the exercise of the church’s task of mission in witness, dialogue and community of life might be helpful in defining the church’s mission in our times more modestly and more realistically, and articulating the call to faith in a multi-religious society more clearly than in this document.

Moreover, it is stated that the stocktaking of convergences and differences by *TNMC* coincides with the EMW’s assessment of the situation. The question, therefore, posed is why this broad measure of convergence has not produced a greater awareness of our common mission and common task, but seems to have led to differences again being emphasised and some aspects on which cooperation was possible are no longer so.

Finally, two points are emphasised: a. The reasons that prevent the churches from being more vigorous in exercising their common mission are not only theological, but also non-theological (the competition of influence, media presence, and preservation of their own identity) and should not be overlooked. b. Christians do not yet seem to? have radically enough thought through the nature of biblical ecclesiology as the missionary unfolding of Christology, and that is why we regularly find ourselves confronted with the phenomenological divergences in our ecclesiologies. The EMW thanks F&O for this study and expresses their hope that patient theological work in ecumenical dialogue does bear fruit.

49. Francophone Ecumenical Association for Missiology, Association Francophone Œcuménique de Missiologie (AFOM)

Association Francophone Œcuménique de Missiologie (AFOM), Reply of the AFOM Governing Committee to the WCC Faith and Order Commission paper *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, June 2008, p. 5.

The response comments on the quality and accessible style of the study, and welcomes the presentation using both running text and text windows (boxes). It suggests that it would be useful to include windows dealing with alternative ideas with respect to the relationship between church and mission. Particular mention is made of the number of times expressions such as “some... while others...” are used without any mention of the particular confessions, which makes the text seem like a series of different opinions sandwiched together.

It is supported that the study displays a classical ecclesiology of the kind developed chiefly in the West. The church emerges looking rather magisterial, weighty, important, whereas historically that is no longer the position it holds. There is a lack of humility and no account is taken of the disparity between the vision and reality as we experience it. Another problem that is emphasised is the gulf between the church and the world. The response underlines that the church can only ever exist in the world, and, also, the world will always get into the church. The church is “holy” and sinful at the same time. Moreover, the text is said to read like a description of the western church, a powerful institution that retains elements of its previous majority status in society. The perspective of the recently founded churches that now represent the majority faith in the continents of the South is missing.

The response continues by articulating the questions that arose in the process of studying *TNMC*: “Who imagined this ideal version of the church? Are those people living in the real world? Are they helping us to bring this ideal to life? How do we connect the people who make up the church and the ideal that is being proclaimed and confessed? Can we build a bridge between the ideal and the real world? Looking at reality can make us realize that Christians have a mission to change what needs to be changed”. There is also the suggestion that emphasis should be placed on the concept of “gift”.

Furthermore, the response supports that in the context of the discussion on the ideal and reality, a Platonic mode of thought is perceived in *TNMC* with regard to the incarnation. The following analogy is used to support this view: Jesus welcomes you while you are still a drunk: thanks to this, you may not drink again. He does not wait until you have stopped drinking to accept you. It is advised that the section on inculturation needs to go into more depth.

Regarding the “Church and Mission” section, the structure of the text is considered a problem. The title *The Nature and Mission of the Church* implies that it begins by defining an ideal, and then it looks to see how that ideal is going to work out in practice. It is stated that there is a church *because* there is a mission. The title makes an artificial distinction. The AFOM suggests that it would be better to start with the mission and then to understand and show that the church exists in and for that mission.

In the next section, “The church and the poor”, it is indicated that *TNMC* sees the poor as the object of study. There is no salvation without the poor, but this is not what the text says. Moreover, in the NT conversion implies an improved social, human and spiritual status. An ideal that cannot be ignored is that conversion leads to improved social standing. It is suggested that the paragraph on *diakonia* needs to be reworked, linked in with the issue of poverty, and set in perspective against other theologies apart from the urban (western) approach and against poverty, loneliness and the food crisis.

The following section, “An inadequate conception of mission”, starts with an attempt to describe the Evangelical view that the text has lost sight of the purpose of mission in which the WCC is believed to have given too much ground to the Catholics. A significant shortcoming is noticed in recent discussions on ecumenical missiology. The text makes no reference to the intimate relationship between mission and the healing ministry.

In the section on “Eschatology, ecclesiology and mission” the terminology of “restoration” is considered to pose something of a problem. While the original goodness of creation must be affirmed, that has nothing to do with chronology. What matters is the eschatological dimension of this theology – whether we can advance the kingdom of God. The question is posed whether it is realistic to claim that the church is the instrument for the transformation of the cosmos. Is it somehow going to overcome the chaos? The AFOM holds a pessimistic missiological view of the human condition in contradiction to *TNMC*. The response brings the example of violence: violence cannot be beaten or overcome. It can only be endured.

The section “Diversity in the church and carrying out our mission” regards that §62 *et seq* are good overall. It poses the question of how far our disagreements can go (cf. the discussions held by the Evangelical Community for Apostolic Action – *Communauté évangélique d’action apostolique*, or Ceeva?). How are we to imagine unity amid this diversity? It is supported that some clear boundaries must be worked out between the things with which Christians can travel together and those that stop them from doing so. The response stresses that there is a postmodern tendency to come to agreements on particular matters while at the same time abandoning the idea of achieving one whole, unified church.

According to AFOM, the question is how we would describe the Christian “ideal”. For them the answer is Matt 8: “I am with you always”. That’s what church means.

50. Churches Together in Britain and Ireland

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland/CTUG Consultation on WCC Document Nature and Mission of the Church, June 2008, p. 10.

The first section of the response is the description of reactions to *TNMC* of the churches participating in the Consultation. The drafter of the response of the Roman Catholic Church underlines that it is not an official response. Collin Car comments on the similarity of much of the language in *TNMC* to that of *Lumen Gentium*. He stresses that the concept of the sacraments making the Church emphasised the primacy within it of God’s gifts. He adds that the document mentions the issue of primacy rather than petrine ministry and refers to John Pall II’s call in *Ut Unum Sint* to other church leaders and theologians to help him develop a style of primacy that was a service of unity rather than a stumbling block to it. Finally, he argues that the issue of mission in a multicultural society needs to be addressed and that the culture of the Vatican needs to be changed in order to make it more responsive to the ecumenical challenge. In the ensuing conversation, it was stressed that no one denomination had a uniform view on every subject, and that little was said about mission in the document in contrast to the stress on it in *Gaudium et Spes* (The Church in the Modern World). It was the God of mission that had a church rather than the Church that had a mission.

On behalf of the United Reformed Church (URC), Richard Mortimer notes that it was grateful for the profound treatment of ecclesiology and the traditional ecumenical agenda in the report, drawing attention to the following points: 1. The way in which the sheer amount of material in the boxes reveals the distance *still* to be travelled in the search for convergence, although we could all identify with the questions being asked. 2. The URC accepts that the questions asked by other traditions have to become its questions. However, this process must become reciprocal. 3. *TNMC* is stronger on the nature of the Church than on mission. The URC would like to see more on the relationship with other faiths. In addition, not much attention is given to the questions raised by churches of the global south e.g. about economic injustice. 4. It would also like to see more fleshing out of the text with concrete examples. 5. The stress on the “sinlessness” of the Church does not help to engage with those who saw the Church as a corrupt colonial institution. 6. In the context of the discussion of the limits of diversity and the stress on confessional identity, there should also be some discussion in terms of the united churches and the sacrifices that they had made to their previously separated identities for the sake of unity. 7. The affirmation of the sign-nature of the Church should also take into account the fact that God sometimes goes on ahead of the Church. How can it discern the divine presence “going on in front”? 8. There is an insufficient account of the recent discussions concerning the role of baptism in initiation; the URC would also like to see some discussion of discipline as a mark of the Church. 9. There should be more discussion as to the extent to which perception of the essence of the Church was unchanging or culturally conditioned. The ensuing discussion is described where it was confirmed this response was a draft awaiting final approval. During the discussion it was also stressed that F&O and Life & Work could not be kept separate and that the World Alliance of Reformed Churches had seen the questions of race and poverty as involving *status confessionis*. Reciprocity had to involve the concerns of non-episcopal churches in their relations with the Episcopal sector of Christendom.

Regarding the response of the Church of Scotland, Paul Nimmo circulated a paper containing a response not yet ratified by the General Assembly. The Group was appreciative of the revisions to the preceding document, of its honesty about differences and stressed the need for continued dialogue. He also stressed the following points: 1. Many of the differences recorded existed within particular churches and were not *per se* church dividing (e.g. disagreement about the sinlessness of the Church). Perhaps more should be said about how differing views might in general be held in tension within a single church. 2. More should be said about the Church and other faiths. 3. The question of dissemination – how is the *whole* of the Church to engage with the document? 4. The language of communion could be used more judiciously. Full communion might be seen by some as purely eschatological concept. The response then describes the discussion that followed on the question of the reality of the exercise of oversight within any *one* tradition, the effect of *TNMC* on the smaller independent churches whose concerns are scarcely addressed and the problem of reception, the methodology they generated and the need to reflect on what it meant to be the church in the four nations.

The response from the Baptist Union was presented by Graham Sparkers. He feels the Baptist Union could affirm a great deal about the document, especially the way in which it so clearly set out key issues. He makes three general comments: 1. The text needs contextual development. 2. Stories in response should be invited. 3. The whole understanding of mission needs to be further spelt out. In addition, he specifies three key issues: 1. The tension between local and universal. Baptists would like more attention given to the local. However, their doctrine is not one of the *autonomy* of local churches but of their *interdependence*. 2. The section on baptism. The recent Anglican-Baptist conversations on this and the move towards seeing baptism as a point on a journey, carried out at different stages in different traditions, would be helpful here. 3. The issue of church-state relations, where some want a close relationship, and others want to stand outside, even in opposition to, the state. All this needs further exploration. In the following discussion that is described it was mentioned that the Congregationalist Federation would be in

broad agreement, though it sees infant baptism primarily as witness to the faith of the parents of the child being baptised rather than as part of a fuller pattern of initiation.

Regarding the response from the Church of England, Martin Davie states that the Church of England was broadly happy with the consensus registered, but some areas of the report could be improved. More could be said about the relationship of the proclamation of the kingdom to mission, and the Church in the NT. Worship is central but had been largely treated as peripheral. The question of the fullness of the Church, and the degree of its embodiment within the local Church, need to be examined more fully. Further, more is also needed on: 1. The goal of the ecumenical process and whether this involved a structurally united church or a communion of churches in reconciled diversity. 2. Levels of decision making. 3. Territoriality. The question is posed whether a particular country can be exclusive territory of a particular church. 4. Christian anthropology (not just ordination). 5. The divisiveness of differing stances on ethical matters. 6. Salvation in relation to membership of the visible church. 7. The text is too abstract and concentrated too much upon the institutional as opposed to the dynamic in the Church.

The response continues with the discussion on the main papers presented during the meeting: *Hermeneutics of Unity* by Paul Avis and *Missional Perspective* by Andrew Walls. Furthermore, it lists the points/questions made by two or more groups (they were four on the whole): 1. The need for clarification of the goal of the ecumenical process. 2. The need for a more concrete text with more stories and more emphasis upon the dynamic and non-institutional aspects of Church rather than the institutional. 3. The need for more active conversation between “interfaith” and “faith and order” people. 4. The question was posed: “How far is the Church Christ? If it is, then how can one dissent from the view that outside it, there is no salvation? What is salvation?” 5. How does Paul Avis’s paper help churches with completely different theological views overcome their differences? 6. How do variations in social context, including class, education, language affect the importance/non-importance of the issues raised in the document? 7. How do we assess the significance in this context of the degree to which so many Christians now sit light to denominational heritages and agendas? 8. How do we find a common language? Does it emerge out of worship or common service or must it come first? 9. How do we engage with those marginalised or even alienated by the form and language of the document? How do we engage with those marginalised or even alienated by the form and language of the document? 10. How do we hear and receive global perspectives in the text?

