

**INTERPRETATION OF THE PARIS BASIS IN WORLD YMCA CENTENNIAL  
CONFERENCE 1955**

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# CONTENTS

<b>CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1. THE PARIS BASIS .....	3
1.2. PARIS CENTENNIAL CONFERENCES AUGUST, 1955.....	4
1.3. THE TASK OF THE STUDY .....	6
1.4. METHODS OF THE STUDY .....	7
1.4.1. Exegetical methods .....	7
1.4.2. Sociological methods .....	8
1.5. SOURCE MATERIAL AND PREVIOUS STUDIES.....	10
<b>2. THE FORMULATION OF THE PARIS BASIS.....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1. THE ROOTS OF PARIS BASIS .....	11
2.2. THE PARIS BASIS AS A BATTLE-CRY .....	14
2.2.1. <i>Two Paris Bases?</i> .....	14
2.3.2. <i>Divinity in the Paris Basis</i> .....	16
2.3. THE PARIS BASIS AS AN ACTION PLAN .....	18
2.2. PARIS BASIS IN THE HISTORY OF YMCAS.....	20
2.2.1. <i>The stabilisation of the Basis</i> .....	20
2.2.3. <i>The Basis as a Membership Criteria</i> .....	21
2.2.3. <i>The Basis as a Leadership Criteria</i> .....	22
2.3. THE BASIS LIVES ITS OWN LIFE .....	24
<b>3. THE PARIS BASIS IN THE CENTENNIAL CONFERENCES .....</b>	<b>28</b>
3.1. LOCATING THE PARIS BASIS IN THE CENTENNIAL CONFERENCE DOCUMENTS .....	28
3.2. PREPARATORY MATERIAL OF THE CENTENNIAL CONFERENCE .....	28
3.2.1. <i>The navigation of the 'captain'</i> .....	28
3.2.2. <i>Preview to the Centennial Conferences</i> .....	30
3.2.3. <i>Homework before the Conferences</i> .....	34
3.3. THE BASIS IN CENTENNIAL CONFERENCE.....	37
3.3.1. <i>The official resolutions</i> .....	37
3.3.2. <i>The Paris Basis in the addresses of the Centennial Conferences</i> .....	38
3.3.3. <i>The Basis in the Section Reports of the Conferences</i> .....	39
<b>4. THE YMCA INTERPRETATION OF THE PARIS BASIS IN 1955.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>SOURCES AND LITTERATURE:.....</b>	<b>42</b>

# INTERPRETATION OF THE PARIS BASIS IN THE TIME OF WORLD YMCA CENTENNIAL CONFERENCE 1955

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. 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.

YMCA Paris Basis 1855

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. *The Paris Basis*

Paris Basis is the basic formulation of the goals both YMCA and the whole Ecumenical Movement. After it was formulated in 1855 in the first World Conference of World Alliance of YMCAs, it was adopted by all major allies of YMCA – World Young Women's Christian Associations (YWCA) in 1898, Student Christian Movement (SCM or WSCF) in 1895 and World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1948 – adopted it as their basis also (Jentsch 1968,11; Theurer 1966,100ff; Thomas 1991,1098; Steel 1991,1105). From that point of view it is one of the most remarkable Christian documents of modern era.

Paris Basis and its successors form a special type of documents. The Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Evanston in 1954 described it to be 'less than a confession' but 'much more than a mere formula<sup>1</sup> of agreement' (Thomas 1991,1097). Practically

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<sup>1</sup> Formula is a terminus technicus which means some expression that has been crystallised to certain form

this means that the formula of the text is significant in its every detail but it is not as normative as confessions.

## **1.2. Paris Centennial Conferences August, 1955**

In 1955 the World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations celebrated its 100 year's anniversary. This kind of 'round years' develop normally the review of history and the special significance of the year. All kinds of projects were promoted in YMCA for that year. The Mission Review - project mentioned above was of course one. Its practical result was the adopting of the new constitution for World Alliance of YMCAs. That was the only significant resolution of the XXII<sup>th</sup> World Conference. The others were just organisation routine (And Now - Tomorrow, 1957, 83-88). The Centennial Declaration was accepted in the joint plenary of all Centennial Conferences (see below) in the final day (And Now - Tomorrow 1957, 211f).

The main purpose of the Centennial Conferences was however in promoting the feeling of unity. It was implicated in the Statement of Purpose of the Centennial Year:

...to make 1955 a year of world-wide witness to Christ and to the Christian mission of the Movement...

...the Centennial Year may well bring to every member of every association a new and vivid awareness of what it means to belong to the World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations. By thought, action and prayer every member of this world-wide fellowship could share in this experience of united Christian witness... (And Now - Tomorrow 1957, 10)

So the purpose of the Centennial Conferences was to give a testimony of YMCA Christian basis and - as the Paris Basis says - "to unite ... young men".

The Paris setting was combined of several conferences:

**The XXII<sup>nd</sup> World's Conference** was the official centre of the entire celebration in Palais des Sports with 1650 delegates.

**The World Conference of Young Men** was a gathering of 1700 young men and women between the ages of 18 and 30 and it was held in Sorbonne.

**The World Conference of Older Boys** was for 1000 boys and girls aged 15 to 17 in Cité Universitaire.

**The World Boys' Camp** was held in Le Rocheton, Melun with 200 12-14 year old boys.

**The World Conference of YMCA Secretaries** was the first of its kind and most of the 900 YMCA secretaries in Paris attended also to this conference held in Sorbonne.

**The World Conference of Y's Men<sup>2</sup>** was the meeting of 350 'wise men' at the Maison de la Chimie.

**Visitors' programmes** were for those 2500 participants that were not delegates. (And Now - Tomorrow 1957, 23ff)

The reason for separate conferences was that in those times there were no places in Paris to accommodate and gather for meeting nearly 10 000 peoples (And Now - Tomorrow 1957, 23).

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<sup>2</sup> Y's Men Movement is an independent club-organisation that supports YMCA. Originally it grew from the Rotary Movement when some clubs concentrated their support to local YMCAs.

### 1.3. The task of the study

The 'sister and child movements', YWCA and WSCF that were mentioned above, however changed their formulas from Christocentric to Trinitarian form before Paris Centennial Conference<sup>3</sup>. This caused also for YMCA a stress to modify the Paris Basis while reviewing its Christian Mission.

The review of the YMCA Mission was part of the general trend in the whole Ecumenical Movement. There were new elements in the concept of Mission, like the slowing down of missionary expansion since 1930s, the autonomy of the Younger Churches, the integration of missionary societies closer to churches and the challenge of Communism. (Limbert 1955, 32f)

In YMCA the review process had started during the war time when John R. Mott, the president of the World Alliance, proposed such study. "We must be ready with men and money." The Enlarged Executive at Geneva in 1946 approved a plan for survey and staff visitations in different regions. This work was reflected in the Edinburgh Plenary in 1947 and it led to the plans for reconstruction of the work of World Alliance of YMCAs. (Limbert 1955, 62-64). The Centennial Conferences were also part of this process.

