

Seventh Plenary Assembly: Workshop Discussion Guide

A NEW ECUMENICAL VISION FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM

by
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I. INTRODUCTION

Meeting in the first days of the new century, the third millennium after the birth of Christ, the Seventh FABC Plenary Assembly has an opportunity, not only to evaluate ecumenical relations and efforts in the past, but more importantly to propose new initiatives aimed at revitalizing the movement for Christian unity in coming years.

Malaise in the Ecumenical Movement. Many observers have noted that the ecumenical movement does not seem to be flourishing. There appears to be little progress toward ecumenical unity and generally not much enthusiasm for ecumenism among Christians. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is not celebrated in many of our Churches. Important doctrinal agreements have been reached by the Vatican Council for Promoting Christian Unity and other Churches, but such documents are little known and studied by Christians of various Churches. Despite dramatic appeals and gestures by the Pope and his important 1994 encyclical *Ut unum sint*, Church leaders - Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Evangelical - have been slow to take new initiatives to further ecumenical unity. Thus, the first challenge facing the Episcopal Conference members of FABC is to seek, together with other Christian Churches in Asia, realistic and concrete ways to revitalize the ecumenical movement.

First Steps towards FABC-CCA Cooperation. On the positive side, we can report that practical steps towards a closer working relationship with the Christian Conference of Asia, an ecumenical body bringing together over 120 Churches and Synods in Asia, have been taken. CCA and FABC

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have organized two sessions of the Asian Movement for Christian Unity (AMCU I and AMCU II). FABC Representation has been good at the Congresses of Asian Theologians (CATS I and CATS II), giving the association a fully ecumenical nature from its inception. Catholics have begun to participate in the CCA-sponsored Asia Ecumenical Course, and the first jointly organized CCA-FABC Regional Ecumenical Course has taken place.

Organizational coordination has favored broader ecumenical cooperation. A joint staff meeting was held between FABC and CCA. Email and fax connections permit closer cooperation in joint planning. An ecumenical visit to Churches in the Persian Gulf whose congregations are mostly from Asia has opened the possibility of closer cooperation with the Middle East Council of Churches, of which the Catholic Church is a full member.

The Asian Ecumenical Committee, set up to coordinate and promote this cooperation, has met as recently as December, 1999, has proposed concrete measures to increase collaboration. Before examining these measures, it might be worthwhile to take a closer look at recent progress in ecumenical efforts in Asia as the point of departure for further efforts.

II. STEPS TOWARD UNITY: 1993-1999

In the past decade, many new initiatives have been undertaken to promote Christian unity in Asia. A summary of the more important projects follows.

1. Hua Hin Agreement. Recent ecumenical cooperation stems from the agreement signed in September, 1993, at Hua Hin, Thailand, by a Joint FABC-CCA Task Force which approved plans for the formation of an Asian Ecumenical Committee (AEC). The committee was to carry out joint programs, foster ecumenical relations at national and local levels, and conscientize Christians of all churches to work for Christian unity. The agreement was approved by FABC at the Sixth Plenary Assembly in Manila, Philippines, in January, 1995, and by CCA at their General Assembly in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in June, 1995.

The agreement outlined the goals of the Asian Ecumenical Committee. These were seen as the sharing of information, identifying, promoting and supervising joint programs, establishing joint program committees, fostering ecumenical relations at national and local levels, consulting Bishops conferences on the possibility of joining National Councils of Churches, and sharing personnel and resources. These goals should be implemented by publishing a joint newsletter, inviting one another to take part in programs and activities, forming new joint committees to promote womens concerns, ecumenical formation, and theological formation, encouraging

local initiatives such as joint worship materials, cooperating in the preparation and celebration of Christian Unity Week, and setting up ecumenical commissions in every Church and bishops conference.

After the ratification of the Joint Task Force Report by the FABC Plenary in Manila and the CCA General Assembly in Colombo, the two bodies named seven members from CCA churches and seven from FABC. The first meeting was not held until January, 1997.

