An Ecumenical and International
Sociological Study of the Anglican and
Roman Catholic Church

A PROPOSAL MADE

TO

THE ANGLICAN/ROMAN CATHOLIC INTERNATIONAL

COMMISSION

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Introduction:

This paper represents a revision of our original draft proposal made to the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission on the morning of September 5, 1971. The revisions themselves are a result of the discussions held during the plenary session. This proposal, furthermore, is intended as a continuation and elaboration of the paper delivered by Canon William Purdy at the same session, entitled, "Growing Together". It presupposes a previous paper we had submitted, "An Ecumenical Study of Anglican and Roman Catholic Priests: Goals and Perspectives" which was a "defense" of Sociological Studies in this area. This latter paper, which each of you will receive in the mail in the near future, has now to be expanded, in the light of the discussions of the Sept. 5th meeting, to include the laity and South Africa and Australia.

The primary substantive revision of the original proposal made on Sept. 5th consists of a change in the multiphasic order of the study. Rather than divide the study into five phases based on some geographical division of the populations to be studied, it was thought that the study should begin in all regions simultaneously, and that divisions should be made rather on the basis of the internal sections of the study itself. This latter approach will be scientifically reliable and valid if the criteria of sample selection are identical in each stage of the survey. It will also add to the value of the study in so far as gaps scientifically detected in any one stage of the survey can be filled in, in the immediately following stage. Ecumenical implementation, the key issue and raison d'etre of this survey, can be continually tested in each subsequent stage.

Is there any practical, ecumenical value to a Sociological survey? Clearly, surveys of a purely demographic and content-free nature are of little but descriptive value. Decisions on any level cannot be made with this kind of information as a base. Though virtually mountains of useless information have been collected and carefully analysed by Sociologists of both the past and present, it does not follow that all Sociologists devote their academic lives to these pursuits. Not all Sociologists are radical empiricists nor logical positivists. Surveys, furthermore, cannot change the world even when they are conducted in the more substantive areas of belief-systems, ultimate values and basic life-style patterns. Surveys, however, have been of significant and demonstrable help to individuals and groups in their efforts to solve the problems which confront them. Studies cannot give people strength but they can help people to discover their existing and frequently latent resources. Surveys are instructive and educative when the questionnaires are properly constructed. This educational value is not limited to the respondents but to all persons who are acquainted or who can be made cognizant of the findings. Sociological facts, particularly those of a more profound nature, are frequently more moving than logical argumentation.

Since Sociology is much more than the scientific quantification of information (quantifrenia has long since been repudiated by scholars in the field) the insights derived from data carefully collected and analysed can be of immeasurable help in the decision-making process. People, not facts make decisions. But people unencumbered by factual ignorance manifest a marked tendency to overcome that paralysis so frequently associated with bureaucratic decision-making processes. It is easier to make decisions in areas of total or partial consensus than in areas of darkness. Information, however, stored in computer memory banks or in file cabinets is of little practical value to anyone. But, there are techniques whereby data can be put to use in the solving of human and religious problems.

A study will be of practical value when it gets people to ask themselves questions they wouldn't ask otherwise and when the results of the data-gathering can be presented in such a way as they can understand the problems, their strengths and weaknesses, their de facto area of agreement and dissent and when they can be helped in the discovery of their own solutions. A study will be of practical value when it suggests the areas of strategic decision-making that will have the real support of the people involved. Finally, a study will be of practical value when, and only when it is multidisciplinary, international and ecumenical.

What are the Conditions of Success ?

A survey cannot be successful when it is viewed as a substitute for action. Frequently, when individuals do not want to make a decision they begin a study. But, when surveys are viewed as an attempt to locate the precise area where action can be undertaken successfully then they can be quite fruitful.

