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The Relevance of the Ecumenical Movement of the New Testament Church

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Robert E. Black

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Committee:

Dean E. Walker, Chairman

Frank Albert

A. C. Watters

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THE RELEVANCE OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT
TO THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

by

ROBERT E. BLACK

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of
Arts
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Preface

More than nineteen hundred years ago our Lord presented himself to a small group of select men and he commissioned them to go into all the world preaching the gospel to every creature. Guided by his Spirit and endowed with his power they began to fulfill their assignment. Therefore, it is not so strange that we in the twentieth century are thinking in terms of world Christianity. There is a vitally invigorating content in the concept of a brotherhood in Christ which encircles the globe. My sincere desire is that this study will help the reader to evaluate properly the ecumenical movement in the light of the New Testament Church. I express my deep gratitude to my major professor, Professor Dean E. Walker, for his suggesting this subject and for his helpful advice and direction in the preparation of this dissertation.

Robert E. Black

Montezuma, Indiana, April 4, 1949.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	AN INTRODUCTORY SECTION OUTLINING THE FIELD OF INVESTIGATION	1
II.	THE BEGINNING OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT .	8
III.	THE MISSIONARY MOVEMENT	13
IV.	THE FAITH AND ORDER MOVEMENT	26
V.	THE LIFE AND WORK MOVEMENT	47
VI.	THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES	56
VII.	THE CHURCH REFLECTED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT .	68
VIII.	THE RELEVANCE OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT TO THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH	78

CHAPTER I

AN INTRODUCTORY SECTION OUTLINING THE FIELD OF INVESTIGATION

Can the church be anything less than the church and continue to meet the basic needs of men? There is a growing conviction that in view of the challenging commission given the church by her Head, the church must begin to function at full power. Christians have been "devotees of the cult of the incomplete--sectarianism,"¹ far too long. The sectarian spirit has flourished particularly well in this country. The full impact of the centrifugal divisive force of Protestantism has been felt here. With this monster of sectarianism Thomas Campbell wrestled one hundred and forty years ago. The Christian Association of Washington and his Declaration and Address came out of Thomas Campbell's conviction that schism is the grossest sin. In the tenth proposition of the Declaration and Address, he asserts,

That division among the Christians is a horrid evil, fraught with many evils. It is antiChristian, as it destroys the visible unity of the body of Christ, as if he were divided against himself, excluding and excommunicating a part of himself. It is antisciptural, as being strictly prohibited by his sovereign authority; a direct violation of his express command. It is anti-natural, as it excites Christians to contemn, to hate,

¹Charles H. Brent, "The Call to Unity," Faith and Order, Proceedings of the World Conference, Lausanne, 1927, New York, Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1928, p. 8.

and oppose one another, who are bound by the highest and most endearing obligations to love each other as brethren, even as Christ has loved them. In a word, it is productive of confusion and of every evil work.¹

In his judgement division among Christians was antiChristian, antiscriptural, and antinatural. He pled for the unity of Christians that the church might function effectively, that the gospel might be propagated throughout the world.

This great document, Declaration and Address, became the platform of the reformation of the nineteenth century. The superstructure of this movement toward unity found expression in the work of Alexander Campbell in the Christian Baptist and the Millennial Harbinger. In preparing the second edition of The Christian System in 1839, Alexander Campbell declared that he had in mind a great question

which we anticipate soon to be the all-absorbing question of Protestant Christendom, viz: How may schisms cease and all Christians unite, harmonize and co-operate in one great community, as at the beginning?²

The movement with which Thomas Campbell and Alexander Campbell were identified was not just a passing episode in the march of time. Out of this movement has come "the most numerous and influential religious body which had its inception in America."³

Thomas Campbell was far in advance of his contemporaries in his concern for the unity of Christians. In a community where lines between Christians bearing the same class name were so surely established that other Presbyterians could not meet

¹Frederick D. Kershner, The Christian Union Overture, St. Louis, The Bethany Press, 1923, pp. 91, 92.