2. Asian Movement for Christian Unity (AMCU). Even before the first meeting of the AEC, representatives of the 17 episcopal conference members of FABC and of the 120 Churches of the CCA met on Cheung Chau island, in Hong Kong, in March, 1996, for the first seminar of the Asian Movement for Christian Unity (AMCU I). Taking part were 42 participants from 15 Asian countries and delegates from the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. The consultation studied the theology of ecumenism, the vision of Christian Unity, and ways to build on what unites Christians and to overcome what divides. The participants looked for practical ways to work for unity in Asia and committed themselves to a wide range of programs aimed at fostering Christian unity. The papers of AMCU I were published jointly by FABC in *FABC Papers #77* and the CTC Bulletin, Vol. 14, no. 2.

By sharing insights on the subject of Christian unity and by worshiping together, the participants became aware of the common responsibility of all Christians for overcoming the scandal of a divided Christianity. They tried to identify the obstacles to Christian unity in Asia: a long history of mutual indifference, prejudice, and hostility, an inadequate understanding of ecumenism, the failure of the ecumenical movement to reach the grass-roots, a lack of structures to carry out initiatives, and unresolved doctrinal, moral and disciplinary issues. They also sought signs of hope: joint ecumenical activities at national and local levels, the experiences of churches in Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, and Taiwan where churches have formed more inclusive ecumenical bodies, common responses to social, political and economic issues, improved attitudes toward other denominations, increasing willingness to overcome prejudices and share experiences, and the heroism of Asian Christians of all churches who have given their lives in fidelity to Christ.

Because of its importance in giving direction to the ecumenical movement in Asia, the final statement of AMCU I, *Our Pilgrimage of Hope*, will be included as an appendix to this report.

3. First Meeting of Asian Ecumenical Committee. The first meeting of the AEC took place in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in January, 1997. A

number of joint projects were proposed and studied. Of these, some were approved and others rejected.

- a. **Ecumenical formation** was seen as the first priority. CCA-FABC would not begin by organizing its own regional or national seminars, but Catholic involvement, both as animators and participants, should be sought in the Asia Ecumenical Course which has been held annually for more than 20 years. The purpose of Catholic participation is to broaden involvement in each others initiatives and to work towards mutual understanding of each others history and ecumenical vision. Eventually, regional ecumenical courses could be jointly organized.
- b. **Theological Cooperation.** The AEC recommended that FABC send official representation to the first Congress of Asian Theologians to be held in Suwon, Korea. The organizers would be free to invite other Roman Catholic theologians as well.
- c. **AMCU II.** The seminar should be aimed at church leaders, bishops and seminary professors. The theme: Ecumenical Formation as Churches of Asia Move Towards the New Millennium, and the main goal ecumenical conversion, to be achieved by exchange of information, a meeting of spiritualities, and the formation of animators to promote ecumenical unity.
- d. **Jubilee Year.** At the FABC-OHD meeting in Pattaya, Thailand on 24-31 August 1997 to discuss plans for the Jubilee, Dr. Cario would represent CCA on The Church in the 21st Century. CCA-FABC should provide a different voice of what the year 2000 is about, focusing on what has been accomplished in terms of Christian unity and focusing conscientizing people about international justice issues, e.g., the debt problem and the arms industry.
- e. **Migrants, Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons.** Centers should service-oriented and also involved in community building and pastoral care for Christian and non-Christian migrants. CCA and FABC should prepare a joint directory of migrant centers and programs existing in Asia and services available for migrant workers to be made available to the workers and the churches that serve migrants. FABC should send a participant in the visit planned by CCA to the Gulf Churches.
- f. **Interreligious Dialogue.** CCA and FABC should cooperate in common witness to promote interreligious dialogue. Two types of meeting are necessary: workshops to prepare Christians for dialogue and

direct encounters with people of other faiths to study and discuss issues together.

- g. Worship booklet** of para-liturgical prayers should be prepared for ecumenical occasions.

Two proposed projects were rejected. It was decided that CCA and FABC would not organize any commemoration of Vasco da Gama's entrance into Asia in 1498 but are willing to suggest historians and other scholars for any eventual commemoration. A proposal for an Asia-wide consultation on Third World Tourism was shelved because of the recent transfer of the headquarters of the Ecumenical Committee for Third World Tourism from Bangkok to Barbados. It was questioned whether the CCA and FABC would remain as supporting members.

4. Congress of Asian Theologians (CATS). The first Congress, with over 100 theologians from Asia, was held in Suwon, Korea, on 25-31 May 1997. The FABC was represented officially by five delegates, and other Roman Catholic theologians also took part. Continuation committees were formed in which Catholics were well-represented. The FABC Office for Theological Concerns has been in contact with the CCA regarding the possibility of becoming a sponsor. The next Congress was set for Bangalore in August, 1999.