What is more, the response describes the development of the four issues brought to the final panel: 1. Tension between the classic F&O agenda and “fresh expressions of church”. How do we hold them together? 2. Religious language, communication and receptivity. 3. To what extent does inculturation make any ecclesiological document a provisional rather than a static one? 4. How do we find the right language by which to relate Gospel and culture. How can we do this, working together ecumenically?

In the *Concluding remarks* section, David Carter, the drafter of the whole response of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, adds his personal reflection on the consultation (See response).

51. Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME)

Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME), Response to *The Nature and Mission of the Church (NMC)*, p. 3.

The Mission and Ecclesiology Working Group of the CWME discussed *TNMC* in June 2008. Its report was discussed, amended, and then approved at the CWME commission meeting in October 2008. Members of the CWME commission are in general favourably disposed towards this document. They positively affirm it for many things, especially its recognition that mission is part of the very essence of the church, its clear statement that the church is founded on the Word of God, and the endorsement by this document of a holistic understanding of

mission. They would like to see a version or study guide in language suitable for local congregations. However, there are also a number of constructive criticisms that members of the CWME bring to the attention of the F&O Commission.

One concern is with the title of the document. The change from *The Nature and Purpose of the Church* to *the Nature and Mission of the Church* is applauded. However, there is still a concern that the title distinguishes two things “church” and “mission” that cannot or should not be distinguished if the nature of the church is that mission is its very essence or mode of being. Disappointment was expressed that there appeared to be no awareness in *TNMC* of CWME documents on mission, particularly the Ecumenical Affirmation (EA) (*Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation*, 1982).

Some felt that the statements on mission were not fully incorporated into the document as a whole. Others, however, after a second reading of it, did now see that the theme of mission was reasonably well integrated into the document as a whole. They noted a difference of approach in that F&O tends to look at the doctrine of the church “from above”, whereas the CWME tends to look at the experience of the church “from below”. Furthermore, the document seems to be written from and to reflect the ecclesiology of the established churches and not that of the emerging churches.

There was consensus, however, that while the statements on mission were generally good and acceptable as far as they went, they did not say nearly as much about the mission of the church as they ought to, that mission should be more integral to the document, and also more explicit. For example the document needs an explicit recognition of the *missio Dei*, which precedes the mission of the Church. It should highlight much more clearly that within the wider *missio Dei* there is also the *missio ecclesiae*, and that a very crucial aspect of this mission of the Church is the ministry of evangelism, which includes what has traditionally been called the Great Commission, the command to make disciples of all nations. The Great Commission must of course always be linked to the Great Commandment to love God with all one’s heart strength and mind and to love one’s neighbour as oneself. Another crucial aspect of the *missio ecclesiae* is the prophetic witness of the Church in society. Both the evangelistic and the prophetic roles may introduce a note of tension in the relationship between the mission and the unity of the church, which needs to be considered in *TNMC*.

What is more, *TNMC* needs to emphasise the following mission-related matters: 1. The theology and practice of mission in a religiously plural world. 2. The contextual aspect of mission, unity in diversity and openness to the ways in which different cultures make the Christian faith their own. 3. The ecclesiological significance of the poor as subjects and agents of mission. 4. Ministries of healing and reconciliation as an integral part of the mission of the church. 5. A recognition of the missional implications of Christology, particularly with reference to the suffering Christ. 6. The reality of sin and evil in the world, both in their personal and in their systemic dimensions, and the missiological implications of the doctrine of justification by faith. 7. The implications for mission of the shift of the centre of Christianity from the global north to the global south, and of new forms of missionary movement. 8. The numerical growth of church. 9. The implications for mission of new and emerging forms of the church, including cyberchurch. 10. Issues of religious, ethnic and cultural identity in migrant, diaspora and multicultural churches. 11. Other metaphors of church in the New Testament, which reflect the concerns of diverse contexts, could be included, such as the family of God from the African context. 12. The different models in different cultures of the relations of church and state. 13. The different roles in mission of the local church and the universal church.

In addition, the mission dimensions of some matters that are already dealt with in *TNMC* could be further developed: 1. The mission implications of Eucharist, Baptism, Apostolicity, and Ordination could be further drawn out. 2. Specific WCC debates on proselytism and the ethics of conversion should be referred to. 3. Greater attention to pneumatology and different views of the role of the Holy Spirit in mission would add a sense of the dynamic nature of the church and

mission. 4. The relationship between the biblical concepts of the church, the world and the kingdom or reign of God needs to be clarified.

The response concludes with further suggestions: 1. The generally historical perspective on mission needs to be balanced by an eschatological perspective on mission. 2. There should be an acknowledgment of the fact that while the church is called to be a foretaste and sign of the new society Jesus Christ came to establish, the failure of church to live out this call can sometimes become a stumbling block to the fulfilment of its own mission. 3. All Christians are called to mission. There should be a discussion of mission as carried out by the laity, for example, catechists, lay ministers, missionaries, youth leaders, ordinary church members, etc. 4. There needs to be recognition of the role of mission agencies, parachurch organisations, informal groups and spontaneous movements in carrying out the mission of the church. Connected with this is the question of what it is that gives a Christian organisation a recognisably ecclesial status. 5. As with other areas of theology where Christians have unresolved differences of opinion, there need to be some boxes to highlight differences of opinion about understandings of mission as well.

52. The Swedish Mission Council

Comments to the document *The Nature and Mission of the Church, Faith and Order Paper 198*, From the Swedish Mission Council, April 2009, p. 2.

The Swedish Mission Council is an association of 35 Swedish denominations, mission organisations and other Christian agencies with a broad ecumenical representation of denominations. Its guiding principle “to be” rather than to do is said to have influenced the comments on *TNMC*.

The response begins with an expression of appreciation of the hard work done during the process. §34-47, 60-63, 109-118 that have implications on mission are said to be of special interest and appreciation. The controversial issue of the relationship between ecclesiology and mission is found to be important and serving as an inspiration to studies, reflections, conversations on common ecclesiological perspectives.

In addition, the table of contents is described as difficult to understand. The question is posed why “A. The Nature of the Church” and “B. The Mission of the Church” do not have their own headlines but are under other headlines. On the whole, a lack of clear structure and organisation in the document is noted that makes it difficult to discern the deficiencies, the points that should be further developed and those that are over-emphasised.

The response is in accordance with §43, 109, 110 that see the Church as sign and instrument, and mission as service. However, it supports that these understandings should be expanded more and the difference between God’s mission and the service done by the churches and the people should be stressed. Moreover, an even more clear explanation would be appreciated on what mission involves. It is indicated that *TNMC* does not give notion to the term *Missio Dei* until the very last section, §118. Furthermore, the notion of the suffering Christ is noted to not be mentioned until §77. The response requests a deeper understanding of Christology: How do we understand *Christ* in relation to *mission*, to people of other faiths, to people in need and to people in wealth?

Another point made by the Council is that due to necessary respect of diversity, *TNMC* is not able to be radical i.e. state something with a sharp tone or edge. Then, three questions are posed and three suggestions are made correspondingly: 1. For whom is the document written? The life and work of local congregations needs to be kept in mind. 2. What theological traditions is the document built on? It has a bit too strong a western mindset. 3. A lot is written about the purpose of the church, however the term mission is used. What is the actual difference between *purpose* and *mission* of the church?

In addition, the response focuses on two aspects of *TNMC* that are particularly challenging for the Swedish context: 1. “The Church is not merely the sum of individual believers in communion with God, nor primarily the mutual communion of individual believers among themselves”, §13. 2. Members of the churches “belonging without believing” versus people “believing without belonging”, §51. The question is posed of how these challenges are faced in the context where many people prefer to be individual believers.

Finally, the response notes that the early part of the document is unnecessarily heavy with long complicated sentences, whereas the latter part is more accessible. It is suggested that emphasis be given to the life of the congregations and that this must be kept in mind more obviously. A question that should be also kept in mind is whether the text is to inspire for the nature and mission of the Church or primarily to be a common understanding on what we can agree upon and what we cannot.

E. ACADEMIC SEMINARS

53. Class of the Principal Seminary, Theological Faculty of Triveneto, Padua

Letter from Professor Ermanno R. Tura and 29 Students of the Theological Faculty of Triveneto From the Principal Seminary, Padua, p. 3.

A letter of encouragement with positive comments from students of Italian Catholic background in the winter 2007 class winter semester 2007 class “Re-thinking the Church in an Ecumenical light”, whose aim was to read and comment upon *TNMC*. The first part of the letter (*Appreciation*) comments on specific aspects of *TNMC*: the Trinitarian Church, §8, 88, 60; the mutual recognition of baptism, §83-99; communion that extends also to other faiths and cultures, §106-114; episcopal ministry, §94; the recovery of creation as a common basis of our unity, §25, 59, 77; the metaphor of the Body of Christ, §20, 89; living tradition as a constant “rumination” of the one Gospel in different historic situations, §69-71. What is noted as very positive is that sections on problematic issues (§48, 56, 93) are always followed by a concluding theological affirmation which points towards hope and to further study.

In the *Proposals/desires* section it is stated that at the beginning of II Part B of *TNMC* (between §57-58) a synthesis of the three ecclesiologies (Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant) is desired with indications regarding their culture, theology and spirituality, and some indication of the particular points of importance which have been raised during the past few decades as churches have worked towards visible unity. Secondly, in §93 and in the section following §13, the notion of “emerging church” needs to be re-elaborated upon within the scheme of emerging humanity/humanitarian emergency, in order to accept “unusual new ways”, evangelical revivals, religious orders. Thirdly, in the section following §63 there should be some attempt at stating precisely when diversities become divisive, and when on the other hand, they remain more like badges or clothing. Fourthly, on the section after §96, regarding the Anamnesis as a fragile Biblical basis for rethinking the Eucharist, it is noted that Vatican II in at least five texts reinforced its teaching on the subject by using the ancient liturgical verb *exercetur* (bring out, make actual so as to involve, re-actualise).

54. Graduate seminar of the Faculty of Theology at the Catholic University of Leuven

The Nature and Mission of the Church (*Faith & Order*, 2005), Response by a graduate seminar on ecclesiology under the direction of Dr Peter May, Faculty of Theology at the Catholic University of Leuven, p. 23.

The introductory section of the response is dedicated to the *History of the document and its reception* followed by a section on the *Structure of the document*. The response continues with an *Analysis of some noteworthy aspects of the document* that discusses “*A new metaphor for the Church: Creation of the Word and of the Holy Spirit*” whose use constitutes one of the best examples of the willingness of Roman Catholic theologians – who fully participated in the drafting process – to receive a metaphor of the Church which is typical for the churches of the Reformation.

The *EXCURSUS* section is divided into three sub-sections: 1. The Church as *Creatura Verbi* in Lutheran Ecclesiology. 2. Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue: Both Churches Hold onto the Images of the Church as “Creature of the Gospel” and “God’s Pilgrim People, Body of Christ and Temple of the Holy Spirit”. 3. Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue: The Images of Church as “*Creatura Verbi*” and “*Sacramentum Gratiae*” are Complementary.

Furthermore, the areas of divergence are noted at the end of the first subsection of *TNMC* “The institutional dimension of the Church and the Work of the Holy Spirit”. Sullivan’s question is mentioned here of whether this is the appropriate place to treat this difficulty, since the reflections of the document on the Church as creation of the Word and of the Holy Spirit deliberately omitted any reference to the institutional dimension of the Church (§23). Three problems are indicated in this part of the text. The first relates to the question “whether the preaching and the Sacraments are the means of, or simply witnesses to, the activity of the Spirit through the divine Word, which comes about in an immediate internal action upon the hearts of the believers”. The preceding reflections on the notions of the Church are thought to indicate the existence of a convergence. When speaking about the oneness of the Church the document states that God made the Church “a foretaste and instrument for the redemption of all created reality” (§12). When speaking about the catholicity of the Church it is emphasised that God “through Word and Spirit, makes his people the place and instrument of his saving, life-giving, fulfilling presence”.

