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SOME THOUGHTS ON RECEPTION: NOT FORGETTING THE PEOPLE AND LIFE

ALEXANDROS PAPADEROS

"Please stop making things difficult for us any longer by writing and sending us anything more on these matters. For you treat the luminaries and teachers of the Church now in one way, now in another. You honour and revere them in words but reject them in your deeds. You describe our arms as useless; moreover it is their holy divine words we use in writing to you and in our efforts to answer you. So you yourself spare us the trouble. Go then your own way! If you want to write to us, do so out of friendship but not about doctrines. Farewell!"

6th June 1581

Jeremias of Constantinople
Theodosius the Chief Secretary

From the Old Divergence into the New Convergence

Farewell!

1. That was the Orthódox East's final word to the West, in the throes of its Reformation, when Jeremias II, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, felt compelled, four hundred years ago, to break off the theological correspondence with the Tübingen theologians. Significantly enough, his last letter dealt among other things with the mysteries (sacraments) of the Church. Meanwhile it had become clear to him that, because of renovations which neither the Old Rome nor the New could receive, the earlier great schism of Christendom (1054) was being followed by another. "Go then your own way—leave us to go ours!" "Write to us . . . out of *friendship* but not about *doctrines* . . . *Farewell!*"

2. Although they have certainly not fared well in their isolation, both worlds have in fact gone their own ways for nigh on four centuries, until quite recently they met each other once again, this time in the far west, in Lima, Peru. Moreover, it was not only the correspondents of four centuries ago who were present but also representatives of the 'Old Rome' and of many others old and new, not only from the East and West but also from the whole *oikumene*, now become truly world-embracing. They met not only out of friendship but also to talk about doctrines! Above all, they met because they and the churches which had delegated them no longer

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felt well each going its own way. Their firm intention in meeting, therefore, was to prepare and propose steps leading to the Way which is also the Truth and the Life (Jn. 14:6).

3. This representative ecumenical gathering in Lima has resulted in the initiation once again of a correspondence, this time among all the churches, in which once again the mysteries (sacraments) are the theme: baptism, eucharist and ministry (BEM). No longer is it a question here of divergent disputations. Thanks to a desire to converge and draw closer together, a *convergence text* was unanimously agreed and given to us all, to our immense joy. For our 'rebaptism' into the faith of the apostolic Church, for penitence and for the promotion of eucharistic communion with our Lord and with each other, and for the witness and service of the great mysteries of the unity and salvation of the whole people of the Triune God, for His whole cosmos! For obedience, therefore, to the Gospel!

What is BEM?

4. I have been asked in this paper to provide a brief commentary on this convergence text and, in particular, on the question of its reception. In my view, however, it would be improper, indeed hardly possible, to offer this commentary without first having established clearly 1) what BEM really is, 2) what it is intended to be and 3) what precisely it is that the churches are expected to respond to.

5. BEM seems to me, firstly and supremely, a fruit of the faithful fulfilment of the task explicitly entrusted to the Faith and Order Commission by its constitution "to proclaim the oneness of the Church of Jesus Christ and to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, in order that the world might believe" (Lima BEM, p. viii). After a period of almost half a century—far too long a time when one considers the urgency of the ecumenical concern and the impatience of our generation, but understandable when we remember just how profoundly divided and torn the Church and theology has been—the Commission has now presented the churches with a concrete proposal which takes account explicitly or implicitly of all the tasks assigned to the Commission in its constitution. For this the Commission and the World Council of Churches deserve our gratitude.

6. As to what BEM really is and what its authors themselves wish it to be understood to be, the document's own Preface provides ample information. The following main points seem to us of importance here so far as the task assigned to us is concerned:

(a) BEM starts from the commonly accepted truth that one of the vital prerequisites for the visible unity of the churches is fundamental agreement in the doctrinal differences in respect of baptism, eucharist and ministry (Preface p. viii).

(b) Even if BEM has not achieved a consensus it has nevertheless registered "a remarkable degree of agreement" (p. ix).

