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The Reunion Views of Archbishop Ussher and his Circle

By Graham Windsor

CHURCH history cannot dictate its commands to us, but it can instruct us by its example. Such an example may be found by Anglican ecumenicals in the activities of Archbishop Ussher (1581-1656) and his circle—that is, those of his friends who showed particular interest in the reunion question and whose theological views largely coincided with his. In the order of seniority they read :

Thomas Morton (1564-1659), Bishop of Durham,
William Bedell (1571-1642), Bishop of Kilmore,
Samuel Ward (1574-1643), Master of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge,
Joseph Hall (1574-1656), Bishop of Norwich,
John Davenant (1576-1641), Bishop of Salisbury,
Joseph Mead (1586-1638), Fellow of Christ's, Cambridge.

These men shared a considerable homogeneity of outlook which justifies the treatment of them as a group, although, of course, they never formed anything like a self-conscious coterie issuing ecumenical manifestoes. The bond which links them is less formal, and their basic agreement therefore the more noteworthy. A group-treatment also brings into relief their representative significance. Both for their time—the last days before the collapse of the national Church of England—and for their place—within that falling Church—they claim attention as the exponents of a moderate Anglicanism which may justly claim its right to the inheritance of our Reformers. Then, when English Christians still thought the troubles abroad were greater than those at home, they sang all unwittingly what proved to be the swan-song of tolerant orthodoxy.

For the content of their opinions they drank deeply from Augustine and other traditional sources. Yet this unoriginality, even if it were to make their work less exciting, undoubtedly makes it more significant. As traditionalists, they felt it to be the duty of the Protestant churches to practice the unity which had long been preached. They show the weight of established orthodoxy to be against the novelty of those who are either inwardly or outwardly schismatics. Accepting the principle that the Church is constituted by a federation of autonomous national or regional churches, they maintained both that the Church of England was that most in agreement with the divine pattern, and that she was unconditionally bound to intercommunion with her sister Reformed churches. Submission to bishops at home was obligatory ; imposition of bishops abroad was unthinkable. Their loyalty to Anglicanism is undoubted ; their readiness for Protestant intercommunion undiminished.

Three factors urged them to express their views on the topic of Christian unity. First, the increasing pressure of the Counter-Reformation : not only had the Jesuit and other missions made inroads into once Protestant areas, but the military threat of the Catholic alliance in the Thirty Years' War was revealing the peril in which isolated Protestants stood. Second, the historic interest of Calvinists in the conciliation of divided parties within the churches of the Reformation. Third, the emergence upon the English and the international scene of John Durie, the ecumenical tramp from Scotland, whose unprecedented zeal for the cause of reunion was to be a catalyst for other men's interest for over half a century. Davenant, Ward, Hall, and Bedell were among the thirty-eight English divines who pledged their support to Durie in 1630[1]—a course followed then or later by the other three members of our group. For this they suffered criticism not only from Lutherans abroad, but from Calvinists and Arminian Laudians at home, as we learn in three of Mead's letters which throw interesting light on the changing face of the domestic religious scene during the 1630s.[2]

Though they could get little hearing at home, they were celebrated and respected abroad, and this lent added weight to their comments on the inter-church situation. They were men of international reputation, honoured by Lutherans, Arminians, and Reformed. Davenant was a leading figure at Dort, and Samuel Ward was pronounced by Episcopius, the Arminian leader, to be the most learned divine of that assembly.[3] Dudley Loftus' encomium of Ussher as *totius Europae splendor, totius terrarum orbis eximium decus* is only an extravagant declaration of the respect in which the Archbishop was held by every scholar in Europe.[4] Bedell was well-known abroad after his chaplaincy in Venice in the critical years 1607-1610, and Mead, Hall, and Morton were not only acknowledged but sought after by foreigners for their learning. Hall was one of many English writers who were renowned for their explication of cases of conscience. When, in February 1633, some German divines requested Durie to arrange for the production of a text-book of practical divinity to counteract the current preoccupation with polemics, they suggested he should turn to the English for material. Durie asked Ussher himself to supervise the symposium which was to be drawn from the works of the English casuists. Ussher commented : " I was very glad of the notion and laid it very seriously to heart and conferred with some of my brethren about it that we might bring it to some perfection ". The project fell through because of the disturbances leading to the Civil War, and could not be revived in 1642 or 1654, despite Durie's appeal to Ussher's recommendation.[5]

