

**Irish Inter-Church Meeting**  
**Department of Theological Questions**

# **ECUMENICAL PRINCIPLES**

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## **Introduction**

This study seeks to locate the search for Christian unity in scripture, and 7-8 Lower Abbey Street to outline the vision of unity which is central peripheral concern for the life and witness of the Church, but a fundamental expression of being reconciled in Christ. Having explored the parameters of the Gospel vision, an outline of the ways in which this vision has been frustrated and of some ways to overcome the divisions which characterise the contemporary life of our churches will be offered as a contribution to the search for Christian unity in Ireland.

### **Unity - 'the impulse of the Bible'**

All the Churches regard the testimony of Scripture as normative for their theology and life. It is important to begin our enquiry with an analysis of the theme of unity in the Bible.' Robert McAfee Brown, the American Presbyterian theologian, has characterised the direction of Scripture in the following way: 'The impulse of the Bible is towards unity'.<sup>2</sup>

In exploring the theme of unity, therefore, it is important to explore it as it appears in the Hebrew Scriptures and in the New Testament.

#### **a. Unity in the Old Testament**

Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, the recurring motif of the various writers is that of the one people of God united in response to God's activity. The people of God received their existence and their very identity through their being-in-relationship-to-God.

The people of Israel were aware of a special relationship with God which they described as having been initiated by him through the creation of the world in which men and women have the possibility of relationship with God and with each other,<sup>3</sup> through the various covenants, and above all in the election to the covenant established through the liberation of the people from captivity and slavery in Egypt. In this covenant the Israelites are the recipients of the gifts of oneness with God and as a people.<sup>4</sup> The awareness of this special relationship with God remains the central theme of the Old Testament. The accent in the covenant is on God's grace in electing and sustaining the community, and the corollary is the maintenance of the unity of the people of God. Such a

covenant relationship dominates the thought of the people - as seen through the central affirmations of faith which were probably recited in the principal cultic festivals, e.g. Deuteronomy 26:5-10; Joshua 24; Nehemiah 9.<sup>5</sup> Such a covenant relationship also dominates the life-style of the community - as may be seen in the very laws of the people which attempt to give expression to the fact that each person takes his or her place within the community which has experienced the grace of God, and in which each man and woman is to receive "the space and the time to live"<sup>6</sup> and to concede that to everyone else.

This theology and lifestyle is served by the central institutions of the nation, namely the kingship, the priesthood and the prophets. The King was to represent the people before God and God before the people, a role which may be seen with clarity in the Psalms, e.g. Ps 85.<sup>7</sup> The focal point of the people's identity was seen in the institution of the Temple, served by the Highpriest who was to maintain the covenant relationship by teaching the people proper conduct in their relationship to God and other people, by sacrificial offering and by mediating the blessing of God.<sup>8</sup> The institution of the prophets is such that they were deemed to reveal the true meaning of events, recalling to the people how God would wish them to be in consequence of the covenant with them, - the people were to be the community reflecting how God intends the world to be.<sup>9</sup>

The central affirmations, then, of the Hebrew Scriptures point to the unity of the people with God - a unity seen in the theology and the lifestyle of the Israelites and maintained by the central institutions of the nation - the kingship, the priesthood and the prophets.

Such a brief excursus in the literature of the Hebrew Scriptures provides the background for our consideration of the New Testament literature. However else the Christian wants to understand the relationship of the Hebrew Scriptures to the New Testament - whether it be by way of promise - fulfilment, or by a christological reading of the Hebrew Scriptures, or by a typological approach - it is essential to see that an understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures, within its own term of reference, is essential for an appreciation of the understanding of the people who saw themselves as belonging to the New Covenant established in Jesus Christ.<sup>10</sup>

## **b. Unity in the New Testament**

The primitive Church saw itself in terms remarkably similar to those of the people of God in the Hebrew Scriptures, being a community within Judaism. However, the decisive element in their identity was their being in and through Jesus of Nazareth.

The early Christians, then, took up themes from the Hebrew Scriptures, as their understanding of their relation to God. Thus they spoke of themselves as the New Creation (2 Co 5:7) and of Jesus Christ as the last Adam (2 Co 5:11-17). They further described themselves as the people of God, the people of the New Covenant established in Christ - a covenant brought into being again and again through the gracious activity of God (2 Co 3:6; Hb 8:13; 9:15). The characterisation of the work of Jesus of Nazareth as establishing the New Covenant in and through him is emphasised above all in the words of Jesus at the Last Supper as transmitted in the Words of Institution (1 Co 11:25). In line with their heritage, the early Christians are described as the commonwealth of Israel (Ep 2:12), a holy nation (1 P 2:9), and they look forward towards the Holy City (the New Jerusalem) which had been established in their midst (Rv; Hb; Gal).