(c) BEM, therefore, is one of the most important stages on the way to visible unity (*ibid*).

(d) This step does not carry us directly forwards, but backwards in order to advance! In the ecumenical movement, the churches "have been blessed anew through listening to each other and jointly returning to the primary sources", namely, "the Tradition of the Gospel testified in Scripture, transmitted in and by the Church through the power of the Holy Spirit" (*ibid*). Like the Lima Text itself, this confession is perhaps the first ecumenical evidence of an agreement in the divisive question of the inner coherence of Scripture and Tradition.

(e) Faithful to its own purpose, the Text concentrates on "those aspects of the theme that have been directly or indirectly related to the problems of mutual recognition leading to unity" (*ibid*). The clear aim of the document is to tackle themes which disturb unity. Not only theoretical but also practical questions since the latter have frequently fuelled dissension (questions of ritual, for example).

(f) There is no attempt to provide a "complete theological treatment" nor to hide "disputed issues still in need of further research and reconciliation" (*ibid*). Reference is made to these, above all, in the commentary which accompanies the main text in the form of parentheses; these are an outstanding and helpful innovation.

(g) Although what we have before us in BEM is a "finally revised document", the process remains open. The responses of the churches will be compared and collated, and a proposed world conference will study the ecumenical implications for the churches. Even after this Text, therefore, but from now on with this Text, we are still on the way!

(h) Finally, the Text is witness to a conviction which is of special importance for us all. "We have become increasingly aware of our unity in the body of Christ" (p. x). The authors, therefore, are filled with transparent joy by the rediscovery of our common heritage in the Gospel and believe that the ecumenical movement has been led to a *kairos* which must be grasped by us all (*ibid*) above all, by the whole people of God whose access to the common joy must also be made possible (*ibid*).

(i) Complete consensus as "experience of life and articulation of faith", rooted "in the communion built on Jesus Christ and the witness of the apostles" is, of course, a gift of the Spirit and "can only be proclaimed after the churches reach the point of living and acting together in unity" (p. ix).

7. The authors of the Lima Text have themselves, therefore, pointed out frankly and honestly the nature and essence, purpose and function, limits, possibilities and weaknesses of the text before us. By doing so, they have also made clear the direction and range of the reception requested of the churches.

What BEM is not

8. The next question is how the Lima Text is viewed by those to whom it is addressed. This must remain an open question (more or less) until the churches produce their official responses. Till that time, we must be content with subjective comments which only commit their authors, especially if, as in my case, they are only lay theologians without specialized knowledge of comparative ecclesiology, or in dogmatics.

9. So far as I am aware, no discussion of the kind which is appropriate for this text with its significance and potentially pioneering role has yet taken place among us in the Orthodox Church. Apart from a few commentaries, which are not uniformly positive or negative, there is only one really instructive utterance of any note. I refer to the statement made by Dimitrios, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, on March 3, 1983, in which he affirms that, in the Lima Text on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, "the Orthodox Church is pleased to discover many elements of its teaching on these central themes" (Episkepsis, 291/1983 p. 2). We shall come back to this later on.

10. What can be said is what BEM is not meant to be and what it cannot be for us:

(a) *It is not a chapter from a Handbook of Doctrine* which follows other chapters on the Holy Trinity, christology, ecclesiology, etc. Anyone expecting this must learn as quickly as possible that this could not possibly be the purpose and meaning of this Text; on the contrary, it says "Adieu" (it is to be hoped, forever) to the scholastic mode of thinking, questioning and answering. It is also the parting of the ways, clearly, for a pure, objective, scientific theology, although the findings of science are not of course ignored for example, in the new understanding of the basic significance of episkope, (para. 23). The main emphasis here is not on what the theologians are saying but on what *the Spirit* is saying to the churches. If we grasp this, we shall have no great difficulty in discovering the solid triadological, christological, ecclesiological, pneumatological and eucharistic basis of theology which forms the basis here for building for the future of the Church solidly and with material tested through the centuries.