Durie made further application for the weighty support of these Englishmen for his crusade. In 1634 he published essays by Morton, Davenant, and Hall on the feasibility of intercommunion between Lutherans and Reformed, under the title *De Pace Ecclesiastica inter Evangelicos Procuranda Sententiae Quatuor*.[6] They all emphasized the extent of doctrinal agreement recently demonstrated at the Leipzig Colloquy, and asserted that none of the three points at issue was fundamental. Durie wrote to Davenant concerning his contribution,

" I acknowledge that you have conferred a notable benefit not only upon myself, but upon the whole Church of God, and posterity itself will no doubt admit the same ".[7]   The Englishmen, for their part, were equally ready both with pen and with pocket to give private and public assistance to the " sweet seeker of peace "[8] from Scotland.   He was not only their news reporter on ecumenical affairs, but the symbol and the instrument of their desire to knit up the severed members of the Church.   Among the pacific literature which was the fruit of this desire may be mentioned *Columba Noae* (1624), *Via Media* (c. 1626), *The Peace-maker* (1645), and *Pax Terris* (1647) by Joseph Hall, and Davenant's *Ad Fraternam Communionem inter Evangelicas Ecclesias Restaurandam Adhortatio* (1640).   Two other items with a similar aim came from Archbishop Ussher.   One is a contribution to *Good Counsels for the Peace of the Reformed Churches* (1641) ; the other is his *Reduction of Episcopacy unto the Form of Synodical Government received in the Ancient Church* (1641).

An interesting example of theory made actuality occurs in the life of Bishop Bedell.   When certain Lutherans living in Dublin would not take communion in the Church of Ireland, and were backed up in their attitude by their church leaders in Germany, Bedell's assistance was requested.   He wrote to the pastors in Germany and explained the doctrine of the Lord's Supper which his church held, and so commended it to them that they wrote to the Dublin Lutherans advising them to join in communion, which they duly did.   Thus was a minor victory won in the realm of peaceful co-operation.[9]

*   *   *   *

Let us now glance at the theory which undergirded their interest in the promotion of fellowship, goodwill, and unity among Christians. First of all, these men were convinced that unity between fellow-Christians was not an optional extra, but a plain duty to be observed by all.   " It is the duty of every son of peace ", says Hall, " to endeavour, what in him lies, to reduce all the members of God's Church upon earth to a blessed unity, both in judgment and affection ".[10] The mounting threat of Rome was in itself a spur to Protestant union, but the highest motives were drawn from the dominical command to love the brethren (Jn 13: 35) and the apostolic exhortation to live at peace with all men (Rom. 12: 18).   The disadvantages of division provide a negative reason against disunity, but there are positive reasons for unity which are far more compelling.   Our communion with Christ is a joint possession, as all parties admit.   Yet this binds us inextricably together.   Love will not seek reasons to justify division. It is the ministers of the churches who are chiefly to blame for dissensions, by their controversies, and mutual excommunications.   Yet in this they go beyond the limits of their commission, and subvert the authority not only of the laity but of the Catholic Church.

Second, there are certain obstacles which do in fact justify separation from a church.   Our divines all agree that disagreement in fundamentals is one such obstacle.   " I hold communion is not to be broken but for fundamentals ", wrote Mead.[11]   Davenant suggests two other valid obstacles to union, applying both to the Church of Rome.   The

first is when one church domineers over others, imposing its own creed as the condition of communion, and indeed of salvation. The second is when a church is idolatrous. Diversity in rites, polity, or discipline can be no just barrier to the right hand of fellowship, says Samuel Ward.