According to the response, a second area of divergence pertains to the relationship between the ordained ministry, especially the episcopacy, and the Word and Spirit of God. *TNMC* is aware that for some churches the ordained ministry is almost “a guarantee of the presence of truth and power of the Word and Spirit of God in the Church”. For other churches, however, the Word and Spirit of God remain the norm of all church structures. A final point pertains to the apostolicity of the Church. Some churches believe that apostolic faith requires “institutional continuity” whereas other churches hold to the idea that it was necessary to leave this continuity in order to safeguard the apostolic faith.

The following section of the response discusses the issue of “Church as Sacrament?” noting that the churches who do not use the concept of Sacrament for the Church do not do so for at least two reasons, namely: 1. the need for a clear distinction between the Church and Sacraments. The Sacraments are the means of salvation through which Christ sustains the Church, and not actions by which the Church realises or actualises itself, and 2. the use of the word “Sacrament” for the Church obscures the fact that, for them, the Church is a sign and instrument of God’s intention and plan as a communion which while being holy is still subject to sin. Behind this lack of agreement lie varying views about the instrumentality of the Church with regard to salvation. Yet those who have become accustomed to call the Church “Sacrament” would still distinguish between the ways, in which baptism and the Lord’s Supper on the one hand and the Church on the other are signs and instruments of God’s plan; and those who do not use the phrase “Church as Sacrament” would still uphold that the Church is God’s holy instrument for his divine purpose.

The section entitled *Holiness vs Sinfulness of the Church* initially develops the Roman Catholic position on the issue, reminding us that in *TNMC* “The Church and Sin” figures among the boxes representing matters of continuing disagreement among the Christian churches. Luckily this is not true for one important wisdom which this text produced: “The relationship between sin and holiness in the Church is not a relationship of two equal realities, because sin and holiness

do not exist on the same level. Rather, holiness denotes the Church's nature and God's will for it, while sinfulness is contrary to both". In the end, the response stresses that differences between churches emerge in answering the question of where the idea of the church's need for renewal or of its sinfulness find its necessary limit, by reason of the divine pledge that the church abides in the truth and that error and sin will not overcome it.

What is more, the response focuses on the issue of the "Catholicity on the Church" discussing §16, 55, 60-66. In addition, before developing an understanding of "The Eucharist" (§79), it emphasises the connection with baptism making "*A comparison of the 1982 'Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry' document by Faith and Order and 'The Nature and Mission of the Church' as regards describing the mission of the people of God and of the ordained by referring to the threefold office of Christ*".

Furthermore, the section on "The ministry of episcopate or oversight" follows after commenting on the Personal, Communal and Collegial dimensions of oversight. The response then notes that in comparison to *TNPC*, which had only a modest input to make on the theme of "Conciliarity and Primacy" (§103), the new version dedicates six paragraphs to this theme (§99-104), before the last "box" of the document indicates that there exists quite a lot of disagreement among the churches on this issue. The text pays much attention to the Orthodox view on the relation between primacy and conciliarity by referring to canon 34 of the so-called Apostolic Canons. The response concludes with *An Ecumenical Reflection on the Mission of the Church*. Extensive quotations are given here in German. In the last *Conclusion* paragraph it is noted that it is important that the members of the churches involved in this dialogue, and even students of a course on ecumenism, carefully reflect on the questions for discussion which have been mentioned at the end of the document's introduction. Finally, the questions of *TNMC* are copied.

55. Commentary by students of theology at the Eberhard Karl University, Tübingen, Germany

Institute for Ecumenical Research (Institut für Ökumenische Forschung), University of Tübingen, Commentary, *The Nature and Mission of the Church – a Stage on the Way to a Common Statement* by students of theology at the Eberhard Karl University, Tübingen, Germany, p. 28.

The response-commentary begins with a *Foreword* that explains the synthesis of the group that drafted it and the reasons why the group took up the invitation of F&O to respond to *TNMC*. The response continues by posing a basic question: "What can and should *TNMC* accomplish?" Further, it defines the aim of ecumenical efforts that must be to help to overcome the situation of division, through convergences leading to a consensus, and to contribute to mutual recognition of one another as true and legitimate expressions of the one Church of Jesus Christ. Moreover, it is supported that the relationship between multilateral and bilateral dialogue needs re-thinking, and that a common multilateral dialogue among all church families is needed, to delineate the entire

framework of the ecumenical movement. This is because it would do a service to the stock-taking by exploring what point we have reached in our dialogue today, what results bilateral dialogues have actually yielded thus far, and what these results of bilateral dialogues contributed to *TNMC*. Also, it is supported that multilateral dialogue helps to make clear what the consequences are which can and should be carried forward through bilateral dialogue. To this degree, a common convergence statement by the churches on *TNMC* would set a standard for all further bilateral dialogues.

The second chapter of the response consists of *General remarks on the text*, namely on the German translation of *TNMC*, the title, and the translation of quotations from the Bible. In addition, a specific section is dedicated to "reception", and discussion raised around

“Rezeption/Anerkennung”. What follows is a section of remarks on the structure of the document, and then another one on its content as a whole, and also particularly on Part I, “The Church of the Triune God”, and Part II, “The Church in History”. In offering general observations the response has not taken these up in chronological order, nor according to the document’s structure, but rather according to themes and associations, which are: *Being the Church within a context*, *The Church and the loss of religious commitment*, *The Church and other religions*, *The conciliar process on justice, peace and the preservation of creation*, *The understanding of unity and ecumenical hermeneutics*, and *Interim goals*.

In the previously-mentioned paragraph of goals, the view is expressed that on the way to recognition by the churches of one another as the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church in all its fullness, they should formulate interim goals which lend themselves to action, for contacts lead to understanding and agreement. Taking action together is necessary in the effort towards a common witness, evangelisation, love for one’s neighbour and justice. But from these interim goals, consequences should be drawn for the ecclesiologies of churches and church communities. The question remains whether the ultimate goals of TNMC may be too far off. The response recommends that naming realistic interim goals helps to keep the text and the ecumenical issues from being put aside too quickly. If the text is to be understood as offering help to individual churches, the need is urgent to name concrete tasks for bilateral dialogue. It is noted that some interim ecumenical steps which have already been realised speak quite an encouraging word: faculty partnerships between theological faculties of different confessions, the monastic life being shared in religious communities such as Taizé, Bose etc., ecumenical Kirchentage [church conventions in Germany], marriages which bring two confessions together, partnerships between local churches, pulpit exchanges (for example during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity), celebrations of the Lima Liturgy, and so on.

The response suggests that a future task for F&O could be to invite churches and church communities to discuss the concept of *communio* from a variety of viewpoints, in order to find further shared aspects of local churches which emphasise their communion at the local level. Then a deepened understanding would be seen of “conciliar forms of life and action” (§66) and the adoption of practice-oriented goals as promising approaches. The catholic and apostolic elements hold the communion of local churches together. With regard to apostolicity, the three aspects ministry, teaching and shared life of the Church are recommended to F&O for further study in this context. Especially in the areas of apostolicity as faithfulness to the apostles’ teaching and faithfulness to the apostles’ fellowship (Acts 2:42), interim goals could be formulated for the ecumenical movement and perhaps partial recognition could be attained. The Holy Scriptures as proof of original faithfulness could be a standard for valid ministries, which proclaim the pure Gospel. But especially with regard to faithfulness to the apostles’ fellowship, the churches could be invited to respond to the question of the rightly shared life. Interconfessional and intercultural responses that lead to taking action together appear desirable in the face of globalisation. A commitment by the churches to common goals and common action, such as those CCEE and CEC have made in the Charta Oecumenica, could be a goal towards which to strive.

What is more, the response focuses on Part III, “The Life of Communion in and for the World”, as it is seen as a continuation of the Lima Document. It is explained that Catholic and Protestant drafters of the response chose a different way to work on the text: the former keep very closely to the text in their argument, and the latter selected certain aspects which seemed important to them for particular commentary. Thus, the *Commentary from the Catholic side* develops the themes of *Apostolic Faith*, *Baptism*, *Eucharist*, *Ministry of All the Faithful*, *Ministry of the Ordained*, *Oversight: Personal, Communal, Collegial, Conciliarity and Primacy*, and *Authority*. Further, the *Commentary from the Protestant side* deals with the issues of *Apostolic Faith*, *The understanding of what church is*, *Confessing the Holy Spirit*, *Justification by faith*, *Baptism*, *Eucharist*, *Terminology*, *Character*, *Exclusion from*

participation, Ministry of All the Faithful, Ministry of the Ordained, and Oversight, Foundation of, and Subject in, the act of Ordination, The understanding of “succession” and its significance, Primacy, Authority.

In the paragraph of *Concluding remarks* it is indicated that in working with *TNMC* it was noticed that statements about the ministry of the Church are given by far the most space in the document. Part III is the most thorough, in both breadth and depth. The main problems seem to appear when we grapple with the statements on ministry in the Church, which means that this is the part most in need of further ecumenical and ecclesiological work. An indicator of the relevance and urgency of this topic is said to be that in mid-March 2009 the Catholic Church and the Oriental Orthodox churches published a joint document on the understanding of the Church, with the title – significantly expanded over and? against *NMC* – “Nature, Constitution and Mission of the Church”. On one hand, this move to give ecumenical weight also to church order is considered honest and realistic; on the other, fears are expressed that by concentrating on these issues, the ecumenical movement will be losing itself in a sort of navel-gazing and trying only to clarify internal problems. Thus, the response pleads for these issues to be dealt within the context of the Church’s being sent into the world and for the world, thus keeping the final aspect in view which is the aim of the Church and its ministries.

Lastly, the response comments on Part IV. “In and For the World” and offers observations on the Conclusion section of the document in the *Summing-up* paragraph. What follows is a *Commentary on the commentary* that looks at the two wholly different approaches offered in it. The Protestant and Catholic commentators were in agreement that *TNMC* chose to use an open language that lends itself to different readings, for example from an Anglican, Orthodox, Catholic, Reformed or Lutheran perspective. This was seen as the basis for the differing approaches of the commentary itself. It is noted that the language used in *TNMC* was to a large extent familiar to the Catholic side, since it reminded them strongly of the Vatican II documents, especially *Lumen Gentium*. This familiarity allowed the Catholic group to connect positively with *TNMC* and to argue closely with the text. The Catholic group sees the openness of *TNMC* as a strength, since in their view it may allow the text to be received. So, based on its Catholic interpretation, the group finds itself in the end able to ask whether *TNMC* has fulfilled its potential.

Further, the Protestant group in some cases could not identify with the content of statements in *TNMC*. It was also more difficult for them to work with the text, because they did not find, in these open formulations, an unambiguous consensus. This is why the Protestant commentary concentrated on the problematic formulations which must first of all be clarified before a consensus can be formulated. In conclusion, the question arises whether these differing views of *TNMC* are connected with the differing understandings of unity of confessions. For the Protestant side it is easier, because of its concept of unity, to formulate a dissenting response. The reason there is a problem here is that the dissent that remains is accorded a different status within the Protestant and Catholic understandings of the Church. Thus, working together has demonstrated that even the reception of a (multilateral ecumenical) text is strongly dependent on the positions of different churches on the fundamental ecumenical questions.

The response concludes by listing the names of the Commentators. (See response for the detailed comments on the parts of the text).