5. FABC-CCA Joint Staff Meeting. The staffs of FABC and CCA met at CCA headquarters in Hong Kong on 13-14 June 1997, in an informal meeting at which Dr. Cario, CCA General Secretary, and Fr. Malone, FABC Asst. General Secretary, took part. The staffs discussed ways of implementing the proposals made at the AEC meeting in Colombo.

- a. AMCU II should focus on ecumenical formation at the national and local levels and be aimed at church leaders, bishops, and seminary professors.
- b. Catholic participation should be sought, both as students and as teachers, in the Asian Ecumenical Course.
- c. Dr. Cario will be invited to the Pattaya seminar on The Church in the 21st Century.
- d. A jointly-sponsored Christian-Muslim meeting should be organized in Indonesia in 1998.
- e. The CCA-FABC should work together on questions of migrants. Catholic participation at the meetings with MECC in Cyprus and the Gulf should be arranged.
- f. CCA-MRIA and FABC-OHD will be responsible for producing a directory of Migrant Centers/Programs in Asia and available services provided for migrant workers and prospective migrant work-

- ers. MECC will be contacted to obtain information from them.
- g. CATS. FABC Office of Theological Concerns will be invited to become a supporting organization and Catholic theologians will be encouraged to become members. AEC members are well represented on CATS committees. Dr. Cario is Secretary of the Continuation Committee; Fr. Pathil is on the Continuation Committee.
 - h. Worship Booklet. Materials are still being collected, and CCA and FABC participants are urged to identify liturgical/catechetical centers who can contribute.
 - i. Common intercessory prayers were sent to all churches for the people of Hong Kong on the occasion of the return of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty.

6. Second AEC Meeting. The second meeting of the AEC was held in Bali, Indonesia, in January, 1998, immediately preceding AMCU II. The main points decided upon were:

- a. FABC should contact the Synod Office to ensure CCA representation at the Asian Synod.
- b. Catholic participation in the Asian Ecumenical Course (Chiang Mai, October, 1998) was confirmed: five students and two professors.
- c. The FABC should encourage the episcopal conferences to consider forms of ecumenical association with other churches at the national and regional levels. Taiwan, Malaysia, Australia, MECC were various models proposed.
- d. Joint celebration of the Year 2000 should be encouraged at the national level, and all councils of churches and episcopal conferences would be contacted to this end. The FABC and CCA plenaries in 2000 could be an occasion for joint celebrations, but more detailed plans must await confirmed dates and places. All agreed that national or continental celebrations should concentrate on repentance and renewal. Absolution of debts should be a central focus.

7. CCA Representation at the Asian Synod. The CCA was represented at the Special Assembly for Asia by Revs. Agustina Lamentut, David Gill, and T.K. George, all of whom addressed the Synod participants. Bishop Kenneth Fernando could not attend because of illness.

8. AMCU II. AMCU II was held in Bali, Indonesia in January 1998, with 48 participants from 15 Asian countries, equally divided between Catholics and those from CCA Churches. The main focus of AMCU II was the preparation of ecumenical teams who could give ecumenical formation courses at the local and national levels. The context for ecumenical formation as the Churches of Asia look forward towards the 21st Century was presented by various speakers from the FABC and CCA. Speaker from

both FABC and CCA addressed the following themes: "An Ecumenical Vision of the Church in the 21st Century," "Special Assembly for Asia of the Synod of Bishops," "Christian Theological Concerns in Asia for the 21st Century," "Women in Theology and Ecumenism," "The Wider Ecumenism: Ecumenical Concerns in Interreligious Dialogue," and "Christian Ecumenical Courses."

9. Ecumenical Visit to the Churches of the Gulf. A joint CCA-FABC team visited the churches of the Arabian/Persian Gulf in May, 1998, to study the situation of migrant workers and to explore forms of cooperation with the Middle East Council of Churches (of which the Catholic Church is a full member) to serve the needs of the migrants. It was decided to cooperate with the Churches of the Middle East to prepare an ecumenical directory on migrant centers which could be distributed both among migrant workers and those working to serve them.