From all this the task of this study arises. **The main goal is to find out what was the *sitz im leben* of Paris Basis in the YMCA in the light of Centennial Conferences documents.** This leads to several questions that has to be clarified. First **what was the original meaning of Paris Basis?** Then **how Paris Basis was**

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<sup>3</sup> WSCF in 1913 and YWCA in 1914 (Theurer 1966, 101f). WCC changed its basis only after this period that I study, but the tension was in air (Thomas 1991, 1096f).

**interpreted during its history?** After these I pay attention on **why the Basis was confirmed in Centennial Conferences.**

#### **1.4. Methods of the study**

##### **1.4.1. Exegetical methods**

I mentioned above that the Paris Basis created a certain type of a document. The type of bibles can be treated like those of laws and confessions. The significance of details of text can be described with two examples.

There is a story from the time of the Russian Revolution: Lenin was asked to give orders how to treat some prisoners in Siberia. He sent a telegram in which he wrote: 'Execution, no mercy.' However, when the telegram came to Siberia it was as 'Execution no, mercy.' One comma in a different place changed the whole message. This is typical to juridical, liturgical and confessional texts.

The opposite example is a verse from a song that was popular some years ago in Finland: 'Million, million roses.' It was poetry and nobody would even think that there would be exactly million pieces of roses. In poems, songs, fairy tales and legends the expressions represent the other end where the exact formulation is not so important.

The other questions, save type, are related to the text-versions, text-structures, tradition history of the text and its 'sitz im leben'.

The methodology of the analyse of this kind of texts has been developed in Exegetics and can be used also for non-biblical

texts.<sup>4</sup> In this study I use some of these methods<sup>5</sup> to analyse the text and history of the Paris Basis. The useful methods are text criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism and tradition criticism. With text criticism I am going to analyse the differences of English and French versions of the Basis. With form and redaction criticisms I intend to find out to which kind of social context certain forms and modifications of the formulas in the text belong. Finally with tradition criticism it is possible to follow the development and possible change of the text. However when the latter is normally tracing backwards in the history, I am going to use it upside down - from older time to newer.

#### 1.4.2. Sociological methods

After the exegetical analysis of the history of the Basis I take a look to the '*sitz im leben*' of it in 1955. This will be through the Centennial Conference documents. I use the concepts of Göran Therborn of the social system which, according to him, is constituted of structurations, spacing and enculturations. These, with the connections to power relations, lead to social action and to new system. (Therborn 1995, 8-13)

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<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to note that the Biblical scholars 'at the feet of rabbi Räisänen' in Helsinki University identify themselves more and more to such disciplines as Comparative studies of religions, Filology, Literature studies and Cultural anthropology than to Theology (articles of Uro, Pyysiäinen and Räisänen, TA 2/1997, 106-125). The methodology flow has been from those studies to Exegetics but not so much vice versa.

<sup>5</sup> Short but sufficient introductions to these methods can be found e.g. in Interpreter's Dictionary (1976) Suppl.Vol. in following articles: 'Discourse, Direct and Indirect'; 'Discourse Structure'; 'Exegesis'; 'Form criticism, OT'; 'Form criticism, NT'; 'Literary criticism'; 'Literary, The Bible as'; 'Redaction criticism, OT'; 'Redaction criticism, NT'; 'Source criticism, OT'; 'Tradition criticism, OT'



Here the system in focus will be the World Alliance of YMCAs. So I will not look the whole patchwork quilt of YMCAs but only the main international body. Here must be added that nor YMCA nor most of international NGOs are organisations in the traditional meaning of the word. Partly they are that but partly they are also social movements where the identifying of the structure is almost like structuring the clouds. Therborns system analyse is supposed to work because it is quite loose compared to some other system theories which too often colonise the object of the study.

The elements of structures are tasks, means and rights. With tasks he means the basic role script of human society. So it includes also other elements than pure duties. The means is understood as a wide concept of allocational concerns. The rights is a framework of norms and values which are actors' resources in the social system. (Therborn 1995,8f)

In the social action there is always the change of positive and negative results. These Therborn identify as risks and opportunities in the future. He is not so much interested of decision analysis or macro-social interpretation. (Therborn 1995,9f)

The third element, culture, is formed of identity, cognition and evaluations. Of identity he first notes that identity is quite rare concept in contemporary social theory. His concept of identity is based on 'I' - 'other' division. However the concept of 'other' is limited in sociological research of religion or religious organisations. As nuances of 'other' there will be 'you' and 'he/they' like Martin Buber has pointed. In the Christian context there is also always the aspect of being 'coram Deo' which means that in some level 'they' are part of 'us'. The identity is more inclusive than exclusive (Simmel 1964,368). With cognition Therborn means both language, as a framework of thinking and

**Kommentti [MM1]:** nootti  
Buberilta!!!

communication, and knowledge of the world. Here he quotes Berger and Luckmann. The evaluation is a pattern of model to handle ethical questions. (Therborn 1995,10f)

With this methodological standpoint I study both the material of the Centennial Conference and the preparatory material. In this I use also the results of previous exegetical study.

### **1.5. Source Material and Previous Studies**

The primary sources are the documents of the World YMCA conferences in Paris both in 1855 and in 1955. This is the material that I try to explain. In this explanation I use both primary sources, i.e. documents of the conferences between the limits, and literature<sup>6</sup>.

There are some previous studies on Paris Basis. **Auguste Senaud** gave reports to World Committee Plenaries in 1951 and 1953 about the history of the Basis. **Werner Jentsch** has dealt the issue in **Façade oder Fundament** in 1954, which was included in the Centennial Conference study material **Fellow Workmen for God** as part II.

Later World YMCA has had two study-commissions: **Commission of Ecumenical Consultants** from 1959-1961 and **Commission of Paris Basis** 1969-1973. The works and study documents of these commissions give help to find the crucial points of the issue.

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<sup>6</sup> Here I have to remind that not all the papers labelled 'studies' are scientific research. Some of them are reports for the committees made by some specialists, who know the field of which they are reporting. Many of them had a doctoral degree. In these reports they do not always use scientific manner of implementation for example in case of references. This kind of material I regard as an own report category - somewhere between source document and a study.

**P.Wolfdieter Theurer** dealt the issue in his dissertation **Trinität und Ökumene** from 1966<sup>7</sup>. From Werner Jentsch there is a study **Ökumene im Entwurf** from 1968.

Then there are two histories that give light to item: Clarence Prouty Shedd's **History of the World's Alliance of YMCA's**, which was published in the Conferences and Ruth Rouse's **A History of the Ecumenical Movement I-II**. Also **The Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement** has useful articles on the issue.

## 2. The Formulation of the Paris Basis

### 2.1. The roots of Paris Basis

In his report to Nyborg Strand Plenary in 1950 Auguste Senaud, the former secretary of the World Alliance of YMCAs, points that the idea of General Alliance for YMCAs became from French context. The Second Empire did not allow the Protestants to have a national synod<sup>8</sup> and the leaders of the Evangelical Alliance(EA) launched an idea of wider organisation of Associations in French speaking countries(Shedd 1955a,41). When there was a personal union between the EA and YMCA<sup>9</sup> the former served evidently a model for YMCA. However Swiss were not so eager to be centralised under French leadership and Henri Dunant looked forward to include also Anglo-Saxon and German Associations into the Federation. (Senaud 1950,2, Shedd 1955b, 102f)

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<sup>7</sup> The English translations are taken from his article **The Basis of the World Council of Churches and the Paris Basis** which was taken and translated from his dissertation to be used as a Paris Basis studymaterial.