Course papers presented to Prof. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, for the Ecclesiology: Current Trends Worldwide Class, Fuller Theological Seminary (nos 56-62):

56. Response by Brandon Henry, The Nature and Mission of the Church, p. 4.

The purpose of this response is to integrate *TNMC* with other ecclesiological reflections and with the experiences of the author. It is divided into two sections: 1. *The Nature of the Church.*

Firstly, this section focuses on the Church as “the creature of God’s Word and of the Holy Spirit” (§9) and underlines that the church and the kingdom are not synonymous, nor are they equal entities and should not be treated as though they were. Secondly, it explores the idea that the church finds its anchor in the theologically rich concept of the Word of God. Thirdly, it develops the traditional attributes of the church (one, holy, catholic and apostolic) that find their meaning in God. In addition, it deals with the pressing issue of how the church handles unity while allowing diversity. It is noted that defining the essentials of the Gospel becomes more difficult when the goal of unity is kept in the forefront. What one person or church finds essential, others do not. *TNMC* document is thought to fail to address this question directly and this oversight is a serious issue if the document is going to be meaningful for the churches going forward. Moreover, he holds the view that another way that the church, local and universal, can maintain unity is through recovery of Scriptural understanding of what it means to be the church. Lastly, the four themes is posed that *TNMC* highlights (people of God, body of Christ, temple of the Holy Spirit and *koinonia*, §17).

2. *The Mission of the Church*. The author supports that dividing the mission into the five traditional aspects of church, (*leitourgia, diakonia, kerygma, martyria* and *metanoia*), *TNMC* highlights areas where God is already at work inviting the church to join him. All five are equally important to the well-being of the church, but are they equally important for the benefit of the world? He claims that distinction between importance and effectiveness must be drawn. Lastly, the author notes that unfortunately *TNMC* does not directly address two significant items important to mission: reconciliation and shalom.

57. Reflection on *The Nature and Mission of the Church* in Light of the Experience of the Persecuted Church, Erwin Morales, 2008, p. 4.

The response is a reflection on the notions of *perichorisis* (as applied in the different parts of *TNMC*), and persecution. The author thinks it is encouraging that this document from WCC mentions the necessity of suffering for the gospel (§39, 40). In his view, it is a tragedy that persecution is not seen or shown as a necessary integral component of the nature and mission of the church. He supports it is not enough to say “faithful witness may involve Christians themselves in suffering for the sake of the Gospel” (§40). Faithful witness does necessarily involve in suffering in one way or another. Part of the task of WCC should be to become an advocate for the persecuted church in every part of the world.

58. *Amici in Commune: A Progressive Theologian’s Reflections on The Nature and Mission of the Church*, Kyle David Bennett, p. 5.

The response comes from a trained evangelical and ecumenical theologian, and leader of a small emerging community, *Amici Dei* (Pasadena, CA). First, the author offers remarks on the nature and mission of the church in communion. He poses the questions that should be explored by *TNMC*: “What do we mean when we say that we exist in communion with God? What sort of correlation is there between our communion in the Triune God and communion with the world or other believers? How do we adjudicate whether we are incarnating and expressing our communion with these others properly and according to our communion in the Triune God? How can we ascertain that our conceptions of communion are constitutive of the copious conceptions articulated and expressed throughout the universal church in space and time?”

In addition, the author concurs with and lauds the emphasis of *TNMC* on the missional ontology of the church. Regarding his community’s mission to the world and how it pragmatically reconciles and transforms broken relationships and friendships, he poses several questions: “Do we reconcile as individuals who are sent out into our own spheres of life? Or, do we do it as a community as we share life together? Or, do we do both? How should reconciliation

and transformation be pursued and is any approach more profitable for the community and the individual than another?”.

Second, he presents reflections on what it means to be in communion in and for the world, including a succinct discussion of the sacraments, the ministries of clergy and lay, as well as ecclesiastical structure. The author notes that one of the primary questions that this section of *TNMC* raises but does not proffer an answer to is the essence and direct function of the sacraments. What do the sacraments do? He supports that questions such as whether the Eucharist confers salvation or represents it (§81) are false dichotomies. He then poses the questions of what it means to belong in communion or in a church, what communion is and who is experiencing it in a fragmented culture. One has to wonder if communion can be discovered and maintained outside of a formal gathering of church and if it can, what it looks like. Can one experience the necessary communion with God and others in transient ways that do not require one's verbal commitment or physical presence?

59. Theological Reflections, Lisa L. Dorsey, March 2008, p. 8.

The goal of this paper is to present a brief historical overview of the author's ecclesial context and attempt to discern the movement of the Holy Spirit in light of the needs of a particular faith community whose goal is to be faithful to the Gospel of Jesus in their own context. Thus, the “Current Church Context” is presented. In the following section in articulating the “Nature and Mission of the Church” from a Oneness Pentecostal perspective, the author draws from communion and mission ecclesiology.

She emphasises that universal markers are needed to evaluate what communion ecclesiology is and how it defines the nature and mission of the Church. Using categories from *TNMC* (namely “The Church as Sign and Instrument” and “The Life of Communion in and for the World”, she looks at two aspects of the Church to articulate the nature and mission of a Oneness Pentecostal Church from a communion and ecclesiological perspective incorporating the concept of unity. Lastly, based on a theological reflection of *TNMC*, and her own Church context at LFCC, she offers a nascent ecumenical statement.

60. The Nature and Mission of the Church – A Theological Reflection, Linh Doan, p. 4.

As the author notes, the reflection mainly aims at appreciating and responding to the document as a whole and to a major theme of ecclesiology in it, the theme of communion, from the perspective of an Asian Christian from a congregational ecclesiological tradition. In *Responding to the document as a whole* the author indicates that its most important contribution is that it is enriching theologically, and helps everyone to taste the theological treasures in traditions of others. Also, it achieves a wonderful level of balance by clearly setting the Church of Jesus Christ in the relationship with the Triune God and not with just one person of the Trinity. It unmistakably articulates the Church in both Christological and Pneumatological language.

According to this response, when verbal proclamation is singled out in a document often mentioning proclamation in word and deeds together, one wonders if behind the such wording is the insistence of certain evangelical representatives (§10). Such emphasis on evangelism, in turn, calls for a depth of identification with Christ in his suffering and width of social responsibility (§40). Moreover, the document is enriching because it does not base its statements only on Scriptures but also in the common historical tradition. The four traditional marks of the Church are set in contrasting contexts: oneness in contrast to the actual divisions (§53); holiness in contrast to individual and communal sin (§54); catholicity in contrast to the inadequate gospel (§55); and apostolicity in contrast to the shortcomings and errors of churches (§56).

Language-wise, *TNMC* is considered to achieve an amazing feat in deftly introducing the concept of sacrament to church traditions that are reserved about it by describing the Church as sign and instrument of God's intention and plan for the world (§43). However, certain parts are highly abstract, especially when the document is trying hard to accommodate contrasting views (§56). To be helpful to the churches in the two-thirds world another language style, perhaps metaphorical, could be employed. In addition, it should be more concise, as some concepts are repeatedly found in the document to the point of redundancy. Finally, the method of separating not-yet-resolved issues is commendable.

In *Responding to the theme of communion* the author notes that it is clear that the theme present in Scriptures, the patristic and Reformation writings, is able to spell out a great ecclesiology that is healing to the scandalous divisions of the Church. It allows for different shades or degrees of fellowship, avoiding black and white positioning. It subsumes the whole language of hierarchy and has the potential to cure excessive institutionalism, centralism and clericalism. A number of questions are posed: "How far should a church body go to preserve the unity, to be in communion, when it feels that its faithfulness to the Triune God is threatened? Aren't there times when visible unity has to be put aside in order to be faithful to God? When is the call to visible unity immature and requiring too much sacrifice on issues of truth and convictions? In box of §63 *TNMC* is thought to try to set some limits to the differences that could be called "diversity", but never touches the issue of truth and faithfulness. The question is raised of what has been learned from the Reformation about this and what a document like this could offer to, for instance, the present crisis of the Episcopal communion in the US.

What is more, the author thinks that communion ecclesiology could point to guidelines for church bodies in needed *temporary* division before the eschatological consummation of the Church. Also, the document seems to treat the problem "belong without believing" as being on a par with "believe without belonging" (§51). For those in the evangelical tradition the former is utterly more serious - it is the matter of salvation itself. How should there be visible "communion" between the official three-self Church and the underground churches in China?

According to Doan, the sensitivity of *TNMC* to different cultures must be liberating for two-thirds world Christians (§61), but further development is needed. Moreover, from an Asian perspective, issues like communion with God versus communion with idols/evil/spirits/devil/world need to be articulated and incorporated in the study. The document is said to have emerged in the circles that have been steeped in the language and theological framework and problems of the Latin and Greek worlds. Thus, issues of more relevance to all churches should be included in it. Lastly, the impact of *TNMC* on this reader is that it is impossible to separate the nature and mission of the Church.

61. Response from Stephan, student at Fuller Theological Seminary, p. 4.

The author attempts to illuminate the understanding that the nature of God informs the nature of the Church, both global and local, by noting two conceptual threads *lex orandi, lex credendi* and the *perichorisis* of God. Thus, he offers a summary of the basic points of *TNMC* with regard to the nature of the church listing the images used to describe the church in the different paragraphs. On a second level, he goes into a description of the notion of *koinonia* in the document, as well as of "The community of God". Regarding "The Mission of God", he notes that §34 and §37 seem to indicate that because God is on a mission, we are too. He poses the question of what the origin is of this mission. What is the content of the final glorification of God that is the mission of Christ and the Spirit?

Moreover, employing the ideas of John Zizioulas and Jurgen Moltman to further unpack claims made about the Triune God within *TNMC*, the author mentions that while the relationship between mission and *perichorisis* is hinted at in *TNMC* (§57), it is by no means explicit. Thus, we must find the *perichoritic* nature of our conceptualisation of the mission of the Church, if

we are to imitate the *perichoritic* mission of God. Before delving into the content and contributions of his Free Church view, he offers a summary of findings to the *TNMC*: First, inherent within the document are the understandings that the nature of God dictates the nature and essence of his people, the church, and the nature of God is *perichoritic*. Diversity is not only a gift from God, but a central part of him. Furthermore, if we are to talk about the mission of God and thus the mission of the Church, we must then also talk about *perichorisis*. That is to say, if God's mission is *perichorisis* then our mission is too.

On this basis, the author claims that the contribution of his tradition is a conceptualisation of the global unity of the Church as a perichoritically unified community, which is in part born out of a concern from his tradition that remains inadequately addressed in the document as it stands. That is a thorough discussion of worship and spirituality that may have gone without systematic coverage in *TNMC* because it is divisive (§63, box) or hard to define. The fact is, however, that if we are to hold that the mission of the Church is related to the final glorification of God and the mutual indwelling of God in all things, indeed a worshipful event, then worship is closely related to the nature of the church. Worship and spirituality can be generally defined as connection to God and other believers. They both involve the margin, and hospitality is an essential part of them. Lastly, the author notes that suggestions for visible unity somehow present in *TNMC* (intercommunion, §102, a global hierarchy, §22, discovery of common theological ground) are not mutually exclusive with his suggestions presented here.

62. Theological Reflections on The Nature and Mission of the Church, Clayton Coombs, p. 7.

Right from the beginning the author states that *TNMC* resonates more with his own convictions than perhaps any other statement he has read. Therefore, his paper focuses on the few points of disagreement that he has. Writing from a Pentecostal perspective coloured by his Seventh Day Adventist upbringing and having very few resources available on Pentecostal ecclesiology, the author addresses three areas to discuss: 1. The institutional hierarchy that is assumed, 2. The sacramental framework of the document, 3. The ultimate goal of “visible unity”.

In the Section on *Ordination and Universal Ministry* the author explains why Pentecostals place little value on “ordination”, while enthusiastically affirming the priesthood of all believers which is so eloquently laid out in §9, and rejoicing at the discussion of the distribution of gifts for ministry (§83), and why Pentecostals would be puzzled by assumption that the ordination of a special class is universal and biblical, which appears to undergird Section E.

Furthermore, given the framework where the Spirit leads the Church through the distribution of gifts, it is difficult to justify the assertion that only one particular class of people has the responsibility to “assemble and build up the Body of Christ by proclaiming and teaching the Word of God, by celebrating baptism and Eucharist and by guiding the life of the community in its worship, its mission and its service” (§88). In addition, the question of universal primacy is totally foreign to the Pentecostals since it is Jesus who exercises lordship over His Church with no one individual “above” another in “rank”. Any discussion of this ministry will always be perceived as an attempt by human beings to regain control of God's Church to its detriment.