(b) *It is not a presentation of the doctrine of one Tradition* e.g. the Orthodox tradition! If the Commission had presented a pure Orthodox text, I, as an Orthodox theologian, would have been hardly any less disturbed than I would have been if confronted with a pure, Latin, Old Catholic, Waldensian or Baptist text, or with a text conforming with "black" or "yellow" theology . . . or a text reflecting the theology of liberation or the theology of a charismatic, or of some ultra-conservative or ultra-radical movement. In that case, it would have been reasonable for me to assume either that a miracle (hardly likely at this stage) had happened and that a general

consensus had developed in one particular, namely, in 'my', direction, or else that the Commission had ignored its specific mandate and failed to achieve its concrete goal. *I am grateful, therefore, that I have precisely this text before me and not another!*

(c) *No global judgments.* For this reason, BEM does not lend itself, it seems to us, to global judgments. Assertions that BEM is, for example, on the whole too Orthodox, too Catholic, too Lutheran, or in certain places purely Calvinist or Zwinglian, are in fact simply global judgments and as such we should globally ignore them!

(d) *No taboo.* Nor is BEM a tabu which we are forbidden to touch! The *critical* discussion of the text is part of the process of reception. Even a positive official response by the churches at this stage certainly cannot be regarded as official reception. Yes, therefore, to critical appraisal. Providing, of course, that the criticism (not criticism for criticism's sake) serves the ultimate goal to which the churches are together committed. For the text has been sent to the churches to be *received* not to be *reviewed*!

(e) *Not a comfortable text.* BEM is not a comfortable text for the churches! Even if it does not have to perform the stabbing function of a gadfly for churches and theologians, it is certainly not one of the innumerable theological texts consigned to oblivion in the Church's consciousness. Here, undoubtedly, the churches are presented with something new, something different, something challenging. The sense of coercion, of threat, of great risks, will perhaps provoke fears and encourage flight into the security of inactive silence! Here especially we all need the distinguishing gift of the Holy Spirit to make the right decisions and to keep on the right path. BEM itself clearly points us in this direction: called as they are to eucharistic action, may the churches, even in face of the questions put to them by BEM, think through again the content and present ecumenical relevance of certain basic concepts, such as the ideas of eucharistic sacrifice, the changing of the elements, the breaking of the bread, and so on. A visible unity and a eucharistic fellowship are certainly almost inconceivable without sacrifice, without change and breaking, in respect of many and possibly naive axioms!

(f) *Not a private affair.* BEM is not a private affair of its authors, of the Faith and Order Commission, or of the World Council of Churches itself. It is not an abstract self-contained entity. It is an affair of the churches! BEM has grown up with the ecumenical movement, come to maturity with it, and seeks only to serve the common witness, the common service to human beings and to humanity, and to promote visible unity. The Lima Text was produced at the official bidding of the churches. The churches have freely and voluntarily shared in this process, assumed joint responsibility for the whole process and supported it by contributing personal and material resources and, above all, with their prayers. Not only the member churches of the World Council but also the Roman Catholic Church and other churches, for whose practical

cooperation we all have every reason to give special thanks. What is reflected in the Lima Text, therefore, is not only the theological wealth and converging determination of the hundred or more theologians who lived and worked together in this process. Even in the various decisive phases through which the Text passed, a real process of reception is discernible in which what had previously and simultaneously been studied, commented on and in fact if not officially, received by the churches themselves both within the framework of the World Council and in the various consultations and bilateral and multilateral dialogues was step by step received, adopted and declared.

The deliberate and vigorous involvement of the churches which helped to achieve this convergence, certainly the maximum possible up to the present time, permits the hope that in the next stages, no church will dance the Turkish three-step (i.e. one step forward, two steps back!). After an ecumenical effort and hope stretching over so long a time, one certainly would be justified in saying that the seriousness and consistency with which the churches deal with the Lima Text and the manner in which the reception process takes place will also be the measure, the demonstration or the legitimate calling in question of the seriousness of the same churches' participation, not only in the bilateral dialogues but also and above all in the ecumenical movement itself. The churches remain completely free, of course, to accept the Text, to suggest modifications, to voice specific wishes, and even to reject it outright. They would display inconsistency only if they decided to ignore the Lima Text completely!