10. CATS II. The Second Congress of Asian Theologians was held at the Ecumenical Centre in Bangalore, India, in August, 1999. Of about 100 participants, 20 were Catholics. FABC sent an official delegation of ten participants.

III. MOVING ECUMENICALLY INTO THE NEW MILLENNIUM

Third Meeting of AEC. The third meeting of the Asian Ecumenical Committee was held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, in December, 1999. In light of the fact that both FABC and CCA will hold their plenary assemblies in early 2000 (FABC Plenary in Sampran, Thailand, in January, 2000, and CCA General Assembly in Tomohon, Indonesia, in June, 2000) the AEC was directed toward preparing an ecumenical agenda for the two assembled bodies. This was the first time that representatives of the CCA and FABC worked together to make joint proposals for the two plenary assemblies and, as such, the planning session marked a new stage in ecumenical cooperation at the Asian continental level.

1. AMCU III. One of the main obstacles to promoting Christian unity effectively in Asia is the lack of effective associations between the Catholic Church and the more than 120 Churches and Councils of the CCA. In over 50 countries and regions around the world, the Catholic Church is a full member of the National or Regional Council of Churches. In some places, such as Oceania and the Caribbean, the Catholic Church is universally represented in the ecumenical bodies of the place. Elsewhere, such as in Africa, Latin America, and Europe, the Catholic Church is a member of the National Council of Churches in most countries. Asia, where only Taiwan and Malaysia have some form of structural relationship to other Churches, would appear to be the most ecumenically backward region in the area of

Catholic participation in ecumenical associations. At the continental level, the Catholic Church is already represented in the Christian Conference of Asia through its membership in Australias Council of Churches, which is a member of the CCA. Catholic delegates from Australia are expected at the forthcoming CCA General Assembly.

The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity has repeatedly urged Bishops Conferences to explore, together with other Christian Churches and Councils, effective forms of association which would promote the visible unity of Christians. In November, 1999, in his post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, Pope John Paul specifically urged the Episcopal Conferences in Asia "to join in a process of prayer and consultation in order to explore the possibilities of new ecumenical structures and associations to promote Christian unity" (*Ecclesia in Asia*, 30). On their part, the Christian Conference of Asia, in General Assemblies in CIPANAS, Indonesia, and in Manila, Philippines, committed themselves to work for ecumenical association with the Catholic Church that would take concrete form in continental, regional, and national structures.

In the third consultation of the Asian Movement for Christian Unity (AMCU III), the Asian Ecumenical Committee proposes to respond to the urging of Pope John Paul II and the appeals of CCA General Assemblies to explore models of ecumenical associations for the new millennium. Ecumenical associations are not all of one type, nor do they mean that individual Churches lose their identity or independence in decision-making. Some local Catholic Churches, as in Taiwan, have joined the previously existing National Council of Churches. Elsewhere, as in Australia, the Churches together created a new association which they felt would more accurately express the ecumenical relationships of the region. In Malaysia, the Catholic Church is not a member of the National Council of Churches, but Catholics, Protestants, Anglicans, and Evangelicals are all represented in the Christian Federation of Malaysia.

AMCU III intends to look critically at the various models tried and to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of each form of ecumenical association. The final decision whether or not to join the existing Councils of Churches or newly created ecumenical bodies rests with the Episcopal Conferences and their partner Churches, but it is hoped that AMCU III will offer bishops and other Church leaders the opportunity to prepare themselves to make well-informed decisions.

In the previous AMCUs, participants were either representatives of local churches who were already engaged in ecumenical activity (AMCU I) or those expected to be involved in ecumenical formation (AMCU II). In the forthcoming AMCU III, the participants should be delegates from each

FABC Episcopal Conference member and the National Councils of Churches in countries of the CCA region. They will be expected to report their findings to their respective Episcopal Conferences and Councils of Churches and, it is hoped, to continue their efforts to search together for the most suitable forms of ecumenical association in their nation or region. A new millennium deserves new associations and new structures for promoting the visible unity of Christians.

Because of the importance of this gathering, guests will be invited to take part from the Vatican Council for Promoting Christian Unity, the World Council of Churches, and international confessional bodies such as the Anglican communion, the Lutheran World Federation and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC). The possibility of inviting Episcopal Conference delegates from countries where the Catholic Church is already a member of some form of ecumenical association is being considered, as well as observers from organizations such as "Pro Oriente" which have been active in ecumenical fields.