Regarding the section on *Sacramental Framework* that discusses Baptism and the Eucharist, it is noted that Pentecostals use neither the term “sacrament”, nor “ordinance” to describe either experience. Baptism for them is not necessary to salvation, though it is “the very next step” to take after one is saved (see the whole paragraph for more). Communion or the Lord's Supper likewise is a sign; a reminder of what Christ has done. Communion is open to all, even the non-Christians. Communion is also celebrated every time Christians gather together over a shared meal in one another's homes.

For the writer, when reading *TNMC*'s sections on Baptism and Eucharist it seems apparent that a sacramental framework is assumed which is foreign to a Pentecostal

understanding of these practices. An underlying sacramental orientation is betrayed by the fact that only these two are discussed to the exclusion of other practices universally shared among Christians such as prayer which, it seems, would also hold the potential to foster Christian unity. The discussion in the explanatory box following §81 is somewhat foreign to the Pentecostal consciousness because: 1. the Eucharist is the Lord's Supper, therefore it cannot be owned or controlled by any person or institution. 2. No rule should prohibit any person from partaking of Communion which is offered in the setting of a formal Church service, whether they are from another church or from no church.

In the last section on *Communion and Visible Unity*, it is stated that Pentecostals do not talk an awful lot about "visible unity". The author provides three reasons why this is so. Unity is seen in terms of the presence of a unified vision within a single congregation rather than confessional uniformity, and association with a larger movement or organisation is on the basis of shared vision rather than shared history. From a Pentecostal viewpoint, it is puzzling why the need to achieve "visible unity in ... one Eucharistic fellowship... in order that the world may believe" (§1) is felt so passionately and expressed so urgently, for while Pentecostals certainly resonate with the goal "that the world may believe", this is achieved through Christ's presence through His Spirit in our proclamation, rather than our own human attempts to unify doctrinally. According to the response, they tend to see the goal of unity as being at the interpersonal or congregational level, and to be wary of diluting the mission, vibrancy and fruitfulness of the local church with considerations beyond these. For them, an alternative to trying to hammer out unity at a theological level is to unite with other Christians in shared mission.

Lastly, the author notes that Pentecostals would affirm the notion of the Church as *ekklesia* even though they have tended to render the term "fellowship" rather than "communion". He concludes by underlining a point of disagreement with *TNMC*: the assumption that there is inherent in the nature of God's Church a priestly ruling class, that baptism, and the Eucharist somehow "mediate grace" to the believer in such way as to make the new birth through the Holy Spirit alone insufficient for salvation and that "visible unity" is a legitimate and realistic goal.

F. ACADEMIC RESPONSES

63. The Boston Theological Institute

The Nature and Mission of the Church (Faith and Order Commission, WCC), A Response by Members of the Boston Theological Institute, May 2008, p. 3.

The Boston Theological Institute (BTI) response that was crafted by an ecumenical group of theologians from different institutions states that *TNMC* is a reason for thanksgiving among professional ecumenists and theologians. The text witnesses to the fact that during the 20th century many of the Christian churches have learned to listen to one another, to compare doctrinal beliefs, to explore their historical and present-day disputes while searching for ways to enter into deeper visible communion. Over a period of two academic years the group met at regular intervals to discuss the text and to prepare a brief response indicating its judgement about the text's understanding of the church. The 2006 revision is a notable improvement on the NPC.

It is indicated that *TNMC* builds on the strengths of *BEM* (1982), which emerged as one of the foremost common ecclesiological statements of the last century. F&O has found a way of creating open dialogue and, to a notable extent, a method for promoting consensus. Both *BEM* and *TNMC* combine two genres of affirmations: quasi unanimously agreed convictions vs. ongoing controverted points. This allows for open and creative exchange to take place even before there is total agreement on some doctrinal issues. Part of the present-day challenge is to determine which differences are strictly church-dividing issues and which are simply alternate

emphases that can be permitted within an overarching united community of belief. The text reflects a desire to welcome legitimate diversity within the global community and is generally sensitive to the importance of inclusive language.

Much attention is given to the question of the audience for whom *TNMC* is written. It appears to be addressed principally to church leaders, professional ecumenists and theologians. This specialised audience tends to restrict its accessibility to the church membership at large. This characteristic of most official bilateral and multilateral ecumenical consultations is perhaps inevitable, but it may explain why this kind of statement often has little impact on the church's wider membership. The need for religious educators to instruct the faithful on these issues is crucial. Without it the wider Christian community may continue to experience the problem of "non-reception" of consensus statements. It would be well to stress the church's need to educate young Christians in the basics of belief through Bible study and religious instruction.

The BTI group reacted favourably to the first section of *TNMC* (§1-47). Regarding §43-47, one might have affirmed in this section that the various churches in the light of their reality are called upon to practice mutual hospitality at various levels. However, one aspect that was judged to be insufficiently addressed in the whole section was the role that public worship or liturgy play in embodying the nature and mission of the church. Clearly the communal response of adoration and thanksgiving plays an essential role in understanding the church and its responsibilities. Since the liturgy is a matrix for the church's life, some fuller discussion of it is called for.

With regard to the second section, §48-56, it is noted that "the Church is an eschatological reality, already anticipating the Kingdom. However, the Church on earth is not yet the full visible realisation of the Kingdom" (§48). This rather terse assertion (with which the group agrees) needs to be more fully explained. For example, a relativising attempt to "locate" the church in its essences, in distinction from its "temporal" definition, has been caught up over the past two centuries in various visions of the church with apocalyptic significance. Despite the significant influence that this has had in popular culture and upon contemporary ecclesiology, little or no reference was made in the text to this dynamic theological and historical interplay. The text does touch on the distinction between the kingdom of God and the church, and the fact that the kingdom is already in our midst but not yet fully realised (§57-59). This second section is then concluded with brief descriptions of "Communion and Diversity" in the church (§60-63), and the notion of "The Church as Communion of Local Churches" (§64-66). The text does appropriately place greater stress on the fullness of the local church, that is, the fact that the local church does not lack anything that must be added to it from the "universal" church.

Concerning the third major section of *TNMC* "The Life of Communion in and for the World" (§68-108), it is stated that it reaffirms the previous F&O work. It was felt useful that this section addresses the notion of "oversight" (*episkopé*) in the church, and the various ways that over the centuries that ministry has been exercised in a personal, communal, collegial manner (§90-98). Within that context the previously heated discussions of "conciliarity and primacy" were then raised as a church-dividing issue (§99-104, especially §102-104 for raising the possible role of a personal primacy). The section closes with a brief reflection on the ecclesial understanding of "authority" (§105-108). What is not included is a demand for accountability on the part of those who bear special pastoral responsibilities of oversight in the church.

Concerning the final section "In and For the World" (§109-118) followed by a "conclusion" (§119-123), it is underlined that this is the only section which enters into some of the ethical roles that the church needs to engage in within the secular society. The section is rather short and terse, thereby creating the impression that social action has a rather minor role in the church. The group felt that there was need of further strengthening the affirmation of the ethical obligations of the church. More discussion of the interplay between church and civil government would be useful, not to dim the separation between church and state, but to show how the church is appropriately a teaching voice in the public domain in facing ethical challenges

relating to such issues such as: warfare, poverty, medical care, discrimination, the beginning and end of life, etc. The ethical thrust of the document reflects certain deficiencies.

Despite the incompleteness of these several areas, *TNMC* is judged to be a gift to the Church and an invitation for responsible response.

G. INDIVIDUALS

64. Nairobi Study Group, Fr. Aloysius Ssekamatte, p. 2.

The author expresses appreciation for the document, but finds it is still a long way from the implementation of the resolutions of the Second Vatican Council with its decree on Ecumenism. He points out that visible unity can be understood in various ways, so our discussion and efforts towards unity risk bearing little fruit if we do not agree on what we are looking for. He supports that most Christians understand *koinonia* as described in the sense presented in the 7th Assembly of the WCC, §2.1 (Canberra, 1991). Others still hold onto the unity in the “rainbow” model. Also, there is still confusion between “diversity and division” that needs to be clarified. The same need for clarity and common agreement can be extended to areas of terminology and theological language in the document, for example in the case of the various models of the church.

Moreover, emphasis has been put on appreciating what we have in common and celebrating it in our ecumenical encounters. The danger at the moment lies in covering up the differences and on certain occasions pretending that they do not exist. More effort is required in dealing with our differences and mutual suspicions. Also, the response notes that much has been done at theological level or among Church leaders, but one question must be asked: has enough effort been put into ecumenical endeavour at the pastoral level? The suggestion is made that some testimony of what is actually being done in the different parts of the world should be added to *TNMC* to help the churches and to show the possibilities of what could be done. In addition, it is noted that it is important to translate *TNMC* into simpler language and into local languages to enable the particular churches to benefit more from it. Lastly, it is emphasised that the question of proselytism, whereby some churches attempt to convert members of other churches to their communion and at times using aggressive means, should be clearly addressed in the document as it is an important issue affecting the relationship between the churches.

65. Nairobi Study Group, Fr. George Kocholickal Nairobi study group

The Nature and Mission of the Church. A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement (Faith and Order Paper 1980, Geneva: WCC 2005, Comments on the Text, Reactions by Fr. George Kocholickal, *sdb.*, p. 4.

The response begins with four *Positive Comments*: 1. The text expresses in a very general way many common ecclesiological convictions, such as the Trinitarian Dimension of the Church; the nature of the Church as a community (Church as *Koinonia*); some of the elements that are constitutive of the Church (Faith, Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry); and the Mission of the church. 2. It highlights most of the doctrinal matters that are divisive between the communities and gives an idea of the differences that exist between the communities in their self-understanding. 3. The mission of the Church in its multi-dimensional aspects, including the contemporary emphasis on the mission as comprising ecological and social matters, is praiseworthy. However, the soteriological dimension of the mission of the Church is mostly absent. 4. The response suggests that the text could serve Christian communities as they continue to reflect on the nature and the

mission of their own contexts, and move towards greater appreciation of the nature and importance of the Church in the world today.

What follows is a section on *Drawbacks of the text*: 1. Many statements in *TNMC* tend to trivialise major doctrinal points of disagreement from a Catholic (and also Orthodox) perspective. Some of the glaring cases noted are: The essentials of unity - Faith, Sacraments (especially Eucharist), Episcopate united with the successor of Peter (apostolic college) and Petrine ministry. 2. The fact that the text talks about differences as real disagreements or mere differences in emphasis that can be reconciled (p16). 3. The statement that “One type of Ecclesiology identifies the Church exclusively with one’s own community[...] other communities may possess elements of the Church which bring those who enjoy them into a real, though imperfect, communion outside of one’s own community” (p38) trivialises important convictions and doctrinal matters. 4. The marks of the Church (One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic) are spoken of in very vague, spiritualised terms devoid of doctrinal and juridical contents. The text avoids the question: how is the Church “here and now” as a visible community, one, holy, catholic and apostolic? Unanswered, the text becomes very vague and open to all types of interpretations, justifications and claims.

5. In the attempt to seek common points of agreement the text has been much emptied of the doctrinal and juridical aspects of the Church. Specific examples are given here by the writer. 6. The text highlights “sinfulness” within the ecclesial community and the diversities existing between the communities, and in so doing may leave room for a biased reader to over-emphasise the “sin” aspect of the Church and the diversity of the Churches to the detriment of the unity of the one Church of Christ. 7. The principle: the “local Churches in and out of the universal Church” and the “ontological and temporal priority of the universal Church” (part of the Catholic conviction) is ignored in the text. 8. The ontological bond between the Eucharist (Body of Christ) and the Church (Body of Christ) is basically ignored. Also the origin of the Church from the “side of Christ” as “blood and water poured out” (cf. Jn 19:34) is ignored. Full incorporation into the Church is tied to faith and Baptism avoiding the Eucharistic link. Besides, when Eucharist is mentioned (§78-81), it is understood primarily as a “table fellowship” devoid of its sacrificial content. Hence the Church ends up to be, either mostly a sociological reality or a purely spiritual other-worldly reality. Both positions seem to emerge from the texts depending on where the reader’s affiliations lie.