Return to the ecumenical 'raison d'être'

11. The Orthodox Church certainly has good reasons for joy. With the Lima Text, the theological discussion directly concerned with the unity of the Church has been brought right back into the very center of the ecumenical movement. Just ten years ago, it will be remembered, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the World Council of Churches in 1973, sent a Declaration to the World Council in which he spoke, among other things, of a crisis 'threatening the ecumenical movement as a whole and the World Council of Churches in particular'.

12. Without minimizing the duty and responsibility of Christians and churches in relation to human pain and suffering, the Declaration saw the real reason for the crisis in what many asserted accusingly to be the onesided interest of the World Council of Churches in social and political goals. A similar note was struck in a simultaneous message from the Russian Patriarchate and other Orthodox representatives. The Orthodox, therefore, may see in the Lima Text the fruits of their criticism at that time.

13. This was confirmed by the Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios in the statement already mentioned. "Today we are pleased to see that in recent years there is observable a praiseworthy return of the World Council of Churches to the quest for Christian unity for which it was founded, as the work of the Faith and Order Commission shows . . . It is our desire that this return and this advance of the World Council of Churches should be permanent, so that it may succeed in its chief aim" (Epispepsis 291/1982, p. 2).

14. As the Lima Text above all shows, the World Council has meanwhile reached a deeper appreciation and practice of its *raison d'être*. What we must hope now is that once this Assembly is over, BEM will not be relegated to the periphery of ecumenical activity and marginalized by some other concerns. We hope, indeed, that BEM and its spirit will also animate other areas of the World Council's work and help the churches in the future to advance even more confidently towards their visible unity. If this is to happen, one basic prerequisite will certainly be to strengthen and equip the Faith and Order Commission by providing it with the staff and material resources it needs, and, above all, with the trust and spiritual support of the churches, to match the increased responsibilities of this Commission in view particularly of the process of 'reception' which lies ahead.

Return to the 'raison d'être' without withdrawal from life

15. The return of the World Council to its *raison d'être* is not to be mistaken, of course, for a recommendation that

(a) we are to strive for the visible unity of the Church with a theology which ignores real life in its thinking and action, or that

(b) the future mandate of the Faith and Order Commission should be theological work misunderstood in this sense as remote from life. On the contrary:

16. When we meet in Vancouver to make our assured but, for many, quite scandalous affirmation that Jesus Christ is the *Life of the world and its Light*, we should take care not to cordon off and devalue any part of what takes place in the name of Jesus Christ by treating it as a 'purely' theological and 'purely' domestic church affair. As far as BEM itself is concerned, this means that our understanding and practice of baptism, eucharist and ministry are always to be related, deliberately and consistently, to "the mission of Christ through the churches in the modern world" (p. ix). At the same time, in the power of the Holy Spirit, we should rid ourselves of any fear that in doing so we should be secularizing our churches and letting them become the prisoners of the world. Rid ourselves, too, of the fear that it would, in the last analysis, amount to serving the 'Marxist utopia' of an earthly paradise if we choose to cooperate with all people of goodwill in helping to make sure that this life,

originating in the Holy Spirit, based in Christ and called to become 'divinized' in the *doxa* of God, is not daily poisoned by the bitter taste of hell.

17. It is all the more important to insist on this point, considering that the social and international crises but also the general spiritual and cultural crises of humankind will continue in future to be the so-called 'non-theological' factors in the differences of opinion and in the conflicts among the churches and even among the individual members of every church, theologically disguised though these differences may often be. It is more than ever necessary, therefore, that the theological and churchly tasks and the practical tasks of social ethics should be tackled today in a complementary way! Recall the earlier point that the Lima Text itself matured with the ecumenical movement. This document can be rightly understood and cherished only if it is considered in the context of the other themes and programs which have concerned and characterized the World Council of Churches, at the very latest since the Uppsala Assembly: 'Mission and Dialogue with Other Faiths; Faith, Science and Technology; Development, Racism, Human Rights, Peace and Disarmament; Ecumenical Education, and the role of Woman in Church and Society' (*Konrad Raiser, mit neuem Leben füllen. Oekumene auf dem Weg nach Vancouver, in Evang. Kommentar* 5/1983, p. 252f). It is easy to see, therefore, why the language of the Lima Text is complementary; 'classical' while at the same time 'contextual and contemporary' (p. ix).