<sup>8</sup> Empire was restored in 1851 and after that the secret police surveillance extended to almost everywhere, political rights were banned and press censored.

<sup>9</sup> J.P.Cook and Henri Dunant were secretaries of EA in Paris and Geneva.

When the EA had its Conference in Paris during the Second World Exhibition also 50 YMCA leaders had possibility to meet face to face for the first time (Senaud 1950,2, Shedd 1955b,102ff,113ff). There American Abel Stevens proposed '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' (Occasional Paper No.III,10). Next day he explained as his motives that it would impart mutual strength, express the sacred unity of the Church of Christ and serve as a special importance to America as removing a stumbling-block, which would otherwise divide the Associations. With this he quoted to the question of slavery which soon was lead to civil war. In his proposal there was five articles that described the idea:

1. Associations should be managed by members of Evangelical Churches;
2. Order of associated members was provided for, in those cases in which it might be desired;
3. No difference of opinion on points not comprehended in the immediate aim of the Association, should be permitted to interrupt their harmony.
4. A certificate of membership, which should be available in instances in instances of Young Men travelling from one Association to others.
5. A plan of correspondence...was to be applied to the Alliance now proposed. (Occasional Paper No.III 1856,16f)

In one clause: It was proposed a unity of Protestant men with equal rights in every association. Although his proposal got general support, his formulation was partly rejected. French Frédéric Monnier had made an own proposal drawn from the French national Basis. However Stevens' articles 3-5 were accepted as 'further proposals' while the second was rejected and a committee formulated the final text from the Monniers' proposal (Occasional Paper No.III 1856,19f).

The structure of the Basis (see appendix) became such that in the beginning there was an introduction where the purpose of the Basis was stated. According to it the Basis was 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 to their organisation and action. Then there was the Nucleus of the Basis and finally Stevens' articles 3-5.

The Nuclear Statement of the Basis is what normally is called Paris Basis. The tradition history of it can be seen in the following synopsis where are quotations from the Basis of EA (Rouse 1993,320n.), Article 7 from Paris Association(L'Union Chrétienne de Jeunes Gens 1856,26), Monniers' proposal (Paris Basis French manuscript) and English(Occasional Paper No.III 1956,20) and French texts of Paris Basis(Shedd 1955, 132).

Evangelical Alliance	French Movement	Monniers' proposal	Paris Basis -English	Paris Basis -French
...partie s composing the Alliance shall be such persons	<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:	<u>qui, recardant Jésus- Christ</u>	<u>qui, recardant Jésus- Christ</u>	<u>who, regarding Jesus Christ</u>	<u>qui, recardant Jésus- Christ</u>
(5) The incarnation of the Son of God,... and His Mediatorial Intercession and Reign (1) The Divine Inspiration, Authority, and Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures.	<i><u>comme leur Sauveur et leur Dieu</u></i>	<i><u>comme leur Sauveur &amp; leur Dieu</u></i>	<u>as their God and Saviour,</u>	<i><u>comme leur Sauveur et leur Dieu</u></i>
	<i><u>selon les saintes Écritures,</u></i>	<i>selon les Écritures,</i>	<u>according to the Holy Scriptures,</u>	<i><u>selon les saintes Écritures,</u></i>
	<i><u>veulent être ses disciples dans leur foi et dans leur vie</u></i>	<i><u>veulent être ses disciples dans leur doctrine &amp; dans leur vie</u></i>	<u>desire to be his disciples in their <b>doctrine</b> and in their life,</u>	<i><u>veulent être ses disciples dans leur foi et dans leur vie</u></i>
	<i><u>et travailler ensemble à étendre parmi les <b>jeunes gens le règne de leur Maître.</b></u></i>	<i><u>&amp; travailler ensemble à étendre parmi les <b>jeunes gens le règne de leur Maître</b></u></i>	<u>and to associate their efforts for the extension of <b>His Kingdom amongst young men.</b></u>	<i><u>et travailler ensemble à étendre parmi les <b>jeunes gens le règne de leur Maître.</b></u></i>
Explanations:	<i>italics</i> = French texts are identical	<u>underline</u> = texts are identical to English version	<b>bold</b> = differences between French and English versions	<u>point underline</u> = the same thing with different words

From the texts it can be seen that it was almost direct from the French National Basis with some wordings that were seen in the EA

Basis. In same time it can be seen that there are some basic differences in the wording of the French and the English texts.

## **2.2. *The Paris Basis as a Battle-cry***

### **2.2.1. Two Paris Bases?**

In the beginning of the Basis there is the first text critical<sup>10</sup> question. In the English version there is the gender based expression 'young men' but in French version words 'jeunes gens' that means simply young people. Although also the French term has a connotation to male sex it is not the dominant meaning (Rey 1992,882, Robert 1982,861). Tradition historically the non-gender expression is closer to EA Basis where there is 'people'. In Paris it was no question at all, but later it became one of the 'big questions'. It is worth to notice that female membership was potentially present in the French text from the beginning.

The other difference between the versions is in the words 'doctrine' and 'foi' (faith). In the manuscript there was the 'doctrine' although in it the context of the word was equivalent to French national version. However it was stroke out by the editing committee<sup>11</sup> and replaced with 'foi'. Redaction critical analyse might give one solution to unsolved problem why it remained in English text for the next hundred years (Shedd 1955a,133f, Jentsch 1955,114n.). Evidently there is an echo from EA background but the main text is from the French soil.

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<sup>10</sup> Text critics is a method to define the the original form of the text.

<sup>11</sup> Officially it was the editing committee which was composed by the representatives of all seven countries. Practically it was made in the night by Monnier and three other French (one Swiss French). The process was not so pious because Théophile Rivier, who was present there, writes in his diary that they stopped when one of the participants became too tired of the grogs drinken and stretched out on a couch. (Shedd 1955a,131)

The French text was left to Charles Cuénod who later gave it to World Alliance of YMCAs archives<sup>12</sup>. Here comes the possible redaction. The word 'foi' is written in different handwriting than the other text. Did Cuénod 'correct the mistake he noticed' in the text afterwards. He knew the French National version and, as a student of theology, knew the difference of the words. However it can be also made unintentionally without theological reflection. Anyway it would be no surprise if he had reformed the word to its 'original' form. This kind of corrections of the text are very common in the Biblical texts. During the period when they were not yet sacred texts they could be corrected both by reason of mistakes in writing or on theological grounds.

