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**"LESS THAN A CONFESSION BUT MUCH MORE THAN A MERE FORMULA
OF AGREEMENT" - THE YMCAS PARIS BASIS AS A SYMBOL OF
UNITY DURING ITS FIRST CENTURY**

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1. Introduction

ORGANISATIONAL SYMBOLS often reflect either the initial situation or crisis of an organisation. Symbols store organisational values created in those important moments. In Geertzian terms, symbols are *models of* and *models for* the organisation and its mission.¹ On one hand, the symbol explains how the world has been interpreted in the crucial moments of the organisation and, on the other hand, it supplies a frame for future explanations.² Additionally, organisational symbols have interorganisational effects. Holy places and times tend to remain the same, even if the religion is changed; 'mother' and 'midwife' institutions supply organisational models, world views, personnel and resources to emerging organisations.³ In this way symbols diffuse from organisation to organisation.

In this paper I focus on one influential symbol, namely on the Paris Basis of the World Alliance of YMCAs, which was formulated in 1855 and which has had remarkable effect on the symbolism of the ecumenical movement.

¹ Geertz 1973, 93.

² On frame analysis see, e.g., Goffman 1959; Benford 1997; Carroll & Ratner 1996.

³ Smith 1996, 16;

2. The Paris Basis⁴ as a Model of the YMCA

2.1. Background of the Paris Basis

THE YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION was founded in London in 1844. The organisation was a fruit of the Awakenings and the Evangelicalism⁵ of the beginning of the 19th century. In the beginning it was an ecumenical Bible-club of young merchants but soon it widened its mission to include evangelisation and social work as well. Although the London association was the first to carry the YMCA name, it was not the first of its type.⁶ However, when the London YMCA emerged, it gave both name and organisation model to several other organisations of young men in Europe and in the US. These local associations formed the World Alliance of YMCAs in 1855 and accepted the Paris Basis as its foundation.

When the Evangelical Alliance planned to have its Conference in Paris during the Second World Exhibition, YMCA leaders saw a possibility to meet face to face for the first time. The First World Conference of YMCAs (20.-24.8.1855) took place just before the Evangelical Alliance Conference and, of the 99 YMCA participants, 50 also participated in the Evangelical Alliance Conference.⁷

⁴ See appendix.

⁵ An apt description of Evangelicalism can be found in Bebbington (1993, 183): Evangelicalism had tended to centre upon a cluster of four assumptions:
 1 the authority and sufficiency of Scripture;
 2 the uniqueness of redemption through the death of Christ upon the cross, often linked with a specifically substitutionary theory of atonement;
 3 the need for personal conversion;
 4 the necessity, propriety and urgency of evangelism.

All other matters have tended to be regarded as 'matters of indifference', in relation to which a substantial degree of pluralism may be accepted.

⁶ The date, June 6, 1844, of the foundation of the London YMCA has been regarded as the official birthday of the YMCA although there are older local associations like Glasgow (1824), Basel (1825), Paisley(1833), Bremen(1834), and 12 others that trace their origin to pre-1844 time. However, they were founded under a different name and only later adopted the name YMCA. On the discussion of this theme, see Shedd 1955b, 331-334.

⁷ Senaud 1950, 2; Shedd 1955a, 61, 106-113, 131, 133f. The attitude towards the Evangelical Alliance in the YMCA was, as Shedd describes: "a sense of close *relationship with* and yet *separation from* the Evangelical Alliance." Shedd 1955a, 113 (italics in original).

The idea of a General Alliance for YMCAs came, according to Auguste Senaud, from the French context. The French Second Empire did not allow the Protestants to have a national synod⁸ and the leaders of the Paris YMCA, following the example of the Evangelical Alliance⁹, launched the idea of a wider organisation of Associations in the French speaking countries under Paris leadership¹⁰. However, the federalist Swiss were not eager to be organised under French leadership and Henri Dunant, the 'soul' of the Geneva YMCA, looked forward to including Anglo-Saxon and German Associations into the Federation as well.¹¹

Another root for the international alliance of YMCAs was the German *Rheinisch-Westphälische Jünglingsbund* which was formed in 1848.¹² The German *Bund* served as an incentive for the North American Confederation of YMCAs which was founded in 1854.¹³ This, in turn, is evidently behind the actual proposal of the formation of the World Alliance of YMCAs.

At the Paris Conference, an American, Abel Stevens proposed that there be formed,

the union of all the associations of the old and new world in confederation, on a basis which would exclude every subject foreign to their legitimate and common aim.¹⁴

His motivation was that the union would impart mutual strength, express the sacred unity of the Church of Christ, and especially serve America by removing a stumbling-block which would otherwise divide the Associations. By this possible division he was referring to the question of slavery which was soon to lead to civil war. In his proposal, there were five articles:

The 1st provided that the Associations should be managed by members of Evangelical Churches. By the 2nd, the admission of a second order of associated members was provided in those cases in which it might be desired. The 3rd article provided that no difference of opinion on points not comprehended in the immediate aim of the Association, should be

⁸ Senaud 1950, 2. The Empire was restored in 1851.

⁹ Shedd 1955a, 94. On the Evangelical Alliance, see, e.g., Kirby 1974; Rouse 1993, 318-324.

¹⁰ Shedd 1955a, 41, 52.

¹¹ Senaud 1950, 2; Shedd 1955a, 94-97.

¹² Occasional Paper No.III, 52.

¹³ Shedd 1955a, 59; Occasional Paper No.III, 77-82.

¹⁴ Occasional Paper No.III, 10.

permitted to interrupt their harmony. The 4th proposed a certificate of membership, which should be available in instances of Young Men travelling from one Association to others. And by the 5th article, the plan of correspondence, already determined on by the Conference, was to be applied to the Alliance now proposed.¹⁵

In short, Stevens proposed a unity of Protestant men with equal rights in every association. In his proposal two basic elements of the YMCA self- understanding can be seen. First, the identity was related to 'Evangelical Churches' and 'Young Men'. The restriction to Evangelical churches clearly reflected the relationship with the Evangelical Alliance which campaigned against "Popery, Puseyism¹⁶ and Plymouth Brethenism."¹⁷ Second, the mission of the new organisation was, according to Stevens, to serve as a bond between independent associations and occasionally to help them if needed. The basic mission of the movement (extending God's Kingdom) was conducted on the local level and associations had complete autonomy in implementing their mission.