AMCU III will also be an opportunity to study together recent documents such as the joint Anglican-Roman Catholic document *The Gift of Authority*, the Lutheran-Roman Catholic document on justification, and the post-Synodal document *Ecclesia in Asia*.

Entitled Giving Shape to Ecumenical Vision in Asia at the Dawn of the New Millennium, AMCU III will be held in early 2001. This is to give FABC-CCA time to organize a well-prepared consultation. The Episcopal Conferences and Councils of Churches will receive notification of the dates and venue of the consultation within a few months.

2. Regional Ecumenical Courses. A second major task facing the Churches in Asia is the formation of ecumenical animators who have a sound knowledge of ecumenical theology, the history, practices and theological emphases of the various ecclesial traditions present in Asia, practical steps to promote Christian unity, and the factors that hinder unity. The ecumenical animators should also be equipped with a basic understanding of the faith and practice of other religions in Asia, as well as the practical difficulties and opportunities for dialogue. Thus, the focus of ecumenical formation courses should be double: ecumenical relations among the Christian churches and interreligious relations.

If ecumenism is to move beyond being the concern of a limited number of committed Church leaders and specialists and take root in the local Churches and congregations, the role of well-prepared animators is indispensable. Ideally, every bishops conference and national council of churches should hold their own ecumenical courses in the national and local lan-

guages. The FABC-OEIA and the CCA are ready to offer their services to the local churches to conduct national ecumenical courses.

Since ecumenical formation courses are still not possible in most local Churches due to the small number of specialists who can offer such courses, the Asian Ecumenical Committee has proposed that the CCA and FABC jointly undertake annual or semi-annual ecumenical formation courses on the regional level. In September, 1999, the first jointly sponsored CCA-FABC regional ecumenical course was held for the South Asia region at the Ecumenical Centre in Bangalore, India. A second, to be held in Hong Kong, is planned for the East/northeast Asia region in mid-2001, a third is scheduled for Southeast Asia in 2003.

For over 30 years, the CCA has conducted annually its Asia Ecumenical Courses for ecumenical formation. In 1998, for the first time, Catholic participants and input persons took part, but the course was planned and organized by CCA. At their General Assembly in June, 2000, the CCA will reevaluate the Asia Ecumenical Courses to determine whether they will continue as in the past independently from the jointly planned CCA-FABC regional courses, or whether the CCA-FABC regional courses will eventually replace the CCA courses.

Previously, each CCA Asia Ecumenical Course was prepared individually. At the AEC meeting in Chiang Mai, it was decided that the new regional courses should have a core curriculum of subjects to be studied, which will then be modified according to the needs of each region. Academic co-directors will be appointed, one each from FABC and CCA. The courses will last about 16 days and expenses will be borne equally by CCA and FABC.

3. Asian Forum of Christian Churches and Organizations. At the World Council of Churches General Assembly held in Harare, Zimbabwe, in December, 1998, Dr. Konrad Raiser, WCC General Secretary, proposed the formation of a Forum of Christian Churches and Ecumenical Organizations. This new entity is an attempt to respond to ecumenical realities today which have evolved considerably since the WCC structures were created 50 years ago.

Much ecumenical activity today is taking place outside membership in the World Council of Churches. Not only is the Catholic Church not a member of WCC, but neither are the dynamic and sometimes ecumenically-minded Evangelical and Pentecostal Churches. Moreover, international confessional bodies like the World Lutheran Fellowship, the World Assembly of Reformed Churches, and the Anglican Communion are not represented directly in the WCC because they are not *churches*. Regional

ecumenical bodies like the Middle East Council of Churches, continental ecumenical bodies like the CCA or the 80-member All-Africa Council of Churches, and ecumenical organizations like YMCA and YWCA are similarly ineligible for membership in the WCC.

Raiser proposed that the Forum should not be a new organization with yet another bureaucracy but rather a free association in which participation is more important than membership. The World Council of Churches, he stated, continues to be the most comprehensive and most representative institutional expression of the ecumenical movement, and as such should not be replaced by the new association, but remain as one constitutive element of the Forum. The Vatican Council for Promoting Christian Unity, along with other confessional and regional organizations and prospective members, have studied the proposal and agreed in principle.