These characterisations by the first Christians of themselves are all unitive images. They all emphasise their nature as one community or people whose source and identity is their relation to God. Throughout the New Testament some eighty-five images of the Church can be noted - all of them of one people united in their relation to God." Most notable of these images are those of the Body, the Temple, the Bride and the Household. These images were given credibility as the Church embraced people from different races, religions, socio-economic classes and conditions (Ep 2; Ga 3:28). The community in each place had come into existence through the preaching about Jesus of Nazareth, and the awareness of his presence.

Jesus was regarded as incorporating in himself the very unitive institutions of the Hebrew people, when he was described as *the Prophet*, *the King*, and *the Highpriest*.<sup>12</sup> For Christians, Jesus initiated a new relationship of oneness with God, which has as an implication their oneness as a community in and through him. Such was not a marginal perception of the first followers of Jesus, but was the central affirmation of their being as a community.

Nowhere is the theme of oneness more evident than in the Fourth Gospel. To John, oneness always has strong theological connotations. The word 'one' expresses the unique relationship of Jesus to the Father. It expresses the saving work of Jesus in drawing a community into oneness in himself. Finally it expresses the relationship of the disciples of Jesus among themselves.<sup>13</sup> The thrust of the Gospel is to indicate that Jesus is the centre, the pivotal point, of authentic relations between humankind and God and between believers. He is the Truth, the norm to which everything must conform and in which the nature of reality is evident. The use of the word 'one' by the evangelist indicates relationship, not numerical oneness or uniformity.

### **c. The textus classicus of the ecumenical movement**

Nowhere are these themes of unity brought into sharper focus than in the famous prayer of Jesus in John 17 - a passage which has become the classic text of the ecumenical movement.<sup>14</sup> In this prayer Jesus prays that the Father may glorify him so that he may glorify the Father (vv. 1-8), and does so by recapitulating the activity he has undertaken on the Father's behalf. He then prays for the disciples that they may be one in the Father and the Son remaining in the truth through integrity and through living the commandment to love (vv. 9-19). Finally he intercedes on behalf of those who believe due to the testimony of the disciples that they also may be one for the sake of the credibility of Jesus' work of reconciliation - so that the world may believe (vv. 20-26).

Raymond Brown, in his commentary on this, suggests that this prayer belongs to the tradition of the last speech of the leader to maintain their unity as the people of God, and draws parallels with the last speech of Moses when he urged the people to maintain their unity in the covenant. It is evident that John is writing in a situation of a community which has become divided. His stress on unity highlights the importance of being one, as Paul also has to emphasise to the Corinthians where division was very evident. In John, Jesus prays that the people of the New Covenant may be one as the Father and the Son.<sup>15</sup>

The unity, then, which is spoken of in the Fourth Gospel, is through Jesus Christ who takes up the disciples into the oneness of the glory of

God. This unity is the gift of God; the gift of love. The force of the word 'as' in John 17 is causative. Since the Father and the Son are one, therefore the believers are drawn into that oneness through the divine activity and are to remain in this activity by maintaining the commandment to love one another. As Yves Congar has stressed:

The Church is not merely a society, people associated with God, but the divine Societas itself, the life of the Godhead reaching out to humanity and taking up humanity into itself.<sup>16</sup>

Such a unity also provides a task for the community of believers. The community is to live in the world seeking to manifest the dynamic of the relationship between Father and Son - an organic oneness in which diversity exists. The Church always lives in the tension between 'already and not yet', as it seeks to manifest God's intention for humankind in Jesus of Nazareth.

This organic oneness, then, provides the central vision of ecumenism. At stake is the credibility of the Gospel for those outside the Church. After all, how can a divided Church show forth the Gospel of reconciliation, of oneness? The oneness of Christians which is to be manifest is a oneness of the Father, the Son and the Spirit.