18. To continue in the future on this way of coordination and common growth can only be welcomed. Without this reciprocal impregnation and complementarity in existence and development, our theology of baptism, eucharist and ministry, like our theology generally, is in acute danger of succumbing to the triumphal ecstasy of a lifeless verticalism almost completely disconnected from the actual needs and hopes of the people of God and the world. Doctrine and life are just as inseparable as lack of faith and lifelessness! My own church tradition, for one, has never authorized a theology objectified by rationalization processes, a theology which thought of itself as a naked struggle for a truth which floated abstractly in and for itself somewhere between heaven and earth. The doctrine of the incarnate Logos of God can only be incarnated doctrine; a faith which 'sits' in the flesh of total life and total humanity, a faith which wears historical clothes and which is demonstrated in the here and now of each generation.

Otherwise, it would be blasphemous to teach, for example, that Christian *baptism* is liberation 'into a new humanity in which barriers of division whether of sex or race or social status are transcended' (II, 2) and yet to tolerate racial discrimination, for example, and even to seek to justify it biblically! Equally blasphemous to be taught and to teach others that the holy eucharist denotes what the world is to become, namely 'an offering and hymn

of praise to the Creator, a universal communion in the body of Christ, a kingdom of justice, love and peace in the Holy Spirit' (Eucharist II, 4), when the world and what happens in the world is the exact opposite of this promise; when we neglect pressing tasks of *micro-diakonia* and, above all, of *macro-diakonia*; when expediency and fear reduce churches and Christians to silence, even when the cry of the hungry for justice and peace is deafening, when in more and more areas throughout the world we find repeated daily the situation so clearly delineated by the Greek poet:

Two trees have blossomed too soon,
the police rush up to interrogate them!

Reception and meticulousness

19. The churches are now requested to respond officially to the Lima Text at the highest appropriate level of authority and to answer the specific questions put to them by the Commission. This adoption of a position by the churches is described in the Preface to the Lima Text as a 'process of reception'. Clearly this term does not carry the same meaning for all. Discussion of this basic term will, it is hoped, help to clarify one of the most important and pressing questions for the future. With God's help, a *ripeness for reception* is emerging at all levels of the ecumenical endeavor, especially in the bilateral dialogues. In my opinion, the concrete question of quite outstanding importance for ecumenical education, ecumenical methodology and ecumenical practice in the immediate future is simply this:

Is a consensus text the only kind of text that is ripe for reception or can even a pre-consensual agreement contain an element ripe for reception?

20. There is another reason why we should be clear about this question: the reception process recommended in connection with BEM is just as much a novelty for the churches as is the Lima Text itself. This novelty fits into none of the reception patterns familiar to us in the past. To give the question greater concreteness, let me try out the following: As applied to the Lima Text, is the concept of reception understood in its specifically theological and ecclesiological sense and in the way this was applied in the ancient Church; for example, in the reception of the decisions of local and ecumenical synods? If so, we shall probably have to reckon with the likelihood that a number of churches, the Orthodox Churches certainly, will be unable to give a positive response to the Commission's request. In any case, a text which touches on basics of the Christian faith is subject primarily not to the criterion of ecumenical need or of the longing for ecumenical unity, but to the inflexible criterion of doctrinal meticulousness.

21. It is on the immaturity in the Lima Text rather than on its maturity that the Orthodox Churches are bound to concentrate,

therefore, and not only the Orthodox churches. They are bound to say, for example, that the formulations they find there are undoubtedly well-considered but nevertheless not altogether precise; in other words, abstractions which do not exactly invite confidence (for example, a quasi absorption of confirmation by baptism, wooliness as to the real presence and the real change in the elements, a number of still open questions concerning the ministry—the Orthodox would probably have to stick to the concept of priesthood—and so on).