²Alexander Campbell, The Christian System, St. Louis, Christian Board of Publication, n.d., p. 12.

³Kershner, op. cit., p. 17.

with Seceder Presbyterians around the Lord's Table without the minister incurring censure, it was exceedingly courageous for a man even to think of the possibility of Christians working together.¹

The point is that even though the Declaration and Address appeared as early as 1809, it is altogether modern and appropriate for today. Concerning the essential unity of the church

there can be no question but that present-day religious forces are more and more drifting in the direction of Thomas Campbell. The theory of denominationalism is no longer held by the thought leaders of the Christian world. The eloquent appeals in behalf of union and the vigorous criticisms of sectarianism contained in the "Declaration and Address" are now being re-echoed throughout the pulpits of evangelical Christendom. It is safe to say that a large portion of the language found in the pages prepared by Thomas Campbell could be quoted verbatim and with approval by the majority of present day Protestant ministers. Thus far, at least, Thomas Campbell 'has arrived'.²

Both Thomas Campbell and Alexander Campbell were firmly convinced that a divided church would never carry out the commission given to and designed for a united church.

In this dissertation we are dealing with a movement which has appeared in history and has been called "the ecumenical movement". Concerning the formation of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam, Hampton Adams, secretary of the Christian Board of Publication wrote,

Thomas Campbell would have been at home in such a conference as this, and he would have thanked God for the leading of His Spirit. This is the kind of fellowship for which the founder

¹Robert Richardson, Memoirs of Alexander Campbell, Vol. 1, Cincinnati, Standard Publishing Company, 1897, p. 224.

²Kershner, op. cit., pp. 26, 27.

of our communion longed in his day.¹

There are those who recognize an affinity between the program of Thomas Campbell and the modern ecumenical movement.

Definitions of "Ecumenical"

There are three possible definitions of the word "ecumenical". The definition according to Greek usage is properly "the inhabited world". Our word "ecumenical" is the Anglicized form of the Greek οἰκουμένη. As used by Greek writers it often meant the portion of the earth inhabited by Greeks as distinct from the lands of the barbarians. Greek authors writing about Roman matters used the word to designate the Roman empire and its subjects. Οἰκουμένη was also employed when the Greek desired to speak about "the whole inhabited earth" or "the world".²

The etymology of the word is interesting. It is a combination of two Greek words, οἶκος and μέν. Οἶκος, a noun, signified a house which was inhabited. It was clearly distinct from δόμος, a building. Any dwelling place might be designated as οἶκος. The word could also signify the inmates of a house, all the persons forming one family, a household. Again, οἶκος is used to designate the stock, race, or descendants of one, e.g., the οἶκος of David.³

¹Hampton Adams, "A Date In History," The Christian Evangelist, Volume 86, No. 37, September 15, 1948, p. 924.

²Joseph H. Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, (corrected edition), New York, American Book Company, 1886, pp. 441, 442.

³Ibid., p. 441.

Méru, a verb, when used intransitively in reference to place carries the idea of tarrying or sojourning. When used tropically, such concepts as "not departing," "continuing to be present," "maintaining unbroken fellowship with one," are to be understood.¹ Therefore, upon combining the two words, one arrives at the concept of maintaining an unbroken fellowship within the household.

In the third place, there is the current usage of the word "ecumenical". Henry S. Leiper, Secretary in America of the World Council of Churches, says that the meaning of "ecumenical" is:

Concerned with the whole family of the church in the whole inhabited world, interracial, interdenominational, international, considered in the light of its common origin and common objective.²

Here is no denial of glaring differences in race, denomination, and nationality. These are all faced intelligently with greater concern being shown in likenesses and similarities within the household of faith. There is also in this statement the affirmation that the church can never be the private possession of any particular race, denomination, or section of the inhabited world. By its very origin and objective the church is a world-wide fellowship. Mr. Leiper further notes that the word "ecumenical" was not used by Christians for a long time because the idea was foreign to their thinking.

