

Leuenberg Church Fellowship

The Church of Jesus Christ

The Contribution of the Reformation towards Ecumenical Dialogue on Church Unity

**Result of the consultation of the 4th General Assembly
of the Leuenberg Church Fellowship,
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Resolution of the General Assembly of 9th May 1994:

The General Assembly accepts the result of the consultations of the Leuenberg doctrinal conversations "The Church of Jesus Christ. The Contribution of the Reformation towards Ecumenical Dialogue on Church Unity" in the version of 9 May 1994. It requests the churches of the Leuenberg Fellowship to take this paper into account in their ecumenical conversation and in their further work.

(translated from the German original)

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The Church of Jesus Christ The Contribution of the Reformation towards Ecumenical Dialogue on Church Unity

Preface

At the 3. Assembly of the churches participating in the Leuenberg Agreement (18.-24. 3.1987 in Strasbourg) an **ecclesiological subject** was put on the agenda of the doctrinal conversations: The "distinguishing marks of the church as a community called and sent forth by Jesus Christ - the contribution of the churches of the Reformation to the ecumenical dialogue on church unity".

The Assembly recommended the following aspects and foci for the project:

- "No merely historical elaboration, but one determined by current problems (the ethical-missionary challenge for Christians, contextuality, the growing minorisation on the one hand and the tradition of the Volkskirche on the other - cf. the Tampere Theses of the Copenhagen regional group: 'Church Ministry Today', thesis 6, and 'Ecumenical Openness', part I, findings of the Berlin group, Drübeck 1986);
- the relationship between the ministry (priesthood) of all believers and the ordained ministry;
- the unity within the congregations and among the churches, and the diversity of gifts within the congregations and the churches;
- the Church as an institution guided by the Holy Spirit;
- the Church as sacrament and as the 'greatest sinner' (Martin Luther) - (compatibility of the Roman Catholic concept of the Church and the conception of Reformation theology);
- the relationship of the Christian community to the Jewish people within the framework of Reformation ecclesiology and from the perspective of our identity as a church."

Furthermore it ought to be examined how far the topic 'Holy Scripture and Tradition' (for instance as a reflection of fundamental theology) can be linked to these ecclesiological questions" (*Konkordie und Ökumene. Die Leuenberger Kirchengemeinschaft in der gegenwärtigen ökumenischen Situation. Texte der Konferenz von Straßburg*, ed. André Birmelé, Frankfurt/Main 1988, 149f.).

On the basis of preliminary studies at the Ecumenical Institutes of Bensheim, Berne and Strasbourg, the Executive Committee had developed a project sketch which was then sent for comment to the member churches of the Leuenberg Agreement. 17 of these churches responded. On the basis of these responses, the Executive Committee worked out three guide-lines for the project group in January 1989. Among others the theme of "Holy Scripture and Tradition" requested by the Assembly was temporarily postponed.

The guidelines were the following:

"1. It is necessary that the concept of the church must be made transparent as a consequence and application of the doctrine of justification according to the understanding of the Reformation (the priority of the Word of God, the priesthood of all believers, the fallibility of the church etc.).

2. Consideration should primarily be given to the dialogue between the Reformed, Lutheran, United and Waldensian churches and to the different resp. controversial concepts of the church among them. Secondly, the ecumenical openness towards other Christian churches and the model character of the Leuenberg Agreement are to be developed.

3. The declaration ought to be directed to the practical work of local congregations in their shared confessional and ecumenical existence and in their position over against their (atheistic, secularized and religious) environment.

In order to work on the present study the project group came together for a preparatory meeting in 1989 (Bergkirchen, Germany) and held four consultations (1989: Villigst, Germany; 1990: Driebergen, the Netherlands; 1991: Breklum, Germany; 1992: Sandbjerg, Denmark). The appendix to this statement contains the titles of all papers given at the consultations in chronological order.

On October 28, 1992 the Executive Committee discussed the provisional results of the project group. It was decided that after changes needed by way of corrections, additions and editorial amendments the document was to be sent to the participating churches of the Leuenberg Agreement and comments were requested by 31 October 1993. At the 5th consultation (2 - 5 Dec. 1993, Sigtuna/Sweden) the statement that is now presented received its final form by taking into account 24 statements by individuals, churches and church federations (representing approx. 40 churches). The project group presents this text through the Executive Committee to the General Assembly which has accepted it in its present version on 9 May 1994.

The study offers for the first time a shared reflection of the churches of the Reformation in Europe on the church and its calling. The study is intended to offer orientation on being Christians and on being a church according to the understanding of the Reformation in view of the challenges of our time and within the ecumenical context.

1 Introduction

1.1 Challenges to the churches

At the end of the 20th century the churches find themselves confronted with fundamental challenges. For their self-understanding two are of particular importance: The churches have to live in the **context** of increasingly multi-religious, multi-cultural and in part explicitly, in part tacitly secularist societies, and the **division** between the churches has not yet been overcome in spite of numerous ecumenical advances.

The challenges the **European** churches are faced with have acquired new dimensions owing to the social and historical transformations in the past few years. The majority of former socialist countries are now on the road towards becoming democratically constituted states and share in the cultural, national and religious **pluralism** spreading all over Europe. In other states the future is more uncertain: Newly awakened nationalism and religious fundamentalism are becoming sources of dangerous tensions and crises. In the states of the European Union there is some hope through the expansion of the common market and the establishment of institutions of shared responsibility. At the same time there are increasing worries and anxieties in view of socially and ecologically unpredictable developments.

These transformations have brought noticeable changes for the ecumenical situation. In their respective surroundings the churches are now faced with a twofold task: They have to explain in a transformed political, social and cultural context, which is in part characterized by ostentatious indifference towards the church, and in view of the prevailing divisions of the churches **what** the church is, **whereby** it is recognized and **which** specific contributions to the life of society can be expected from the churches.

1.2 Expectations from society

Belonging to a church is no longer taken for granted as part of life in society. The churches are nevertheless, and in spite of increased indifference towards life in the church, faced with a host of expectations. There are some in society who expect the churches to be institutions of **safe-guarding** traditional **identities** and to confront the pluralistic tendencies of modern societies. They are expected to counterbalance the multi-cultural and multi-religious currents of today's societies. Others see the churches as **engines of social change** or as **advocates** and **helpers** of people in need, under pressure and in critical situations of life: The experiences of the political and social transformations in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe have shown that the churches can offer a free space for the articulation of the longing for freedom and better orders of the common human life. Many expect the churches to provide **ethical orientation** on the fundamental issues of life.

1.3 Joint solutions to these tasks

The awareness is growing that towards the end of the 20th century the Christian churches can only tackle their tasks together. Certainly every church is individually responsible to see its special tasks in the light of its own binding traditions (confessions of faith etc.). Yet responsibility cannot be assumed in isolation in today's multi-cultural societies. For the churches this creates the necessity to cooperate **on the ground of the same origin and the same mission in the same world**. The churches that are signatories of the Leuenberg Agreement have pledged to witness and to serve together as an expression of their will for church fellowship (LA 35 and 36¹). The (Nordic) churches which have so far only participated in the Leuenberg Agreement also share in this commitment in different ways.

1.4 The starting point: The Leuenberg Agreement

The Leuenberg Agreement declares church Fellowship of the Lutheran, Reformed and United churches and their related pre-Reformation churches of the Waldensian and the Czech Brethren in Europe. The realisation of this fellowship by common witness and service in practice implies cooperation of churches of different traditions in doctrine, history and piety. In some countries churches of the Reformation are still state churches, in others they exist independent of the state as *Volkskirchen* or in similar forms of organisation, and still in others they are minority churches alongside other, numerically dominant churches or other religions and world-views. They all belong to different denominations but on the basis of "the consensus they have reached in their understanding of the gospel" they have "fellowship in word and sacrament" and strive for the greatest possible "cooperation in witness and service to the world" (LA 29).

The "Leuenberg Church Fellowship" became possible because Reformation theology makes a fundamental distinction between the **foundation**, the **shape** and the **mission** of the church. The foundation of the church is God's action to save humankind first in the people of Israel, then in Jesus Christ. In this fundamental action God himself is the subject, and consequently the church is an object of faith. Since the church is a community of believers the **shape** of the church has taken various historical forms. The one church of faith (singular) is present in a hidden manner in churches (plural) shaped in different ways.² The **mission** of the church is its task to witness before all humankind to the gospel of the coming of the Kingdom of God in word and action. In order to achieve unity of the church in the diversity of these shapes it is sufficient "that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word" (Augsburg Confession VII).

This shared understanding of the gospel is described in the Leuenberg Agreement. It interprets the gospel as "the message of Jesus Christ, the salvation of the world, in fulfilment of the promise given to the people of the Old Covenant" (LA 7). The Agreement finds the "true understanding" of this good news in the doctrine of justification according to the understanding of the Reformation (LA 8). This doctrine understands the message of Christ (LA 9) as the word through which God "by his Holy Spirit calls all men to repent and believe" (LA 10), which promises righteousness in Christ to all believers and thus liberates and enables them for a "responsible service in the world" (LA 11). This expresses not only the foundation of the faith of individual Christians, it states at the same time **what the church lives by**, namely the gospel as a "power of God" (Rom. 1:16). With this it is also decided **how** and **what for** Christians and the churches exist in the world.