9. Mary is spoken of as a symbol of the Church because of her “faithful responsiveness” (the only instance Mary is mentioned in the whole text on the Church is this in §10), and the Marian dimension of the Church is not mentioned at all in the boxes where points of divergences appear. 10. The juridical aspects of ecclesial unity are basically ignored. 11. The principle *sola scriptura* runs throughout the text. It is supported that it is almost impossible to have a solid text on the *nature and mission of the Church* based on biblical references alone without taking in the writings of the praxis of the Fathers, given the historical contexts and specific goals of the NT writings, as none of the NT authors wrote to give a precise ecclesiology, though all may have implicit ecclesiologies. There has to be a greater agreement on the role of tradition, and acceptance of it, especially the apostolic tradition of the patristic times. Another issue brought up here is the interpretation of the Scriptures.

The response continues by underlining that there has to be greater agreement on the interpretation of the Scripture (especially of the basic biblical texts with an ecclesiological impact), and the importance of apostolic tradition. There also has to be more study and greater agreement on the Eucharist (one of the texts of the *BEM*), especially on the central place of the Eucharist for a sound ecclesiology. Without these, the text remains what it claims to be: a *stage*, an initial step.

66. Nairobi Study Group, Fr Jan Lensen Nairobi study group

“Nature and Mission of the Church” an Ecumenical perspective” Proposal for a Study Programme To initiate a Study Programme on: “The Nature and the Mission of the Church in Ecumenical perspective” Proposed jointly by different Churches, p. 2.

The response begins with a short paragraph describing the context of the study. Then, the purpose of the study project is presented: to introduce and acquaint the students with the theological reflection on the Church’s Nature and Mission, and the pastoral consequences in the context of the Ecumenical Movement in Africa. The aim is to help them to integrate into their pastoral responsibility for the African Christian Communities belonging to different Christian Denominations, the challenges they will discover together in their study process. What follows is the explanation of the study’s content: The Theological-Pastoral study of both elements of the proposal include the “Nature and the Mission” of the Church, in the context of the African Ecumenical Movement and discover together the real challenges for the search of unity. The Catholic study project will be invited to submit the options of the study to the African Churches in connexion with the Second Special Assembly of the Synod “The Church in Africa in service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace”.

Lastly, the Main Bibliography is listed, namely the *Catholic Church Documents*, and the *WCC Churches Documents*.

67. Nairobi Study Group, Rev. Dr. Callisto Locheng Nairobi study group

THE IMAGE OF THE CHURCH AS A FAMILY: African Christian Ecclesiology, by Rev. Dr. CALLISTO LOCHENG, A.J, p. 6.

The response is an interesting paper on the image of the Church as a family from the perspective of African Christian Ecclesiology developed in the following parts: Introduction, African Image of the Church as a family, Biblical Foundations of the Image of the Church as family, The family in the Creator’s Plan, Baptism and the Eucharist Create the Family, Trinity and the Family, Importance of the family in God’s plan, Image of the Family in the New Testament, Image of the Family in Pauline writings, Image of the Family in Early Christian Community, and Conclusion.

68. Nairobi Study Group, Philomena N. Mwaura Nairobi study group

The Nature and Mission of the Church, Comments by Philomena N. Mwaura, p. 1.

The writer states that she found *TNMC* to be very comprehensive in its articulation of the commonly held ecclesiological convictions by various ecumenical Christian Churches of what constitutes the Church and its mission in the world. The affirmation that the church is one, Catholic, holy and Apostolic is considered of significance and believed to be defined by a common partaking in the life of God who as Trinity is the source and focus of all communion. In addition, it is noted that the understanding of the nature and mission of the Church is based on Scripture for scripture is normative and provides a uniquely privileged source for our understanding of it. Moreover, the idea is supported that mission is basic to the identity of the Church, as well as the idea that the church and her mission transcend all differences of ecclesiastical organisation, creedal articulation, culturally and contextually adapted liturgical rites and practices of Christian life and discipline.

Furthermore, there is recognition that the study document helps the writer to take concrete steps towards Christian unity through recognising that there is much that binds us as Christians for we have a common faith, a common source of that faith and the Gospel of love applies to all of us despite our differences in living out that faith. We are also bound by a common humanity that has its source in God. Concrete steps that could be taken are educating our brothers and sisters in the faith about this common witness and not emphasising the differences but at the same time not losing our identity as, for example, Catholics. It is mentioned that at the level of humanitarian assistance, there is no problem in working together and finding much that binds us. The problem arises when our different theological standpoints and theologies are articulated. The recommendation is made that the text should outline clearly how differences that enhance disunity can be addressed and not merely say that differences should be celebrated.

69. Nairobi Study Group, Fr Agbonkhanmeghe E. Orobator SJ, p. 2.

Right from the beginning, the writer notes that he read *TNMC* with the interest of a theologian currently engaged in the intellectual discipline of ecclesiology of the Roman Catholic Church. His following remarks are based on his knowledge of Roman Catholic and other ecclesial traditions. He finds the document quite remarkable for its balance and ability to elicit the deep binding ties among the theologies of the respective ecclesial traditions, while holding in creative tension the points of divergence (and without overlooking the differences). To a very remarkable degree, he continues, the text agrees with the major tenets of *Lumen Gentium* on the “nature and mission” of the church. So remarkable is the agreement, that it is hard to believe that the authors are not familiar with *Lumen Gentium*. Points of convergence are highlighted: The Trinitarian origin and foundation of the church (§9); The divine and human nature of the church (§13); The exquisitely rich scriptural images and symbols of the church (§17); The church as *ecclesia*, called and convoked by Yahweh as a permanent community of believers (§18); The church as a pilgrim reality (§19, see also §48 ff), as well as the Body of Christ (§20), pneumatological community (§22), *koinonia* (§24). See also §27 ff; The treatment of local and particular churches, to a large extent, is in agreement with current theological thinking in the Roman Catholic Church, §64 ff.

Moreover, the response points out areas for further debate and clarification: 1. The way the sacramentality of the church is treated in relation to the notion of the instrumentality of the church. 2. The question of the hierarchical constitution of the church is weak in the document. 3. Apostolic succession is an issue that also needs further clarification. Lastly, it is noted that on the whole, this F&O document is perhaps the most ecumenically balanced text on the nature and mission of the church that the writer is familiar with.

70. Revd Dr Vrej Nerses Nersessian

Some reflections on the Nature and Mission of the Church. A stage on the way to a common statement, Revd Dr Vrej Nerses Nersessian, Curator, Christian Middle East Section, Asia, Pacific and African Collections, The British Library, June 2006, p. 1.

The author supports that the process on “Towards a Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches”, and the call to search for visible unity is being undermined wilfully by individual churches taking decisions on local level, without any regard of the “Church as the One Body of Christ”. He underlines that in past centuries an ecumenical council would be called upon to decide on particular issues concerning the church, and that this practice has been lost.

He then provides a list of “activities/practices” that in his opinion cannot be described as “credible witness to unity in diversity”: 1. The inclusion and ordination of gay bishops, 2. Ordination of women into the priesthood, 3. The elevation of women priests to the order of bishops, 4. The decision to tolerate same sex marriages, 5. The decision on abortion, 6. The willingness of the church to allow procreation outside the sacrament of marriage by external medical intervention, 7. The timidity of the church in condoning the human atrocities in Israel, Darfur and Iraq. 8. The compromised status of the western Christian states in their demonising of Islam and conduct of war against terrorism. He holds the view that Christian creed, Christian ethics and moral expression of faith must not be sacrificed for the satisfaction of small minorities, and believes that the universal church should be consulted before decisions are taken and not after.

The last point of the response is a complaint to the WCC and F&O. He supports they have failed visibly in their study of their duty of Christian mission and care to the Christian communities emerging from the shadow of the Soviet era. The WCC has not intervened or assisted the national churches in the post-Soviet era. The multiplication of the centres of evangelisation and mission set up in the Orthodox churches freed from Communism has not helped the national churches to re-establish themselves after 75 years of intolerance towards the Christian faith.

71. Dr Wolfgang Vondey

Pentecostal Perspectives on “Nature and Mission of the Church”, A Response by Wolfgang Vondey (Regent University), p. 7.

A response that underlines the process of study on *TNMC* by the ecumenical studies group (formed in 2001) of the Society for Pentecostal Studies and refers to its statements (see *Ecumenical Trends* 33.7 (2004), and 34.7 (2004)), that reflect an increasing ecumenical commitment and a maturing ecclesiology among Pentecostals. Emphasis is given to the change of the title of *TNMC* and the implications of that change in light of the four Pentecostal perspectives: 1. The nature of the text and its function as an ecumenical document, 2. The structure and central themes of the document, 3. The potential ecumenical ramifications of the document, 4. The development of an ecumenical ecclesiology.

The author underlines that *TNMC* is the first major ecumenical consensus statement with the promise of containing significant contributions from the Pentecostal community. He comments on the use of the term “mission” (of the Church) that is intrinsically connected with its “nature” (as the Church), and offers a broad synthesis of *TNMC*’s ecclesiology of mission using the following scheme: Church = nature + mission (proclamation + concrete action), where mission for Pentecostals is understood as evangelisation. This emphasis should be understood as a preference in theological focus and positioning of the ecclesial self-understanding of Pentecostals in the ecumenical landscape. A further definition of evangelisation is suggested (§110).

Examining the first perspective, *TNMC* is seen to reflect very little Pentecostal language. It is noted that the language of the text should reflect and invite participation of all churches in casting a common understanding of the nature and mission of the Church. Pentecostals call for a more consistent integration of non-western Christians who experience the nature and mission of the Church in way often radically different from the established European and North American mindset. Regarding the second perspective, it is stated that any successful revision of the nature and function of the document will depend largely on the structure of the text and its themes. Thus, it is suggested that different aspects of the document should be improved: “proclamation” (§88) should be seen as witness in worship and holiness; the text should point out what kind of “concrete actions” belong to the nature and mission of the Church, and how they are made

possible and these demands can be met in Church; “baptism in the Holy Spirit” (§83) should refer to the Spirit’s empowerment for evangelisation through words of wisdom, knowledge, prophecy, discernment of spirits, healing or the working of miracles. Emphasis should be also placed on the doxological, eschatological and charismatic aspects of the life of the Church in seeing mission as evangelisation.

Regarding perspective 3, *TNMC* is said to hold a number of promises for the Pentecostal community as a genuine Pentecostal theology begins to emerge. This is why what is being said in the document, how it is being said, and whether it reaches those who should listen, is of importance. Concerning perspective 4, the development of an ecumenical ecclesiology is likely not hindered by distinctions of ecclesial praxis but challenged more immediately by ecumenical prejudices, assumptions, generalisations, such as the presumed antithesis of Pentecostalism and ecumenism. The final part of the response (Illustration 2), describes Pentecostal ecclesiology as evangelistic, contextual, critical, non-triumphant, and pragmatic, and suggests that it has much to say to what appears as an idealistic, romantic, and authoritarian ecclesiology in *TNMC*.

72. Dr Kevin W. Mannoia

A Response by Kevin W. Mannoia (Azusa Pacific University) to the Pentecostal Perspectives on “The Nature and Mission of the Church” by Wolfgang Vondey, p. 2.

The text is a non-Pentecostal response that traces roots through the Catholic Church to the Methodist revivals and the Holiness movement focusing on Dr. Vondey’s paper. While the author considers accurate Vondey’s view that *TNMC* is largely built upon the traditions of the North and he is suggesting that attention should shift to the South, he thinks that both are a response to the effect the Church has had in different times in those locations. He poses the question of where the Church finds greatest effect in mission, and what the nature is behind the effect.