### **d. Union in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit**

The primitive Church, in its very early attempt to describe the way in which God had acted for them, had to describe that activity as belonging to the work of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In the Ephesian hymn (Ch 1:3-14) the whole drama of salvation is presented through an account of the activity of each in the Godhead. The hymn declares that it is only in and through Jesus Christ that humankind can know God and can be drawn into community. This awareness of the Holy Trinity is thus described in 'economic' terms. The early Christians felt unable to comprehend Jesus of Nazareth apart from his relationship to the Father and the Spirit.

Christians are drawn to speak of God in terms of oneness and distinction. This experience and awareness expressed in the doctrine of the

Holy Trinity is the reason that Christians are drawn to speak of communion. As one theologian has put it :

.. life springs out of the communion which exists in God and leads to communion between God and humankind and among women and men in his Church. Relationships are the backbone of divine creation and revelation. 17

The relationship of the Father, Son and Spirit provides the paradigm for the union of Christians.<sup>18</sup>

### **e. Union of the Church**

While the above provides the theological foundation for concern with Church unity, it also emphasises the task of the Church. The event of oneness in and through Jesus Christ, which draws the community into oneness in God, is the subject of the very being of the Church. The Church is that community which is to respond to the event of reconciliation by taking part in God's reconciling activity in the world. It is to participate in the prophetic, priestly and kingly ministry of Christ.<sup>19</sup>

The early Church, therefore, in attempting to reflect this, focused community life on three central features:

1. the confessing of the faith (cf. 1 Co 13:3b-5); an active concern to articulate for each given time and place the central affirmation of God's dealings with humankind;
2. the celebration of 'This .. my body' (cf. Co 11:12-27) a representing (anamnesis) of the whole drama of salvation in Christ and sign of and for the world as God intends it to be;
3. the living of a life of holiness, service and life in a style consonant with that of Christ, through the agency of the Holy Spirit (cf. Th 4:1-12) as it seeks to be obedient in the service of the Kingdom.

These three features of the life and witness of the Church appear under the dynamic rubric of 'traditioning' - 'I am handing on to you that which

I have received ...', and provide the kernel of the activity for that community which seeks to live in the perspective of God's gracious being-with-and-for-humankind. These three aspects of the Church's life and witness, standing under the same rubric, are also interdependent.

The Church, therefore, which is to participate in the priestly, kingly and prophetic ministry of Jesus is to be a confessing community, which centres itself on the celebration of the eucharist and which demonstrates internally and externally the lifestyle of love and reconciliation, seeking to act in the service of the Kingdom.

A central focus, therefore, on the search for the union of the Church has been concerned with these three features. Thus the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1961 at New Delhi spoke of the nature of the common goal of the vision of the one Church as follows:

We believe that the unity which is both God's will and his gift to the church is being made visible as all in each place who are baptised in Jesus Christ and confess him as Lord and Saviour are brought by the Holy Spirit into one fully committed fellowship, holding the one apostolic faith, preaching the one gospel, breaking the one bread, joining in common prayer and having a corporate life reaching out in witness and service to all and who at the same time are united with the whole Christian fellowship in all places and all ages in such wise that ministry and members are accepted by all, and that all can act and speak together as occasion requires for the tasks to which God calls his people.<sup>20</sup>

The New Delhi statement, which has become a central definition for the current search for unity, emphasises a unity that is visible and whose form is expressed 'in each place' and 'in all places and ages'. The signs

of commitment to this fellowship are nothing less than proclaiming or confessing the faith together, participating in common prayer and praise, celebrating the one baptism, sharing regularly in a common eucharist, mutually accepting members and ministers, sharing a corporate life which allows the Church to be engaged in a common mission in the name of Christ - a vision which is substantially the same as that of the Second Vatican Council.

This vision of the Church is an attempt to recover the priority of the Church as a community which seeks to live in the light of God's gracious activity of reconciling and to participate in that work. This vision takes seriously the fact that the Church is a pilgrim community, journeying 'between the times' - a community ever seeking to reflect more adequately the communion of God.

This impulse towards the search for unity emerges as the churches seek to be more faithful to God through their journeying. The vision of the unity of the Church as a reflection of the union of God has been frustrated by the fragmentation of the Church. This fragmentation occurred at different times in history for different reasons - sometimes theological, while on other occasions because of 'non-doctrinal factors' (e.g. nationalism, social and economic factors, personality tensions, racism).<sup>21</sup> The prompting and the power of the Holy Spirit were experienced as important as a crucial stance was taken by communities feeling that they had no option but to break communion with others.<sup>22</sup> Throughout this century, the activity of the Holy Spirit has been evident in drawing communities towards communion, and enabling the churches to attempt to show the world, community as God intends it to be.