Although Steven's proposal received general support, his formulation was partly rejected. Continental Europeans saw that the membership criterion of 'Evangelical churches' "would not be applicable in Europe, seeing that here we have Evangelical churches, the membership of which does not necessarily imply any personal profession."¹⁸ Stevens' aim was to point out the loyalty to Jesus Christ and not to present any ecclesiastical test. The Frenchman, Frédéric Monnier made his proposal drawn from the French national Basis.¹⁹ This was accepted to replace Stevens' first article.²⁰ During the discussion Stevens withdrew his second article because of the associations' "right of admitting as associates those who are not properly members of the Societies²¹."

¹⁵ Occasional Paper No.III 1856, 16f.

¹⁶ Edward Pusey was one of the leading figures of the Anglo-Catholic movement in Anglicanism.

¹⁷ Rouse 1993, 319.

¹⁸ Occasional Paper No.III 1856, 17f.

¹⁹ See synopsis below.

²⁰ Shedd 1955a,67. The text of the French Basis was also accepted into the constitutions of Brussels and Geneva. Thus, the text off the Paris basis had already established itself into the French speaking YMCAs. From this point of view, it is rather natural that Monnier's proposal had wider support than Stevens' new one.

²¹ This means, in practice, adoption of so-called 'associate members' who can participate in activities but have no vote in choosing the leadership.

Finally, his articles 3-5 were accepted as 'further proposals' and the final text from the Monnier's proposal was formulated by a committee.²²

THE STRUCTURE OF THE BASIS (see appendix) became such that in the beginning, there is the Preamble where the purpose of the Basis has been stated. According to the Preamble, the Basis was meant to be a bond between the members of the associations at present and the criteria for accepting new societies as members. In spite of this, it was stressed that all associations preserve complete independence in their organisation and action. After the Preamble there is the Fundamental Principle, and finally Stevens' articles 3-5. In the history of the YMCA sometimes only the Fundamental Principle has been regarded as the Paris Basis. However, Frank Willis underlines that the whole "statement and the three articles have together" formed the Paris Basis²³.

The Preamble expresses the starting point of the new federation. First, it points out that Christian unity already exists and the YMCA is only an attempt to manifest this unity. This is the same idea that later has been expressed with the words: "He that unites us is bigger than the issues that separate us." Although there was naturally some conference euphoria, there was a deeper reason for this feeling of unity. The YMCA has been ecumenical from its very beginning: the 12 founders of the London YMCA were members of Methodist, Independent, Presbyterian, and Anglican churches.²⁴ Other YMCAs, except in Germany, were also mainly interdenominational. Thus, the YMCAs had already experienced ecumenism at the local level and correspondence had created contacts to other similar associations abroad.

The second important point in the Preamble is the notion of the complete independence of member associations. From the reports to the Conference and from the discussions afterwards it was clear that there was great variety in organisation and modes of action. There were differences in the target groups (students, young

²² Occasional Paper No.III 1856, 19f.

²³ Willis 1955, 687; Jentsch 1971, 8.

²⁴ Shedd 1955a, 23.

merchants, young labour men, etc.), in the membership requirements, in the treatment of associated members, in organisation modes, in activities, etc.²⁵ Especially the issue of special associations for special groups aroused sentiments.²⁶ These discussions are evidently behind the statement of independency.

However, there are also pre-conference roots for the wording. I have already noted the Swiss attitude towards the proposal of the French-speaking Alliance of YMCAs under the Paris leadership. Local autonomy had been self-evident in Switzerland. This attitude was also manifested in North America where the Confederation (founded in 1854) had no authority over the local associations. Some associations were afraid that they would become branches of the Boston YMCA (which was the oldest YMCA in the US), parallel to the French proposal and the British practice where associations were branches of the London YMCA.²⁷ In Germany, there had been an area organisation from 1848. The president of this organisation, Gerhard Dürselen, expressed in his 1854 report the attitude towards the local independency as follows:

The Committee has never upheld the opinion that all the Associations should adhere to the same forms and methods; on the contrary, it fully recognizes the necessity of an individual growth based on the local conditions and the influences of varying circumstances.²⁸

Thus there were both fears of losing self sovereignty and practical reasons behind the wording of 'complete independence'.

Finally, the Preamble stated that the Fundamental Principle would be the criterion for membership in the World Alliance in the future. Later this meant that all new organisational members had to sign the Paris Basis as a prerequisite of their membership. However, it is doubtful if the Basis was signed at all in Paris 1855 by the founding members.²⁹

THE 'PROPOSALS' of the conference emphasise more the practical than the spiritual aspect of the federation. As seen above, the

²⁵ Occasional Paper No.III 1856, 120f.

²⁶ Shedd 1955a, 119f.

²⁷ Occasional Paper No.III 1856, 77, 80; Zald 1970, 57.

²⁸ Shedd 1955a, 56.

²⁹ Shedd 1955a, 135.

'proposals' were directly adopted from Stevens' articles. The first of them was:

That any differences of opinion on other subjects, however important in themselves, but not embraced by the specific designs of the Associations, shall not interfere with the harmonious relations of the confederated Societies.

Stevens' worry was that the slave-question would divide the American Associations into two groups as it had divided the Evangelical Alliance.³⁰ On the ideological level, Stevens' proposal evidently stemmed from the British philanthropic tradition that separated charities from political activity.³¹ This amendment later became the Second Fundamental Principle. The other two proposals were still more practical:

That a travelling certificate of membership be designed, by which members of the confederated Societies shall be entitled to the privileges of any other Society belonging to this Confederation, and to the personal attentions of all its members.³²

The issue of a travelling certificate reflects the needs of members and the existing situation. First, many local YMCAs had either been founded or supported by travelling business men, pastors or students. Second, the German *Jünglingsvereine*³³ had established Christian *Herberge* or Homes for the travelling apprentices and journeymen.³⁴ Third, both the British and French movements had a parent association practice according to which local associations were branches of the one in the capital and all members in the country had similar rights. Thus, the proposal was only confirming the existing practice. A similar observation can be made regarding correspondence which proposal reads as follows:

That the system of correspondence adopted by this Conference shall apply to the Societies of this Confederation.³⁵

Especially Henri Dunant from Geneva had been very active in maintaining connections with similar associations and the whole World Conference was a fruit of his correspondence. The plan of correspondence was actually accepted before Stevens' proposal of

³⁰ Occasional Paper No.III 1856, 10, 122; McCrea Cavert 1970, 595.

³¹ See Randon & 6 1994.

³² Occasional Paper No.III 1856, 20.

³³ The name YMCA was taken long afterwards.