Another point that he makes is that while it is true that there appears to be no clear description within *TNMC* document regarding evangelisation, thereby leaving the matter open to interpretation and self-definition, in reality it may be the one thing that most serves as a watershed in our understanding of mission. It seems to separate churches into the broad camps we have created.

73. Dr Dale T. Irvin

Society for Pentecostal Studies, Response to Wolfgang Vondey “Pentecostal Perspectives”, by Dale T. Irvin, President, New York Theological Seminary, p. 4.

The response emphasises the missional understanding that Pentecostals bring to their ecclesiology regarding mission as being primarily evangelisation. It is claimed that evangelisation, like mission, belongs to the very nature of the Church because it belongs to the very nature of God. The church is apostolic in its very essence and nature. To be apostolic is the same as to be missional, and all missionaries can be said to be carrying on the apostolic commission. This is so, in turn, because the Triune God is missional in eternal essence. Mission and communion are both ways of naming the eternal essence of God. The response attempts to develop this close relationship between communion and mission.

Commenting on the title of the document, the writer holds the view that it has the effect of separating “mission” from the “nature” of the church. This separation is also reflected on the structure of the document. However, a key moment in the text is found early in §4 that signals a deeper integrated understanding at a methodological level, where mission is concretely connected with the diversity of the church in the world, and with actual stories. More comments follow on the connections among grace, mission and communion (§9, 10), as well as on the inter-connections between mission and communion in § 35, 36.

74. Peter Heltzel

Reflections on “The Nature and Mission of the Church”: A stage on the Way to a Common Statement, Faith and Order Paper 198, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 2007 General Assembly, Christian Church (Disciple of Christ), Peter Heltzel, July 2007, p. 3.

The short introduction links *TNMC* with its predecessor *TNPC*. It is stated that the F&O paper no 198 succeeds in offering a missional ecclesiology. However, it does not adequately explain the way that liturgy is a primary source of social ethics.

The Section on *Convergence* affirms the Trinitarian basis of the church based on the Nicene Creed and notes that for the Disciples’ ecumenical work it is vital that they continue to develop their Trinitarian theology. The response states that while the purpose of the church is to worship God, its mission is to make disciples. In that sense it is in accordance with §110 and §66 of *TNMC*. In addition, other points of convergence are: the discussion of culture (§61), references to justice (§4, 12, 18, 28, 73, 77, 80-85, 99, 109-115), economic democracy (§28, 30, 64, 81), even though it is encouraged to emphasise the early Christians’ call to “hold all things in common”. What is more, the need is underlined for the theology of justification to be deepened in the fear that the worst utopian and pelagian impulses of the early 20th century social gospel will be reinforced (§113).

The section of *Criticism* indicates that *TNMC* does not adequately describe how social ethics flows out of liturgy. As we “restructure for mission” it is important that we deepen our liturgical theology, and theology of the sacraments in particular, since structures are provisional. Also, the text has a problem developing a theology of justice from the four essential attributes of the churches: oneness, holiness, catholicity, apostolicity (§52-56). It is supported that the closest it gets is in §54. Thirdly, the language of the church as “instrument” is seen as problematic because it is too utilitarian and shaped by discourse of modernity.

In addition, the *Proposals* formulated are mostly directed to CCU’s first two long-range goals: 1. Becoming a multicultural and inclusive church, 2. Developing a deeper and more dynamic ecumenical spirituality. Disciples need more sustained theological reflection on the relationship between unity and justice in the one mission of the church, as well as to reflect on the cruciform nature of the church and discipleship as participation in martyrdom (§31). It is stressed that one expression of cruciform ecclesiology can be found in the reflection on the Lord’s Supper (§81). Lastly, an initial dialogue is proposed on missional ecclesiology between Disciples and the emerging church, as well as the implementation of all three of CCU’s long-term goals through common justice work with people of faith.

75. Revd Dr Paul Collins

Cognitive and Aesthetic Approaches to Theology and The Nature and Mission of the Church. A personal paper from the Revd Dr Paul Collins of the Faith and Order Advisory Group of the Church of England, January 2009, p. 4.

The author notes that what is of particular interest is the way in which *TNMC* brings together what might be seen as different approaches to the statement of doctrine. It might be argued that there are different genres of text, sometimes within the same paragraph. He poses the question whether drawing upon the distinction between theory and experience as a method of expressing ecumenical doctrinal agreement might be used explicitly in seeking resolution of

Church-dividing issues. Examples of this method can be traced in *BEM*. When talking about *TNMC* the method is pursued in the main body of the text as well as in the shaded boxes. Another way of naming these differences might be to argue that some sentences are written from a more rational or “objective” stance (cognitive), while others are written from a more “subjective” stance on the basis of reflection on practice and experience (aesthetic response). The written style which makes assertions without direct appeal to experience is called by the writer “cognitive” claims, whereas the one which argues from experience is named “aesthetic” claims. Within this framework he is analyzing and responding to *TNMC* attempting to discern how an aesthetic approach to understandings of the Church is expressed in it, how an appeal to experience is used to describe the Church, its reality, its members and its praxis. In that perspective, the response comments on §9, 10, 12, 15, 32, 44, 49, 59, 114.

76. Dr R. M. Keelan Downton

Entrepreneurial Ecclesiological Narratives and the Unity Project: Exploring Techno-Scientific-Captalist Impulses as Ecumenical Challenge and Opportunity by R. M. Keelan Downton, p. 17.

In the *Introduction* of his response the writer explains that the phrase “entrepreneurial church” appeared at least as early as 1979 in *Justification by Success: The Invisible Captivity of the Church* by a book by John Stanley Glen. It became popular in the 1990s as a means to distinguish the adaptable model of Willow Creek and Saddleback from that of traditional churches as well as to emphasise a concern “simultaneously for the salvation of persons and the social transforming of places” before being accorded status as a distinctive mark of evangelical ecclesiology. Further, he explains that “techno” signifies both the *objects* of technology and the *application* of theories in the form of *technique*, whereas “scientific” signifies both a set of *explanatory theories* and the *method* used for obtaining them. Similarly, capitalism may be distinguished as *an economic system oriented around bargaining by individuals, private property, and reinvestment of resources into further production*, that has some obvious connections with the first two.

In the second part of his response, the writer explores the *Roots of Entrepreneurial Ecclesiological Narratives*, and in the third section, he deals with *Critiques of Entrepreneurism and the Impulses That Give Rise to It*. After he articulates the general framework of entrepreneurial ecclesiological narratives, in the fourth chapter he brings it into dialogue with *TNMC*. The response concludes with the last section that on *Visions for the Future*. (See response).

77. Robert Allan Hill

The Nature and Mission of the Church (WCC) Response: Robert Allan Hill, Boston Institute of Theology Lent 2007, p. 2.

After expressing his gratitude for participating in the Boston conversations about ecclesiology, the writer continues with making the following points: 1. *Koinonia* is a choice for focus in ecclesiology. Absent in this document is translation, like that in Phil 1:3 RSV, of the word as “partnership”. That rendering is preferred, given the troubles created by some others (sharing, etc...). Also, noted as an aside, the personalists and others distinguished between *koinonia* (the communion of the real spiritual church) and *ecclesia* (the necessary, historical and historic, earthly, organised church). 2. A. Wilder identified some 90 images of the church in the NT. The four chosen here are thought to be fine, but the writer wonders what argument was used to select them out of the many others. Are they thought to include or subsume the others? 3. The section on the mission of the church uses no “new creational” language (Gal. 2, 3, 6,

other). The writer wonders about this as someone who sings “finish then thy new creation” with regularity if not with fine musicality.

4. The box on church as sacrament is of less interest to him than many of the others. 5. He cautions against shadowy negative use of the term “membership” (p13). Mere membership is not a negative, but a start. Likewise, taking nothing away from oneness, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity, a fuller emphasis on expansion and embrace of the “other” would appeal to him, in discussion of the nature of the church. Church without fierce welcome is less than church. 6. A box on the church and sin, for the northern USA, is less timely than a box on the church and death. That is, sometimes discussions in comfortable rooms at twilight neglect or deny the actual, current dormancy to death of the churches that formed the WCC 60 years ago, among them the writer’s own Methodist Church.

7. A minor quibble is noted: the citation of 2 Cor 5:17 (p15) does not really support what it means to support (a “natural” bond between “human beings and humanity and creation”). It is new creation not creation which by this text and others brings such bonds. The following sentence is emphasised as good: “authentic diversity in the life of communion must not be stifled: authentic unity must not be surrendered” (p15). 8. The question is posed if actual denominations inside the three ecclesiologies are kept in mind. If so, it is suggested they may be brought out. 9. In IIIA70, reference is missed to “education” or “discipleship” in the list of “the living traditions of the church”. 10. Another minor quibble is mentioned: does anyone ever ask anymore about occasional use of inclusive language (eg IIIB75), or is that a past interest? Likewise, at IIIC79, the discussion of eucharist, the writer wonders about the absence of reference to “thanksgiving” and “presence”.

11. The section on the ministry of the faithful feels light to the writer. The ministry of the ordained in the box seems a bit puzzling. The question is asked whether churches have decided not to ask about the necessary concomitance of the gifts of ministry and celibacy, on the one hand, and the gifts of ministry and heterosexuality, on the other. 12. An issue that is suggested to be discussed is whether the “ministry of universal primacy” is truly a gift to the ministry of primacy itself, or in what ways it is a gift. 13. In §115, p30 the lateness and brevity of the mention of “adherents of other religions” are noted by the writer. 14. In general, the document is thought to be clear, helpful and purposive. The writer recommends that the physical deterioration needs to be kept clearly in mind, during the years of ecumenical activity, of some of the church, and some of the churches who supported the earlier ecumenical “surge”. Now Christianity is more southern hemisphere than northern, and more southern state than northern. This causes him to qualify his own set of interests, in a different way.

78. Bishop Dr Vasyl Boyechko, Evangelical Christian Church

Ukrainian Catholic University Institute of Ecumenical Studies THE NATURE AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH, (The View of the Evangelical Church), Speech at the International Colloquium, Lviv, 20-23 April 2007, p. 9.

The first part of the paper is a response to the questions provided by *TNMC*: 1. The document is considered maximally close to Biblical ecclesiology and thought to objectively reflect the Christology and pneumatology of the Church. However, its weak spot is believed to be a lack of analysis of the main factors which have caused the division of the Church, namely: mistakes of patristic authors and removing the dominating role of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit in the functioning of the Church. These causes are still present in the churches, and thus divisions are still present. 2. It is noted that *TNMC* undoubtedly reflects existing points of contact regarding the nature and mission of the Church. Also, it is said that if the biblical aspects of the nature and mission of the Church provided in the document were heard and realised, the matter of the unity of the Church would be resolved to a great extent and with God’s blessing. 3.

Regarding question 3, it is noted that the Ukrainian Catholic University is more concerned with turning to ecumenism of the Church based on common principles of the teaching of Christ as well as the model of the apostolic Church. The higher authority of the Gospel of Christ in modern ecumenism has not, unfortunately, reached its dominating height. 4. Concerning specific steps towards unity, it is noticed that since the Word of God is predominant in the document, it has the right to be an inspiration and driving force for practical dialogue on the issue of the unity of the Church and its return to authority and influence in the world according to the model of the apostolic Church.

5. Suggestions that are made for the further development of the document are: a. To ask participants in further theological disputes to provide New Testament grounds for the beliefs and dogmas of their Church. b. To repent in front of God and each other for the sins of separation, separatism, and the deepening of separation in the Church. c. To agree to start a new page in Christian history in solidarity, peace, and mutual respect: in common evangelisation, programs of charity, in joint religious services, in joint programs teaching Christian ethics, and in defence of human values, to root out immorality and the spiritual decline of human society. d. To provide grounds for the position of our Church regarding this document, it is necessary to provide our comments on separate issues of the document.