Third, they believed that the actual obstacles which separated Protestants in their day were neither valid nor insuperable. The divisive factors were really pride and ignorance—ignorance as to what the other side thought and to what were justifiable grounds for separation ; pride in the perfection of one's own theological views leading to an exaggerated hatred of every divergence from them. Too often the attitude towards other Christians was simply that of certain Lutherans : " From having any brotherhood with Calvinists, Good Lord, deliver us ".[12]

Fourth, they accepted the historic distinction between fundamentals and non-fundamentals elaborated by Augustine and typical of the ecumenical thought of their time. In doing so, they found themselves compelled to re-examine the concept. Fundamentals were described, though not defined, as those articles of faith which were essential to the being of a church, and which had to be believed and known for the salvation of the individual. " We shall find that to be one Church ", says Hall, " wherein there is an agreement in all the essentials of religion. And those the great Doctor of the Gentiles hath determined to be, one Lord, one faith, one baptism ; that is, a subjection to one Lord, prescribed in the Decalogue ; a belief of the same Articles, set down in the Creed ; a joint use and celebration of the holy sacraments, the initiatory whereof is baptism ".[13] In his Wanstead sermon of June 1624 Ussher quotes from Augustine and other fathers to show the antiquity of such a position.[14]

Could the fundamentals be defined as well as described ? This was a burning question, for until a satisfactory definition was found by which the right of a doctrine to be considered fundamental could be tested there was not likely to be any diminution in the controversy. Samuel Ward, in his 23rd Determination, analyses the matter as follows. Both the written and the living Word may be entitled " the foundation ", the first as the source of the doctrine of faith, the second as the primary object of faith. The fundamentals may be listed as the Apostles' Creed, the Decalogue, the Lord's Prayer, and the doctrine of the sacraments. There are primary, secondary, and tertiary articles of faith. The primary are the first principles contained in the Creed. together with the truths that God the giver of all benefits is alone to be worshipped, that due authorities are to be honoured, and that sacraments are effective organs of grace, divinely instituted and to be administered according to the dominical pattern. These primaries must be believed for salvation. The secondary articles are those easily and evidently deduced from the primaries by revealed or natural reasons. And the tertiaries are those more remotely derived from the primaries. The latter two categories are to be believed by necessity of command, but not of means—that is, one should believe them because God has revealed them, but one can be saved without believing them.

John Davenant, in his *Ad Fraternam Communionem*, recognizes three

foundations : personal, ministerial, and doctrinal. The personal foundation is Jesus Christ. Union with Him constitutes church-hood. To Him and in Him all Protestants are linked, so that they cannot rightly refuse brotherly communion to each other : " Those churches in which all the acts take place by which men can be united to Christ, remain in Christ, and be brought to eternal life, those no one can declare or think to be separated and torn from this unique foundation for salvation ".[16]   The acts to which he refers are baptism, knowledge about God, faith in Christ, repentance, and holiness, and for each of these the Protestant churches do in fact provide.   This definition of the fundamentals which each church must provide for is similar to that of Durie and Mead which will be mentioned later.   The second foundation, the ministerial, is not properly called a foundation, for it is simply the means by which the personal foundation, Christ, is laid.   It consists of the prophets and apostles, the Catholic Church, general councils, particular churches, and the ordained ministry.   The doctrinal foundation is the body of fundamental articles, drawn only from Scripture.

While everything fundamental is scriptural, however, not everything scriptural is fundamental.   Scripture contains non-fundamental truths which must not prove the occasion for divisions.   Davenant suggests five rules by which non-fundamentals may be recognized : (1) No doctrine is fundamental which was not clearly, openly, and everywhere taught by the apostles ; (2) nor is any doctrine fundamental which was not held by the sub-apostolic Church and commended by the early Church ; (3) nor is any doctrine fundamental which can only be understood by the learned ; (4) nor is any doctrine fundamental which, when newly expressed, does not obviously mean the same as the old expression ; and (5) fundamentals are few and simple.