Those studies which have been interdisciplinary, international, ecumenical and hierarchical have been successful in the past. When one or another of these elements is missing, the study frequently suffers from excessive bias to such a degree that it does not enjoy sufficient credibility to warrant successful implementation. This is particularly true of studies in Religious Sociology wherein the content of the questionnaire items has not been determined from theological and hierarchical sources of imput.

Surveys are successful when they are scholarly in terms of all of the disciplines involved and when they are adequate to the complexities of the issues being probed. Far too many amateurish studies have already been done and far too many failures experienced. Data collected in this fashion is usually unreliable and invalid and even the best of experts find it difficult to make anything out of it.

Success also depends upon the utilization of the most highly developed statistical and computer techniques. The science of biostatistics, for example, has developed remarkably in the last few years due to advances in computer technology. To return to an older and simpler form of statistical analysis would seriously threaten the eventual outcome of any ecumenical survey.

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Sociologists are aware of the limitations of their own science however pompous they may sound on certain occasions. The reality which the Sociologists examine is far more complex than that of the natural scientist. The Sociologists must not only examine interactive behaviour, human relationships and human institutions, but also the beliefs, the values, (both ultimate and penultimate), the feelings and intensity thereof which, hypothetically at least, undergird the behaviour. These complexities cannot be perfectly managed at the present stage in the development of Sociology. But the inter-disciplinary approach suggested in this paper is designed to aid in the management of the built-in limitations of Sociology.

Surveys are successful when they encompass more than one point in time or space. They must be longitudinal if they are to discover something more than ephemeral opinions, ideas or feelings determined by fads, passing fancies and so forth. The attitudes discovered through the instrumentality of Sociological research are factual. They are not normative. They do reveal areas of human interaction wherein truly normative input is needed. The facts revealed in surveys tell us where we have succeeded and where we have failed in the transmission of Christian norms, and consequently where we can best direct our own activity.

Studies which probe for human interaction in all of its complexities are far more successful than those which investigate ideological interaction or conflict. Some theorticians feel that ideas and ideologies govern human behaviour. Others, perhaps more realistically, believe that ideas, belief-systems, moral norms and so forth are but one of many factors present in human interaction or the lack thereof. It would be interesting to find out if the fellowship present in the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission (which has devoted itself to the discovery of a consensus in the areas of Anglican and Roman Catholic belief) is a function of the coming together of religious ideologies or the coming together of religious men.

In view of the ecumenical practicality envisioned in this study and in view of the conditions of success outlined above, it seems appropriate to distribute a study of this kind into a series of phases or stages encompassing different areas or categories of research and stretching across several periods of time. Survey instruments or questionnaires are continually in need of refinement and techniques of implementation in need of constant scrutiny. These two needs can best be met when sufficient time is allowed for review and evaluation.

Phase I Planning and Development

In this phase of the study the appropriate theories and hypotheses will be developed relative to the specific areas under investigation. We will be looking at the phenomenon of ecumenicity and searching for those factors which are theoretically and hypothetically associated with barriers and adjuncts to the emergence of closer union. What are some of these areas ?

1. Propositions Relating to Faith and Order:

Three general areas associated with faith and order have been developed in the deliberations of the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission: The Church and Ministries, The Church and Authority and the Church and the Eucharist. There are a number of propositions relating to these three areas which are hypothetically associated with emerging Ecumenism. Perhaps a list of approximately one hundred such propositions could be developed by the members of the Commission. Each proposition should be the object of direct enquiry although it could be stated negatively or positively. The propositions should be simple and exact statements and should contain no reference to Ecumenism. We will probe for the relationship between assent or dissent from these propositions and ecumenical orientations through the instrumentality of computer analysis. But, in forming the propositions, it should be kept in mind that there is an on-going relationship between one's attitude towards these propositions and attitudes towards ecumenism. The basic question which should be kept in mind is that the specifics of faith, stated propositionally, either contribute to union or impede it. But which specifics ? In this section of the survey we are not probing so much for the actualities of ministries, evaluations of experiences of authority or the Eucharist but general attitudes towards these. In the computer, we will not be searching for ideological unity or conflict but will be making the analysis of the relationship between assent or dissent, on the one hand, and de facto expressions of ecumenical activity (studied in a different section of the study).