While looking the meaning of the words, the omission of EA long doctrinal formulation was by purpose. The Christianity in YMCA context was more 'fides qua creditur' than 'fides quae creditur'. In that sense the 'faith' was theologically a correct word<sup>13</sup>. Paris Basis was mere a 'battle-cry' to unite the forces against the enemy than a confession. The main point was against the significant other - those who denied the deity of Christ. (Theurer 1966, 79f)

The third text critical question is in the pair 'His kingdom' - 'le règne de leur Maître'. In Britain the 'King James Version' has formulated the language so much that 'Kingdom' is the only reasonable form. In KJV there even does not exist such a concept than 'Dominion of God' (Rintoul 1992) like in other European languages and that is why it existed there in the English text. The French expression is wider than the 'kingdom' which also existed in French Bible translations. The French political

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<sup>12</sup> The text of the Basis ends with the words: 'Fait & signé à Paris le Août 1855. Shedd (Shedd 1955a, 135) and Senaud (Senaud 1950, 4f) disagree if it was signed at all in Paris. If it was the signatures have been lost.

<sup>13</sup> This strengthens the result that 'doctrine' was the original word in the text.

situation seems to have inflated to French wording. In the re-established Empire of Napoleon III it would have been unwise to speak about Kingdom. That would explain the use of more neutral 'règne de leur Maître' (dominion of their Master)<sup>14</sup>.

The ecumenical problem of both formulas was that they were both Protestant concepts. Both Roman Catholics and Orthodox would have used the word 'Church' with or instead of 'His Kingdom'. The etymological meaning is the same - the Greece word Κυριακος, which is the root for both Church and German Kirche, means 'belongs to the Lord'. The French Église comes from an other root, Εκκλησια, mean 'assembly' or 'out invited'. The difference is in the context they were used. For Protestants the Church had no holy aspects of salvation like in the case of the older churches.

### 2.3.2. Divinity in the Paris Basis

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

In the background there was the challenge of liberal theologians, such as David Friedrich Strauss who, in his 'Leben Jesu' (1835) denied the divinity of Christ. The emotions of his work were also seen in Paris Conference, where delegates from Geneva tried to include words 'divine inspired' in front of the 'Holy Scriptures'.

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<sup>14</sup> The German 'Gottesreich' could also be the result of the Empire. In Luthers time it would have been odd to speak about Gods kingdom - the concept was not familiar to the people. Luthers work influated also to Scandinavia where the Swedish 'Guds rikedom' represents the expressions of the whole area.



Their motivation was that the Bible was so vigorously attacked in Geneva that they should clearly stress the divinity of the Scriptures (Occasional Paper No.III 1856,20f).

The formula 'according to the Holy Scriptures' was totally a Protestant concept avoiding the Catholic or Orthodox understanding of the Tradition and Councils. This Protestant context was so clear that it is no wonder why the Catholic Church regarded YMCA as only a Protestant organisation until the Second Vatican Council. In spite of that it can not be seen as a differentiation from those churches. Its background was mere a reaction towards the rise of biblical criticism that saw the Bible as only an ancient document. We have to remember that YMCA was in that time mainly a network of local Bible clubs with some social projects.

The divine aspect, mentioned above, can be seen also in the formula 'God and Saviour'. It is not found in the Bible but has roots in the old Christian Confessions. The oldest Christian symbol (even before cross) was a fish which was ΙΧΘΥΣ in Greece. The first letters were understood to mean Ιησους Χριστος Θεου Υιος Σωτηρ (Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour).

The formula was later one of the target of the main attacks in other ecumenical bodies. The wording lacks the Trinity. There is two possible explanations to this. The first is that in that time the Trinity was not in a high mood in Protestant theological streams. It was seen as part of the old classical metaphysics and not as a real part of theology that was centred around the 'righteousness' principle (Kotiranta 1993,195f). On the other hand the representants from Geneva were so anxious to fight against

Socionism<sup>15</sup> (Occasional Paper No.III 1856,5) that this explanation is questionable.

The other explanation is that in a the Basis also the Trinitarian concept was built in . Although the Christianity is centred around the saving power of Jesus, the concept 'Son, Saviour' presupposes also the existence of 'Father, Creator' and 'Holy Spirit, Sanctifier' (Jentsch 1955,115). This aspect is worth to remember when there becomes later the stress to formulate Basis to Trinitarian form.

### 2.3. The Paris Basis as an Action Plan

The content of the Basis was also something else than just a formulation of faith. While looking the structure of the text there would be seen the following entities:

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,	Criteria 1
according to the Holy Scriptures,	Criteria 2
desire to be his disciples in their faith and in their life	Criteria 3
and to associate their efforts	Task 2
for the extension of His Kingdom	Purpose
amongst young men.	Object 2

From this analyse can be seen that there were two tasks: firstly to **unite** those **young men** who had personal Evangelical type Christian faith. Secondly to **unite** their **efforts** in Missionary work directed to young men. In other words: to seek the people who

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<sup>15</sup> A Unitarian sect named according to Faustus Socinus from 16th Century. Unitarians rejected the Trinity and stressed the Monofysitism of God (Schulz 1991,1031f).

have already motivation and co-ordinate their already existing activities. From this point of view the Paris Basis is more a definition of the actual tasks than a formula of faith. And, by the World Alliance of YMCAs, it is a good plan to work with limited resources - the input/output ratio is much higher than in other cases. Amazingly it resembles the theories of directing the advertising into the limited segments of customers.

The practical aspect is seen also in the 'proposals' of the conference. As seen above they 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 and that was why he made this proposal (Occasional Paper No.III 1856,122). This amendment became later as a part of the Nuclear Basis. 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.

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

The latter was practically only confirming the existing situation. Especially Henri Dunant from Geneva had been very active in this field and the whole World conference was a fruit of this correspondence. (Occasional Paper No.III 1856,3)

## 2.2. *Paris Basis in the history of YMCAs*

### 2.2.1. The stabilisation of the Basis

After the Paris Basis was accepted it soon got acceptance among the Local Associations and National Movements. The French Movement replaced their own Article I in their Rules in the closing day of the World Conference. The definition of the purpose of Local Association or National Movement became one of the three models of the use of the Basis. In Switzerland it was used as a personal test for membership - a candidate should sign it before he was accepted. The third use was the American and the German model. They used it as a bond between the National Movements in the World Alliance like the Preamble of the Basis says. Especially they stressed the words **'whilst preserving a completely independence as to their particular organization and modes of action'**. Both had their own Bases - Americans a strict one and Germans quite liberal in their membership policy. (Senaud 1953,3, Shedd 1955,142). The quotation of the Preamble gave possibility to look the needs of local society and adapt the work in different contexts.