Such a procedure would obviously condemn the ecumenical discussion to almost endless floundering for a long time to come. Not only would a *Confessio Oikumenica* of the kind some are already desiderating (do we really need another one alongside the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed, the Creed of the whole of Christendom?) remain inconceivable for a very long time, but also our *Confusio Oikumenica* would also be indefinitely prolonged! By constantly piling up new texts independent of each other, even perhaps divergent texts on the same theme, canceling out previous ones, we would be ensuring that the figure of the ecumenical Sisyphus would come to prevail ever more tragically in our midst and even within each one of us!

A reception which does not bypass the pleroma of the Church

22. Faced with this difficulty and opting for a *preconsensual reception*, the first step would be to share the joy of our sisters and brothers who have ascended the longed-for mountain of the Lord step by step and who affirmed at their interim encampment in Lima: here we are standing not perhaps on the ground yet nevertheless in the forecourt of the apostolic faith. The interim camp is not yet Tabor itself (Mt. 17). It is certainly permissible for us to join with them, therefore, in saying: 'How good, Lord, it is to be here!' At the same time, we also hear His voice telling us: 'Rise! Go further! Continue on the way!

23. We need not, however, heed the other words commanding the disciples to "tell no one the vision!"—for meanwhile the Son of Man has risen from the dead and with Him also our hope for the future of His Church. We intend, indeed we must, continue our journey and carry the good news to "the people down there": to the people of God in the whole world, which longs increasingly to be reinforced by its spiritual shepherds in its conviction of the growing degree of the unity of humankind, a unity which it longs to experience as unity in the body of Christ! This, indeed, is the longing of the authors themselves when they ask the churches "to enable the widest possible involvement of the people of God at all levels of church life in the spiritual process of receiving this Text" (p. x).

24. *Who really speaks for the Church?* The plurality of church structures makes it impossible to give a uniform answer to this

question. Each church has crystallized its answer in the course of history and this answer is not in all churches the same as the answer of the Church in the time of the apostles. But whatever the answer, none surely should any longer ignore the long historical experience of the Church in their decision-making. For it is surely common knowledge that the doctrinal decisions of the highest church authorities have often remained empty words, *precisely because they bypassed the pleroma of the Church in their making!*

From our standpoint it would have to be said that bishops in their synodal decisions give expression to the faith, mind, ethos of the whole Church. But anyone who ignores the people of God in reaching decisions, anyone who prevents the people of God from taking part in the necessary process of information and opinion forming, is guilty of a *bureautheology* and a *bureaucratic "conciliarity"*, which in the long run is doomed to failure. It should be obvious therefore, that even an eventually positive official response of the highest authority to the Lima Text will not in itself signify reception in the theological and ecclesiological sense. By the same token, of course, a negative response of the same highest authority could not be considered to be a response of the unsuspecting people of God if the highest authority were to decide autonomously and therefore bureaucratically. At any rate, it seems to me aberrant and pointless to try to nourish ecumenical optimism by evasions, i.e. by manipulating church opinion or, on the contrary, by letting the people of God, which is hungry for ecumenical accord, therefore, starve by abstinence at the wrong place! Participation, therefore, is the most important thing that must be generally accepted.

25. The second, closely connected with participation, is the removal of elementary practical difficulties which have been neglected by the World Council of Churches in a way which is not exactly encouraging for the future. I am referring here to the whole complex area of the sharing of information. It is an illusion to think that there can be any participation without information. I have spoken elsewhere of the almost catastrophic *décalage chronologique* (chronological gap) in the ecumenical enterprise, i.e. of the enormous difference of level of information and participation between the group of ecumenical specialists and ordinary Christians, a difference which is to be found universally. Only a year after its publication, who really knows anything of BEM? In *whose*—unsuspecting!—name is *what* decided and *by whom*?