The members of the hierarchy and the theologians who are contributing to the development of this part of the survey should keep in mind that they are not making a study of themselves. In a sense, then, they must attempt to play the role of the more ordinary clergyman and layman because there is some likelihood that the orientations of the experts are not the same as those of others. Neither faith nor

consensus is merely propositional or notional. Remaining, nonetheless, within the general area of faith or "faith experiences" the propositions developed need not achieve the same degree of abstraction or precision normally expected of experts.

2. Manner of life and spirituality:

The "life-style", both secular and religious, of the clergy and the laity should be investigated. There are certain patterns of living, cognitive, affective, social, economic, political, devotional, ritual and so forth which either help or hinder the emergence of ecumenism. We shall have to probe for these patterns, study the relationship between these and the propositions noted above in section one and ecumenicity. In this section, however, we are confining ourself to a probe into the matter of life and the spirituality of people. The computer will search for the correlations.

Are there any life-style patterns of either a religious or secular type which form barriers to ecumenism? Are the conceptions of private life different? Is local consensus the same in every area of the world? Are there any areas in the manner of living and the spirituality of Christians which simply transcend geographical and cultural barriers? For example, are the orientations towards one's children similar or dissimilar, the relationships between spouses, between friends and relatives, the acquaintance potential in situations of contact between peoples?

Phase II: Community and Communication

3. Vertical and Horizontal Communication:

How much dialogue is actually taking place and of what kind in the every day life of the respondent. If a person finds it difficult to communicate with his fellow priest or his wife, if he is married, will not this unresolved intimacy crisis, to use a term coined by Erikson, impede communication across the several Communions? In a society of people who feel foreign in their own land, is there a greater or lesser likelihood of communication between Communions? We will thus have to know not only the frequency and kinds of communication which take place in the life of the individual but also his expectations and the kinds of frustrations or dissatisfactions he experiences in the face of the reality of his daily life. Do people, clergy and laity alike, converse with each other as frequently and as deeply as they think they should? Does the presence or absence of adequate conversation contribute to differential expectations relative to ecumenical "growing together"? Is the "escape into the 'telly'" indicative of despair relative to human communication, and, if so, how is this related to faith, order, life style and ecumenism?

Aside from horizontal communication, that is, dialogue with one's peers, are there any peculiar patterns and expectations relative to conversation with one's superiors, i.e. between the laity and the clergy, the clergy and the bishops, the bishops and the archbishops and so forth? In this section of the survey we are probing for de facto communication and the expectations thereof. Do non-bishops "freeze" before bishops?

Do they behave conversationally only in the expected way? Are these expectations realistic or residual to another culture? Would people like their bishops to be more friendly, more approachable? Would they like to engage in intimate conversations on this level and are such expectations realistic?

4. The Christian Community:

This is the most difficult phenomenon to investigate because there are so many idealistic aspirations in the direction of the Christian Community and so little reality to examine. In order to understand, however, the depths of ecumenical endeavours, the orientations towards the Christian Community or the Christian fellowship should be carefully examined. Are the conditions, frequently officially established, for membership in the brotherhood so severe that few can pass the test? Is there an absence of priestly or episcopal reconcilers that few people are effectively welcomed? Is the alienation of modern man so widespread that the Christian Community seems Cimmerian? Have the priests of either Communion so ineffectively resolved their own intimacy crises as to be incapable of contributing as leaders in the development of the Christian Brotherhood? Does the absence of inter-communion contribute to the absence of intra-communion or is the reverse the case? Again, we shall have to allow the computer to inform us about the inter-relationship between this category and the three mentioned above as well as ecumenicity.