When he comes to specifying what are the fundamentals Davenant shows greater caution, indicative probably of greater uncertainty. After stressing the ambiguity of theological language, he concludes that the Apostles' Creed may be said to be the rule of *credenda*, and the Decalogue the rule of *agenda*.   If anyone wishes to add the doctrine of the sacraments, he has no objection, provided the marginal issues are not introduced.   The Lord's Prayer might also be included.   In leaning thus heavily on former expositions of the topic Davenant might have appealed to the axiom that the fundamentals do not change.   They must be the same now as in apostolic days and under the early Church, or else those Christians would not have been saved.

Concerning the definition of the fundamentals, Joseph Mead carried on an interesting correspondence with Samuel Hartlib, the educationalist and friend of Comenius, who acted as Durie's P.O. box in England.   Mead wrote first to Durie in 1635, wishing that the nature of a fundamental might be defined and the fundamentals not merely listed, as usually happened.   He complained that almost no one in the Church of England was prepared to do this, for fear of appearing to countenance some error by removing it from the fundamental class. Probably the primitive creeds would have to be retained as the basis of faith, since they were at least generally acceptable.[16]   In a letter the following February to Hartlib he suggests a division into (1) funda-

mentals of salvation and (2) fundamentals of ecclesiastical communion.
In relation to fundamentals of salvation he lays it down that not only
theoretical but practical articles are to be included, that is, those things
which are so necessary to the Christian life that without them we cannot
call on the Father or believe on the Son. As to the second class,
articles of ecclesiastical communion, he says : " It is not fit that the
Church should admit any to the communion which shall professedly
deny or refuse their assent to such catholic truths as she hath anciently
declared by universal authority, for the symbol and badge of such as
should have communion with her ".[17]   These articles, in others words,
are not decided with reference to the mere *esse* of a church, but deter-
mined by the Catholic Church with reference to its *bene esse*.   Funda-
mentals of salvation must be understood distinctly and explicitly,
the others only implicitly and according to capacity.

After this Hartlib sent Mead a treatise of 1634 by Caspar Streso,
dealing with the fundamentals.   Mead commented :   " The difference
between Mr. Streso's way and mine is this : He measures his funda-
mentals by their relation to one *fundamentum* ; I measure all by the
relation they have to eternal life in regard of those acts and dispositions
whereby we are capable thereof ".[18]   In this approach to the problem,
Mead differed from Ward, and felt himself to be at one with Durie,
whose definition ran thus : " All those verities, therefore, the know-
ledge and belief whereof is necessary to the acts and functions requisite
to the being and continuation in the covenant with God in Jesus Christ,
are fundamental verities ".[19]

Hartlib, with others, felt that too close a definition of the funda-
mentals was likely to hinder rather than to foster peace, and Mead had
to justify his insistence on greater precision.   He struck out at the
vagueness of much of contemporary ecumenical thought when he
wrote : " It seems strange that men should hold that those who err in
fundamentals cannot be saved, and yet maintain it scarce possible to
set down the ratio of a fundamental article, or any other criterion
whereby to know them ".[20]   He admitted that " fundamental " is a
metaphor, but since it could easily be expressed in other words without
metaphor, that was surely no reason for giving up the attempt at
definition.   He maintained that the canon of the Council of Ephesus
forbidding the making of new creeds applied only to private formula-
tions, and not to the statements of other councils and churches.   He
concludes : " The way to determine fundamental articles must be made
very short, easy, and evident ; or it will breed as many controversies
as are about the points themselves in question ".[21]

*   *   *   *

Faced with the prospect of continuing internecine warfare among
Protestants, our writers had some definite proposals to make for
pouring oil on the troubled waters.   The immediate duty was to
tone down the controversy and enjoy interim communion.   The
second and critical phase was to call a Protestant Council which would
formulate a creed acceptable to all parties.   The third stage was to
arrange for the maintenance of the peace after agreement had been
reached.