They simply have not thought of the church as Christ intended it to be. They have localized, individualized, denominationalized, racialized, and nationalized the church out of all

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 399.

² George Walker Buckner, Jr., Concerns of a World Church, St. Louis, The Bethany Press, 1943, p. 10.

resemblance to the universal fellowship of which Jesus was thinking when he prayed five times over that his followers "may be one . . . that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."¹

Paul G. Macy, director of the Midwest Region of the American Committee for the World Council of Churches, writes that

In its modern usage the word "ecumenical" signifies the "whole household of faith, embracing all races, all nations, all branches of the Church itself throughout all the world." The familiar hymn puts it thus--"all people that on earth do dwell". The "ecumenical movement" is the movement toward Christian unity, or as Dr. Visser 't Hooft² has so aptly put it, "from the Church-as men have-conceived-it toward the Church-as God-intended-it." In its meaning of "universal" ecumenical is nearly synonymous with the word "catholic", with which we are more familiar. It has this advantage, however, that it has never been used to designate a particular branch of the Church.³

From these statements it is evident that we are dealing with a very inclusive term when we use "ecumenical" according to current usage.

The ecumenical movement, therefore, as it relates to the church has arisen because of the sharp contrast between the church as it is and the church as it was designed. Underlying the ecumenical movement is the conviction that the church "is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one."⁴ The movement grows as this conviction is shared and as its implications are realized in vital Christian life and work

¹Ibid., pp. 10, 11.

²Dr. Visser 't Hooft is the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches.

³Paul G. Macy, The Story of the World Council of Churches, New York, American Committee for the World Council of Churches, 3rd ed., 1947, p. 19.

⁴Kershner, op. cit. p. 81.

throughout the world.

In this dissertation we are not only concerned in studying the development of the ecumenical movement, but our attention will also be focused upon this question, "In what particulars is the ecumenical movement relevant to the New Testament Church?" Our first concern will be to give an account of this movement noting personnel, places, conferences, emphases, etc. Then we shall compare and contrast the ecumenical movement with the organism called the church, the earliest record of which is in the New Testament.

CHAPTER II

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

The exact point in time at which the modern ecumenical movement had its inception is extremely difficult to fix. The consensus of judgment dates the movement as beginning with the Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910. However, several years prior to this date there were proposals, bids for union, and ecumenical conferences. On the basis of this fact it is possible to date the beginning of this movement from the middle of the nineteenth century.

There is no doubt that the work of Thomas and Alexander Campbell and their associates created much discussion and stirred many minds with reference to the fact that the church is one and members of the body of Christ should accept this unity. The sectarianism, the fruit of Protestantism, the narrow, localized thinking of those who claimed Christ as their Lord affords a challenging background against which men with the vision of a fellowship with Christ encircling the globe stand out in bold relief.

In 1853 the bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church appointed a commission to confer with the Christian bodies of the United States which were desirous of "promoting union and concord among all who love our Lord Jesus in sincerity and truth." At that time, the bishops made various suggestions and recommendations concerning the promotion of such union. In 1880 the bishops of this communion issued a lengthy statement pointing out the desirability of cooperation with these

ends in view:

That this church does not seek to absorb other communions, but rather cooperating with them on a basis of a common faith and order, to discountenance schism, to heal the wounds of the body of Christ, and to promote the charity which is the chief of Christian graces and the visible manifestation of Christ to the world.¹

Even though this plan proposed by the Protestant Episcopal Church in 1880 had some insurmountable barriers to Christian unity, such as the required acceptance of the Nicene Creed and the preservation of the historic episcopate,² yet the fact that the leaders were doing some thinking about the possibility of union is apparent. Out of their deliberations came this statement:

Furthermore, deeply grieved by the sad divisions which afflict the Christian Church in our own land, we hereby declare our desire and readiness . . . to enter into brotherly conference with all or any Christian bodies seeking the organic union of the church, with a view to the earnest study of the conditions under which so priceless a blessing might happily be brought to pass.³

Whereas the Campbells had pled for "Christian unity", at this point, 1880, the concept of "organic church union" emerges and we shall notice how this latter concept predominates in all the conferences that follow. The point is that there were stirrings in men's minds and emotions concerning the ecumenical concept long before the coming of the twentieth century.