1.5 The structure of the document

This document approaches the description of the understanding of the church from the doctrine of justification of the Reformation and unfolds it in three steps:

- The **nature** of the church as founded in the world through God's Word and sent into the world as the communion of saints (chap. I);
- The **challenges** for witness and service posed for this community in **today's society** (chap. II);
- The concept of **church unity** as contained in the understanding of the church by the Reformation and its implications for the **unification of the churches** (chap. III).

¹ LA refers to the Leuenberg Agreement, the following number to the numbered statements of the Agreement.

² In the study the plural 'churches' always refers to the different historical shapes of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church; the singular refers normally to the church of faith, unless there are additional adjectives like 'visible', 'concrete' etc.

Chapter I: THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH AS THE COMMUNITY OF SAINTS

"Thank God, a seven-year-old child knows what the church is, namely, holy believers and sheep who hear the voice of their Shepherd" (John 10:3) (Martin Luther, The Smalcald Articles III, 12).

"What do you believe concerning the Holy Catholic Church? I believe that, from the beginning to the end of the world, and from among the whole human race, the Son of God, by his Spirit and his Word, gathers, protects, and preserves for himself, in the unity of the true faith, a congregation chosen for eternal life. Moreover, I believe that I am and forever will remain a living member of it" (The Heidelberg Catechism, question 54f.).

These sentences from programmatic confessional texts of the Reformation take up the fundamental statement of the Apostolic Creed. The church is the community of saints. For that matter all deliberations about the church must start from the insight: The church consists of us Christians who as sinful and mortal human beings have been brought together in faith by God to be a community of saints. The church is therefore the community of sinners pardoned and sanctified by God in its concrete existence in congregations and churches. The churches of the Reformation share the conviction with other Christian denominations that this community does not have its **foundation** and **mission** in itself, that therefore its **shape** is not arbitrary and that it cannot autonomously set itself its own **historical tasks**. This action of God provides the norms for shaping the church and defines its mission from which then results the commission of Christians.

1 Origin and foundation of the church - what the church lives by

1.1 The justifying action of the triune God

The justifying action of the triune God is the content of the gospel. It is normatively proclaimed in Holy scripture by "acknowledging Jesus Christ

- as the one in whom God became man and bound himself to man
- as the crucified and risen one who took God's judgment upon himself and in so doing demonstrated God's love to sinners, and
- as the coming one who, as Judge and Saviour leads the world to its consummation" (LA 9).

The church **has its foundation** in the Word of the triune God. It is the **creature of the Word calling for faith** by which God reconciles and relates the alienated and rebellious human race to himself by justifying and sanctifying it in Christ, by renewing it in the Holy Spirit and by calling it to be his people.

In this way the church is God's people chosen in Christ, gathered and nurtured by the Holy Spirit, on its way through time towards its consummation in the Kingdom of God. The church has its origin and lasting foundation in this all-encompassing action of God.

1.2 The living witness of the gospel as an instrument of the Holy Spirit

This good news is addressed to all people since Jesus Christ has died on the cross for all. Every human being is a creature of God and destined for fellowship with him. In the proclaimed word and in the sacraments "administered according to the Gospel" (Augsburg Confession VII) we encounter God's justifying action. Through the Holy Spirit who **creates** the living witness of God's justification and uses it as **his** instrument the word of proclamation is inscribed unto our hearts. "Whoever puts his trust in the gospel is justified in God's sight for the sake of Jesus Christ and set free from the accusation of the law" (LA 10). As the assurance of God's grace the gospel lays claim on the whole of our life and liberates us to live in accordance with the will of the triune God for his creation. "In daily

repentance and renewal he (i.e. the believer) lives with the fellowship in praise of God and in service to others, in the assurance that God will bring his kingdom in all its fullness" (LA 10). Such creative action of God is the foundation of the church as "the community of saints".

1.3 The fellowship that springs from the living witness of the gospel

In receiving the justifying grace of God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit people are joined in community with each other. The **Spirit of God** does not isolate but **unites**. The Spirit is the power of community originating from the oneness of the Father and the Son (cf. 2 Cor. 13:13 with Rom 15:13 and 2 Tim. 1:7) in whom people who find their orientation in God's word in the biblical word, **witness to the gospel** and **celebrate the sacraments**. Thereby the Holy Spirit gathers and builds the church as the community of believers: "In preaching, baptism and the Lord's Supper, Jesus Christ is present through the Holy Spirit. Justification in Christ is thus imparted to men and in this way the Lord gathers his people" (LA 13). In baptism "Jesus irrevocably receives man, fallen prey to sin and death, into his fellowship of salvation" and "in the power of his Holy Spirit calls him into his community" (LA 14). In the Lord's Supper "he enables us to experience anew that we are members of his body" (LA 15). The communion in the gifts of grace (communio sanctorum) is the community of saints (communio sanctorum; cf. Heidelberg Catechism 55 and Martin Luther, Large Catechism, article 3).

By acting in this way towards us Jesus Christ at the same time grants us insight into what **he** alone can and will do and into what we then can and ought to do. Thus the experience of Christ is always also the experience of the freedom and responsibility of faith.

1.4. The foundation of the church as the origin of Christian freedom

God's justifying action does not exclude **independent** and **free** human **action**, but provides a foundation for it and qualifies it, requires it and creates space for it as the freedom of faith. People recognise what God alone can do and thereby become free to do what is entrusted to them. This provides them with the foundation to shape the community of believers, its order and ministries in the freedom of faith, to tolerate differences and to respond to historical transformations in church and society, but shows them also the limits of such activity.

In the freedom of faith Christians and the church can and ought to go forward and witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ within their respective contexts. Changes in society or in the forms of life and order of the church do not have to result in a loss of identity; on the contrary: they offer opportunities for new spiritual experiences when the church lives with commitment from its foundation. The **courage to change**, to repent and to shape church and society anew and the readiness to except changes are signs of the life the church draws from the gospel. The preservation of the church is promised to the church in the gospel (Mt 16:18; 28:20). In trusting in this promise crises can be borne and mastered. It is therefore necessary that in all the challenges of its existence the churches seek direction for their actions in the proclamation of the gospel through word and sacrament.

2 The shape of the church - how the church lives

2.1 The church as the body of Christ

In its historical life the church expresses itself as the body of Christ: "Now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is part of it" (1 Cor 12:27). The biblical image of the body expresses **how the church lives and in what it has its continued existence**. The church is the community of persons whose unity among themselves is based on their unity with Christ (1 Cor 12:12f). The community of

the members draws its life from the fact that they all equally contribute to the building of the church in accordance with the diversity of their God-given talents (1 Cor 12:12-31; Rom 12:4-8).

The words that Christ be the **head** of the body (Col 1:18; Eph 4:15) emphasise that the church does not have the ground for its unity in itself but in Christ as its living and acting Lord in the Spirit. The image of the body contains itself the **relationship** of all the different gifts and tasks in the unity of the church. All questions of the life of the church are therefore from the time of the New Testament onwards assessed and decided on the basis of this criterion of unity in diversity (cf. 1 Cor 12-14).

2.2 The church of faith and the visible reality of the churches

The church as the creature of the divine word cannot simply be equated with one of the historical churches or with the entirety of all churches. The church is an object of faith. That is why the tradition of the Reformation distinguishes **two ways of speaking** about the church and relates them to each other. On the one hand, the church is an **object of faith** and on the other, it is at the same time a **visible community**, a social reality that can be experienced in the diversity of historical forms and shapes. The distinction between these two ways of speaking must not be misunderstood in such a sense as if the visible reality of the church were the false church. The visible church has the task of witnessing in its shapes and forms to its original nature.

According to the insight of the Reformers it is of fundamental importance to distinguish correctly and relate to each other the action of God and human action in the life of the church. The activity of the church receives its orientation from the **distinction** between what we faithfully may expect and accept from God and what we have been asked to do as witness to God's grace in Jesus Christ.

The certainty of faith cannot be created by human action. That people are guided to this certainty exclusively remains the action of God for which God uses the action of the church as his instrument. God's action in creation, reconciliation and consummation cannot, according to the insight of the Reformers, be vicariously assumed or continued on his behalf by the church. Institutions or traditions of the church cannot be invested with the authority of God. That is why the confession of God's action as the foundation and goal of the church reminds the church of the **limits of all human activity** - also in the church.

The **activity of the church** must point away from itself. It is **witness** to the justifying action of the triune God. The activity of the church occurs under the responsibility to witness credibly, competently and invitingly to the grace of God as the salvation of the world. The practice of the church gains credibility when the life of the church in all its forms points to God.

The activity of the church which knows itself to be founded and limited by God's action occurs in the trust that God, in faithfulness to his promise, uses the human witness of the truth of the gospel to lead people into the fellowship of faith. This happens where and when it pleases God (Ausburg Confession V). Thus the action of the church is included in the action of the triune God.

2.3 The attributes of the church of faith

The church is the community of believers founded by the Holy Spirit through word and sacrament. Because of its origin it is characterized by "original" or essential attributes which are reflected in the creeds of the ancient church. The church is the **one, holy, catholic (universal), apostolic** church.

The **unity** of the church as the community of saints is rooted in the unity of its origin, i. e. in the unity of the triune God who in the power of the reconciliation in Jesus Christ consummates the creation through the Holy Spirit. According to the understanding of the Reformation this unity is therefore not

an ideal still to be achieved by the churches' own activity, but it has been given to Christians and to the churches as the work of God. Thus the churches are faced with the task to witness in visible ways to this gift of God as the foundation for living fellowship among the churches in the diversity of their historical shapes and forms of organisation.