As John Meyendorff has emphasised :

.. the communion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, or divine Trinity, the 'communion of the Holy Spirit' which introduces men (and women) into divine life, and the 'communion' or 'community' which is then created between men (and women) in Christ, not only are designated with the same term but ultimately represent the same experience and reality.<sup>23</sup>

## f. Principles of Dialogue

As individuals and communities seek to move towards communion, they enter a situation of dialogue with each other. Dialogue is a way of life. It is an approach to others where they are seen as a blessing and gift to us, rather than a threat. It is the acceptance of the otherness of others. It is the building of a community of common conversation so that together we may be God's *oikos* or house. As we learn more about each other, we change our perceptions of the other, but we ourselves also grow and have a vision of God's world.

The American Roman Catholic scholar, Leonard Swidler, has drawn up ten principles of dialogue - Dialogue Decalogue - which help us to understand better the nature and process of dialogue :

1. 'The primary purpose of dialogue is to change and grow in the perception and understanding of reality and then to act accordingly.' We enter dialogue so that we can change, so that we can learn, so that we can grow into understanding, not so that we can force change on the other. Dialogue, therefore, is not a monologue through which we communicate with each other only so that our voice is heard, our opinion considered.
2. 'Dialogue must be a two-sided project - within each community and between each community.' Since the primary goal of dialogue is that each partner learn and change himself, it is also necessary that each participant enter into dialogue not only with his or her partner across the confessional line - the Anglican with the Roman Catholic, for example, - but also with his or her co-religionists, to share with them the fruits of the dialogue. Only thus can the whole community eventually learn and change, moving towards an ever more perceptive insight into reality.
3. 'Each participant must come to the dialogue with complete honesty and integrity.' It should be made clear in what direction the major and minor thrusts of the tradition move, what the future directions seem to be, and where the participant has difficulties with her or his own tradition.

4. 'Each participant must assume a similar complete honesty and sincerity in the other partners.' Not only does the absence of sincerity prevent dialogue from happening, but the absence of the assumption of the partner's sincerity does so as well. If there is no trust, there can be no dialogue.
5. 'Each participant must define himself or herself.' It is not for us to try to interpret the other. Inevitably to do so would involve an exercise in comparison - we would see how 'our' concerns are interpreted in the other's tradition. We need to hear the other. This principle, however, also demands trusting the other. Dialogue involves listening to the other as they give account of their Christian faith and witness. Therefore ...
6. 'Each participant must come to the dialogue with no hard-and-fast assumptions as to where the points of disagreement are.' Each partner should not only listen to the other partner with openness and sympathy, but also seek and express agreement with the partner as far as it is possible, while maintaining integrity with her or his own tradition. Where the partners cannot agree, then there are points of disagreement. Since in our separation, we have been engaged in monologues - speaking to and hearing only our own voice - we have created stereotypes of the other and of their views. We need to transcend these stereotypes, and to hear the other.
7. 'Dialogue can take place only between equals.' Firstly, the participants of a dialogue should in each partner demonstrate equivalent skills - in, e.g. scholarship of the Scriptures. Secondly, dialogue requires that in the dialogue each learns from the other. A dialogue is not a monologue. It is not a process, where one partner learns from the other, while the other partner simply expresses a viewpoint. Both partners are engaged in learning.
8. 'Dialogue can take place only on the basis of mutual trust.' Dialogue can only be built on personal trust. Hence, it is not wise to tackle the most difficult problems in the beginning, but first to approach those issues most likely to provide some common ground,

thereby establishing trust. Thus in learning we move from the known to the unknown.

9. 'Persons entering dialogue must be at least minimally self-critical of both themselves and their own religious traditions.' A lack of such self-criticism implies that one's own tradition already has all the correct answers. Such an attitude makes dialogue not only unnecessary but even impossible. It also runs counter to our Christian faith whereby we are all in a situation, as St Paul reminds us, where 'we know only in part ... but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end.' (1 Co 13:9-10).
10. 'Each participant eventually must attempt to experience the others' faith "from within".' Christian traditions are not merely about doctrines, but also about the spirit, the heart, the 'whole being'.

This 'dialogue decalogue' expresses well the attitude and way of life which lie under any dialogue process, as we begin to perceive the vision of *oikos* - God's house - and thus to reflect God's intention for humankind.