First, then, the lessening of controversy and the promotion of interim communion. As to the controversy, which centred on the three points of consubstantiation, ubiquity, and predestination, Mead shows characteristic realism if not pessimism : " Nor do I think this union will ever be brought to pass by a full decision of the controversies, but only by abating of that vast distance which contention hath made, and approaching the differences so near, as either party may be induced to tolerate the other ".[12] His prophecy has been proved true by the subsequent fragmentation of Protestantism on the reefs of these and other controversies, though his hope for unity on the basis of maximum agreement remains unrealized.

Nevertheless our divines did not urge the suppression of all controversial discussion. This would be to freeze Protestantism into separate blocs. Rather they were ready to offer advice which would enable the rival theologians to see that their differences were neither fundamental nor even so great as they had thought. The three essays in the *De Pace Ecclesiastica* all do this at length, as also do Davenant in the *Ad Fraternam Communionem* and Ward in his *Determination*. They stress the agreement that already exists over a large area of the question at issue, often showing this by quoting from both sides. They can even find formulæ which have been accepted by both sides, as, for example, that on the Lord's Supper agreed on at Wittenberg in 1536 by Luther, Melanchthon, Bucer, and Musculus : " In the Holy Supper the true body and true blood of our Lord is exhibited, given and taken, and not mere bread and wine only : and this receiving and exhibiting is truly and not imaginarily done."[13] It was admitted that such a statement might mean different things to different people, but that did not matter, provided that the differences (thus as it were concealed) were not fundamental.

In charitably putting the best construction possible on the doctrinal utterances of other theologians, Davenant was prepared to go the extra mile. In October 1638 he wrote to Ward : " It is true that the very phrase of oral manducation applied unto the body of Christ can hardly be freed from more than an impropriety ; I mean not from a gross absurdity. But considering the Lutherans hold the words and deny the thing ; I was willing to construe the words, not according to their own signification, but according to the interpretation and limitation which themselves annex thereunto ".[14] To show that neither party was deliberately heretical, they demonstrated from the writings of both that they denied the heretical implications which seemed to follow from their other beliefs.

On the question of ubiquity they thought a solution might be found along the lines of Zanchius' distinction, welcomed by Hooker and Field, between ubiquity as to natural being (which was denied) and ubiquity as to personal being. On predestination Ward felt agreement might be reached *via* Augustine and Overall (some may think them strange bed-fellows !). However, whether or not such a conciliatory formula could be discovered yet, that was no reason for Calvinists and Lutherans withholding communion from each other. Let the Anglican attitude towards Lutherans be the model : " Though we do not share their views on every point of controversial theology, yet we certainly acknow-

ledge them as brothers in Christ, and declare that we have brotherly and holy communion with them ".[15]

The great project, however, was to call a Protestant synod or council. It was not a question of ecumenical dialogue which would create closer and more friendly relations. The project sprang from a healthy respect for duly constituted authority, which lay in the hands of a council of delegates of the visible Church. It will be remembered that Davenant included general councils as one of the ministerial foundations for laying Christ as the foundation. Councils were not simply debating chambers, but legislating bodies acting for the whole Church, exercising an authority none the less binding and real because it was ministerial and conditional upon faithfulness to God's Word. The Church was heading for a state of anarchy, and needed to be brought into subjection to ecclesiastical discipline, itself governed by Scripture. Such a council was among Durie's proposals as he left for Germany in June 1635, and Mead was in entire agreement. Ward, too, thought that a synod might be the answer to the controversy. Pending the arrangement of a full-scale council, Davenant advocated the summoning of a council of divines. Assembling amicably, they were not to try and decide the controverted issues, but to concentrate on showing their respective churches that unity is possible. Let them decide what are the fundamentals, and summarize them briefly.