³⁴ Occasional Paper No.III 1856, 52.

³⁵ Occasional Paper No.III 1856, 20.

an international alliance of associations. According to this plan, one or two associations in each country were chosen as centres of correspondence. These centres should be information channels, on the one hand, inside one country and, on the other hand, between other countries.³⁶ Thus an effective communication system was a priority of the YMCA from the very beginning.

THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE OF THE BASIS is what normally is called the Paris Basis. The tradition history³⁷ of the ideas presented in the Fundamental Principle can be seen in the following synopsis in which there are quotations from the Basis of EA,³⁸ Article 7 from the Paris Association,³⁹ Monnier's proposal⁴⁰ and the English⁴¹ and French texts of the Paris Basis.⁴²

Evangelical Alliance	French Movement	Monnier's' proposal	Paris Basis -English	Paris Basis -French
...parties composing the Alliance shall be such <i>persons</i>	<i>réunit dans une même association les <u>jeunes gens</u></i>	<i>Les Unions Chrétiennes déjà reunissent dans une même association les <u>jeunes gens</u></i>	The Young Men's Christian Associations seek to unite those <u>young men</u>	Les Unions chrétiennes ont pour but de réunir <i>dans une même association les <u>jeunes gens</u></i>
only as hold and maintain what are usually understood to be Evangelical views, in regard of Doctrine understated, namely: (5) The incarnation of the Son of God,... and His Mediatorial Intercession and Reign (1) The Divine Inspiration, Authority, and Sufficiency of the <u>Holy Scriptures</u> . ⁴³	<i><u>qui, recardant Jésus-Christ</u></i>	<i><u>qui, recardant Jésus-Christ</u></i>	<i>who, regarding Jesus <u>Christ</u></i>	<i><u>qui, recardant Jésus-Christ</u></i>
	<i><u>comme leur Sauveur et leur Dieu</u></i>	<i><u>comme leur Sauveur & leur Dieu</u></i>	<i><u>as their God and Saviour,</u></i>	<i><u>comme leur Sauveur et leur Dieu</u></i>
	<i><u>selon les saintes Écritures,</u></i>	<i>selon les Écritures,</i>	<i><u>according to the Holy Scriptures,</u></i>	<i><u>selon les saintes Écritures,</u></i>

³⁶ Occasional Paper No.III 1856, 12f.

³⁷ Tradition criticism is a method enabling the identification of the different phases of a text. See, for example Coats 1976.

³⁸ Rouse 1993, 320n.

³⁹ L'Union Chrétienne de Jeunes Gens 1856, 26.

⁴⁰ Paris Basis French manuscript.

⁴¹ Occasional Paper No.III 1956, 20.

⁴² Shedd 1955a, 132.

⁴³ Other paragraphs of the Evangelical Alliance Basis were: "(2) The Right and Duty of Private Judgement in the Interpretation of the Holy Scriptures. (3) The Unity of the Godhead, and the Trinity of Persons therein. (4) The utter Depravity of Human Nature, in consequence of the Fall. (6) The Justification of the sinner by Faith alone. (7) The work of the Holy Spirit in the Conversion and Sanctification of the sinner. (8) The Immortality of the Soul, the Resurrection of the Body, the Judgement of the World by our Lord Jesus Christ, with the Eternal Blessedness of the Righteous and the Eternal Punishment of the Wicked. (9) The Divine institution of the Christian Ministry, and the obligation and perpetuity of the ordinances of Baptism and

<i>veulent être ses disciples dans leur foi et dans leur vie</i>	<u>veulent être ses disciples dans leur doctrine & dans leur vie</u>	desire to be his disciples in their doctrine and in their life.	<i>veulent être ses disciples dans leur foi et dans leur vie</i>
<i>et travailler ensemble à étendre parmi les jeunes gens le règne de leur Maître.</i>	<u>& travailler ensemble à étendre parmi les jeunes gens le règne de leur Maître</u>	and to associate their efforts for the extension of His Kingdom amongst young men.	<i>et travailler ensemble à étendre parmi les jeunes gens le règne de leur Maître.</i>

Explanations:	<i>italics</i> = French texts are identical	<u>underline</u> = texts are identical to English version	bold = differences between French and English versions	<u>point underline</u> = the same content with different words
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It can be seen that the text of the Paris Basis was almost direct from the French National Basis with some wording seen in the EA Basis (namely the notion of doctrine). Similarly, it can be seen that there are some differences in the wording of the French and the English texts. There were also significant deviations from the Evangelical Alliance Basis. I refer to these below.

2.2. The Paris Basis as a Battle-cry and Action Plan

2.2.1. Calling Young Men in the Service of the Kingdom

'**YOUNG MEN**' versus 'jeunes gens' is the first textual critical⁴⁴ question in the Paris Basis. In the English version, there is the gender based expression 'young men' but in the French version there are the words 'jeunes gens' meaning simply young people. Although the French term has a connotation of the male sex, it is not the dominant meaning.⁴⁵ According to tradition history,⁴⁶ the non-gender expression is closer to the EA Basis where the expression 'people' appears. In Paris, this issue was not a question at all because all participants were young men, but later the female membership became one of the 'big questions' of the movement. However, it is worth noting that female membership was potentially present in the French text from the beginning.

the Lord's Supper."

⁴⁴ Textual criticism is a method of defining the original form of a text. See Thompson 1976 and Epp 1976.

⁴⁵ Rey 1992, 882; Robert 1982, 861.

⁴⁶ Tradition history is a method for analysing the development of a text from some earlier form to its present one. See Coats 1976.

'DOCTRINE' and 'foi' (faith) form another difference between the versions. In the manuscript 'doctrine' already appears, although the context of the word was equivalent to the French national version. However, 'doctrine' was struck out and replaced with 'foi'.⁴⁷ There has been an unanswered question as to why it remained in the English text for the next hundred years.⁴⁸ In 1955 the English text was corrected to be equivalent with the French text.⁴⁹ However, there is no document that explains the difference between the versions. Evidently, in the English version there is an echo from the EA background but the main text is from the French soil.

Redaction critics⁵⁰ might provide one solution to the problem. The English text was translated by T.H. Gladstone from the French text and it had some additions from his notes⁵¹. Here comes the possible redaction. Gladstone may have written some parts of the text automatically from his memory. If he remembered from Monnier's proposal that 'doctrine' was included, he could have written it without noticing the difference.⁵² The fact that the English report was a translation from the French text seems to preclude the possibility that the change occurred in the French one.