The first proposals to change the Basis came in 1867 in Paris World Conference. It was the same than Genevese had made in 1855. (Senaud 1953,3, Shedd 1955,177). Although it did not cause any action, it showed that the Basis was not carved into 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 the German Movements were quite chilly. Geneva YMCA had tried to maintain some kind of relations through its publication 'L'Evangéliste' where the letters from both sides were published. The war time was the first real test of the unity. 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 principle of the 'fundamental principle'. (Senaud 1953,4, Shedd 1955,189f)

### 2.2.3. The Basis as a Membership Criteria

In 1884 the Basis rose into the discussion from the other point of view. This time it was not question of modifying it but its use as a criterion for a new movement to join. In that year the German Baptists' Young Men's Union<sup>16</sup> had officially requested membership in World Alliance but this was rejected because of its confessional basis (Shedd 1955b,251). Paris basis had become an interdenominational criterion for membership. The same problem occurred also with Danish and Norwegian Movements which were at first officially Lutheran movements. They were neither accepted as members before they had changed their rules in 1899 (Shedd 1955b,360ff). The confessional problem was alive till the 50 Years Jubilee Conference in Paris 1905. Especially the Anglo-Saxon Movements stressed the inter-denominationalism (or un-denominationalism) in the Paris Basis and their targets were the 'Church Associations' in Germany and Scandinavia. In the Jubilee Conference the matter was deeply discussed and settled although the 'Christianisme au XXe siècle' wrote afterwards:

We were a little in the same state as a student in theology, who said to a friend on a point of doctrine: "You have just explained it to me, but now make me understand."...Several listernes did not see very clearly what was the aim. (Senaud 1953,7f)

The conference approved the Basis in the Jubilee Declaration. In it the Basis was explained to embody wiz.

A. Personal and vital Christianity on the part of the members.

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<sup>16</sup> The movement was not smaal - it comprised 98 associations.

- 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 effort for the extension of the Kingdom of God among young men. (Jubilee Declaration 1905)

Practically 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 their own businesses but the Basis (or expression that was shown to be equivalent to it) in the National rules was obligatory. In Paris there was also a collection of official signatures of all Member Movements that had accepted the Paris Basis (Senaud 1953,8).

### **2.2.3. The Basis as a Leadership Criteria**

After the First World War the YMCA expanded greatly and that raised a question of the leadership into the agenda. 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. (Senaud 1953,8f).

In 1920 YMCA had spread also to non-Christian countries and there were non-Christians as members. From this on the issue has been discussed according the theme 'Open membership - Christian leadership'.

The Plenary Meeting two years later defined more clearly the role of the Paris Basis in the YMCA Movement:

Any new Alliance seeking affiliation must give satisfactory evidence that its aims and methods are in harmony with the Paris Basis which should be quoted full in the Constitution.  
A copy of the Paris Basis signed by or on behalf of the National Committee must accompany the application for affiliation.  
The Constitution of the Associations forming the National Alliance must offer a guarantee that the leadership remains in the hands of men who,

whatever be their Church affiliation, have a vital experience of the Christian life and earnest desire to extend the Kingdom of God among young men...

In this resolution there is one interesting point. The World Committee gives criteria to the membership of local YMCAs in their National Organisations. This is a thing that changed the Basis from being a bond between **National Movements** and the World Alliance to become a criterion of the leadership in **Local Associations**. This was a new phenomenon because especially Germans had struggled for their right to decide the criterias of their own.

The decision of membership had two sides. On the other hand it included Roman Catholics and Orthodox in YMCA. It is worth to note that there is nothing about Evangelical Christianity. On the other hand it excluded non-Christians from the boards<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> However this remained as a dead resolution. Since the middle of 1920's there has been non-Christians in the governing boards. The trend started in Turkey after their Revolution and became a typical phenomenon of Near East Associations. But - that is an other story and will be told some other time.

### **2.3. *The Basis lives its own life***

As I mentioned above also YMCA, WSCF and WCC adopted a similar basis to Paris Basis. The process was quite natural. YMCA and YWCA have for their whole history been sister movements and YMCA as an elder brother has given a model to the little sister. The WSCF grew from the College YMCAs in USA. So it also was closely connected to YMCA. In fact sometimes it was doubted if even the secretaries knew which of these three organisations paid their salary. In many cases the work was so united.

The WCC was a fruit of these three organisations. In the standard histories it is often quoted that the modern Ecumenical Movement has its roots in the Missionary Council in 1910 in Edinburgh. Partly that is true but it is only the official part. The leaders of both the early ecumenical bodies and WCC came from these three youth movements. In the First Assembly of WCC in Amsterdam 1948 about 80% of the delegates were somehow connected to YMCA, YWCA or WSCF (Rouse 1993,327). So it was no wonder why the Paris basis was accepted also to this official ecumenical body.



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

<b>YMCA 1855</b>	<b>WSCF 1895</b>	<b>YWCA 1898</b>	<b>WSCF 1913</b>	<b>YWCA 1914</b>	<b>WCC 1948</b>
The Young Men's Christian Associations seek to unite those young men	The objects shall be: a) To lead students to become disciples of	The World's Young Women's Christian Associations seeks to unite those young women	The objects shall be: a) To lead students to accept the Christian faith	The World's YWCA desires to be representative of all sections of the Christian Church in so far as they accept the basis. It has	The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches
who, regarding Jesus Christ as their God and Saviour,	Jesus Christ as only Saviour and as God	who, regarding Jesus Christ as their God and Saviour	in God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit-	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,	which accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour
according to the Holy Scriptures,		according to the Holy Scriptures,	according to the Scriptures	according to the teachings of Holy Scripture	
desire to be his disciples 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	and to live as true disciples of Jesus Christ 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 the extension of the Kingdom of God 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 to the extension of the Kingdom of God 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 that do not fit to the structure of other bases 1913:

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

Because the careful analyse of these basses is an other story to be told in an other time, I concentrate only to those points that have relevance to YMCA decisions. Generally it can be seen that the wordings, save WCC, is getting length in later versions when WSCF and YWCA have tried to take an account all the wishes of their allies. The need for Trinitarian form came almost in same time that both movements entered to Catholic and Orthodox soil. In YWCA Berlin Conference in 1910 the Orthodox delegates were for the first time present (Rouse 1993,607).

The wording of YWCA Basis 1898 was almost exactly same as Paris Basis. The only difference being the addition of 'Holy Spirit' and as a new thing - mentioning of the criteria for the acceptable methods. The methodology in 1914, as well as in WSCF 1913, seems to have got influence of the American YMCA Triangle principle (body, mind and spirit) and Four Fold Programme (Triangle + Social work) launched near the end of last century (Johnson 1979,100).

The extension of the Kingdom throughout the world in WSCF 1895 Basis is clearly a remark to the missionary enthusiasm of North American YMCAs in that time. The Student Volunteer Movement, the missionary wing of YMCA student work, was a child of the Second Awakening. One of the first milestones of that movement was the First World Student Conference held in Mt. Hermon, Massachusetts in 1886 where hundred of students offered their lives for foreign missionary service. According to most conservative estimate 20500 students had reached the field by 1945. (Shedd 1955,278; Rouse 1993,328)

The WSCF 1913 Article d) can be partly seen as a reaction towards the huge armament of European nations and Balkan wars in 1912-13. But it was not the whole background. The former GS 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 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. When members of idealistic youth movements wandered through the forests and hills seeking freedom from restraint, or agonised for peace in a shrinking world, the YMCA sought to understand and share their problems. When in the days of realism every utopian element was rigorously excluded, the YMCA with words of encouragement called for the concentrated strength of active patience. When youth longed for status and equality, and masses followed the leadership of those who trust solely in material and secular values, YMCA leaders, together with other Christians, reasserted that they must grapple with this new manifestation of the emancipation of the human spirit. (Strong 1955b, 461)

There is no evidence that the WCC Basis came directly from Paris Basis. It is often quoted its roots to be in the Basis of the 'Faith and Order' Movement, later nucleus of WCC, in 1910. It states:

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

Although this is what is known as the Basis of F&O, it was not really that. The words are from the invitation to form a common body. This invitation was made by American Protestant Episcopal Church (Theurer 1966, 118f; Tatlow 1993, 408) and not made as a resolution of F&O. It would be, however, more simple to suppose that the become leaders of WCC brought the expression with them when they moved from YMCA to WCC.