26. What must be faced here, frankly and realistically, is, above all, the acute problem of language; the faithful translation and swift distribution of ecumenical texts. The language barrier, which is one of the major problems in the ecumenical movement, becomes even more crucial and urgent in face of the reception problem. The polyglot brothers and sisters in Geneva should understand the situation of the many monoglot brothers and sisters throughout the world! The same understanding is also called for from those who

speak English, French and German, for whom the texts are usually made available reasonably quickly. But for the rest who have no facility in these languages, a process of marginalization is perpetuated. The loser from this marginalization process is the 'process of reception' in all ecumenical matters. Some languages are also a sort of major power of our world. The question here, therefore, is who really constitute the powerful among us, who also want to decide for us? How is a poor person, in this context certainly a monolingual bishop or even an ordinary Christian at the other end of the earth, to share in the discussion of BEM and in the decisions concerning it? If this Assembly could show the way to solve this acute problem, it would by that alone have accomplished a decisive advance for the ecumenical movement. But perhaps CICARWS, CCPD, and other program areas of the World Council of Churches should also reexamine their projects and priorities from this standpoint of the elementary human rights of the Christian.

The will to converge and a reception which inspires

27. A third and final factor I want to speak of in this context, is the will to converge, which is presupposed when convergence texts are to be recognized. Lacking this conscious and consistent will to converge, to be developed first, of course, in the official leaders of each church in order then to animate the whole people of God, the ecumenical enterprise will be like a motor without ignition, i.e. without 'movement'. The Lima Text would already fulfil its purpose, perhaps, if the churches were to understand the request for reception not in a specifically theological but in a new and specifically ecumenical sense; i.e. not as a formal canonical act of endorsement but as a decision which stimulates and inspires. Reception in that case would mean, above all, that the Lima Text would be transmitted to the communities of Christ throughout the whole world as good news: the good news that far-reaching converging agreement has been achieved on baptism, eucharist and ministry and that at the same time a will to converge is being guided by the Holy Spirit in the direction He wills! Only then can we expect the new insights of the Lima Text to find entry into theology, liturgy, and into the witness and service of the people of God throughout the whole inhabited earth.

28. In conclusion, I would like to express the hope that, apart from the responses of the churches to the Lima Text as a whole and to its individual questions, what may be received at the widest possible level will be the new spirit of the Lima Text; its new way of seeing and the new breadth with which it approaches old controversial questions in the light of Holy Scripture and the apostolic faith of the Church and points a sure way to their solution.

29. This is all the more important in view of the fact that, in the Church's immediate future and in its more remote future, the old

and still unsolved differences will be joined by new controversial questions. These, too, will lead to and even force upon us differences of opinion and latent, but also open conflicts. This will be not only in the horizontal dimension, in relations between the churches, but also in the vertical dimension, in the life of individual churches and congregations. Our different loyalties, our culture and history, our politics and ideology, "principalities and powers" of this world, the national loyalties and the claims made on the church by pressure groups and blocks, but no less, too, the "mind of the flesh" (Rom. 8), will continue to produce plurality, differentiation and antagonism in the life of the Church to the end of time. Not even our theology, which is both a studious statement about God's revelation and at the same time itself a child of the world and history, can be disciplined so long as it remains a free operation of the living Spirit.

30. In itself, therefore, not even a complete and regularly authorized verbal consensus would be any guarantee of the actual restoration and realization of the unity of the Church. Even if such a universal consensus were to be achieved at the highest level of authority competent here, it would have a real chance only if it were to fill the heart and conscience of the shepherds and the faithful with the assurance that doctrinal differences no longer existed of a kind which were fundamental and strong enough to separate us from the love of Christ and from communion with Him and with one another. The only way to prepare a consensus of this kind and to pave the way for such an assurance is for synods, church authorities, congregations, theological colleges, church mass media, our Christian education and our daily dealings with human beings who differ from us in faith and in thought, to be filled and directed by the Spirit and by the style and breadth of approach of the Lima Text, i.e. by the eucharistic experience of God, of the fellow human being, and of the world.