The church is **holy** because of the holiness of its origin. It is holy in so far as God has overcome the power of sin in Jesus Christ, sanctifies people in the Holy Spirit by the assurance of forgiveness and thus gathers them together to be the community of saints. Holiness is for that matter not primarily the objective of human living in the church but a gift of God to the church as a community of justified sinners who accept the grace of God as the foundation of the shaping of their common life. As the community of people sanctified by God Christians and churches together face the task of shaping their lives in obedience to the commandments of God. That is why this community, the church itself, time and again must confess its guilt knowing itself to be the "greatest sinner" (M. Luther). Precisely because it is holy, it can ask for forgiveness (Cf. WA [Weimar edition] 34/I, p. 276, 8-13).

Because of its origin the church is **catholic (universal)**. Since the church has its origin in God's word as the salvation of the whole world it is not limited by natural human communities, but it is all-encompassing (catholic) as a community created by God. The life of the church is communion with the triune God. Therefore Christians and churches are faced with the task to make it possible that this gift of God can be experienced by the shaping of their lives, in transcending national, racial, social, cultural and gender-specific boundaries. In its catholicity the church carries the promise of the community comprising all humankind.

Because of its origin the church is **apostolic**: The Word of God which constitutes the church is the authentic word of the gospel as it is given to us in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. In so far as the church is built on that foundation it is apostolic. According to the understanding of the Reformation the manner of practising apostolic succession is the **continuous return to the apostolic witness**. This obligates the church to the authentic and missionary witness of the gospel of Jesus Christ in faithfulness to the apostolic message (cf. 1 Cor 15:1-3) to which it owes its existence. Where the spirit of God authenticates this message as the truth for people (cf. John 16:13) the apostolicity of the church as a **successio fidelium** throughout the generations becomes reality. The successio fidelium does not exclude the successio ordinis (succession in the ordered ministry) but is the condition for it. The apostolicity of the church is according to the understanding of the Reformation not guaranteed by the historical continuity in the episcopal ministry of the church. The revelation of God in Christ which is the foundation of the church is not a deposit conferred upon the ecclesial ministry or even being at its disposal.

2.4 The marks of the true church

The distinction between the church of faith and the visible church is not identical with the distinction between the **true** and the **false church**. Yet this distinction is also important and has always been underlined by the theology of the Reformers.

This distinction refers to the visible church. Not every shape of church is in fact an expression of the true one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. The church can in its concrete shape become a false church if the witness that is entrusted to it is falsified in word and deed. It is the task of the ecclesial community constantly to examine its shape and to reform it (*ecclesia semper reformanda*) so that it is in accordance with its essential attributes and nature given in its origin.

2.4.1 The classical marks of the church

No church can fulfil this task completely and exclusively. Its fulfilment is ultimately not a matter of human judgment. In consequence, it can become contentious where the *una sancta catholica et apostolica ecclesia* exists concretely. Therefore the Reformers emphasised special marks, "**notae**" (marks) or as Luther put it, "**Wahrzeichen**" (marks of recognition), which are to facilitate the recognition of a concrete visible church as a member of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. These are according to the Reformers the true proclamation of the gospel and the celebration of the sacraments in accordance with their institution. With this the Reformers claimed to identify those fundamental features of the visible life of the church through which the origin of the church presents itself and through which a church holds fast to its origin. Through this origin it is a true church.

2.4.2 Further marks

In addition to these classical marks the Reformers mentioned further "marks". Through them God's grace makes itself present as well. They comprise for Luther (cf. *Of Councils and the Church*) in addition to the Word of God, baptism and the Lord's Supper the office of the keys (confession of sin and absolution), the order of the ministry of the word (bishops, ministers etc.), prayer, suffering for the sake of the gospel and also obedience to the second table of the Ten Commandments. In a similar way the *Confessio Bohemica* of 1575 talks about five "certain and infallible marks" of the true church. To the two classical marks are added: church discipline, the cross, suffering oppression for the sake of the truth, obedience to the gospel and the law of Christ, especially brotherly love. In the Reformed tradition the marks of church discipline (*disciplina*) and of the obedience of faith were added (cf. *Leiden Synopsis* XL, 45).

Under the "marks" which can be experienced is also counted the Christian life, the Christians' service to God in the everyday life in the world.

The latter marks (obedience to the second table of the Commandments) differ from the former that are related to word and sacraments in two important respects:

- they are not as unambiguous as the former. One cannot recognise from the good works of Christians in the everyday life of the world whether and in what way they are being done in faith. Furthermore, individual Christians may respond to the same challenges with different decisions and actions. This already points to the second characteristic of these marks:
- they belong to the responsibility of all individual Christians and are therefore not primarily visible in the shape of the church but in the life of its members.

For clarity's sake one must distinguish between the **marks of the Christian life** and the **marks of the true church**, i. e. Word and sacrament.

2.4.3 Identity and relevance

The Christian life and the life of the visible church are not identical although they belong constitutively together: the Christian life comprises the witness of the whole life of all believers. It extends beyond the realm of the visible church into the everyday life of Christians and therefore into the life of society. Of course, it also includes keeping the Commandments of the first table: witnessing to the gospel by word and sacraments. In this way the visible church takes shape within the Christian life. Therefore the Christian life is itself fundamental for the concrete shape of the church.

Conversely, the Christian life itself remains dependent on word and sacrament and on their practise and exercise. Only by being gathered around word and sacrament the Christian life holds fast to its origin through which it acquires its identity and concreteness as life in the *communio sanctorum*.

Thereby it also becomes identifiable for society. Through Reformation theology's insistence on the significance of the appropriate proclamation of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments according to the gospel as the **fundamental marks** of the church the wide-spread and misleading misunderstanding that true Christianity becomes identifiable by what the world regards as good works is once and for all contradicted.

Therefore we have to say: Just as word and sacraments are the primary, i. e. the original and fundamental marks of the true church, so is participation in the visible church as the place of gathering around word and sacraments the primary and unambiguous mark of the Christian life.

Loss of identity of the Christian life and **loss of relevance** of the proclamation of the church always indicates that the connection between the proclamation together with the celebration of the sacraments on the one hand and the Christian life in the everyday life of society on the other is distorted.

2.5 "Witness and service" as marks of the church and of the Christian life

The Leuenberg agreement refers to "witness and service" as the fruits of faith for which the gospel liberates as the power of God. In this connection it distinguishes between "witness and service" as marks of the Christian life (cf. LA 11 and 13) and as marks of the church (cf. LA 29 and 36). In this way it instructs us to understand the words "witness and service" concretely and in a differentiated manner:

- both are essentially connected but are not identical: "witness and service" of the Christian life cannot and ought not to be replaced by "witness and service" of ecclesial organisations and *vice versa*. This has to be especially observed since both are mutually dependent.
- in both cases "witness and service" refer to two aspects of the obedience of faith in the whole of life and not to two separate realms. "Witness" should not be understood as keeping the first and "service" as keeping the second table of the Ten Commandments, but as the active fulfilment of the whole will of God in both tables. It is in both tables **always** "witness" **and** service" **together**, both in the Christian life and in the activity of the visible church.

It would, consequently, be wrong, first of all, to understand "witness and service" only as the marks of the visible church; and then, secondly, to divide in addition "witness and service" between two institutional spheres so that the institutions of worship and of the tradition of the gospel (*traditio evangelii*) are regarded as institutions of witness and the institutions of the diaconic work of the church as the institutions of service. Both institutions and spheres only exists together. All institutions of the church are always at the same time institutions of witness and of service. These mistakes should be avoided in speaking about witness and service as the marks of the visible church. This shall now be done:

2.5.1 "Witness and service" - ministry and ministries

Witness and service of the church need the institutions of worship and of the tradition of the Gospel. Therefore an order of ministries (an 'ordered ministry') on the basis of the universal priesthood of believers is required.

2.5.1.1 On the way towards consensus

As "a helpful stimulus for further work on a shared contribution ... in ecumenical conversation" the General Assembly at Strasbourg 1987 received a number of **Theses on the Discussion of the Ministry Today** (the so-called "**Tampere Theses**"). The most important statements shall here be repeated:

"Thesis 1: Word - Church - Ministry

According to the common understanding of the Reformation, the church is constituted as "Jesus Christ becomes present in her as Lord in word and sacrament through the Holy Spirit" (Barmen III) and creates faith. In conformity with Christ's institution there is a ministry pertaining to word and sacrament, the *ministerium verbi* (CA V), "of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments". The Lutheran tradition understands this office more from the word which is the basis of the church; the Reformed tradition by contrast sees this office as more as pertaining to the correct order of the church. The churches from both traditions which have signed or are participating in the Leuenberg Agreement concur that the "ordained ministry" belongs to the being of the church.

The churches which come from the Reformation emphasise, however, that the whole congregation and not just the ordained ministry have responsibility for the proclamation of the word and for the right use of the sacraments. The ordained ministry alone and as such does not guarantee the true being of the church but remains subordinate to the Word of God.

Thesis 2: General priesthood - ordained ministry

The proclamation of the gospel and the offer of a saving fellowship are entrusted to the congregation as a whole and to its members who through baptism are called to witness Christ and to serve each other and the world and who through faith have a share in Christ's priestly office of intercession. In order to maintain constant and public proclamation of the gospel and to maintain correct doctrine trained members of the congregation are specially chosen and ordained. As servants of the Word they should also confront and comfort the congregation with the Word of God and dispense the sacraments to them thus serving the unity of the congregation. Together with the diverse witness and various services of the congregation they should represent it before the world.