There is an other word in WCC Basis that is worth to notice. The word 'fellowship' is an English translation to Greece **Κοινωνία**. In the 1920 encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople there was a proposition of 'a koinonia of the churches' (Thomas 1993, 1096). The background was that koinonia - unity, could happen only in an Ecumenical Council, the last which have been thousand years ago. So the word 'fellowship' has a connotation to ancient Christian unity. The more modern meaning is that in 'fellowship' there is no rulers. This has surely been one

of the reasons why Roman Catholic Church has not joined the WCC. The old Papal claim is to be 'Vicarius Christi', not only 'Primus inter pares'.

### 3. The Paris Basis in the Centennial Conferences

#### 3.1. *Locating the Paris Basis in the Centennial Conference Documents*

The history was very present in Centennial Conference. YMCA had remarkable history and the staff did not hide it a bit. In the GS report 'Times of Testing' there was a long history review and one volume of World Communique was a pictorial referee of the 100 year's history which was to be published in the Conference. Also the study materials had historical reviews. The Paris Basis was mentioned in these occasions frequently.

In this study I am going to limit the focus on those parts of the documents that have some kind of wider reflection of the use. This marks off the occurrences where there is only reference to the Basis, like 'commemorating the adoption of Paris Basis', or the text is used as an emblem to decorate the pages.

#### 3.2. *Preparatory material of the Centennial Conference*

##### 3.2.1. The navigation of the 'captain'

GS Paul Limbert quotes the Basis several times in his report 'Times of Testing'. The first fits here in the beginning of this part quite well: he urges for extension of the understanding the Basis. His concern was that the Basis is little understood by many young men (Limbert 1955,72f). Some pages later he refers to Geneva Plenary where it was agreed that no changes should be made in the Basis (Limbert 1955,100). Both these mentions can be seen as **rights**. They confirm that Paris Basis is the foundation of the codification in YMCA. The **task** is to anchor the members in it. The

**risk** is that if this foundation will be lost also the Mission view will be lost.

According to Limbert the Mission view of YMCA is to extend, not YMCA itself, but the Kingdom of God. YMCA is not an end but a means. These theses are the introduction to the chapter 'Areas of Need' in the second part 'Forward in Faith' of his report. In this chapter he lists the needs of the YMCAs in different areas from the extension view-point. The starting point of this reflection is a remind of the **identity** of the Movement which is implemented in Paris Basis. (Limbert 1955,169).

The extension brings in agenda the question of membership. Limbert refers to two different aspects of it. Both are expressed as **opportunities**: firstly the international membership card (proposal 2 in the full Basis) (Limbert 1955,181) and secondly the need for further study of the implications of the Basis to membership policy. He mentions the female membership and the distinction between full and associate members<sup>18</sup> (Limbert 1955,201). This gives a glimpse to YMCA dilemma of identity: attempts to both include all into the 'we' and same time exclude those who were not 'we' in the right way.

While giving a long and profound analysis of the YMCA history, present social context and possible trends in future, Limbert do not affiliate them to the Paris Basis. In his 230 page book there is only seven mentions of the Basis. Nor he gives any analyse of the Basis itself. It seems that this task was delegates to others.

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<sup>18</sup> Full members were those who had access to decision making bodies. In associations that used the distinction this meant practically either membership of some Christian Church or signing the Basis.

### 3.2.2. Preview to the Centennial Conferences

The publication of the World Alliance of YMCAs, 'World Communique' dedicated its all volumes in 1955 to Centennial Conferences. It is worth to note that the March-April volume, that was a preview to Shedd's history book had only two mentions of the Paris Basis. Obviously the Basis was not affiliated to history but to present. The May-June volume was titled as 'We Seek to Unite' and it had some analyses of the Basis. The Paris Basis was a loose umbrella for the theme 'Unite Man with Man, Nation with Nation'. The first opening of the item continued the title with 'By Worshipping One Lord' (World Communique 5-6/1955,6f). It is the hermeneutical (here in the sense of homilia) explanation of the formula 'Jesus Christ as God and Saviour'. The scopus of the text is in the quotation of John 17:21:

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.

This verse is also in the official emblem of the World Alliance of YMCAs. The message is, like in all good sermons, said also in contemporary words. Of several quotations, the idea is best described the words of exiled Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands in Christmas Eve broadcasting:

All the misery of this world cannot separate us from the eternal and immeasurable love of God, which shines for us in all its loveliness from Bethlehem. The light of Christ penetrates the uttermost darkness.

Thus the Basis is connected to the **cognition** aspect. It explains what kind is the reality in its deepest sense. The logic behind is in the understanding of **identity**: if there is a circle and Christ is the centre point of it then people are in the perimeter. When the radius shortens also the distance of points in the perimeter comes closer. 'Me' and 'you' are always connected to divine 'He'. However a sermon has always also a call to action. The **task** is described in the word-play 'Christ alone can save the world, but

Christ cannot save the world alone'. From this is also derived the **rights**: both the **values** and **authority** to do the task.

The sermon continues in the next opening (World Communique 5-6/1955,8f) where the words 'By Proclaiming One Faith' are added to the title. Here the 'sermon text' is

The Young Men's Christian Associations seek to unite those young men who... desire to be His disciples in their faith and in their life.

Note that here is the 'faith' instead of 'doctrine'<sup>19</sup>. The focus has been shifted to the **content of the task**. As Therborn points the task is not only a duty to do. It bears within also the **status** of the duty (Therborn 1995,8). The status of the extending the Kingdom is discipleship. From this status arise also the **identity**. These three are inseparable. With several quotations of the leading thinkers the practical form of this is explained. I pick here the quotation from Albert Einstein:

Only the Church opposed the fight which Hitler was waging against liberty. Till then I had no interest in the Church, but now I feel great admiration and am truly attracted to the Church, which has had the persistent courage to fight for spiritual truth and moral freedom.

In this and other quotations it is clearly seen that here the YMCA identity was not special 'YMCA identity' but common Christian identity. It is equal to Limbert's words mentioned above.

The sermon continues with the impact of the message. The last of these three openings add the words 'By Seeking One World' to the title (World Communique 5-6/1955,10f). The text from the Basis is now:

The Young Men's Christian Associations seek to unite those young men who... desire... to associate their efforts for the extension of His Kingdom amongst young men.