Phase III: New Ministries and Freedom

5. New Ministries and the Social Apostolate:

What kinds of religious needs (latent or overt) are present in today's world and different from those needs which existing ministries were designed to meet? If the genus of ministries is to serve in the development of the Brotherhood which will, in turn, serve collectively in the satisfaction of human needs, and, if the differentiation of the genus of ministries in the direction of Christian service and the Christian Community is of the Church and in some way sacramental, then what specifically Christian now ministries are needed today? Are the now ministries to be designed in terms of the Pauline charisms, the generalized functions of religion as discovered by Anthropologists and Sociologists, in terms of what Roman Catholics call the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, or in terms of an investigation of the needs of people (clergy and laity alike) inherent in the unprecedented situation. In depth investigation of the needs associated with an individual's attempt to cope with the demands of the unprecedented may, in fact, be the most needful of all new ministries.

Ecumenicity has not happened before and is, apparently, at least, a latent need of modern Christians. Is the vagueness one observes in discussions about new ministries associated with the latency of this need? In many of the conversations about the social apostolate one detects a marked tendency to ape the good works of secular society. If secular ecumenism is to be a starting point, then we shall have to inquire into attempts to bring Christianity to bear on the good works of secular society.

Can Christians of different communions feed the hungry or clothe the naked in such wise as to witness to their true unity? What kind of questions can we ask to determine whether or how they do this?

If, in the section on vertical communication, we discover that a credibility gap exists between the members and the official church, can a probe into the presence or absence of new ministries as a possible factor associated with this gap be made? If those ministries which are designed to meet unforeseen needs are neither created nor approved, will the ministers retain their credibility?

6. Authority and Freedom:

Perhaps the least free of all individuals is the man who suffers most from the disease which social psychologists call authoritarianism. Perhaps the most free of all individuals is the person who lives comfortably within the framework of an ordered society governed by representative, participatory and legitimate authority. In this section of our probe into the factors which are associated with emerging ecumenism, we should be searching for the degree of compulsive pre-occupation with power, either bureaucratic or charismatic, and, either in the direction of obsessive and arbitrary utilization of or subservience to this power. Denominational loyalties as opposed to basic Christian experiences are quite probably associated with the authoritarian personality. Such individuals would quite predictably select specific faith-propositions, life style patterns, communication systems, communal relationships and ministries calculated to limit if not exclude the responsibilities associated with being free. Thus, the undergirding personality structure of authoritarian individuals would most surely impede ecumenism. How many and to what degree are there people of this kind in the active Church?

Authoritarianism, prejudice (religious, ethnic, racial or status) and isolation manifest a strong a strong tendency to be strongly associated with one another. Strongly biased individuals have a need for dictatorial type leaders. Free individuals, on the other hand, grow readily in the context of order and authority so long as the former is flexible and conducive to creativity and the latter participatory and representative.

Phase IV: Human Satisfaction and Human Development

7. Career, Job and Personal Satisfaction:

Previous studies have indicated that the training associated with becoming a cleric in some mysterious way contributes to either retarded growth or the rigidification of the personality structure. The legitimized expectations of the laity vis a vis the clergymen seems to continue this process. Thus, the priest feels himself to be in a "crunch" between the laity and the episcopacy and his own needs to mature. In such a context, there is a strong likelihood of either career, job or personal dissatisfaction.

The two major types of stress are clearly related to apprehension about the value of one's career or of one's job in the service of the expressed needs of men. Clerics have either painted themselves into a sacristy corner or helped others to do so. But, when this narrowing of their role has been achieved, they find that they are both rejected by the laity and are personally and religiously alienated. A cleric of this kind will be able to make little if any contribution to ecumenism. In this section, in-depth probes should be made into the satisfaction/dissatisfaction of the clergyman both in terms of his career, his job and his personal deveopment. Is he satisfied with the person that he is becoming and the job that he is doing? Are his satisfaction/dissatisfactions similar to those of the laity?