¹Samuel M. Jackson, American Church History, Volume XII, New York, The Christian Literature Company, 1894, p. 80.

²M. P. Hayden, "Episcopal Proposals for Christian Unity," Christian Standard, Volume LXII, No. 37, September 10, 1927, p. 870.

³Jackson, op. cit., p. 81.

November, 1854 saw the first Union Missionary Convention in session. This convention was called because Alexander Duff¹ was in America. The object of the gathering

was to unite in cordial love and sympathy the friends of missions; to excite them to higher effort for the conversion of the world, and to discuss, in the presence of the greatest and most experienced of living missionaries, topics in which all mission boards are equally concerned. And if the circulation and perusal of this report will, in any degree, excite and extend among the churches the warm, catholic, elevated, and pious feeling its object will be attained.²

Nearly three hundred evangelical clergymen were delegates at this meeting.

Eight questions were proposed for general discussion. Alexander Duff answered five of the questions. The questions were:

1. To what extent are we authorized by the Word of God to expect the conversion of the world to Christ?
2. What are the divinely appointed and most efficient means of extending the gospel of salvation to all men?
3. Is it best to concentrate laborers in the foreign field, or to scatter them?
4. In view of the great extent of the heathen world, and the degree to which it is opened, is it expedient for different missionary boards to plant stations on the same ground?
5. How may the number of qualified laborers for the evangelization of the world be multiplied and best prepared?
6. How may the co-operation of all our congregations be best secured to aid in the spread of the gospel?
7. How can missionary intelligence be most extensively circulated among the churches?
8. Is it expedient to hold such a meeting as this annually?³

¹Alexander Duff, First Missionary of the Church of Scotland, "the great Scotch missionary to India." George Smith, The Life of Alexander Duff, New York, A. C. Armstrong and Son, 1879.

²Edwin M. Bliss, Ed., Ecumenical Missionary Conference, Vol. 1, New York, American Tract Society, 1900, p. 19.

³Ibid., pp. 19, 20.

The ecumenical idea was certainly present in the considerations of this Convention. We note such phrases as "the conversion of the world," "extending the gospel of salvation to all men," "evangelization of the world." There is no narrowness or bigotry in these phrases. Confronting the various communions represented was the common task of bearing the gospel of Christ to the nations. They did not evade the issue or shun their calling. They faced squarely and made an honest effort to evaluate their ability to respond to their commission.

There is a measure of disappointment for me in that the question concerning co-operation of the various congregations was not answered. Having accepted as valid for themselves the preaching of the gospel to all the world, the next question was "how can this be done most efficiently?" Unity and co-operation were not confused. The manner in which the question was stated presupposed congregations co-operating to spread the gospel.

Within the decade from 1850 to 1860 the concept of world Christianity began to challenge men as they considered the real mission of the church. Within this same period we have noted the emergence of the concept of church union as proposed by the Protestant Episcopal Church. Perhaps if Alexander Duff could have had sufficient time to answer the question concerning the co-operation of the churches, some plan of church union would have been advanced by this Missionary Convention. This gathering was most concerned about the one paramount end of the church. The Protestant Episcopal

Church was suggesting a means to the achievement of that end.

Therefore, by 1900, two ecumenical Missionary Conferences having convened, an atmosphere was present which gave vital impetus to the modern ecumenical movement.

"Christians of many communions were beginning to mingle in friendly fellowship and to work together in cooperative tasks."¹ Other important aspects in the preparation of this atmosphere were the forming of the World's Evangelical Alliance in 1846, various youth movements such as the Student Christian Movement, The Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor, (1881), The World's Student Federation, (1895), and the World's Sunday School Association, (1887). The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, organized in 1908, has been one of the leading organizations in advancing the ecumenical movement.