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<sup>19</sup> When I collected material to this study in World Alliance of YMCAs' Archived in Geneva, I discussed about this with the YMCA librarian C.A.Danthe and in spite of eager hunt we did not find any resolution where the wording was changed to 'faith' till the Centennial Conferences.

The explanation of this formula can be summarised in the next quotation that is better Summary than I could formulate:

Since the prophetic vision of the final book of the Bible anticipates the time when 'The kingdom of this world are become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ<sup>20</sup>', man's desire to seek one world is but the reflection of God's purpose and of Christ's command to 'Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.' In seeking first the Kingdom of God we shall not only play our part in the uniting of a divided world, but also in 'gathering together in one all things in Christ, which are in heaven and earth' - for nothing less than this is the goal of God's vast purpose.

This is again a question of **cognition**. The reality is explained from the Biblical understanding of the world. However this explanation takes only one of the possible views from the Bible. It is in a way mediative explanation from the extremes in the Book. The oldest was that of Sadducees and it was clearly immanent. The other was totally opposite being transcendent. The third is that 'the Kingdom of God is within you' (Luke 17:21). This theology is often described with the dilemma: 'Not yet - all ready'. From the quotations can also be seen that the **evaluation** of the conscept 'Kingdom of God' led to quite practical **tasks** and **social action**.

The adoption of this kind of theology means for the **identity** a distinction from those who see the Kingdom only transsentic. Practically this means also distinction from the old YMCA revivalistic roots. As one result of this YMCA has not been familiar with some strong post-war revivalist, fundamentalist or apocalyptic movements. On the other hand these have regarded YMCAs more as a sports- than Christian Association.

After this practical explanation of the Paris Basis the word is given to those who **distinct YMCA** from their unity, namely Roman

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<sup>20</sup> This expression is OT type and could be translated also 'Lord and His Anointed' i.e. Messiah.



Catholic Church. Father Dumont explains the restrictive attitude of his Church (World Communique 5-6/1955,12f). In 1920 The Holy Office had warned of (and forbid Catholics to join to) YMCA and this was not removed until the Second Vatican Council (Warning of the Holy Office against the YMCA of 1920). Father Dumont presents that the lack of mentioning the Church as an element of salvation in the Paris Basis is a borderline which restricts the mutual recognition. In above it was seen that YWCA tried to bridge this gap by new wording of its Basis.

However it is worth to note that while the Catholic Church prefers its youth to participate to its own youth organisations, Father Dumont writes:

But where such specific Catholic organisations are persistently lacking, or where, because of circumstances of time or place, youth are led to seek the moral advantages of non-Catholic organisations, such as YMCA, it is meeting the most clearly expressed desire of the Church to ensure that the young Catholics have the spiritual assistance of a Catholic priest.

The reason why I quote it here is that this was clearly balsam to the wounds of YMCA Catholic members. Less than ten years ago there were strong pressure especially towards Polska YMCA in London to become a Catholic movement. The **identity** of Catholics was often drawn into two directions.

Finally Robbins Strong, secretary of expansion, explains the content of the Paris Basis (World Communique 5-6/1955,13). He picks from the Preamble the words:

complete independence as to their particular organization and modes of action

and the second part of the 'fundamental principle'

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

and brings these along with the nuclear text and claims that these are inseparable. His main point is to stress 'unity of diversity'.

According to him, the Basis is a minimum and not maximum of the Christian Faith.

As a conclusion of this chapter can be said that Paris Basis determinate the **tasks, rights, identity, evaluation** and **cognition** of the movement. The concept of 'Kingdom of God' was explained as a view of the world. From this understanding grew the discipleship that contained all first three dimensions. The **means** are not connected to Paris Basis but are more in the field of 'secular regiment'.

### 3.2.3. Homework before the Conferences

The study material was made separately for the adults and youth. The theological analysis of the Basis was made by Werner Jentsch, who's 'Fassade oder Fundament' was translated and added as a second part of the 'Fellow Workmen for God', which was for the adults. The 'We are not alone' was for youngsters.

The 'Fellow Workmen for God' begins with the explanation of the nature of the World Alliance (p.9f). It is determined to be a 'Fellowship whose unity is Christ'. This is then explained with Paris Basis (in which this time is again 'doctrine') with a brief remind of growing from Protestant to Ecumenical Movement. Some pages later the whole text of the Paris Basis and the Jubilee Declaration was presented without the comments (1955,14).

The Part One of this document mainly describes the present practices without judgement. Such are the mentions of the 'Foundation of the YMCA' (p.15f), 'Membership' (p.27f,30), 'Programme' (p.47), 'The YMCA, Church and Christian unity' (p.59,64), 'New Horizons for World Service' (p.94f). The use of the Basis was such that in the beginning there was a short quotation and the rest was in no way connected to the Basis. Such Items as

'The YMCA and Social Responsibility' and 'The YMCA in a World of Tension' did not have even that short quotation. I would not be over explained to say that there seems to be gap between the theory and practice. Paris Basis is a nice emblem but has little to do with practice. No wonder why Limbert was worried (see above).

In the second part Werner Jentsch studies the Basis in the light of the World Alliance motto: John 17:21 'That they all may be one'. He describes his starting-point as follows:

The modern world is shaken to its foundations and, politically speaking, split up. What it is now looking for, whether consciously or unconsciously, is some basis of confidence in which it can trust.  
Can the YMCA, with a message, provide such a basis? Is the Paris Basis, for instance, a trustworthy basis? The YMCA at all events takes the young man and the boy - as they are to-day - seriously. (p.113)

Then this young doctor throws his critique towards the YMCA itself and the Churches that are too far away from the real world and reminds that the founders of the World Alliance of YMCAs were all between 20 and 30 years but that they were deeply rooted to the realities of the world(p.113ff).

The first point of the Basis, that Jentsch takes into the focus, is the formula 'God and Saviour'. He clearly denies the criticism of that being anti-Trinitarian or anti-Sacramental and claims that the absence of them does not mean that they were not important (p.117,118n.). Here he obviously takes attitude in 'maximal-minimal' ecumenical discussion (see above). In spite that it was stressed that this is his personal view, it can be supposed that this kind of argumentation had also larger basis. This leads the YMCA to different direction than its allies YWCA and WSCF, who changed their basses.

The next items are the Bible and the unity. About the first one he describes the e.g. the relevance of the Bible reading and simply

points that 'Bible is perquisite of the YMCA's message' (p.118). The point of the latter is that YMCA can not continue to 'building of bridges towards unity' at any cost. If this means that YMCA would lose its Christian identity, it would be worthless (p.119f). So in the discussion of 'open membership-Christian leadership' he makes himself clear that there is a limit for openness. He requires converted men in the leadership (p.121). With conversion he does not mean any emotional breakdown or vague outpouring of sentiment but attitude to act in those fields needed. To him YMCA social action is essential part of the faith. (p.121ff)

Turning to question of unity, he claims that there is no other way than through the person of Christ. He points out that the dogma has been more separating than uniting factor (p.124). But he also mentions that the Paris Basis speaks about associating the efforts. To him this means that it is not aloud only to pray for unity but also do something for it and connects this to the Christ command 'Love one another' (p.127).