This brings us to the suggestion of a joint creed, made by conference or council, which also had a fascination for the Protestants of the time. The promulgation of a joint statement on the fundamentals of the faith by an interim council was another of Durie's proposals for 1635 with which Mead was in accord.[16] It should declare that for the salvation of non-idolaters the truths were sufficient which were contained in the three creeds, the first four councils, and the councils of Milevum and Arausica (against Pelagianism). Morton wondered whether the Confession of Augsburg might not be acceptable as the Protestant Creed, since Calvin, Sturmius, and Zanchius had all accepted it. If a new creed was to be formulated, Bedell's advice to Ward at Dort is representative : " I would be bold rather to represent this one thing to you, consider if it be not the best course ; contenting yourselves to set down in the very words of Holy Scripture the confessed doctrine, and inhibiting all new-fangled forms, for the rest to give as much scope to opinions as may be ".[17] Such caution did not spring from pure conservatism, but from an anxiety that the Church should not overburden the conscience of the individual nor overreach itself in the exercise of its continuing legislative power, which it held in common with the early Church, and indeed with the Church in every age. Mead believed that, on the model of ancient procedure, we should take the former creeds and make additions to them suitable to the times, thus testifying our agreement with antiquity and our opposition to modern heretics. The additions should be inserted as explicative of the old articles, and not as new articles in the Tridentine fashion.

Supposing peace should once be established, what were the means to preserve that peace ? First, churches were not to be held responsible for the utterances of private theologians. Second, all controversy should be carried on away from the public eye, where it could not

disturb the faith of the simple Christian.   Third, brotherly love should prevail, even amid controversy.   Fourth, practical rather than polemic divinity should be encouraged.   Fifth, particular churches should make their doctrinal confessions as brief as possible, so that ministers would not be forced into non-conformity for the slightest deviations. Sixth, ministers or individuals who did not entirely agree with their church's confession should live quietly and not stir up trouble by proselytizing for their own views, recognizing that even if the church were wrong it was only in a non-essential, and waiting for lawful reform in due time.

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These, briefly, are the proposals which Ussher and his friends made on the question of Calvinist-Lutheran union. The outbreak of religious strife in England, however, faced them with a militarized demand for the drastic reform of the Church of England, if she was to be allowed to survive. In such circumstances Ussher produced his scheme for the *Reduction of Episcopacy*. It was not well received by either party in 1641, and only by the King later on. Yet it may bear fruit after many days. Aimed at reconciling Presbyterians and Anglicans, Ussher's scheme provided for a pattern of disciplinary synods which would restore to presbyters their ancient rights of discipline inherent in the Prayer Book service of ordination. It also extended the episcopate. The rector with his wardens would reprove scandalous behaviour, and the unrepentant would be brought before a monthly synod, consisting of the rectors drawn from an area equivalent to a rural deanery, and presided over by a suffragan bishop. These synods would be competent to decide all matters of doctrine and discipline. Once or twice a year the diocesan synod would consider appeals from the monthly synods. They would consist of the bishop, his suffragans, and some or all of the rectors. Every three years a provincial synod would assemble, composed of the archbishop, bishops, suffragans, and selected rectors. When Parliament was meeting it would be national and not provincial. Despite its skilful combination of the appeal to antiquity and the recognition of contemporary exigencies, the scheme was as if still-born and is now a neglected memorial to the pacific intentions of Ussher and his circle.

It will have been noticed that there has been no mention so far of reunion with Rome. This was thought beyond the bounds of possibility and certainly of desirability, until a miracle should restore soundness to that sadly diseased member of the Catholic Church. For such they did indeed allow her to be, a true visible Church, a sister (though not the mother) of the Reformed churches. This asseveration caused the raising of eye-brows both at home and abroad, but our divines were united in its defence. While no one could be more opposed to the errors of Rome, they confessed with Davenant that " the being of a church does principally stand upon the gracious action of God, calling men out of darkness and death unto the participation of life in Christ Jesus. . . . Where God calls men unto the participation of life in Christ by the Word and the Sacraments, there is the true being of a Christian Church ".[28]   They admitted that Rome

retained the fundamentals. Some, indeed, explicitly added that other erroneous doctrines and practices razed the foundation indirectly, but according to their own principles only a direct denial of the fundamentals could be considered as a true denial.