While looking at the meaning of the words, the omission of the EA's long doctrinal formulation was on purpose. The Christianity in the YMCA context was more '*fides qua creditur*' than '*fides quae creditur*'. In that sense, 'faith' was the theologically correct

⁴⁷ Senaud supposes that this has been done by Charles Cuénod, who took the signed original text and later gave it to the archives of the World Alliance. Senaud 1950, 4f. However, Shedd argues that the manuscript which is in the archives is not the final version accepted by the Conference. Shedd 1955a, 131.

⁴⁸ Shedd 1955a, 133f; Jentsch 1954, 114n.

⁴⁹ Frank Willis who presided over the Centennial Declaration committee explains this harmonisation as follows: "the word 'doctrine' in the English text of the fundamental principle was replaced by 'faith', and the English text thus revised became the 'decisive' text of the fundamental principle of the four texts then approved - English, French, German, and Spanish." Willis 1971, 3.

⁵⁰ Redaction history or redaction criticism is a method to understand why and how the differences have emerged in sacral texts. See Wharton 1976 and Fortna 1976.

⁵¹ Shedd 1955a, 114.

⁵² These kinds of corrections of the text are common in the Biblical texts. During the period when they were not yet sacred texts they could be corrected both because of mistakes in writing or on theological grounds.

word.⁵³ Additionally, both the French YMCA and Dunant felt that Evangelical Alliance restricted its membership needlessly by excluding Quakers and Plymouth Brethren from its membership.⁵⁴ The Paris Basis was merely a 'battle-cry' to unite the forces against those who denied the deity of Christ.⁵⁵

'**HIS KINGDOM**' versus 'le règne de leur Maître' is the third text critical question. In Britain the 'King James Version' of the Bible has moulded the English language so much that 'Kingdom' was the only reasonable form. In the KJV there does not even exist such an expression as 'Dominion of God'⁵⁶ like in other European translations. This explains the formulation in the English text. The French expression is wider than 'kingdom' which has also existed in French Bible translations.

There are three possible explanations for the difference of the French text from the English one. The first is obvious: the French 'Our Father'-prayer uses the word 'règne'. Another explanation is related to continental political history: there has not been such an overruling kingdom on the Continent as in Britain. The continent has had emperors, kings, dukes and counts who have ruled their territories - in the French speaking area as well. The concept of 'règne' therefore suited this context better. Third, in the re-established Empire of Napoleon III, speaking about the Kingdom would have been politically unwise - there were already tensions between the government and Protestant groups⁵⁷. This political context would explain the use of a more neutral expression 'règne de leur Maître'⁵⁸ (dominion of their Master).

⁵³ This strengthens the result that 'doctrine' was the original word in the text.

⁵⁴ Shedd 1955a 45, 86; Rouse 1993, 321.

⁵⁵ Theurer 1966, 79f.

⁵⁶ Closest in the KJV is the formula, 'His dominion', for example, in Ps 103:22; 114:2.

⁵⁷ The French Government had not allowed the formation of a national synod of Protestant churches. Shedd 1955a, 41.

⁵⁸ The German 'Gottesreich' could be a result of the Empire as well. In Luther's time the main political power on the continent was in the hands of emperor and independent princes.

2.2.2. Believing in 'God and Saviour According to Holy Scriptures'

Although the delegates were also active in the Evangelical Alliance, the Paris Basis is less dogmatic and more practical than the EA Basis. The latter quotes almost the whole Apostolic Confession (including the question of the Trinity) in its nine paragraphs. However, the expressions of the Divinity of Christ and the authority of the Bible were a common issue in both bases.

'GOD AND SAVIOUR' was an answer to the challenge of liberal theologians. Especially David Friedrich Strauss' book '*Leben Jesu*'⁵⁹, where he denied the divinity of Christ, raised strong opposition among Evangelicals. Thus, in this sense, the Paris Basis is clearly the symbol of a protest movement of its time.

The formula 'God and Saviour' connected to Jesus does not exist in the New Testament⁶⁰ although it can be found there implicitly. However, it has been used in several texts of Early Ecumenical Councils,⁶¹ but it does not exist in the Protestant Confessions of the Reformation. The formula 'God and Saviour' seems to have been part of the language of 19th century Evangelicals.

The formula was later one of the targets of attacks by other ecumenical bodies which adopted the Paris Basis. The claim was that the wording lacks the concept of the Trinity. Especially Orthodox theologians have seen a risk of 'Christomonism' in this. On the other hand, for Unitarians and members of the Society of Friends, even this formula has sometimes been too dogmatic.⁶²

The focus on the person of Jesus does not necessarily mean anti-Trinitarianism. First, for the representatives from Geneva, the question of the Trinity was important because of their fight

⁵⁹ Strauss 1835.

⁶⁰ In the Old Testament it can be found as an epithet of Jahweh (Isa 45:21). The form of 'Lord and Saviour' appears four times in the 2 Peter (1:11; 2:20; 3:2; 3:18).

⁶¹ II Council of Constantinople, 553 AD; II Council of Nicea, 787 AD; IV council of Constantinople, 860-870 AD; and Council of Constance, 1414-1418. All Catholic Church Ecumenical Councils - All the Decrees, 2000.

⁶² Williams 1991, 539; Thomas 1991, 1097.

against Socionism.⁶³ Second, many of the early leaders of the YMCA were pastors or active laymen who were involved in the Evangelical Alliance and the London Basis of the Evangelical Alliance contained a strong emphasis on the Trinity.⁶⁴ Thus, there must be other reasons for the lack of a Trinitarian formulation. Max Perrot, the president of the Geneva YMCA said in his report to the Evangelical Alliance⁶⁵:

It is not without consideration that we call ourselves the Christian Associations. It is on Christ and on Christ alone that we wish to build. Christ crucified whom we wish to serve. Not the equivocal Christ on whose person men establish vain and subtle distinctions, but Jesus Christ the true God and true Man, Jesus Christ our great Lord and Saviour to whom, as to the Father and the Holy Spirit, be honour, praise, glory and adoration for ever! Amen.⁶⁶

The point in Perrot's words is that the focus of the YMCAs is on the Second Chapter of the Creed but that does not mean overlooking the other Chapters. Werner Jentsch, in his interpretation of the Paris Basis, points out that although Christianity is centred on the saving power of Jesus, the concept 'Son, Saviour' also presupposes the existence of 'Father, Creator' and 'Holy Spirit, Sanctifier'.⁶⁷ In fact, the concept of Christ, as a Creek expression of the Hebrew Messiah, is a term expressing Jesus' relationship to the Father. Thus, according to Jentsch, the Trinitarian concept was built into the Basis.