8. Growth and Morality:

Normal human growth is usually cognate with moral development. If the moral has become confused with the legal then there is less likelihood of the development of the moral dimension in an individual. Measures of growth and measures of the moral sense should be combined in this section of the survey. Both are theoretically, at least, related to emerging ecumenism. Measures of growth are fairly standard in Social Psychology. Measures of an individual's sense of the moral are also available. Since, however, there is a likelihood that an individual's attitude towards the moral may make ecumenism difficult, it is important to design some specific enquiries in this area.

Thus, a probe should be made into the specific expectations vis a vis the Church's position on moral issues. Do people expect the Church to restrict its moral statements to issues relative to sexuality (marital relations, birth control, divorce and remarriage, abortion, non-marital sex, homosexuality and so forth), or do they define such statements as an invasion of privacy? Would they be prepared to accept statements of a broader moral character, i.e. those which deal with violence, exploitation, war, the development of the 3rd world, prejudice, honesty, pressures to cheat and steal, non-ecumenism, the practices of business or management and labour vis a vis the consumer and so forth?

Phase V: Growing Together

9. Ecumenicity:

Growing Together, which was aptly described by Canon Purdy and Father Davey, is, in itself, a multi-faceted phenomenon. It clearly represents something more than a cognitive consensus. In this survey we shall have to probe into the very heart of this phenomenon and all of its complexities. The eight categories sketched above make sense out of the presence or absence of ecumenicity. We do not suppose that modern Christians are a composite or summation of certain of the elements investigated above, like the pieces of a jig-saw puzzle. We do hypothesize that when the above eight categories are operating in a given direction, the desire and need for an ecumenical life will be more intense.

If the survey is successful, then we will know where to build and what therapies to apply. We will no longer be treating symptoms. We will also know where we have failed and where we have succeeded. Since each of the four phases will also include phase five, we will have a measure of growth over time in the direction of ecumenism. Since, furthermore, each phase of investigation will be coupled with an appropriate phase of implementation, we will have a measure of effectiveness of our efforts. Since the study is designed to cover a four or five year period, we should be quite capable of teaching large numbers of people the steps required in the development of ecumenism.

At any point of the investigation/implementation process, policy decisions of a strategic nature could be suggested to the highest authorities of both communions. If research in the Sociology of Religion can help us learn something of the mechanics or the methodology of reconciliation, then perhaps we can teach others how to bridge other chasms which separate the human family. At least the seriousness with which we approach this study and its implementation will make our message of Christian brotherhood more credible to men who are separated by racial, ethnic, national or other barriers.

Research Design and Methodology

1. An interdiciplinary research team should be commissioned which would operate like the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission and in the closest possible liaison with it. In a few cases, membership in both Commissions should be shared by the same individual.

2. The Anthropologists, Sociologists, Social Psychologists, Biostatisticians should concern themselves with the technicalities which fall within their own areas of competence. Those measures which are not directly related to religious or moral questions should be developed by this group. The religious and moral items developed by the International Commission should be re-phased by the empirical scientists to insure their reliability and validity.

3. Every effort should be made to eliminate trivialities although a section on demography (age, sex, status, income, educational attainment, type of education, occupation, church involvement measured by participation in church activities, etc.,) should be included with each phase of the study.

4. Pilot studies should be conducted at the beginning of each phase and in-depth interviews on a sub-sample of the study population should be made.

5. At the end of each phase of the study, reports should be written describing the findings and suggesting means of implementation. These latter should be continually evaluated both by the 'Experts' and by the people working in the field. These evaluations should be included in the reports. The publication of the reports for a wider audience will be the responsibility of the International Commission.

6. The principal investigators will be Dr. Leslie Paul and Fr. Gene Schallert, S.J. Since the Study Commission is the investigative arm of the International Commission, the members of the Study Commission will be directly responsible to the International Commission.