Yet they believed reunion with Rome to be as impossible as Perkins has declared in his *Reformed Catholic* : " This union of the two religions ", he said, " can never be made, more than the union of light and darkness ".[19] They insisted on the justice and the duty of breaking off external communion with the Roman church, chiefly on the grounds of her idolatry and her insistence that other churches must adopt her errors and believe them to be fundamentals. From this we may be sure that they would not have been puzzled or allured by occasional good signs in the life of Romanism. If Rome is a visible Christian Church some such variable signs are to be expected ; but it is the grace of God and not the Roman system which is to be thanked for them. They had separated from Rome, and would have no peace with her—yet not in blind negation of all good in her (which attitude will be shaken because mistaken), but from a reasoned estimate of her status and the seriousness of her errors.

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To assign the reasons for the failure of the reunion efforts both in action and writing during this period would require an exact analysis and assessment of the state of the Church at this time. The fact of the failure does seem to stand as a great enigma to one within the Protestant tradition. For the Roman Catholic historian or theologian there would be no such enigma. The continuing division of Protestantism can easily be explained in terms of the inherently fissiparous nature of heresy, the fate of all those who lapse into schism. This estimate might find an echo of assent in the minds of those who have recently maintained that every church is at present in a state of schism. Certainly Protestants should be summoned to reconsider the nature of schism together with the doctrine of the Church and its unity, lest indeed we find ourselves justly liable to that charge. But on Reformed principles mere separation from the See of Rome cannot explain the divisions which plagued the Church in the seventeenth century and still plague it today. The failure of ecumenical activity, then as now, must lie either in the imperfection of the aim and methods proposed, or in the imperfection of those to whom they are proposed, or in both. In the last analysis it may prove that these imperfections adhere to the human situation in such a way in this life that unity expressed will always be our aim and never our realization.

What does an examination of the aims and methods show ? First of all, what was the aim of our divines ? Was it unity, intercommunion, or union ? They urged unity at the very least, the display of a brotherly spirit of love among the churches. They urged further such a union as would involve intercommunion. It was a united Protestant church that they desired, yet so united as not to preclude variety and the toleration of differing views on non-essentials—that is, they were prepared to allow the continuance of differences in church government and in doctrines. But characteristic of their solution

(and some might say it is the fatal weakness) is that they envisaged the toleration of these differences only on a regional basis, so that Lutherans were tolerated in some places but not in others, or rather that in some places Lutheranism was Protestantism.   This was their protection against schism.   Such a protection they felt must be retained against the setting up of private conventicles.   Joseph Hall wrote : " As union is necessary to the making-up of peace, so also, in some cases, is dissipation.   While we are so charitable as not to exclude any church which holdeth the foundation from the benefit of Christian communion, we are yet far from giving way to every combination of Christians to run aside and to raise up a new church of their own. . . . Those, therefore, who do pertinaciously and unreclaimably maintain doctrines destructive to the foundation of Christian religion must necessarily be avoided and suppressed. . . . Those that fly out from a true established church and run ways of their own, raising and fomenting sects and schisms among God's people, let them receive their doom. . . . If men be allowed a latitude of opinions in some unnecessary verities, it may not be endured that, in matter of religion, every man should think as he lists, and utter what he thinks, and defend what he utters, and gather disciples to what he publisheth ".[30]

Second, what of the methods proposed ?   Here one practical and one theoretical consideration must be looked at.   First, in their suggestion of a conference where the rival parties might share their views, they were on safe ground, well tested both before and after them.   Such dialogue is indispensable.   In their suggestion of a council with powers to legislate and not merely discuss, they were following again a well established tradition, but one which has received little practical interest since.   Yet a Protestant general council seems to follow, if we take the Visible Church seriously as a law-making and authoritative body.   Second, in their theoretical suggestion that it is a distinction between fundamentals and non-fundamentals which both allows and controls the variety of opinion to be allowed in the Church, they were once more treading the ancient paths.   The distinction has survived to our day, and yet it seems to be of as little use as the appendix is supposed to be.   Can it be elaborated and defined on scriptural principles in such a way as to allow union and avoid heresy ? Examination of the discussions on this point in the early seventeenth century does not beckon us on.   Perhaps the reunion suggestions failed just here, for want of living and biblical categories in which to frame the question and its answer.