The ministry of the Word in the exercise of proclamation as well as in instruction and pastoral care always depends on the universal priesthood of the congregation and should serve it, as also the universal priesthood of the congregation and of all who have been baptised depends upon the special service of the proclamation of the word and the administration of the sacraments. Thus, according to the understanding of the Reformation the ordained office rests upon a particular commission of Christ and at the same time stands together with the whole congregation in his service under the word of God.

Thesis 3: The service of leadership (episkopé) - ecumenical perspectives

The task of leadership of the community also belongs to the service of the word. The Lutheran as well as the Reformed and the United churches recognise pastoral care and episkopé as belonging to the ordained ministry both in the individual congregation and also at a level (regional and beyond that, national) going beyond the congregation. Nevertheless, the churches which have arisen from the Reformation emphasise that the responsibility for the proclamation of the gospel is the obligation for the whole congregation and that the leadership

of the congregation is also exercised through other ministries and does not only fall to the ordained ministry.

The Lutheran churches, especially in Scandinavia, put more stress on continuity with the historical office of the bishop whereas the Reformed churches are committed in principle to a presbyterial-synodical order. Nonetheless, the churches participating in the Leuenberg Agreement concur in regarding the service of episcopé as a service of the Word for the unity of the church and that in all churches the non-ordained members of the congregation also participate in the leadership of the church. They intend in this way also to incorporate the personal, collegiate and communal dimensions in their thinking about and approach to the ordained ministry.

Although the churches participating in the Leuenberg Agreement have come from their historically conditioned traditions with differing structures of church leadership, they are nevertheless agreed that such differences in church structures do not impede a "church fellowship" in the sense of pulpit and table fellowship. The reciprocal acknowledgement of the ministry and ordination is not impeded as long as the question of church leadership remains subordinate to the sovereignty of the Word. They also recognise that in the wider ecumenical discussion they can and should learn from other, non-Reformation, churches, but they hold that no single historically arisen form of church leadership and ministerial structure can or may be laid down as a prior condition for fellowship and for mutual recognition." (Published in: Konkordie und Ökumene, pp. 64-66)

2.5.1.2 Implications of the Tampere Theses

These important theses document both the fundamental consensus and the different interpretations concerning the ministry as well as the diversity of forms in shaping the ministry. It is, however, decisive that these differences do not call church fellowship in word and sacrament into question, since these differences do not refer to the foundation but to the **shape of the church**. There is fundamental consensus in the conviction that

- all Christians participate through faith and baptism in the offices of Christ as prophet, priest and king and all are called to witness and to hand on the gospel and to intercede before God for one another (priesthood of all believers);
- that the ministry of the public proclamation of the gospel and of the administration of the sacraments is fundamental and necessary for the church. Where the church exists it needs an "ordered ministry" of the public proclamation of the gospel and of the administration of the sacraments. There is diversity in the ways in which this ministry is perceived and shaped. This diversity is shaped by historical experiences and determined by the different interpretations of the task of the ministry. We can accept the different forms of the ministries in our churches as spiritual wealth and as a gift of God. In this sense the historical episcopate and the structured ministry in a synodical and presbyteral form of church order can both be appreciated as serving the unity of the church. The criterion for perceiving ministries and services is the fundamental commission of the church.
- that the ministry of public proclamation is conferred through ordination (the "ordained ministry" in the terminology of the Lima documents). It is rooted in a special commission of Christ but it is always dependent on the priesthood of all believers (Neuendettelsau-Theses 3 A - cf. Konkordie und Ökumene, pp. 72-77). The Word of God constitutes this ministry which serves the justification of the sinner. It has a serving function for Word and faith.
- that the expression "ordered ministry" refers to the totality of all ministries and services in the church in the sense of thesis 3 of the Tampere Theses. The ministry confessed through ordination is part of this ministry.

2.5.2 "Witness and service" - in the institutions of the diaconic work of the church

The visible church has not only to contribute to the keeping of the commandments of the first table, but also to the keeping of the commandments of the second. Therefore institutions of the diaconic work of the church in its widest sense are necessary. For the work of these institutions full-time staff is required. They take part in the ordered ministry of the church. The work of the institutions of the diaconic work of the church and their full-time staff does not replace the diaconic engagement of all believers in their everyday life, but should inspire, aid it and support it.

2.5.3 "Witness and service" - the unity of the tradition of the gospel and the diaconic work

For the order of the visible church which is in accordance with its commission the institutions of worship and of the tradition of the gospel on the one hand and those of the diaconic work of the church on the other have to be ordered in such a way that **both** are acknowledged as **institutions of witness and service**. If anywhere in these two spheres only service is emphasised, activism threatens, if only the witness in worship is stressed, spiritualism and quietism threaten.

2.5.4 "Witness and service" - the necessary correspondence between the practice and the origin of the church

It is the criterion of appropriate ecclesial practice that the origin of the church in God's justifying action is witnessed and becomes recognizable through it.

Since the church as the community of saints constituted by the Word of God is one, the ecclesial practice of proclamation and the celebration of the sacraments must be questioned as to how it expresses this unity. The same applies to the diaconic work of the church. - For the witness of the Lord's Supper it is, for instance, true that willingness to accept Christians from other denominations is able to express the unity of the Christian churches even under the conditions of division among Christians.

Since the church as the community of people sanctified by God is **holy**, the ecclesial practice of witnessing must be measured by how far it corresponds to this in its praxis of the word and sacraments. - By taking care of the poor, of foreigners and strangers, of the homeless, of those who are discriminated and the underprivileged, of those threatened in their right to live and in their human dignity the church bears witness to the fact that every human being stands before God accepted as God's creature.

Since the church is founded on the Word of God as the salvation of the world, it is **catholic**, i.e. universal. That is why the witness and service of a church can be judged by the way in which they publicly proclaim and express the comprehensive claim and promise of the Word of God. - Thus, for instance, the exclusion from the Lord's Table on the grounds of belonging to a certain race is an injury inflicted upon the body of Christ and therefore not only an ethical, but a Christological heresy (which justifies the status confessionis).

Since the Word of God which is the foundation of the church is the original message of Christ **entrusted to the apostles** and **witnessed** by them the churches' practice of witnessing must satisfy the criterion of the authenticity of its witness. The continuous self-examination of the shape of the church in the light of its origin belongs to the apostolic being of the church.

3 The mission of the church and the commission of Christians - what the church lives for

3.1 The election as the basis of the mission of the church - the church as the people of God.

"Before the foundation of the world God chose us in Christ to be his people, to be without blemish in his sight, to be full of love." (Eph 1:3-6, 9-11; 3:11 together with 1 Cor 2:7; Col 1:12-18; Hebr 1:1f and John 1:1ff.). This election is the basis for the mission of the church: to be the light of the world (Mt 5:14) "to proclaim the glorious deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9) and to make known "the wisdom of God in its infinite variety to the rulers and authorities" (Eph 3:10).

This election of the Church is inseparably connected with the election of Israel as the people of God (Ex 19:5f; 1 Kings 8:53; Ps 77: 16.21; Is 62:12). As his people God has called Israel to faith (Is 7:9) and has shown it through his guidance the way to life (Ex 20:1-17; Deut 30:15-20) and has in this way made it the light of the nations (Is 42:6). This promise to Israel has not been rendered invalid by the Christ event because God's faithfulness upholds it (Rom 11:2.29).

The church as the people of God (1 Peter 2:9f) is the community of believers called by Christ from among Jews and Gentiles alike (Rom 9:24). Faith comes from the Word of God which subjects all, Gentiles and Jews alike, under God's judgement (Rom 3:9), calls them to repentance and promises them grace (Rom 3:28ff). Christians believe that the mission of the church as it is disclosed in Jesus Christ will be fulfilled in such a way that when the Gentiles have been admitted in full strength the "whole of Israel" will be saved (Rom 11:25f together with Rom 15:8f)³.

3.2 Scope and clarity of the mission of the church

The church has been called to be an instrument of God for the actualisation of God's universal will to salvation. It will fulfil this task if it remains in Christ, the infallible sole instrument of salvation. The certainty that this promise of God is reliable liberates and enables Christians and churches to witness to the world and for the world.

As this promise of the gospel comprises all human life its mission to be an instrument of God's will to salvation sends the church into **all spheres of life**. There is no dimension of life to which the promise of the gospel does not apply, and there is no sphere of life to which God's commandment does not grant orientation. The comprehensive nature of the message entrusted to it determines the scope of the mission of the church. Every regional or national limitation of the practice of witness and service would run counter to the universality of God's will to salvation and to the mission of the church as it is rooted in it.

The churches of the Reformation have tried in different ways to do justice both to the **scope** of their mission and to the **clarity** of their witness and service.

- Where the churches of the Reformation exist as a **majority church**, they have been able to lend expression to the scope of its mission in many areas of the life of society: in the diaconic work of the church, in the field of education, in the area of counselling and in its work in public relations. The stimulus to extend the work of the church to these areas of the life of society corresponds to the radical character of the insight according to which the gospel has a claim on the whole of life. Today many churches coming from the tradition of a *Volkskirche* are faced with the question whether their involvement in large areas of the life of society still outlines clearly enough the specific features and the uniqueness of their Christian witness.

³ The relationship of Jews and Christians, of Israel and the church requires further doctrinal consultations among the churches participating in the Leuenberg church fellowship.