### **The Truth will set you free**

Dialogue is a process which seeks to manifest the common search for understanding. Truth is the event of the revelation of God in Jesus of Nazareth. In the New Testament truth is not primarily something which is to be contemplated, but that which is to be done (John 3:21).

In his book, *The Divine-Human Encounter*, Emil Brunner points out that for the Bible truth is about 'The God who inclines himself toward men and women and makes himself present to men and women'. The Way of Truth is thus participating in God's journeying with men and women.

In contrast to a static understanding which makes of truth a timeless series of rational propositions, a quite different understanding operates in the Jewish-Christian tradition. There is no concept of the truth in the Bible. Wherever 'truth' or its cognate words appears it refers to a God who speaks - and through his speaking, acts. God's revelation has certainty and force. He is the norm - the meaning of life and of history.

The truth for the Jewish-Christian tradition is the encounter between God and humanity. The thought of the Bible is not substantial, neutral and abstract, but verbal, historical and personal. God is known in his relationship to men and women. God is known in relation to humanity, and humanity comes to self-knowledge in relation to God. This knowing is an event. God reveals himself; God communicates himself. This communication of God is above all seen in Jesus Christ who draws humanity into relationship with the Father and the Spirit. The Word is something which happens. The Truth is something which happens, which God does. In the encounter with God-with-us, God-for-us, men and women come to a fuller understanding of God, of themselves, of the meaning and purpose of life.

The truth is dynamic. God speaks, acts, accompanies the people. The very Hebrew word for the Word, *dabhar*, denotes this dynamic understanding. For John's Gospel 'truth' is divine reality, while 'speaking the truth' means 'bringing the revelation in words'.

The truth cannot then be constrained by human words. It cannot be tied down in words, or propositions. The Christian's apprehension of and articulation of the truth is always *penultimate*.<sup>24</sup> Christian theology does not state the last word on the understanding of God, humanity, the meaning of life. Rather, it expresses provisional understandings - to be amended as the Way is understood more, to be revised as the Way is lived in greater openness to the needs and insights of others. The formulae and expressions of Christian truth are signposts to the reality of God. The Holy Spirit guides the Church as she seeks to articulate the Gospel. The perception and articulation of the truth must be consonant with scripture and the experience of the Church through the ages. Through the exploration of scripture that which is opposed to and inconsistent with the truth becomes evident.

To encapsulate this understanding of truth, and the provisional nature of human understanding, Johannes Wollebius, the seventeenth-century Swiss theologian, used the phrase 'the theology of the Wayfarers'.<sup>25</sup> Wollebius saw that theological statements are relative, since human beings still 'see through a glass darkly'. Such theological statements need to be open to change in the light of the insights gained as the Way is travelled accompanied by him who is the Way. This perception of the nature of Christian life is well phrased in the Church of England's Doctrine Commission report *Christian believing*:

Christian life is an adventure, a voyage of discovery, a journey, sustained by faith and hope, towards a final and complete communion with the Love at the heart of all things. 26

As Christians and Christian communities respond to, and seek to reflect more evidently this dynamic divine-human encounter by seeking to manifest Christian unity, so they will self-critically learn from those of different traditions about their experiences of God's presence and activity with them, through which a greater understanding and appreciation of God's grace will be evident.

As Christians and Christian communities seek to manifest Christian community so they will make evident as sign and instrument God's intention for humankind, thus challenging all that tends towards isolation and division.

## Discussion Questions

1. What is your vision for the unity of the Church in Ireland?
2. What are the main barriers in Ireland (theological and non-doctrinal) which need to be overcome in the search to manifest unity? What steps might be taken to begin to overcome those barriers?
3. What opportunities present themselves to you for engaging in dialogue with members of a congregation or theological college of a different tradition? What steps can be taken to initiate such a dialogue?
4. What have the Irish Churches to learn from the experience of Churches in other situations?
5. On what basis can Christians of different traditions proclaim the basis of their faith together as a witness in Ireland today?
6. How can the Churches in Ireland grow towards a greater common concern for justice and social issues, such as is manifested in many other national Church experiences?