Imperfection, too, lay in the men of the time no doubt.   The pulse of ecumenical love and interest beats steadily throughout the centuries, but against a continuing background of opposition without and weakness within.   No one who reads of the immense labours of a Durie can doubt the exuberance and irrepressible verve which bore him up. But the ecumenicals were, by and large, too optimistic.   They looked back somewhat naïvely at the near misses of Marburg (1529), Wittenberg (1536), and Sendomir (1570).   Reunion appeared to be just around the corner.   The Protestant leanings of Cyril Loukaris, Patriarch of Constantinople, appeared as a comet on the horizon about 1630, seeming to Morton and others to presage union with the Greek

Orthodox Church ; but their hopes were dashed by his death and the official condemnation by his church.[31]

Men did not reckon sufficiently with the temper of the times. It was an era of separatism. Loyalty to national, and indeed private, churches cut out concern for the Catholic Church. Protestantism had been spending its spiritual capital in riotous controversy, and was paying the due penalty. Negative values had replaced the positive ones of missionary work and service. Pietism was creating the cult of the individual, the disdain of the churchly organization. Politicians headed the churches and they were more interested in expediency than principle, in material than spiritual alliance. England sat still under James and Charles I, when the great chance to strengthen the Protestant church and its links was at the door. Yet the voice of the peacemaker was heard : " Now by the dear bonds of brotherhood, by our love to our common mother the Church, by our holy care and zeal of the prosperous success of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus, let us all compose our hearts to peace, and rest ourselves in those common truths which sober minds shall find abundantly sufficient whether for our knowledge or salvation ". Our brotherhood, our mother the Church, the success of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus, call us to realize today what was unrealized then.

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[2] J. Mead : *Works* (ed. 1664), Letters 47, 80, 83.
[3] See *Dictionary of National Biography*, " Samuel Ward ".
[4] C. R. Elrington : *The Whole Works of the most Rev. James Ussher* (1847), XVI, 56.
[5] Batten : *op. cit.*, pp. 52f.
[6] This was the title of the 1636 edition (Amsterdam) from which quotations are made here. The original edition was called *De Pacis Ecclesiasticae Rationibus inter Evangelicos Usurpandis.*
[7] British Museum, Sloan MS. 654, p. 252.
[8] *De Pace Ecclesiastica*, p. 17.
[9] E. S. Shuckburgh : *Two Biographies of W. Bedell* (1902), pp. 145f.
[10] J. Hall : *Works* (ed. Hall, 1837), VII, p. 48.
[11] Mead : *op. cit.*, Letter 80.
[12] Hall : *op. cit.*, VII, p. 54.
[13] Hall : *op. cit.*, VII, pp. 49f.
[14] J. Ussher : *A Brief Declaration of the Universality of the Church of Christ* (1624), pp. 22-27.
[15] J. Davenant : *Ad Fraternam Communionem inter Evangelicas Ecclesias Restaurandam Adhortatio* (1640), p. 59.
[16] Mead : *op. cit.*, Letter 83.
[17] *Ibid.*, Letter 82.
[18] *Ibid.*, Letter 84.
[19] *Ibid.*, Letter 88.
[20] *Ibid.*, Letter 86.
[21] *Ibid.*, Letter 85.
[22] *Ibid.*, Letter 80.
[23] Hall : *op. cit.*, VII, p. 55.
[24] M. J. Fuller : *Life, Letters, and Writings of J. Davenant* (1897), p. 430.
[25] *De Pace Ecclesiastica*, p. 45.
[26] Mead : *op. cit.*, Letter 82.
[27] Shuckburgh : *op. cit.*, p. 255.
[28] Hall : *op. cit.*, IX, pp. 410f.
[29] W. Perkins : *A Reformed Catholike* (1597), Dedication, p. 1.
[30] Hall : *op. cit.*, VII, pp. 59-61.
[31] *De Pace*, p. 14.