'ACCORDING TO THE HOLY SCRIPTURES' is a Protestant formula which seems to ignore both Catholic and Orthodox understanding of the Tradition and Councils. In spite of this, the formula can not be seen either as a differentiation from those old churches or an attack against them. The background of the expression was merely in reaction to the rise of Biblical criticism that saw the Bible only as an ancient document. The target of the protest was inside

⁶³ Occasional Paper No.III 1856, 5. Socionism is a Unitarian sect named after Faustus Socinus from the 16th Century. Unitarians rejected the Trinity and stressed the Monophysitism of God. Schulz 1991, 1031f.

⁶⁴ Rouse 1993, 320.

⁶⁵ Perrot was asked to present a report in 23.8.1855 The YMCA conference was originally intended to end in 22.8. but an extra session was added in 24.8. 50 of the 99 YMCA delegates participated the Evangelical Alliance conference as well. Shedd 1955a, 111f.

⁶⁶ Perrot 1856, 24. English translation in Theurer 1971, 23.

⁶⁷ Jentsch 1954, 115; 1971, 4;

Protestantism, not against old churches⁶⁸. This is why the delegates from Geneva tried to include the words 'divine inspired' in front of the words 'Holy Scriptures' in the Paris Basis. Their motive was that the Bible was so vigorously attacked in Geneva that they should clearly stress the divinity of the Scriptures.⁶⁹

2.2.3. Seeking Unity

The content of the Basis is more than just a formulation of faith. If one looks at the structure of the text of the Fundamental Principle the following entities can be seen:

The Young Men's Christian Associations	Subject
seek to unite	Task 1
those young men who,	Object 1
regarding Jesus Christ as their God and Saviour,	Criterion 1
according to the Holy Scriptures,	Criterion 2
desire to be his disciples in their faith and in their life	Criterion 3
and to associate their efforts	Task 2
for the extension of His Kingdom	Purpose
amongst young men.	Object 2

It can be seen that there were two tasks: first, to 'unite those young men' who had a personal, Evangelical type, Christian faith. Second, to 'unite their efforts' in Missionary work directed to young men. In other words, the tasks were, first, to seek people who already had motivation and, second, to co-ordinate their already existing activities. From this point of view, the Paris Basis is more a definition of actual tasks than a formula of faith. Thus the Basis is, in Geertzian terms, both a model of Evangelical Christianity and a model for the practical tasks of the YMCA.

SEEK TO UNITE does not mean that there was no unity among Christian young men. In the Preamble it had already been said that delegates 'feel that they are

⁶⁸ The relationship to Catholicism appeared in a couple of reports to the Conference. In France there were Catholic members in the YMCA but the requirement was that "they refuse to accept the absolute authority of the clergy in matters of faith" (Occasional Paper No.III 1856, 28). On the other hand, in Geneva the members had joined the Anti-Catholic movement (ibid. 46).

⁶⁹ Occasional Paper No.III 1856, 20f.

one'. This is what later in the Ecumenical Movement was called 'given unity', namely unity that is based on the participation in Christ. The unity about which the Fundamental Principle speaks above refers to the manifestation of this transcendental unity.

ASSOCIATE THEIR EFFORTS refers more to a practical than a theological task. When these young men and their talents were united, the critical mass and co-operation would serve the missionary work that was the main aim of the Evangelical Movement. Although the associations have emerged from the needs of the members, there was also organisational wisdom in concentrating on converted young men: they were already motivated and committed to missionary work. Thus, the organisation needed only to direct this motivation.

THE MISSION OF THE YMCA, according to the Paris Basis, has several levels. The final goal is the extension of the Kingdom of Christ. However, this is too broad a definition for practical purposes. The strategical task in reaching this final goal is to unite young men to do the work. Thus young men are both subjects and objects of the YMCA. Tactical tasks were left to be defined in each local situation.

3. The Paris Basis as a Model for the Ecumenical Movement

3.1. The Paris Basis as a Model for the YMCA

3.1.1. The Institutionalisation of the Paris Basis

After the Paris Basis was accepted at the First World Conference, it soon received acceptance among the Local Associations and National Movements. However, there emerged three different models on how to use the Basis. In Switzerland, it was used as a personal test for membership (a candidate should sign it before he was accepted) as well as a definition for the purpose of Local

Associations and National Movement. These later uses were practised in France.⁷⁰

The third use of the Basis was that of the American, the British and the German movements. In these countries the Paris Basis was understood as a bond between the National Movements in the World Alliance as the Preamble of the Basis states. Especially Americans and Germans stressed the words 'whilst preserving a complete independence as to their particular organization and modes of action'. These national movements had their own bases. The quotation of the Preamble provided the possibility of looking at the needs of local society and adopting the work in different contexts.⁷¹

A PROPOSAL TO CHANGE THE BASIS emerged for the first time in 1867 in the Paris World Conference. The proposal was the same as the one that the members of the Geneva YMCA had made in 1855.⁷² Although it did not result in any action, it showed that the Basis was not carved in stone.

The second time the Basis was in the agenda was in Amsterdam in 1872. The Franco-Prussian war was over and the relationships between the French and German Movements were quite chilly. The Geneva YMCA had tried to maintain some kind of relations through its publication *l'Évangéliste* where letters from both sides were published. Wartime was the first real test of YMCA unity. After the war, in Amsterdam, it was unanimously agreed that the 'first proposal' "that any differences of opinion on other subjects, however important in themselves, but not embraced by the specific designs of the Associations, shall not interfere with the harmonious relations of the confederated Societies" should be added as a 'second fundamental principle' along with the 'fundamental principle.'⁷³

3.1.2. The Paris Basis as a Membership Criterion

As time passed, themes emerged that had not been expressed in the Paris Basis. Some of these themes were seen as tactical decisions

⁷⁰ Shedd 1955a, 142.

⁷¹ Senaud 1953, 3; Shedd 1955a, 142.

⁷² Senaud 1953, 3; Shedd 1955a, 177.

⁷³ Senaud 1953, 4; Shedd 1955a, 189f.

that were concerns of local and national organisations, but there were also fundamental questions that had to be solved on an international level. Questions of membership requirements, interdenominationalism and the lay character of the YMCA were bound together in a crisis that faced the World Alliance just before its 50th anniversary.