- Where churches of the Reformation exist as **minority churches**, the Reformation insight of the claim of the gospel on the whole of life has resulted in a distinction from the majority of society. Such delimitation can be beneficial for witnessing and can be experienced as a liberation. It then results in "non-conformist" form of life which claims to have the character of witness. It is true, however, that in such cases it often becomes necessary to distinguish this "non-conformist" practice of witness from a sectarianism which can withdraw from constructive engagement for the whole.

The churches of the Reformation are together faced with the task **to do justice to the scope of their mission without sacrificing the clarity of their witnessing**. On the other hand, they are to present their message in such a way that the scope of their mission which is founded on the comprehensive promise of the gospel is not limited in any way.

From the mission of the church results the **commission** for the activity of **Christians** as leiturgia (communal worship), martyria (public witness to the truth of the gospel), diakonia (seeking the best for the world) and koinonia (working towards a community of all people and creatures corresponding to fellowship with God).

3.3. The commission of Christians

3.3.1 The commission of Christians to worship

The whole life of Christians is to be led under the commission to be worship to God. In the narrower sense this is liturgical celebration (leiturgia), in its wider interpretation it is "reasonable worship" (logike latreia, Rom 12: 2) in the everyday life of the world which is indicated by the three notions of martyria, diakonia and koinonia.

The gathering of the congregation for worship has a **fundamental** and **permanent** significance for the whole of reasonable worship, i. e. the witness of the Christian life. Through the celebration of worship Christians experience and witness the origin and character of their whole life in faith. In proclaiming and hearing the gospel and in handing out and receiving the sacraments Christians turn to the foundation of the church in God's justifying action and are confirmed in their commission to witness and to serve.; at the same time they yearn for the future consummation of their fellowship in the universal realisation of God's saving action.

The relationship with God promised in word and sacrament and accepted in faith finds expression in the celebration of worship in various ways:

- as calling to God in praise, thanksgiving, petition and lamentation,
- as proclaiming and receiving the gospel in word and sacrament,
- as the confession of sin and guilt,
- as the confession of faith in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
- as the promise of freedom and the claim of God's will,
- as the intercession for the church, for the state and the needs of the world,
- as the promise and the acceptance of God's blessing.

Since the life of Christians as reasonable worship is rooted in the justifying action of God, proclaiming and hearing the gospel as the promise of God's grace as witnessed in the Bible for the congregation are at the **centre** of worship.

3.3.2 The commission of Christians to witness (martyria)

The whole life of Christians is placed under the commission to witness to the gospel of the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Christians follow this commission by **publicly confessing** the gospel (homologia). In this sense the following quotation from Psalm 119: 46 is used on the title page of the Augsburg

Confession in the confessional writings of the Lutheran church: "I will speak of your statutes before kings and will not be put to shame."

In addition to public worship there have to be further institutions and forms of the tradition of the gospel. Part of this is, for instance, the constantly renewed effort in scholarly theology to understand the biblical message of Christ clearly as a prerequisite for the competent practice of the ministries of the church and as an aid for the authentic proclamation of the gospel. The tradition of the gospel occurs in theological research and teaching, in the work of church academies and education centres, in conversation with other world-views and ideologies, in statements by the church on important public issues.

Special emphasis must be placed on the obligation of parents and adults to pass on the gospel from generation to generation for children and young people. If it is not in the families that parents exercise their "ministry", i.e. the obligation to bear witness, the public worship of the congregation cannot, in human terms, unfold its full capacities. The church has to provide support for parents in this task through appropriate institutions (nursery schools, religious education, schools, adult- and family education etc.). It should not be denied that one can come to believe without growing up in a Christian home; neither it is claimed that a Christian home necessarily leads to faith.

The task of passing on the gospel that is given to all Christians includes faithfulness to their fundamental Christian conviction in their public working lives. They are called to make the **truth** of the gospel of Christ as they have come to know it the guide-line and criterion **for interpreting and shaping of the reality of life**. However, in doing so the gospel may not be falsely turned into law. This happens when particular instructions for particular situations are posited as universal divine commandments and obedience to them is presented as the way to salvation (or as the condition for salvation).

The obedience of faith can also encounter contradiction and lead into oppression and suffering. Faith requires and enables Christians to endure this. The church gratefully remembers women and men who had to lose their lives for their Christian faith.

3.3.3 The commission of Christians to serve (diakonia)

As in Acts and for Paul the **ministry of proclamation** and the **service "at the table"**, i.e. diakonia, though being different, belong for Christians closely together (cf. Acts 6: 1ff; Rom 12: 1-21; Gal 6: 2-10). The assistance provided in the diakonia of the church is manifold. It ranges from feeding the poor to "financial transfer" (2 Cor 8 and 9), from hospitality in the church to working for the good of all (Gal 6:10). In being directed not only to members of the church but to all people in need, the diaconate of Christians corresponds to the universality of salvation.

Over against the distinction of clergy and laity and the concomitant higher regard given to the service of the clergy the Reformers explicitly emphasised Christian witness in the family and in worldly professions as "reasonable worship". At the same time they declared the exercise of political responsibility by Christians in state and society, but also in schools and universities to be equal to the clergy.

This service of Christians in everyday life, emphasised so much by the Reformers, includes appreciation for the professional character of such service. This, however, also contains a typically Protestant problem, namely, the **growing apart of witness and service** of Christians which were still inseparably linked in such "professions" as that of deacon and deaconess. For Christians living in the everyday life of the world and having to exercise their being Christians in this context there is today the urgent task of practising and confirming afresh the connection between witness and service - not

only in the social and diaconic work of the church but also in secular professions (e.g. as lawyers, journalists, politicians, managers, doctors etc.). Many churches meet the increasing challenges for diaconic work with a **political diakonia** which is not only concerned with individuals in need, but also with the social tasks of society (e.g. in statements on social ethics or thorough institutions of diakonia: hospitals, counselling services, telephone ministry etc.). It is especially the social engagement of the churches that still helps them today to gain a broad response and acceptance in society. The church does not thereby replace the service of individual Christians, but supplements and supports it.

3.3.4 The commission of Christians for life in community (koinonia)

The community of believers **encompasses, relativizes and transcends the natural, social and national forms of community** in human life and differs from such communities that determine their cohesion by way of the common interests of their members.

The community of believers is a **reconciled community**. It is **lived** in daily repentance and renewal. It is thus aware of the dangers and fragility of all forms of human community and therefore is made responsible to witness and live in accordance with the gospel as the message of reconciliation within its own communal life and in its relations to other communities. Sin and guilt lead to the isolation of the individual without God, to loneliness in human relationships and to the separation of humans from their fellow creatures.

It is part of the commission of Christians to identify the misery of the **destruction of fellowship** between God and God's human creatures through sin and its effects on the whole creation and to resist every attempt to deny its seriousness. This includes witnessing to the restoration of this fellowship.

The community of Christians is on the way towards the consummation of God's community with God's creation. That is why it is an open inviting community intending all people to participate. Christians are therefore obligated to practice openness transcending national, ethnic and social barriers and to make the gospel accessible as God's promise for all who accept it in faith. In this way the church can witness to the new humanity that has its beginning in Christ. Christians are taken into responsibility to show in their communal life that the community of God with humanity in creation, reconciliation and consummation is the foundation and goal of human community and of community with the whole of creation.

4 The future consummation: The church before its judge and saviour

The church has its foundation in the Word of God which nurtures and sustains it. The church is also **cleansed and judged by this word** as "it is living and active. It cuts more deeply than any two-edged sword, piercing so deeply that it divides soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it discriminates among the purposes and thoughts of the heart" (Heb 4: 12). In accordance with the teaching of the Reformation one has to distinguish between the sins of the individual Christian and the sins of the church, but they must not be separated as the church is the community of believers and as such the community of justified sinners. According to Luther the church proves to be holy especially by confessing its sins and asking forgiveness for them (cf. 2.3).

Faith expects the universal revelation of the Kingdom of God and not the church as the consummation of all ways and works of God. Accordingly the vision of the New Jerusalem contains the statement: "I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple" (Rev 21: 22). In the Kingdom of God there will no longer be a difference between the church and the world and therefore neither between the two "kingdoms" of church and state. Rather, God himself will be universally disclosed as the One who is "all in all" (1 Cor 15: 28). At the same time Christians expect

together with the Kingdom of God the Last Judgement and eternal life. According to the witness of the New Testament the judgement begins "with the house of God" (1 Peter 4: 17). What the church expects of its judge can for that matter be nothing other than the appreciation of its good works and the judgement over its evil works. The church must also be revealed before the judgement seat of Christ (2 Cor 5: 10) in its shame and in its glory. Only Christ and nobody else is its ultimate judge. The fact that the house of God is also considered worthy of judgement relativizes and at the same time exalts it as the community of pardoned sinners.

This indicates that the judge of Christianity is at the same time its saviour and redeemer. As such he grants Christianity the fulfilment of his beatitudes (Mt 5: 3-12, Lk 6: 20 -23). The eternal life will forever comfort the mourning, quench all thirst and satisfy all hunger, it will overcome all absence of peace, all bondage and all injustice through a fellowship with God that can no longer be called into question.