The response then discusses different aspects of the document: The Institutional Dimension of the Church, The Church of Christ: The Body of Christ, The House of God, *Koinonia*, The Mission of the Church, The Church in History, The Church and Sin, Unity in Diversity, and The Life of Communion in and for the World (See response).

79. Dr Friederike Nüssel

Evangelical Church in Germany, Dr Friederike Nüssel, p. 4.

Speaking as a member of the Evangelical Church in Germany the writer appreciates this stage on the way to a common ecclesiological statement. Very crucial ecclesiological issues and helpful aspects are thought to be elaborated in this text, but further work is believed to be needed to develop a declaration of convergence as it has been achieved in *BEM*. From the perspective of Protestant churches, it is supported that a declaration of convergence should not try to argue for one certain concept of ecclesiology, but rather try to develop an ecclesiological framework that allows different theological issues to be taken into account.

The response develops in different paragraphs commenting on the document: a. The nature of the Church, b. The structure of the document, c. The concept of unity, d. Reflection on “Limits of Diversity?” (p37), e. The Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe concept of visible unity, f. Limits in diversity referring to the proclamation of the Gospel, g. Limits of diversity referring to the administration of the sacraments, h. Limits of diversity referring to ordained ministry, i. Limits of diversity referring to the ministry of oversight and primacy (See response).

80. Fr. Michael Dymyd

“The Nature and Mission of the Church” in the Context of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, p. 14.

In the introductory paragraph the writer states that *TMNC* is interesting and helpful for a Greek Catholic theologian due to its profound biblical way of expressing the essence of the Church, and also in that it points out the divergences between theological explanations of some truths by churches about themselves and asks those churches whether they could see a similarity to their belief in the given sphere in the theological interpretations of others. He also points out

that his reflection is on the basis of the ecclesiological development of the thought of the leading hierarchs of the UGCC of the 20th century: Metropolitan Andrey (Sheptytsky), Patriarch Josyf (Slipyj), and Patriarch Myroslav Ivan (Lubachivsky), set forth in the book of Mitred Archpriest Dr. Myron Bendyk *Autonomous Churches in the Universal Church in the teaching of the Lviv metropolitans of Ukrainian rite of the 20th century*.

The response is not dealing with the analysis of the whole document, but reflects on the outlined parts, namely The Institutional Dimension of the Church and the Work of the Holy Spirit, The Church as Sacrament, The Church and Sin, Limits of diversity, Local Church, Baptism, Eucharist, Ordained Ministry, Episkope, Bishops and Apostolic Succession, and Conciliarity and Universal Primacy.

81. Kenneth Loyer

In Appreciation of *The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Response from a United Methodist*, Kenneth Loyer, October 24, 2006, p. 6.

The writer declares that he issues his response in appreciation of *TNMC* from his own perspective as a United Methodist. He focuses on four points which stand out as noteworthy to him, and then reflects on a question which emerged in his reading of the text. The points which he particularly appreciates are: 1. The trinitarian language which is thought to be quite appropriately used. 2. The emphasis on mission. 3. *TNMC*'s honest identification of the issues which still divide the churches. 4. The keen attention throughout the text to the ecclesial attributes/marks of the Church. He analyses these four points and uses them as a basis for his response.

Regarding the question of whether *TNMC* “best allows for the recognition of the Christian reality wherever it is found”, the writer thinks that the text does not say much about this issue. Granted, and not insignificantly, he continues, it does acknowledge that “The goal of the search for full communion is realised when all the churches are able to recognise in one another the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church in all its fullness” (§66). It also alludes to the difficulty of identifying the Church in the box on limits of diversity (p37-39). Yet he finds that the document also reflects the tension, which seems to be ultimately an unhealthy tension, between a commitment to ecclesiological neutrality on the one hand (in this case, that of the WCC), and the need for a concrete identification and location of the Church on the other. He hopes that a more robust account of the Church's identity and location, however difficult the task of formulating such an account may be, can—and will—be offered. Given the importance of the issue he wonders if it could be more fully treated here so as to enhance the exposition of ecclesiology which is in other ways quite fruitfully articulated in *TNMC*.

H. RECENT ADDITIONS

82. Just and Inclusive Communities Programme of the World Council of Churches

A Response from the members of the Core Group of the programme for Just and Inclusive Communities of the World Council of Churches to the Nature and Mission of the Church: A Study Document of the Faith and Order Commission, p. 6.

This response is an open letter by the members of the Core Group of the Just and Inclusive Communities who met in Nagpur, India from 9-14 December 2009 under the theme:

Hospitality, Inclusion and Justice: A theological response to old and new forms of discrimination and exclusion. It is a response from the perspective of the five specific constituencies of the Programme for Just and Inclusive Communities, people who experience racial and caste discrimination, migrant communities, Indigenous people and people living with disabilities. As they respond to *TNMC* they underline their vantage points of experience of and struggle against discrimination and exclusion in the church and society, and offer comments under the categories of methodology, general content of *TNMC* document, and specific observations.

Regarding methodology, the response indicates that it was specifically felt that what was ultimately said could be no more than the lowest common denominator. Against this background two observations are made: 1. Process: a. The church reflects through its being and doing the complexities and dynamics of human histories, cultures, anthropological presuppositions concepts of power. These also include concepts of God and the corresponding symbols and belief systems, etc., of the people who compose the church in each local context. This reality of the empirical nature of the church needs to be acknowledged at the outset in order that what we say of the nature and mission of the church is grounded in a realism and pragmatism that both makes sense to and answers the real-life questions of the world and of God, of the people who compose the church. b. In the document, the Church is treated in a very abstract, ahistorical way. The central concern of the document seems to be more dogma and doctrine than people. The effort seemed to be to bring about a unity of doctrine rather than a unity at the level of people. Developing a consensus seemed more important than wrestling with issues of human differences and inequalities that make unity elusive in many cases. c. Though the document speaks about the “nature” of the church, it does so in terms of doctrine rather than demographics. The significant feature of the 20th and 21st century is that the church today is no longer white, north, male and European but is instead black and brown, indigenous, Asian, African, Latin American, South and made up largely of women. Most of these communities share their space with many other religious communities, often competing or threatened by each other, and are composed of people who are politically, socially or economically powerless. These realities of the empirical church, in other words the dynamic character of every visible expression of the church, need to be acknowledged and kept in mind as we reflect on the nature and mission of the church in the 21st century. d. In the recent discourses on unity, ecumenical instruments such as the F&O have moved beyond ecclesiastical identities and confessional theologies with a view to tackling challenges posed by national and ethnic identities to the unity of the church. While this is welcome, the response insists on a thorough examination of the role of cultures in shaping attitudes and structures of relationships. The shameful presence and practice of discrimination and marginalisation of people of colour, migrants, Dalits, Indigenous peoples and those others with disabilities, right within many of our church communities in many parts of the world, unfortunately expose the shallowness of our efforts towards unity at the level of church structures and bureaucracies. The respondents also feel that rootedness in the life of the despised and disenfranchised would not only help the document to be relevant but also help the church to rediscover itself with credibility and purpose.

This leads to the second point: Contextuality: It is indicated that *TNMC* lacks contextuality and that it ignores the concrete historical reality of the church. This lack of contextuality seems to designate the church as being static rather than a continually evolving movement that responds to its context. In fact the document seems to speak from the context in which Christianity is a majority religion, which is in itself problematic as this is not the situation in several parts of the two-thirds world and is no longer the situation in the first world. Furthermore, a document about the nature and the mission of the church needs to take shape against the backdrop of the dominant discourse on globalisation, the *laissez faire* logic that seems to gain wider acceptance in all human institutions, the increasing partnership between hegemonic powers, etc. It is in this context that *TNMC* should stand out in clear opposition to these other “texts”, that is these other structures, formations, visions, etc., that prescribe, guide and judge

options and patterns of relationships. The cultures of discrimination, derision, exploitation and exclusion that some people are subjected to are not the same as the challenges of poverty, war, HIV Aids, climate change, etc. The former deeply affect relationships, cause, sustain and legitimise human abuse. Therefore, the response urges that the incompatibility is asserted of these cultures of discrimination which deny the image of God in others to the affirmation and practice of faith in today's world. This point is made with the conviction that the church whose mission does not resonate with the aspirations of the poor for justice and participation loses its credibility completely.

What is more, the response offers the following *General Observations*: 1. The document speaks about the nature and the mission of the church without indicating the purpose of the church. Many other religious communities do not operate within or under large structures and organisations with a book, a head/heads, structures and discipline, the way church does. If others could remain as vibrant as, and even more populous than, churches, in which people seem to find adequate space for expression of their religiosity, what makes the church so special? What is its purpose? Or is the church that we belong to a purely western instrument of religious discipline for social cohesion? 2. It is asserted that the church is essentially people. Bishops, clergy and male adults do not make the churches. It was felt that the document is gender insensitive as well as being insensitive to the emergent tensions between generations. For example, it does not recognise the role of the church in legitimising gender stereotypes nor does it make any reference to the unequal participation of women in the context of the church, especially women in positions of leadership and decision making. Further, the document does not recognise the increasing reality that women are the majority members of the church the world over. Likewise the document is silent about both the striking absence of youth in the church and the continual marginalisation of the youth who are present in our congregations. Similarly the document makes no reference to children at all, suggesting that somehow the church is a community of adults alone.

3. The document seems to operate with a traditional understanding of Church rather than responding to the new formations, such as the post-denominational churches, informal fellowships, online churches, cyber churches, etc. Also, it does not seem to refer to church as a worshipping community. The aspects of prayer, caring, etc., are missing. Worship is central to the very being of the church and it is in the act of worship that the church not only reminds itself of God's saving act in the world but also discovers itself and its purpose to be the sign of the kingdom in the world. Ironically, it is often during worship that churches are found wanting in practicing what they are affirming. Various forms of discrimination and exclusion are allowed to be a part of what goes on in worship. 4. *TNMC* does not spell out its understanding of humankind. The response supports that the church is first and foremost a human institution whose concern for unity cannot preclude issues of human dignity and justice. In fact it argues that unity should be for the sake of justice and not at the cost of it. In this sense, the document seems to call for a doctrinal unity that transcends real flesh and blood people and their concerns. In this sense the document should contain a section on what it means to be human. 5. The prevailing idea of the church is one in which the church is privileged above the people. The idea seems to be that the Church should reach out to the suffering; this seems to suggest that the church does not have suffering people in its midst. It could be argued that the church is made up of the suffering. This idea comes out in paragraph 40 most clearly where the Church sees itself as reaching out to the victims of history rather than a community of the victims itself. 6. While appreciative of the many claims to diversity and plurality of the church, the core group is uncomfortable with the language of limiting diversity that is used in the document (Cf. §62, box after section II C). The questions of whose diversity and whose experience was being considered were asked. It was also felt necessary to connect the language of diversity to power. It was similarly felt that to be diverse was to open up oneself to the other. One cannot hold on to power, privilege, pride and prominence in a relationship of partnership. Likewise the group is

uncomfortable with the use of the language of heresy. The history of the church has shown that what is heresy and what is normative is not just a matter of perspective but is also a matter of power. It is in this light that it was felt that the church was not so much a space for the discerning of dogma, however true, or for the laying down of rules, however perfect, but was a creative space for the celebration of God's grace to all humanity, "receiving one another as Christ has received us" (Rom. 15:7).

In addition, *Specific Observations* are made on §9, 18-19, 20-21, 55 and §63, 86-89, §12. In conclusion it is underlined that many within the church experience discrimination and exclusion. These groups aspire for a church that is just and inclusive, one which makes present the reign of God to come. The question is posed of how this vision of the church, as the document unveils, resonates with these aspirations. Is not the church called to be the very epitome of a just and inclusive community? The question is, if the church should reject this calling, does she still remain a church at all?