TWO TYPES OF YMCAS were present from the very beginning of the movement. In Anglo-Saxon countries the associations were mostly interconfessional and led by laymen. In Germany and Scandinavia, in turn, the organisations worked in close co-operation with State Churches because the majority of the population belonged to one church. This difference was no problem in Paris in 1855 because the focus was on commitment of members, not on organisational affiliations. However, when the YMCAs institutionalised, the flame of the spirit was accompanied by the guiding principles. Questions of membership basis became serious issues in the YMCA.

There was also another difference between Anglo-Saxons and Germans regarding membership. The British YMCA required conversion,⁷⁴ and North America required membership in an evangelical church⁷⁵ for full membership. Germans, in turn, accepted "all young men as long as they behave decently and can be trusted".⁷⁶ Behind these membership requirements lay both theological and strategical differences. Anglo-Saxon movements represented revivalism-Christianity while Germans represented nurture-Christianity. For Germans the associations were nets "catching good and bad alike; the ultimate selection is in God's hands."⁷⁷ Additionally, the Lutheran doctrine of *sola gratia* did not emphasise conversion as a requirement for salvation.⁷⁸

INTERDOMINATIONAL IDENTITY became a problem in 1884 when the German Baptists' Young Men's Union⁷⁹ officially requested membership in the World Alliance. Their admission was rejected

⁷⁴ London YMCA Rule VIII. Quoted by Shedd 1955a, 25.

⁷⁵ Occasional Paper No.III 1856, 90.

⁷⁶ Shedd 1955a, 168.

⁷⁷ Shedd 1955a, 168.

⁷⁸ For discussion of this theme, see Shedd 1955b, 273-276.

⁷⁹ The movement was not small - it comprised 98 associations.

because of the Young Men's Union's confessional base⁸⁰. Thus the Paris Basis had become an interdenominational criterion for membership. Organisations accepting members from only one denomination were not accepted. A similar problem also occurred in the case of the Danish and the Norwegian Movements which were at first officially Lutheran organisations. Neither was accepted as members before they changed their rules in 1899.⁸¹

The confessional problem was alive till the 50th Anniversary Jubilee Conference in Paris 1905. There had been growing misunderstanding between Anglo-Saxon and German Movements since 1884. Anglo-Saxon Movements stressed inter-denominationalism and lay leadership and they targeted the 'Church Associations' in Germany and Scandinavia. The American and British claim was that the German *Jünglingsverein* was not actually a true YMCA Movement because it de facto limited its membership to the majority church. According to the Anglo-Saxons, the Paris Basis and its wording 'Jesus Christ as their God and Saviour' required interdenominationalism. However, this was only a partial truth. At Paris 1855 (during the discussions on the Paris Basis) the membership criterion was stated as follows:

Whoever believes Jesus Christ as his God and Saviour, according to the Holy Scriptures, will be received in the kingdom of Heaven, and whoever will be received in into Heaven ought not to be refused admission into our Association.⁸²

Thus, on the one hand, Anglo-Saxons were right: basically, there should not be more requirements of membership than the Paris Basis had stated. Moreover, the spirit of the Paris Conference was totally ecumenical. It was clear that the aim of the Paris Basis was to be an inclusive criterion. On the other hand, Anglo-Saxons forgot that, as Shedd underlines, "the World's Alliance was not an Anglo-Saxon creation."⁸³ Moreover, according to their own policy which both British and Americans had strongly underlined several times, the Paris Basis was meant to be a bond between associations and national movements and not a basis for local or national

⁸⁰ Shedd 1955b, 251.

⁸¹ Shedd 1955b, 360ff.

⁸² Occasional Paper No.III 1856, 21.

⁸³ Shedd 1955b, 402. Italics in original.

organisations.⁸⁴ Thus, from this point of view, the Basis could not be used to defend the interdenominationalism thesis.

Germans defended themselves with the 'Independence Clause' of the Preamble of the Paris Basis. Additionally, they noted that the *Rheinisch-Westphälische Jüngesbund* was a founding member of the World Alliance, and in 1855 their membership criterion had not been questioned. Along with both the Americans and the British they had kept their own bases, and all these movements had interpreted the Paris Basis as an international, not national or local one. The Germans, in turn, did not see the irony in their attitude: while they accepted those who have no personal relationship with Christ, they excluded committed Christians from minority churches.

In this issue the YMCA faced the fundamental question of how to handle different cultural views and interpretations. The question was whether the YMCA was to be a heterogeneous movement including different views or was its destiny to split into different groups isolated from each other. The danger was real: distinction was the model of 19th century revivalism.

Before the Jubilee Conference of 1905 the matter was discussed deeply and emotions settled. The conference reaffirmed the Paris Basis in the Jubilee Declaration in 1905 in which the Basis was explained to embody wiz.

- A. Personal and vital Christianity on the part of the members.
- B. The spirit of the Evangelical Alliance according to John xvii.21: "That they all may be one as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee. That they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me."
- C. The activity and responsibility of the members in an effort for the extension of the Kingdom of God among young men.⁸⁵

The 'Church Association' problem was resolved with the wording "the spirit of the Evangelical Alliance⁸⁶" without mentioning

⁸⁴ Shedd 1955b, 273f.

⁸⁵ Jubilee Declaration 1905, Quoted in Shedd 1955b, 421.

⁸⁶ There is a certain irony in the wording "the spirit of the Evangelical Alliance" since the Evangelical Alliance had lost its credibility in a similar battle in the 1880s. When it protected the rights of the minority churches in Germany and Scandinavia, the Lutherans withdrew their support for it and the significance of Evangelical Alliance in Lutheran territory became minimal.

inter-denominationalism. The function of the Basis was confirmed to be the bond between the National Movements and the World Alliance. The interpretation inside the country was one's own business but the Basis (or expression that was shown to be equivalent to it) in the National rules was obligatory.

The significance of this agreement became evident when the YMCA entered into countries of Roman Catholic and Orthodox dominance. Until the 1955 the YMCA had adopted an interconfessional policy to accept all Christians as full members. However, this ecumenism was, according to Paul Limbert, "not the result of a deliberate policy but the inevitable consequence of offering service to young men regardless of creed."⁸⁷ Thus, the practice modified the interpretation of the Paris Basis from evangelicalism to ecumenism.

3.1.3. The Paris Basis as a Leadership Criteria

While most associations had developed some kind of associate membership for those who did not meet the requirements of full membership, the leadership of the movement was kept in the hands of committed Christians. However, as we have seen, there were different requirements in different countries (membership in an evangelical church, conversion, membership in a state church). When the Americans and the British were most eager in their missionary work, their models diffused to the new YMCAs they founded. Especially the requirement for membership in an Evangelical church became problematic in Catholic and Orthodox dominant countries. Thus, practical reasons led to a trend to include members of these old churches as full members of the YMCA⁸⁸.

CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP became more important than before when the YMCA expanded greatly to new territories after the First World

Shedd 1955b, 261f; Rouse 1993, 323.

⁸⁷ Limbert 1955, 10.

⁸⁸ The St. Petersburg YMCA opened its membership to the Orthodox in 1900 and the Mexico City YMCA modified its rules in 1907 and "became the first Association to include the Roman Catholic Church among those fulfilling the definition of evangelical Churches. Willis 1955, 695.

War. In 1920, the Plenary meeting of the World's Committee decided that

the control in the YMCAs should be in the hands of those who have a personal faith in Christ and who accept the fundamental principles which have been proclaimed during the Jubilee Conference held in Paris in 1905.⁸⁹

Thus, the Paris Basis and its interpretation - the Jubilee Declaration - were changed from a bond between *National Movements* and the World Alliance to become a criterion of the leadership in *Local Associations*. This was a new phenomenon. It should be noted, however, that these kinds of decisions did not have a legal effect on national movements but were only recommendations. The background of the Plenary decision was that in 1920, the YMCA had also spread to non-Christian countries and non-Christians were members of the YMCAs in these countries. From this point on, the issue has been discussed according to the theme 'open membership - Christian leadership'.

The decision on membership had two sides. On the one hand, it included Roman Catholics and the Orthodox into the YMCA. It is noteworthy that there is no preference for Evangelical Christianity in the Basis. On the other hand, the decision excluded non-Christians from the boards and other leadership positions. However, while this has been an official policy⁹⁰ it has not been the practice of all YMCAs in non-Christian lands.⁹¹ In these countries it is has been enough if the Paris Basis or its equivalent is the membership criterion instead of membership in a Christian church.

⁸⁹ Senaud 1953, 8f.

⁹⁰ Flaming Milestone 1937, 49.

⁹¹ Since the mid-1920s there have also been non-Christians on the governing boards. The trend started in Turkey after their Revolution and became a typical phenomenon of Near East associations. YMCAs of the World 1958, 191; Kandy Consultation 1953, 19.

3.2. The Paris Basis as a Model for Other Ecumenical Organisations

3.2.1. The YMCA as a Parent of Ecumenical Organisations

In the case of interorganisational diffusion, the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) also adopted basis similar to the Paris one. This was quite natural for several reasons. First, the YMCA and the YWCA have, for their whole history, been sister movements and the YMCA, as the older brother, has been a model for its little sister. Second, the WSCF grew from the College YMCAs in USA and was also closely connected to the YMCA in international level.⁹²

Third, the WCC was the fruit of these three organisations. In the standard histories of the WCC it is often said that the modern Ecumenical Movement has its roots in the Missionary Council in 1910 in Edinburgh, in the Life and Work Movement (L&W), and in the Faith and Order Movement (F&O). However, this is only partially true because the leaders of these early ecumenical bodies, as well as those of the WCCs, came from these three youth movements. According to Ruth Rouse, at the First Assembly of the WCC in Amsterdam 1948, and at other such ecumenical assemblies, about "four-fifths of those assembled on these platforms probably owed their ecumenical inspiration to some connection with the YMCA, with the YWCA, or with the closely-connected Student Christian Movement."⁹³ So it was no wonder that the modified Paris Basis was also accepted as the basis of the WCC.⁹⁴

The similarities and the differences of the Bases and their modifications can be seen in the following synopsis:

YMCA 1855	WSCF 1895	YWCA 1898	WSCF 1913	YWCA 1914	WCC 1948
The Young Men's Christian	The objects shall be:	The World's Young Women's	The objects shall be:	The World's YWCA desires to	The World Council of Churches is a

⁹² Tracy Strong mentions that five of the first six presidents of the WSCF came from the YMCA. Strong 1955, 533.

⁹³ Rouse 1993, 327.

⁹⁴ This is a common trend in social movements. They adopt many their practices from the previous movements. When the movement activists shift to a new movement in the same cluster, they normally bring their practices with them. See, for example, McAdam & McCarthy & Zald 1988, 716.

Associations seek to unite those young men	a) To lead students to become disciples of	Christian Associations seeks to unite those young women	a) To lead students to accept the Christian faith	be representative of all sections of the Christian Church in so far as they accept the basis. It has Faith in God the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord and Saviour, and in the Holy Spirit as Revealer of Truth and Source of Power for life and service	fellowship of churches
who, regarding Jesus Christ as their God and Saviour,	<u>Jesus Christ as only Saviour and as God</u>	who, regarding Jesus Christ as their God and Saviour	in God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit		<u>which accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour</u>
according to the Holy Scriptures,		according to the Holy Scriptures,	<u>according to the Scriptures</u>	<u>according to the teachings of the Holy Scripture</u>	
<u>desire to be his disciples</u> in their doctrine and in their life,	b) To deepen the spiritual life of students and to promote earnest study of Scriptures among them	are vitally united to Him through the love of God shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, and	<u>and to live as true disciples of Jesus Christ</u> b) To deepen the spiritual life of students and to promote earnest study of Scriptures among them		
and to associate their efforts for the extension of His Kingdom amongst young men.	c) To influence students to devote themselves to <u>the extension of the Kingdom of God</u> in their own nation and throughout the world	desire to associate their efforts for the extension of his Kingdom among all young women	c) To influence students to devote themselves <u>to the extension of the Kingdom of God</u> in their own nation and throughout the world	and desires to enlist the service of young woman for young women	
		by such means as are in accordance with the Word of God.	e) To further, either directly or indirectly, the effort on behalf of welfare of students in body, mind and spirit which are in harmony with the Christian purpose.	in their spiritual, intellectual, social, and physical advancement and to encourage their fellowship and activity in the Christian Church.	