The Theological Questions Committee of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting would be grateful if you would share your reflections and insights on these questions with it by writing to:

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## Notes

1. Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation Section 11; Westminster Confession of Faith, Ch. 1; The Thirty-Nine Articles, Ch. 6.
2. Robert McAfee Brown, *The Ecumenical Revolution*, London, Burns and Oates 1967, p. 9.
3. Marc-Francois Lacan, 'Unity', in Xavier Leon-Dufour, *Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, London, Chapman 1973, p.624, stresses the importance of remaining 'in God' for the very maintenance of these human relationships.
4. Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology, Vol. 1*, Edinburgh, Oliver and Boyd 1962, p.129ff.
5. See Gerhard von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, Edinburgh, Oliver and Boyd 1966, Ch. 1.
6. See Ian Fraser, *The Fire Runs*, London, SCM 1975, p.104, for this translation of 'salvation'.
7. John Gray, *The Biblical Doctrine of the Reign of God*, Edinburgh, T & T Clark 1978, and Arthur Weiser, *The Psalms*, London, SCM 1962.
8. Cf. Walter Zimmerli, *Old Testament Theology in Outline*, Edinburgh, T & T Clark 1978.
9. See John Barton, 'Prophets and Prophecy' in R.J. Coggins and J.L. Houlden, *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, London, SCM 1990, pp.556-559 for discussion of individual and institutional prophets.
10. E.g. for each reading respectively see W.G. Kummel, *Promise and Fulfilment*, London SCM 1962; Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Psalms - Prayer Book of the Bible*, Minneapolis, Augsburg 1970; the justifica

tion of texts from the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament in a large number of hymns in the liturgical cycle of the Orthodox Churches.

11. See Paul Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament*, Philadelphia, Westminster Press 1960.
12. Oscar Cullmann, *Christology of the New Testament*, London, SCM 1959. Cullmann stresses that Jesus didn't use these titles of himself, but his disciples did at an early stage in the life of the Church.  
  
In contemporary theology, Christians are described as participating in the Ministry of Jesus - Prophet, Priest and King, through baptism.
13. See Mark Appold, *The Oneness Motif in the Fourth Gospel*, Tübingen, J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) 1976. Appold notes the reciprocal nature of the oneness statement describing the relationship between Jesus and the Father, and Jesus and the believers.
14. Cf. e.g. Decree on ecumenism, Ch.I, Section 2: Preamble to joint congregations of the Presbyterian and Methodist congregations.
15. See Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John, Vol.11*, London 1977.
16. Yves Congar, *Divided Christendom: A Catholic Study of the Problem of Reunion*, London 1939, p.48.
17. Nikos Nissiotis, 'The Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity for Church Life and Theology' in A.J. Phillippou (ed.), *The Orthodox Ethos*, Oxford, Holywell Press 1964.
18. The rootedness of the search for unity in the Holy Trinity is emphasised extensively in ecumenical literature and in the Decree on Ecumenism.
19. This participation is emphasised in many baptismal and ordination liturgies.

20. Cited in S. Amirtham and G.C. Moon (ed.), *The Teaching of Ecumenics*, Geneva, WCC, 1986, p.20.
21. Cf. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*, New York, Meridian 1957.

The importance of 'non-doctrinal' factors for the division of the Church is particularly evident in Ireland, where different churches have become 'chaplains' to different socio-economic and political communities, see, e.g. Donald Akenson, *Small Differences: Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants 1815-1922*, Montreal, McGill University Press 1988; Alan Falconer (ed.) *Reconciling Memories* Dublin, Columba Press 1988, and the various reports of the Faith and Politics Group, e.g. *Living the Kingdom*, Belfast 1989.

22. Cf. e.g. the pain of Thomas Chalmers and others who left the Church of Scotland to found the Free Church of Scotland.
23. John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, London, Mowbray 1975, p.173f.
24. Cf. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, Glasgow, Collins 1964, pp. 125ff.
25. Johannes Wallebius, *Compendium Theologiae Christianae*, Basel 1626. John Beardslee (ed. & trans.), *III Reformed Dogmatics*, Grand Rapids, Baker Book House 1977, p.29.
26. Doctrine Commission of the Church of England, *Christian Believing* London, SPCK, 1976, p.3.

*This booklet seeks to locate the search for Christian unity in scripture, and to outline the vision of unity which is central to the Gospel. Unity is not a peripheral concern for the life and witness of the Church, but a fundamental expression of being reconciled in Christ. Having explored the parameters of the Gospel vision, Ecumenical Principles outlines the ways in which this vision has been frustrated and presents ways to overcome the divisions which characterise the contemporary life of our churches.*