The form which the proposed Forum might take is still vague and needs much reflection, discussion, and negotiation before it becomes a reality. The idea has been subject to criticism for offering an easy alternative to a genuine commitment to work for Christian unity.

It has been suggested that the proposed Forum be tried at the regional and continental levels so that its value could be eventually assessed. The Asian Ecumenical Committee proposed that the Forum be tried experimentally in Asia and decided that the Forum would be raised as one among the many possibilities of ecumenical association at AMCU III.

4. Theological Study. One of the pressing needs of the Churches in Asia is theological reflection. In ecumenical areas, the Catholic Church has signed some important theological statements together with other Churches. The most well known are the Gift of Authority document signed with the Anglicans, that on justification with the Lutherans, others with Methodists, Evangelicals, Pentecostals, and Orthodox. However, most of these documents are not well known or have been much studied in Asia. The AEC proposes to work together with the Theological Concerns Offices of FABC and CCA to provide an opportunity to study these documents in greater depth and reflect together on their implications for ecumenical realities in Asia. It is hoped that a theological consultation at the Asian-wide level, to be held in late 2000 or early 2001 to examine these documents from an Asian perspective.

5. Symposium of Theological Students. There is a need for the future theologians of Asia to have a forum in which they can express their concerns, meet established theologians, and come to know better the issues that are occupying theologians elsewhere in Asia. The CCA is proposing a symposium for theological students to be held late in 2000. It is hoped that

Catholic theological faculties and seminaries in Asia will send representatives to this symposium. Just as CATS began as an initiative of the CCA but is rapidly developing into a fully ecumenical theological association (20 Catholic participants out of 100 at CATS II), so also it is hoped that by their participation and in this symposium Catholic theological students can be theologically and spiritually enriched by and simultaneously enrich their counterparts of other Churches.

ECUMENICAL VISION FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM

The dawn of the new millennium is a privileged opportunity for the Churches in Asia to give new impetus to the movement for Christian unity, an impetus that must be both deeply Christian and specifically Asian. John Paul II, in his encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, expresses well these hopes: All the faithful are asked by the Spirit of God to do everything possible to strengthen the bonds of communion between all Christians and to increase cooperation between Christ's followers. As the Church turns her gaze to the New Millennium, she asks the Spirit for the grace to strengthen her own unity and to make it grow toward full communion with other Christians (*UUS*, 101-102.)

With a few exceptions, ecumenical relations in Asia have not been marked by conflict or warfare. This is a blessing from God for which Asian Christians must be grateful. However, all too often ecumenical relations in Asia have been characterized by mutual ignorance and disinterest in actively promoting Christian unity. The Churches in Asia often give lip service to the calls for Christian unity made by the Pope and other Christian leaders, but then do little to translate these calls into action programs.

In his apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia*, the Pope notes a special motivation for promoting ecumenism in Asia: "Ecumenical dialogue is a challenge and a call to conversion for the whole Church, especially for the Church in Asia where people expect from Christians a clearer sign of unity. The Pope is addressing the sad reality that the Church, which is meant to be a living sign of the unity of all humankind before God, is often seen by others to be the most internally divided of Asia's religions. To our Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, and Taoist neighbors, this visible *disunity* proclaims the opposite of the Christian message the Churches are called to offer. As John Paul II puts it, again in *Ecclesia in Asia*, "The division among Christians is seen as a counter-witness to Jesus Christ by many in Asia who are searching for harmony and unity through their own religions and cultures" (EA, 30).

The path to full visible unity is long and no one pretends that it is easy or that there are not many obstacles to be overcome. However, in the words

of Walter Wink: "The future belongs to those who hope." It is whoever can envision in the manifold of its potentials a new and desirable possibility, which faith then fixes upon as inevitable who make the future a reality. It is those who have a vision of a future, and act as if that future were already a present reality, who actually create the future in which they believe. Once individuals and religious communities give up hope for any real change in the present situation, they no longer influence history. They become its victims.

The dawn of this new millennium is a challenge to Christians of all Churches in Asia to renewed hope and longing for that full visible unity for which Christ prayed. But to be effective, this longing must be an active hope that includes taking the steps, by God's grace, needed to bring it about. Our faith arouses in us an ecumenical vision of the future, which we are called to create by acting as though that future were already a reality. This is the challenge of a New Ecumenical Vision for a New Millennium.

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