Chapter II: THE COMMUNITY OF SAINTS IN TODAY'S SOCIETY

1 Pluralistic society and the community of believers

We live in open and pluralistic societies. A pluralistic and open society is characterized by the equal coexistence of diverse views of life and forms of life. A decisive feature of such a society is the **religious or ideological neutrality of the state and of the legal system**. It presupposes the rejection of a unified religious or ideological orientation which is legally binding for all members of society. It has its genesis in stimuli of the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Enlightenment. The formation of pluralistic societies has taken different routes in different countries and regions of Europe and has also suffered setbacks. The development towards a pluralistic society contains risks and opportunities. This is true for individuals, for society at large and also for the church. For the individual the increase of freedom may mean a loss of identity, for society the loss of its fundamental consensus. For the church the development towards a pluralistic and open society has brought important changes. These have made the situation more honest, but it has also in various ways created a dangerous vacuum:

- the decline of customs and morality shaped by the church and of traditional links with the church, together with the general decline of morally and spiritually "binding" traditions;
- an understanding of world-views and religions in general, and therefore also of the Christian faith, as a "private matter" according to which their significance for the quality and development of society as a whole (for politics, education and culture) cannot be taken for granted, but requires justification;
- the marginalisation of religious communities and consequently also of the churches as formerly dominant institutions of society.

On the other hand, the experience of social re-orientation also in the countries of Eastern Europe shows that the **churches** can become effective as a **decisive factor** in the development towards an open and pluralistic society:

- As a personal conviction for life, created by the experience of the truth of the gospel, the Christian faith bears witness to the freedom of orientation in life as opposed to the all-pervasive claims to validity of an ideology trying to regulate all spheres of society.
- Even in places where customs and morality shaped by traditional forms of church life hardly exist any more, the churches can provide free spaces for the formation and shaping of communal life.
- On the strength of its public witness to the truth of the gospel by individual Christians and Christian groups and especially through Christian witness in professional life the churches can nonetheless gain influence in the life of society.
- Even where the churches have been pushed to the margins of society they can work for changes at the centre of society.

The principal condition for such possibilities of the churches to become influential is that they remain discernible in an open and pluralistic society. They can do this by remaining faithful to their origin and their mission in distinction from the order of society and in constructive relationship to it.

The churches of the Reformation and their members are challenged to accept their living in open and pluralistic societies as a task to shape the Christian life and the existence of the church. They can do so in the certainty that humanity needs the gospel, that persons and nations **need** the good news which discloses to them and grants them new humanity.

2 The community of believers in a pluralistic society

2.1. Confessing the faith in a pluralistic society

Churches in open and pluralistic societies must be **confessing** churches. The confession of faith by Christians and churches is not only a response to a society characterized by diverse and mutually competing orientations of life. Confessing the faith is part of the nature of faith (cf. 3.3.2 martyria). The church will be recognized by its confession of faith and by the witness of its life. Confessing the triune God, the creator, reconciler and consummator of the world, is both the basis for the critical stance of the churches towards all tendencies denying the gospel of Jesus Christ as the foundation of faith and life and for their constructive cooperation with all endeavours serving the welfare of the human race in accordance with the insights of the gospel. The confession of can also be a special act of confessing in situations of internal and external threats to the truth of the gospel in the life of the church and in society. Therefore churches in an open society should be discernible as confessing churches.

2.2 Pastoral care in a pluralistic society

Churches in open and pluralistic societies must be **pastoral churches**. Pastoral care is not just one field of ecclesial practice alongside others but is an essential form of the gospel's witness and service. The gospel itself promises people through the assurance of grace true insight into their situations of life and thus saving orientation in their lives. In an open and pluralistic society pastoral care is of special importance. Because of the absence of a comprehensive order of values claiming unconditional validity and warranting collective identity individual persons in the open society are exiated to make their own decisions regarding their personal and communal orientations in life. Many experience this as a threat to their personal and communal identity and as a life-threatening lack of orientation. In this situation Christians and churches are challenged to bear witness to all people of the truth of the gospel as the foundation for the personal and communal orientation of life in the church and as an aid to find orientation in their search for direction.

This challenge applies not only for specific situations of pastoral care like confession and counselling but also for the life-style and order of the church as a whole. It must be possible to experience the visible church in a pluralistic society as a structure of reliable orders in which the "inner being" can flourish. Pastoral care is therefore not only a matter of special activities but first and foremost a question of church order and Christian custom.

2.3 Counselling in a pluralistic society

Churches in an open and pluralistic society must be **helping** churches. The commission for neighbourly help is considered in the churches of the Reformation a direct implication of the gospel of God's liberating grace as the salvation of the world. By the gospel's promise of eternal life the individual Christian and community of Christians has been freed from the constraints of making self-preservation and self-assertion the sole criterion of all individual and ecclesial action. Churches that are rooted in the promise of the gospel can therefore, as open, confessing and pastoral churches, be without reservation church for others. Where they are "churches for others", where they stand up for the weak, the oppressed and the underprivileged, churches are truly the church. This commission applies for all spheres of life and has to find a convincing expression in the communal life of the church itself. Churches in open and pluralistic societies must be discernible as efficiently helping churches.

2.4 Prophetic criticism in a pluralistic society

Churches in an open and pluralistic society must give space to **prophetic** criticism. Their being rooted in the gospel of the grace of God and their relationship to Jesus Christ as their Lord obligates them to criticise all attempts in society to supplant the power of God the Creator by the power of human beings and to pursue other messages of salvation than the gospel of Christ. Christians have been commissioned to take a stance, in warning and admonition, everywhere where human dignity, human life and the integrity of creation is being infringed upon and violated. This commission motivates Christians also to take a stance in issues of politics and in questions of the economic and social order. By pointing to God as the foundation, the goal and the norm of all life Christians make their contribution to the dialogue on the appropriate goals and means of action in all spheres of the life of society. In this ministry as a guardian the church witnesses to the gospel of Jesus Christ as the promise and guide-line for human flourishing.

Their prophetic word in society will, however, only be credible if it is not autocratically assumed and proclaimed in a self-congratulatory manner, but if Christians and churches expose themselves to the criticism of the gospel and if they seek direction and renewal for themselves and for society by listening to the Word of God. By this and by their own willingness to repent Christians point to the promise of the Kingdom of God in which God will bring his fellowship with his creation to perfection. Since it draws on this hope, prophetic criticism can give direction and be constructive and hopeful.

2.5 Mission in a pluralistic society

The life of Christians and churches in an open and pluralistic society must be shaped by its **mission** to witness to the truth of the gospel of the grace of God in Jesus Christ to all humankind. This task of the churches, based on its calling by Jesus Christ as its Lord, determines its existence as an open, confessing, pastoral and helping church. As open churches they try to proclaim the truth of the gospel as it is addressed to all people publicly as an invitation to everyone. As confessing churches they are called to witness with credibility to Jesus Christ, the origin and content of their mission, as the promise of the grace of God for the whole world. As pastoral churches they are concerned to practice in their communal life the gospel as the foundation for a comprehensive orientation of life. As helping churches they testify by working for the overcoming of the needs of the world that salvation in Christ as they proclaim it is intended for the welfare of all humankind. Even where the missionary task is undertaken by missionary societies abroad and at home it is always the responsibility of the whole church. The churches are discernible as missionary churches where in all aspects of their lives they bear witness to the truth of the gospel given to all humankind.

2.6 A discernible gospel in a pluralistic society

Churches in pluralistic, open societies can only be discerned as churches in their confessing, their counselling, their pastoral care, their prophetic criticism and their mission when they regularly gather around the gospel in word and sacrament. Only in this way it can become evident that their openness towards the world is not rooted in their social context, but in the gospel itself. Openness towards the world and gathering around the Word of God in proclamation and sacrament cannot be separated for the church. Where this link can be experienced in the life of the churches, churches can be recognised as a community of witness to the truth of the gospel. By focusing all forms of their concern for contemporary society in confession, in pastoral care, in counselling, in prophetic criticism and in missionary intention on the proclamation of the gospel and the celebration of the sacraments, the churches maintain for themselves and for others the opportunity to experience the grace of the triune God as revealed in Jesus Christ. By pointing to this foundation they remain at the same time recognisable as a community called and sent forth by Jesus Christ.

The **discernibility of the gospel** is therefore given:

- where Christians and churches point to proclamation and sacrament as the fundamental forms of witnessing to their nature and commission in their practice in society, and
- where they practise the proclamation of the gospel and the celebration of the sacraments in such a way that they provide orientation for Christian living in all spheres of life and refer the existence of the church in all its forms to the truth of the gospel.

3 The churches in dialogue

3.1 Dialogue with Judaism

To be the church means for the churches of the Reformation in biblically rooted priority to examine their relationship to Judaism. Dialogue with Judaism is an indispensable necessity for the Christian churches. For centuries the Jews were persecuted and were faced with pogroms. The anti-Judaism of the churches provided an essential part of the arguments for the persecution of the Jewish people in the Christian West. The persecution and annihilation of millions of Jews were accompanied by the extensive failure mostly of the German churches which did not resist the threat to the Jews early and effectively enough. A thorough analysis of the painful and burdening history of the relationship of Jews and Christians has become a central task for all churches.

Where the gospel of the grace of God in Jesus Christ is abused to justify the "reprobation" of Israel or indifference towards the fate of the Jewish people the gospel itself is called into question as the foundation of the existence of the church. The relationship with Israel is therefore for Christians and for the churches an indispensable part of the foundation of their faith.

The existence of Judaism is for the church a sign of God's faithfulness to his promises on which the church itself also depends in view of its manifold failures, especially in its relationship to the Jews. Jews and Christians will discover common ground as well as differences in their faith and in the life of church and synagogue in an encounter with the living testimony of the other. The dialogue between Jews and Christians lives from the fact that both do not suppress the testimony to the truth of their faith as they have experienced it but feed it into the dialogue and listen to each other endeavouring to understand one another.