Last time he mentions Paris Basis is when he looks it as an action plan. The Basis has two poles 'gathering in' and 'sending out'. Along this polarisation he brings the slogan 'Mission of young men to young men'. The idea is that the message is spread inside one age group. The concept of the Christian youth work that was later widely accepted. (p.132)

As a whole the text of Jentsch seems to me to be in a wrong work book. The zealot and concentration on vivid tropes would have had better place in the work-book of teen age's. The parts of this book seemed to be quite far away of each other. The deep analyse was lacking from both.

The other work-book 'We Are Not Alone' gives a brief describing of the background of the Paris Basis in the Introduction part

(p.5ff). In other parts the only mentions of the Basis are in occasions that it speaks of unity and diversity (p.11ff) or Ecumenism (p.62,64). In the latter part there is a definition that YMCA refuses to be regarded to be as a church (Catholic claim) but is for service of all churches. The other mention is that the lack of 'Church' in Paris Basis 'prevents unnecessary misunderstandings'. - The item that has been the target was here shifted to be the strength. Here the **task** of the YMCA is described to be servant of the churches and the **identity** is to be a bridge between the Christians.

### **3.3. The Basis in Centennial Conference**

#### **3.3.1. The official resolutions**

Paris Basis was part of two resolutions. First in the approval of the new constitution and then in the Centennial Declaration. (And Now - Tomorrow 1957,83,211f)

The new Constitution (And Now - Tomorrow 1957,219ff) has Paris Basis in its Second Article 'Purpose and Objects'. It states:

1. The continuing basis of the work and witness of the World Alliance is that adopted in Paris in 1855 by the delegates of the Young Men's Christian Associations who were then led by God to bring it into being, viz.,  
*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.*
2. The enduring objects of the World Alliance shall be
  - (a) to strengthen the work of the Young Men's Christian Associations in all lands in accordance with the Paris Basis;

Here it is worth to note that the second part of the 'fundamental principle' (former 1st proposal) that was accepted in 1872 in Amsterdam is absent here. Is it part of the nucleus or not?

The third point where Basis is mentioned is the Article III:

- 1.(b) An Applicant for Membership...shall apply...with
  - (iii)evidence, satisfactory to the World Council
    - (1) that the work and witness of the Organization are in accord with the Paris Basis

Here is the old decision that the applicants should give evidence that their work is in accordance with the Paris Basis.

Also in the Centennial Declaration (And Now - Tomorrow 1957,8f) there is a new form of the Paris Basis. Now there is only one proposal - the one that was missing from the Constitution, namely:

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.

The 'Travelling certificate' and 'Correspondence' were dropped out. No wonder why I thought that there was some kind of sadness in Limberts report (see above). Neither of these modifications of the Basis is reported to be discussed in Plenary! Nor the wording 'faith' pro 'doctrine', that had been troubling for 100 years.

### **3.3.2. The Paris Basis in the addresses of the Centennial Conferences**

In his address to Y's Men's Conference GS Paul M. Limbert said:

During these days the Paris Basis will come alive to many Y's Men for the first time, both the 'fundamental principle' which we quote so often... and the 'operative principles', which have served as a bond of unity and have helped at the same time to preserve the independence of units within the Movement. (And Now - Tomorrow 1957,197)

This was one of the few mentions of the Basis in the addresses. Most of the other mentionings were this kind of brief references to it. The general overview is that the function of the Paris Basis in YMCA had become totally different than it was originally. If one of the main objects of the Centennial Conferences was to

affirm the Basis, it is astonishing that it is almost absent in addresses!

Like in Y's Men's Conference the Basis was once referred in Secretaries Conference. In this the one who mentioned it in his address, spoke 'for the duty' - he was the secretary of Education and Religious Work. Neither he actually spoke nor analysed it - only from it rose questions 'Who are we?' and 'What is our main job in world today?' (And Now - Tomorrow 1957,178) The addresses in Young Men's and Older Boy's Conferences and Boy's camp did not mention it at all.

In the Main Conference the formula 'God and Saviour' was protected in two addresses (And Now - Tomorrow 1957,40,45), laymen's mobilisation in one (p.55) in connection to 'associating their efforts...'

### **3.3.3. The Basis in the Section Reports of the Conferences**

Like in the study material, also in the Conferences the mentions were mostly connected on topics of 'Membership', 'Christian Unity' and general question of 'YMCAs job'. They were all, save two, just proposals to affirm the Paris Basis or definitions that it is the heart of the work (And Now - Tomorrow 1957,70,75ff,81,127). The Young Men's Conference was more critical and mainly just asked questions without coming to any conclusions. Anyway it seemed to have been fruitful time to them. Like Limbert said to Y's Men, also many Young men faced the Basis for the first time (And Now - Tomorrow 1957,95,110,119).

## **4. The YMCA Interpretation of the Paris Basis in 1955**

The Paris Basis seems to have become more emblem than such a basis that it was still in the Jubilee Conference in 1905. The affirming of it seems almost liturgical act - few really understand what happened but the act itself was important symbol. The Basis was seldom quoted or referred in the Centennial Conference Documents. Often when it was, it served only as a step to the main issue and then it was not any more mentioned. In such themes that considered social issues there were no references to the Basis. Only Werner Jentsch's 'Fassade oder fundament' tried to arise theological discussion of these issues from the standpoint of Paris Basis.

The theological problems - Trinity and the Church as a means of Salvation - were present only in brief. This was much due to WCC adoption the Basis almost in the same form. The other reason was surely that the Paris Basis was unknown to many delegates because their National YMCAs had their own bases and Paris Basis was only a bond in international level.

The reason for this avoiding of deep analysis lies most probably in admitted proposal (the former second part of the 'fundamental principle') about the things that would interfere the relations. This is clearly interpreted in Jewish way: if the thing is forbidden, let's make sure that there would even be possibility to act like that and let's forbid the possibilities. In everyday words: disagreements were swept under the mat.

The most profound analysis of the significance of the Basis was in World Communiqué May-June volume. From it can be seen that in the light of the Paris Basis the World Alliance of YMCAs was as follows:

1. The Basis is connected to structural concepts of **tasks** and **rights**. The former had two tasks which had been present since 1855, namely 'unite young men' and 'associate their efforts for the extension of His



Kingdom'. The latter refers to Christ and Bible as source of norms, values and authorisation.

2. Cultural concepts **identity** and **cognition** were as well connected to Christ and Bible. Identity was to be a servant of Christ and there were no special YMCA identity. Bible gave the explanation what kind the world was in its deepest sense.
3. The cultural concept of **evaluation** was connected to understanding the concept 'Kingdom of God' which was understood partly immanent and that lead to tasks mentioned above.
4. The concepts connected to **means** were, according to good Protestant manner, left to the field of 'secular regiment'. The issues concerning these aspects were seldom connected to Paris Basis.
4. The **theology** of YMCA was in the dilemma 'unity of diversity'. The uniting factor being Christ Himself.
5. The **organisation** of the Movement was more a fellowship than anything else. The only obligatory element being the Paris Basis (or equivalence) in the Rules of the Member Movements.

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## Appendix

### 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.