The paragraph of WSCF basis from 1913 that does not fit into the structure of the other bases: d) To bring students of all countries into mutual understanding and sympathy, to lead them to realize that the principles of Jesus Christ should rule in international relationships, and to endeavour by so doing to draw the nations together

Bold = same text in Paris Basis and other bases, underline = the same meaning with different words

Because the careful analysis of these bases is another story to be told at another time, I concentrate only on those points that have relevance to YMCA decisions. Generally, it can be seen that the wordings, save the WCC's, are getting longer in later versions when the WSCF and the YWCA have tried to take into account all the wishes of their allies. The need for Trinitarian form came almost

at the same time when all three movements stepped onto Catholic and Orthodox soil. In the Berlin Conference of the YWCA in 1910, the Orthodox delegates were present for the first time.⁹⁵

3.2.2. The Paris Basis as a Model for the YWCA

THE YWCA BASIS from 1898 on was almost exactly the same as the Paris Basis. The only difference was the addition of 'Holy Spirit' and - as a new theme - the mentioning of the criterion for acceptable methods. The methodology adopted in 1914, as well as at the WSCF convention in 1913, seems to have been influenced by the American YMCA Triangle Principle (body, mind and spirit) and Four Fold Programme (Triangle + Social work) launched near the end of last century.⁹⁶ In the question of acceptable methods these two movements differentiated themselves from the YMCA which guaranteed complete independency to national movements on this issue.

3.2.3. The Paris Basis as a Model for the WSCF

Through the "extension of the Kingdom throughout the world," the WSCF Basis of 1895 referred to the missionary enthusiasm of North American YMCAs at that time. The Student Volunteer Movement, the missionary wing of YMCA student activity, was a child of the Second Awakening. One of the first milestones of that movement was the First World Student Conference held in 1886 in Mt. Hermon, Massachusetts, where hundreds of students offered their lives for foreign missionary service. According to the most conservative estimate, 20,500 students had reached the field by 1945.⁹⁷

In part, the WSCF 1913 Article D can be seen as a reaction against the huge armament of European nations and the Balkan wars in 1912-13. This was, however, not the whole background. The former General Secretary of the World Alliance of YMCAs, Tracy Strong, writes about this period when he was still a local Boy's Work Secretary:

When youth was dragged from its natural pursuits and became "destiny's draftees", facing a world of paradoxes and clashes such as the "Clash of

⁹⁵ Rouse 1993, 607.

⁹⁶ Johnson 1979, 100.

⁹⁷ Shedd 1955b, 278; Rouse 1993, 328.

Arms", the "Clash of Colour", the "Clash of Ideas", and the "Clash of Faiths", the YMCA tried to interpret to youth the world-wide slogans and the spiritual engines of propaganda.⁹⁸

Thus, it was the whole atmosphere of the period that provoked this reaction in the YMCA and in the Student Christian Movement.

3.2.4. The Paris Basis as a Model for the WCC

THE WCC BASIS has a strong correlation to the Paris Basis but there is no evidence that the WCC Basis came directly from the Paris Basis. However, T.K. Thomas argues that the roots of the WCC basis are in the basis of the Faith and Order Movement (F&O)⁹⁹ in 1910, which declares,

...that all the Christian Communion throughout the world which confess our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour be asked to unite with us...¹⁰⁰

It would be, however, more simple to suppose that the leaders of the WCC brought the expression with them when they moved from the YMCA to the WCC via the WSCF, the F&O and the L&W. In any case, the formula was in wide use in the ecumenical movement.¹⁰¹

4. Conclusion

During its first century the Paris Basis had become an institutionalised set of symbols for the World Alliance of YMCAs. Some of its elements have remained untouched, some have intensified and some have modified to match new needs. The centrality of Christ remained the same from 1855 to 1955. The YMCA had started as a revival movement and, although social service activities were added, the movement remained as an Evangelical revival movement during its first hundred years. These services were seen as part of the mission "to extend His Kingdom." The YMCA

⁹⁸ Strong 1955, 461.

⁹⁹ Thomas 1991, 1096f.

¹⁰⁰ The words are from the invitation to form a common body. This invitation was issued by the American Protestant Episcopal Church. Tatlow 1993, 408.

¹⁰¹ Wolfdieter Theurer backs this interpretation by the notion that in the discussion before the WCC New Delhi Assembly 1961, it was continuously referred to the tradition of the Paris Basis in the discussions of the new formulation of the WCC Basis. Theurer 1966, 118f.

identity was basically that of an Evangelical Christian. The identity had, however, expanded from young men to all age groups, to both sexes, and to all Christians. In the case of members from other faiths, the YMCA developed a dual principle of 'open membership and Christian leadership' to ensure both the openness of the organisation and its Christian nucleus.

The mission of the YMCA has been seen differently, at the local and international levels, and differently again at the beginning of the movement and then later as it institutionalised. First, in 1855, the role of the World Alliance was restricted to be a facilitator for interaction among the local associations. The main mission was to be fulfilled at the local level. As time passed, the World Alliance was institutionalised and gained a permanent structure and staff. During this process the mission of the World Alliance was broadened to include activities that could not be accomplished by national movements. The most important of these tasks was the war work during both World Wars, missionary enterprises to new territories and consultations with other religious and secular bodies. However, the main mission of the World Alliance has been that of being a bond between national movements.

The ideology of the YMCA is not uniform. The introduction of the Paris Basis ensured complete independence at the local (and later national) level. When the YMCA adapted itself to the local cultures these cultures modified the YMCA as well. Thus, the YMCA ideology and policy are a patchwork quilt while the only common feature is the understanding of the unity that exists in spite of this diversity. The role of the Paris Basis in the modification of YMCA ideology has been significant. The Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Evanston 1954 described its basis as "less than a confession" but "much more than a mere formula of agreement."¹⁰² This has been true in the case of the Paris Basis as well.

¹⁰² Thomas 1991, 1097.

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Appendix: The Paris Basis Text

ALLIANCE OF YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS

The delegates of various Young Men's Christian Associations of Europe and America, assembled in Conference at Paris, the 22nd August, 1855, feeling that they are one in principle and in operation, recommend to their respective Societies to recognize with them the unity existing among their Associations, and whilst preserving a complete independence as to their particular organization and modes of action, to form a Confederation on the following fundamental principle, such principle to be regarded as the basis of admission of other Societies in future:

The Young Men's Christian Associations seek to unite those young men who, regarding Jesus Christ as their God and saviour according to the Holy Scriptures, desire to be His disciples in their faith and in their life, and to associate their efforts for the extension of His Kingdom amongst young men.

This fundamental principle being admitted, the Conference further proposes:

1. That any differences of opinion on other subjects, however important in themselves, but not embraced by the specific designs of the Associations, shall not interfere with the harmonious relations of the confederated Societies.
2. That a travelling certificate of membership be designed, by which members of the confederated Societies shall be entitled to the privileges of any other Society belonging to this Confederation, and to the personal attentions of all its members.
3. That the system of correspondence adopted by this Conference shall apply to the Societies of this Confederation.