There will be many themes of the Jewish-Christian dialogue whose further clarification can, however, only be expected by a continuation of these conversations. Among these are first and foremost the following issues:

- the relationship between the 'old' and the 'new' covenant;
- the understanding of God's word as commandment (tora) and as promise of grace;
- the Christian confession of faith in the Jew Jesus as the Son of God;
- the confession of the Jews of the One God and the confession of Christian faith in God Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
- the future of Jews and the future of Christians;
- the significance of the state of Israel for Jewish and for Christian hope.

For the churches of the Reformation it is necessary that they develop a comprehensive analysis of their relations to Judaism in all its diverse expressions in order to secure a shared future which will not repeat the terrors of the past. The churches of the Reformation are called to attempt a critical examination of the history of Reformation theology and practice with all its brighter and darker sides. Theological errors and the wrong behaviour of the churches which resulted in an entanglement in the history of the terrors of modern anti-Semitism must be identified and revised. For the churches of the Reformation which understand the task of assessing the doctrine of the church as a task for all

Christians and not only for theological specialists and church officials it is necessary that a reorientation in the relationship to Judaism will be supported by the whole congregation and is filled with life in all areas of church life.

A **reorientation** of the relationship between the church and Israel requires of all Christian churches to further knowledge of present-day Judaism in its diverse forms by encounter with people of the Jewish faith. An important basis for this is the community of the churches participating in the Leuenberg Agreement because it facilitates an exchange of experience among the different churches of the Reformation in the Jewish-Christian dialogue. In countries where, often because of the persecution of Jews in the century, encounters between Jews and Christians in the reality of everyday life are rare, churches must rely on the help and support of their sister churches for which the encounter of Jews and Christians belongs to everyday life in church and society. This critical and constructive support in shaping the relationship between the church and Judaism in various churches can become an important element of church fellowship for the churches of the Reformation.

The endeavours to shape the relationship between the churches and Judaism as a dialogical relationship is a feature of a credible practice of witnessing today.

3.2 Dialogue with other religions

In a pluralistic, open society the churches encounter different religions and world-views. Dialogue with them takes place on various levels. For the churches it has varying significance and differs in intensity and quality.

Faced with the religions and religious communities they encounter the churches cannot give up their knowledge of God in favour of a neutral view of the world. What Christians perceive and understand of other religions and the worship of other gods they view and assess in the horizon of their knowledge of Jesus Christ, revealed as truly divine and truly human. This does not mean rejecting dialogue with other religions. On the contrary, in dialogue the attempt is to be made to understand other religions, to eliminate misunderstandings, to do away with prejudices, to discover genuinely common features, to recognise erroneously assumed common features as such and to widen one's own horizon of perception.

Since the First Commandment and its Christological reaffirmation as e.g. in John 14: 6 or 10: 79 is valid, Christian faith must criticise all worship of alien gods and all postulates of alien ideologies. **Faith** is and will remain **critique of religion**. Such a critique is also directed against false worship of God in the church. At the same time other religions are not exempt from this critique. Dialogue is no substitute for witness and mission. But faith in the God who acts on behalf of all humankind in Jesus Christ and whom Christians confess as creator, preserver, reconciler and saviour of the world enables Christians, in spite of the critique of religion, to **perceive** the objective and meaning in the rituals and imagery of **other religions**, even to discern **aspects of truth** in their worship and understanding of the Divine. Syncretistic harmonisations or the systematisation of aspects of truth in other religions in a new super-religion are excluded for Christian faith. The revelation of God in Jesus Christ is for faith a constant reminder of the limits of dialogue between the religions. Christians owe all people, including the representatives of other religions, the clarity of their witness of faith and life.

3.3 Dialogue with other world-views

In our societies Christian confession, Christian pastoral care, Christian counselling, prophetic criticism and Christian mission can only succeed if Christians and churches practise an explicit dialogue with society, its different groups and institutions and their basic convictions. The truth of the gospel is given

as a personal conviction and therefore its **universal claim to truth** can only be expressed as a **personal certainty of truth**. The refusal to order all conditions of social life through a religion or world-view with a legally warranted claim to validity in an open and pluralistic society implies that all views of life have to be represented as personal convictions in **dialogical exchange**. Therefore the credibility of the witness of the church will depend crucially on how individual Christians, ecclesial communities and churches participate in public discourse about those fundamental convictions which shape and determine the life of members of their society. They may also hope that God will let the witness of the church become certainty of truth for other people. Mutual witnessing in dialogue can lead to forms of cooperation that serve peace and justice among people and promote preservation of the integrity of creation.

Chapter III: THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH AND THE UNIFICATION OF THE CHURCHES

1 The conception of unity implied in the understanding of the church in Reformation Theology

1.1 The unity of the church as a fellowship in word and sacrament

The unity of the church was understood by the Reformation of the 16th century as grounded in its origin and, consequently, as fellowship in word and sacrament. The proclamation of the gospel and the celebration of the sacraments which establish and maintain the faith of the individual believer, establishes and maintains also the community (communio) of believers in Christ, their unity in the church, the communion of saints and the unity of the church (cf. esp. art. 7 of the Augsburg Confession; Heidelberg Catechism, question 54f and 75f). The authors of the Leuenberg Agreement neither wanted nor needed to develop a new model; instead, they have taken up this **fundamental conviction of the Reformation**.

"In the view of the Reformation ... the agreement in the right teaching of the gospel and in the right administration of the sacraments is the necessary and sufficient prerequisite for the true unity of the church. It is from these Reformation criteria that the participating churches derive their view of church Fellowship" (LA 2). Churches can **mutually recognize** one another as the true church of Jesus Christ if there is agreement between them on the understanding of the gospel. This mutual recognition establishes church fellowship. This is understood as "fellowship in word and sacrament" (LA 29) which includes "the mutual recognition of ordination and the freedom to provide for intercelebration" (LA 33).

This conception of unity of the Agreement knows no other criteria and presuppositions than those which are also constitutive for the church and its unity within the particular confessional variations of Reformation Theology.

1.2 Unity as a gift of God

The unity of the church is not the doing of the churches but a gift of God to these churches. In the Leuenberg Agreement special importance is attached to the word "accord": "The churches accord each other fellowship" (LA 29). They **accord one another something** that is **antecedently given** to them. This antecedently given is God's saving action for us humans, the message of justification by grace alone. In this saving action the nature of the church, its unity and the shape of that unity have been given once and for all. The ecclesial activity which belongs to the very nature of church fellowship consists - in analogy to the event of justification for the individual believers - in receiving.

"The unique mediation of Jesus Christ in salvation is the heart of Scripture and the message of justification as the message of God's free grace is the measure for all the church's preaching" (LA 12). The consensus necessary and sufficient for the declaration of church fellowship is located in this message. It is of decisive significance how particular churches relate to the reality that is antecedently given to them. Thereby they are enabled by the gospel itself to accord one another church fellowship.

1.3 Unification as achieving and declaring consensus concerning the understanding of the gospel

In order that fellowship in word and sacrament be possible consensus in the understanding of the gospel is required. "The true understanding of the gospel was expressed by the fathers of the Reformation in the doctrine of justification" (LA 8).

This fundamental consensus has in itself two layers:

- on the one hand, it consists in the **common expression** of the **appropriate understanding of the gospel** as the message of God's justifying action in Christ through the Holy Spirit;
- on the other hand, it consists in the **common conviction** that the "**message of justification** as the message of God's free grace is the **measure of all the church's preaching**" (LA 12). Since the grace of God is imparted to humans by means of word and sacrament, fellowship in word and sacrament is necessary for true and complete unity of the church; and in this sense it is also sufficient.

It is possible for Lutheran, Reformed and United churches to concur in distinguishing between those points where full **consensus** is required and those questions where **legitimate diversity** is allowed: The criterion is the common understanding of the gospel as the message of justification and its recognition as the decisive norm for the proclamation and order of the church. Where this criterion is satisfied church fellowship as fellowship in word and sacrament can be declared and practised.

The **understanding of the ministry** is a clear example for the connection between complete agreement and legitimate diversity: For the Leuenberg Agreement the mutual recognition of ordination is a central statement in the declaration of church fellowship (LA 33). The institution of the ministry by Christ for the proclamation of the word and the administration of the sacraments and the fact that this ministry belongs to being the church requires full agreement. But the particular shape as well as the structure of this ministry and of the church belongs to the sphere of legitimate historically and locally conditioned diversity. This diversity does not call church fellowship into question. It requires, however, constant theological assessment in its relationship to the origin and the mission of the church so that it remains legitimate diversity.

1.4 Unity and diversity

The fundamental consensus which has been outlined above and which makes church fellowship possible is based on Reformation theology's **distinction between the foundation** and the **shape** of the church.

It is this necessary distinction which implies in the Leuenberg Agreement that "on the basis of the consensus they have reached in their understanding of the gospel, churches with different confessional positions accord each other fellowship in word and sacrament and strive for the fullest possible cooperation in witnessing and service to the world" (LA 29).

The consensus in the understanding of the gospel can and will find expression in a **legitimate variety** of doctrinal forms. Unity effected by the Holy Spirit neither creates uniformity as it is already documented in the New Testament, nor is it an arbitrary variety. Differences concerning the common understanding of the gospel call church fellowship as community in word and sacrament into question and threaten or prevent thereby the unity of the church. Their divisive character needs to be overcome. In such a case theological dialogue has to examine the differences in doctrinal expression whether or not they contain the common understanding of the gospel which creates church fellowship. The Leuenberg Agreement is an example of how this can be done. A different understanding of Christology, of the Lord's Supper and of predestination had resulted in a separation between Lutheran and Reformed churches. An important part of the Agreement deals with the historical condemnations of doctrine and comes to the conclusion that these "no longer apply to the doctrinal position of the assenting churches" (LA 32). The remaining differences are no longer an impediment for church fellowship. The ecumenical term for this form of church fellowship is "reconciled diversity". This is the unity in which the churches united by the Leuenberg Agreement live.

