

our contemporary world? Linden suggests that such a starting point must be an investigation into the origins of our contemporary society. Centering the theological task on our origins and its implications makes us aware that a new day has already arrived. In this evolved and still evolving cultural clash the tendency is between the rejection of society, its graces, and its authority, including its religious authority and the settling into an "adjusted religion." This adjusted religion is a private matter. In it the believer hears the Word of God but does not always seek to follow that Word where suffering people are concerned. In fact, that "adjusted religion" has become the roadmap for the current efforts at creating global conformity by western civilization. In this context merely upholding religious faith as a private matter and an individualistic experience of an *abstract* God and an *absolute* Church/religious group gets to be problematic.

Responses to both presentations focused on questions and comments around the two main themes posed by the presenters: how to understand and articulate multiple religious belongings and how to adequately describe our context as a basis for theological reflection.

The group then discussed plans for a publication based on the research of its members. In order to enhance the contributions to the publication, past and future presenters will be asked to edit the texts of their presentations to the group for inclusion in the publication. It was agreed that next year we would attempt to have presentations by two female members of the society: Jane Redmont of Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley and Anna Perkins of Boston College.

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FAITH AND ORDER'S *THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH*

- Topic: A Catholic Response to Faith and Order's
The Nature and Purpose of the Church
- Convener: Michael A. Fahey, Marquette University
- Moderator: Ann K. Riggs, National Council of Churches, Faith and Order
- Presenters: Catherine Clifford, St. Paul University, Ottawa
 Francis A. Sullivan, Boston College

The Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches based in Geneva is currently in the process of preparing a major ecumenical document that potentially could be as important as the well-known Lima Document, *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (1982), to which the CTSA commissioned and published an official response (*Catholic Perspectives on Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, edited by Michael Fahey, 1986). To devote the attention which this new

document, still in preparation, rightly deserves, the board of directors of the CTSA has established a new Research Group that will study and analyze the document over a three-year period with the possibility of publishing a response.

The text that the research group had available for study is dated November 1998 (a second revised version is already well underway and will presumably be released to the public this year). The project was strongly recommended by the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, in 1993. The Faith and Order Commission is inviting churches, universities, institutes, and societies such as our own to reflect on the text in the light of questions such as: how much can one recognize in the text an emerging convergence on the nature and purpose of the Church; what areas in the document need further work or addition; what steps might one's own Church take even now toward promoting a mutual recognition of other churches?

The document, like the Lima Document, contains two separate segments: the main text represents common perspectives which can be claimed largely as a result of the pioneering work of the bilateral and multilateral consultations of the past fifty years; the material printed "inside the boxes" explores areas where differences remain both within and between churches. Are these church-dividing differences or legitimate expressions of diversity?

Two exploratory presentations were delivered at the convention before a large turnout of more than fifty auditors. The first presentation on the main text was summarized and evaluated by Catherine Clifford of St. Paul University, Ottawa, whose doctoral dissertation at the University of St. Michael's, Toronto, addressed the work of the Groupe des Dombes, and who is currently a member of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Dialogue of Canada. The second presentation on the theology "in the boxes"—the controverted doctrines—was delivered by the well-known ecclesialogist and ecumenist, Francis A. Sullivan, who taught for thirty-six years at the Gregorian University and who since 1992 has been a member of the theology faculty at Boston College. Copies of these talks may be obtained by contacting via e-mail: <ariggs@nccusa.org> or <michael.fahey@marquette.edu>.

While it is not possible here to summarize even briefly the nuanced assessments by the two presenters, several comments are possible. Clifford, while applauding the text's positive contributions, noted a weakness in a less than consistent treatment of communion ecclesiology and in a lack of clarity about the ecclesiological dimension of the sacraments and the Church as sacrament. Sullivan offered specific critiques of the several "boxes" regarding: the institutional dimension of the Church and the work of the Holy Spirit; the Church and sin as well as the Church and sacrament; *koinonia* and diversity within the local Church; apostolic faith, baptism, eucharist, ministry, and episkope; and finally faith and ethics.

The auditors were invited to provide their electronic addresses so that during the coming years it will be possible for those interested to remain in contact by means of an informal chat room. Those who were in attendance will be contacted

shortly; others interested in participating in the project during the next two years are invited to contact either the convener or the moderator. Copies of the revised Faith and Order draft will be available as soon as it is printed.

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