The churches that are signatories of the Leuenberg Agreement apply this understanding of church fellowship also to their relationship to other Christian families. They recognize that the church of Jesus

Christ lives wherever the marks of true churches can be found and a doctrinal consensus in the understanding of the gospel has been reached - even if this is not always seen in the same way by the other party.

Where the two latter conditions - the existence of the marks of the true church and the achievement of a doctrinal consensus - have been fulfilled, concrete steps have to be taken to declare and to implement church fellowship that has now become possible. Where these conditions have not yet been fully met, it has to be attempted to overcome those dividing factors. This applies especially to the overcoming of those factors dividing the churches which stand in the way of full church fellowship with the Roman Catholic church, the Orthodox churches and some Protestant Free churches. There the churches of the Leuenberg church fellowship desire further committed dialogue. With the Methodist churches and the Anglican Communion such dialogue has made decisive steps towards full church fellowship possible.

2 The binding force and the obligatory character of the Leuenberg Agreement

2.1 The implementation of church fellowship as a process

An ecumenical dialogue between the churches will then achieve its goal when its results are received by the participating churches and in this way acquire **binding** and **obligatory** character for these churches. This, however, cannot only be a formal process of reception. The reception must determine and shape all levels of ecclesial life.

In order to go beyond a single verification and a mere signing of the Agreement by the participating churches, the LA distinguishes between the declaration and the implementation of church fellowship without separating them (Part IV of the LA). This distinction demonstrates that church fellowship is implemented in a continuing process.

2.2 The implementation of church fellowship on the congregational level

Closer contact between Reformed and Lutheran local congregations has contributed to the realisation of the Agreement. The Agreement is also the fruit of ecumenical experiences and an expression of practised ecumenical spirituality. Conversely, it now also contributes to the renewal and continual maintenance of local situations. This close association with ecumenism in local situations gives the Agreement its significance.

2.3 Four dimensions of the implementation of church fellowship

In its final part, the Agreement mentions four directions in which the implementation of fellowship shall be further developed:

- the endeavour for common witness and shared service in view of the challenges of our time;
- continued theological work;
- possible organisational consequences;
- the inclusion of the Leuenberg Process in the world-wide ecumenical movement.

After twenty years of the Leuenberg Church Fellowship the results of continued work in these four directions differ. Significant progress could be made in the theological field. In international and regional conversations some theological topics could be further and **deeper** discerned (for instance: the relationship between the doctrine of the Two Kingdoms and the doctrine of the Kingship of Christ; ministry ministries and ordination; the practise of baptism; the understanding of the Lord's Supper).

With regard to possible **organisational consequences** the Leuenberg Agreement has stated clearly that these "can only be decided in the situation in which these churches live" (LA 44). Today one can note in some situations a clear organisational rapprochement of the churches (the Netherlands, France), in other countries very little has changed.

The most difficult part has been **the endeavour to common witnessing and service** in view of the challenges of our time. This has become especially urgent since 1989. The General Assemblies of the signatory churches have emphasized the urgency of this task time and again, however, it has not yet been achieved to put it into practice. One of the reasons for that could be a certain structural weakness of the Leuenberg Fellowship.

3 The Leuenberg Agreement and the world-wide oikumene

3.1 The Leuenberg church Fellowship serving world-wide ecumenism

From its inception the Leuenberg Fellowship understood itself as a contribution to the "ecumenical fellowship of all Christian churches" (LA 46). It is not a single-handed ecumenical effort on the part of the participating European churches. It intends to serve the whole oikumene including the churches beyond the European borders.

After some initial difficulties there are now clear signs that this hope can be realised:

- The International Lutheran-Reformed Dialogue could take up the preliminary work already undertaken by the Leuenberg Fellowship to recommend church fellowship to all churches of the Lutheran World Federation and the World Alliance of Reformed churches.
- The Leuenberg Fellowship could present their experience within the framework of the World Council of Churches, especially in the Section for Unity and Renewal (of which the Commission of Faith and Order is a part), e.g. the work concerning the reception of the Lima Documents, the attempt at formulating a new understanding of the churches as koinonia (General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Canberra 1991; General Assembly of Faith and Order in Santiago de Compostela 1993).
- It has also been attempted to take up the Leuenberg approach in bilateral dialogue with other Christian traditions, for instance in dealing with questions of doctrinal condemnation and their retraction, or in connection with a new emphasis on the central status of the doctrine of justification (International Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue or the work of the Joint Ecumenical Commission [Gemeinsame Ökumenische Kommission] in Germany). This contribution must be deepened and expanded in the future.

3.2 The compatibility of ecumenical dialogues and bilateral agreements

The pluriform relatedness of ecumenical dialogues confronts the Leuenberg Fellowship with new ecumenical challenges. One of the most significant issues is the compatibility of dialogues (compatibility of the results of dialogues). What is the significance of concrete steps of confessional world families or even concrete steps of particular churches in particular countries for the other partner in the Leuenberg process?

The first area concerns ecumenical advances which have led through international dialogue on a global level to recommending church fellowship with other traditions and which have now also been accepted by some churches participating in the Agreement while others feel not yet able to do so. The most conspicuous examples are the dialogues with the Methodists and with the Church of England, which have resulted in Germany, Austria, England and Italy in church fellowship with the Methodists,

in Scandinavia and in the Baltic States in church fellowship with the Church of England. It is our hope that it is only a question of time until all Lutheran and Reformed churches of Europe participating in the Leuenberg Agreement can follow these steps.

This issue of compatibility becomes more difficult when some churches of the Leuenberg Fellowship plan steps towards church fellowship which other churches within the Leuenberg Fellowship cannot support.

The question of the compatibility of such dialogues with the Leuenberg church fellowship may not be overrated. It can easily be shown that the majority of steps of particular churches occur within the framework of the Leuenberg Fellowship and that other signatory churches could also support them (e.g. The Agreement with the Old Catholics in Germany or the open invitation to the Lord's Table extended to Christians of other denominations in many Protestant churches). The question must be raised and considered seriously so that the fellowship among the signatories of the Leuenberg Agreement and the relationship to the world-wide oikumene remain fruitful.

4 The Leuenberg Agreement as an ecumenical model of unity

The particular contribution of the Leuenberg Fellowship to the world-wide oikumene is the understanding of unit that the Leuenberg Agreement provides and the resulting model of unity. It can be stated in the following way:

- Wherever a church or an ecclesial community displays the marks of the true church it is to be recognized as part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. If necessary, this has to be done unilaterally.
- Wherever these marks are found, one has to expect the possibility of reaching a doctrinal consensus about the common gospel.
- Wherever this consensus has been reached, church fellowship in the sense of the Leuenberg Agreement must be declared.
- Where in spite of such a consensus this is not declared, the division can no longer be justified.
- Achieving this goal is not subject to human control, it is the work of the Holy Spirit. Until then active patience is demanded:

"we know that suffering is a source of endurance, endurance of approval, and approval of hope. Such hope is no fantasy; through the Holy Spirit he has given us, God's love has flooded our hearts" (Romans 5:3-5)

**Papers* presented to the Project Group
"The Marks of the Church" during their consultations**

Gino Conte, "Possibilities and limits of the Leuenberg model in the ecumenical conversations - experiences, problems, questions", Bergkirchen-Wolpinghausen, 12-13 June 1989

Erik Kyndal, "Summary of the contents of the texts and the documents from the work hitherto done by the Leuenberg Doctrinal Conversations concerning the theme of ecclesiology" (regional group of Copenhagen, Bergkirchen-Wolpinghausen, 12-13 June 1989

Martin Weyerstall, "The marks of the Church as the community called and sent forth by Jesus Christ - the contribution of the churches of the Reformation to the ecumenical dialogue on church unity", Bergkirchen-Wolpinghausen, 12-13 June 1989

Christian Link, "The marks of the Church from the Reformed perspective",
Villigst, 11-15 Dec. 1989

Peter Steinacker, "The notae ecclesiae from the Lutheran perspective", Villigst, 11-15 Dec. 1989

Eilert Herms, "The ecclesiology of the Leuenberg Agreement. Its significance for the fellowship of the churches participating in the Agreement from the ecumenical and socio-ethical perspective", Villigst, 11-15 Dec. 1989

Hans-Christian Knuth, "The marks of the Church as the community called and sent forth by Jesus Christ - the contribution of the churches of the Reformation to the ecumenical dialogue on Christian unity. Introduction to the project by way of a project outline and a review of the Bergkirchen consultation", Villigst, 11-15 Dec. 1989

Paolo Ricca, "The marks of the Church from the Waldensian perspective", Villigst, 11-15 Dec. 1989

Georg Kretschmar, "Orthodox ecclesiology and the ecclesiology of the Leuenberg Agreement", Driebergen, 17 Sept. 1990

Hans Stickelberger, "The notae ecclesiae in a secular world" (short paper), Driebergen, 17 Sept. 1990

Martin Petzoldt, "The notae ecclesiae in a secular world", Driebergen, 17 Sept. 1990

* The texts of the papers are available at the Secretariat for the Leuenberg Church Fellowship in Berlin.

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