¹W. R. Warren, Ed., Survey of Service, Disciples of Christ, St. Louis, Christian Board of Publication, 1928, p. 664.

CHAPTER III

THE MISSIONARY MOVEMENT

Those who have been much concerned in the progress of the ecumenical movement do not claim that Christians have experienced a catastrophic awakening. In evaluating the movement they are careful to point out its history.

For in 1854, there was held, in New York, a Union Missionary Convention, the first of a series of Conferences which were to lead to the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910. And it is from the latter gathering that almost all the modern movements for Christian unity are directly or indirectly derived.¹

Another statement published ten years prior to the one just quoted emphasizes the importance of the World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910.

For it was at the World Missionary Conference of 1910 that Faith and Order may be said to have been born. Of course there were movements toward Christian unity before that date, and it was their work, and notably the work of the world-wide Student Christian Movement, that made possible "Edinburgh 1910". But every thing received then a new impetus. From then must be dated a new era in the missionary enterprise, and from then the movement for Christian unity acquired a quite new and more statesman-like form.²

Newsweek, a magazine designed to present the news of the day for popular consumption, in an article on the "Council in Amsterdam", August, 1948, says:

¹H. G. G. Herklots and Henry Smith Leiper, Pilgrimage To Amsterdam, New York, Morehouse-Gorham Co., 1947, p. 16.

²Hugh Martin, Edinburgh 1937, London, Student Christian Movement Press, 1937, p. 19.

But just what was this World Council of Churches? What it was could only be explained by what went into making this World Council. Its origins went back almost 100 years to a Union Missionary Convention held at New York in 1854. This missionary get-together culminated in a World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910--the mother conference of modern movements for Christian unity.¹

Principal William Robinson of Overdale College, Birmingham, England holds that the Ecumenical Movement stems from the Edinburgh Conference in 1910. He points out also that there are three distinct phases to the movement; (1) the missionary phase; (2) the Faith and Order movement which is concerned with the theological matters dividing the churches; and (3) the Life and Work movement which endeavors to promote cooperation among the churches on social, economic, and political matters.²

Edinburgh--1910

There is general agreement that the Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910 is of sufficient importance that we should at least examine the records briefly. Every Christian Mission field in the world was represented at this conference except South America. This continent was not included because the Conference had to do only with Missions in non-Christian lands, and South America was not counted as such. Edinburgh was the seventh in a series of general missionary conferences beginning with the one held in New York in 1854. Prior to the convening of the Conference eight commissions had been at work assembling

¹Malcolm Muir, Chairman of the Board of Editors, "Council in Amsterdam", Newsweek, Volume xxxii, No. 8, August 23, 1948, p. 66.

²William Robinson, The Shattered Cross, Birmingham, Berean Press, 1945, p. 10.

detailed information concerning the various Mission fields. The design of the gathering was that it should be consultative, deliberative, and educational. The commissions dealt with the following themes: (1) Carrying the Gospel to all the non-Christian World, (2) The Church in the Mission Field, (3) Education in Relation to the Christianization of National Life, (4) The Missionary Message in Relation to non-Christian Religions, (5) The Preparation of Missionaries, (6) The Home-Base of Missions, (7) Missions and Governments, (8) Cooperation and the Promotion of Unity. It is significant for our study that this last commission should have been included. The officers of this commission were Sir. A. H. L. Fraser and Silas McBee. The importance of this report is emphasized in the following statement:

The Conference, through this Commission as well as through its investigations as a whole, revealed not only the magnitude of the Comity, Co-operation, Federation, and Unity Movements on the mission fields, but also the demand that these movements¹ be continued and extended both in foreign and home lands.

There is a vital implication for the ecumenical movement in that this Edinburgh Conference appointed a continuation committee which included such men as John R. Mott, Robert E. Speer, and J. H. Oldham. The missionary enterprise must still blaze new trails, establish new frontiers. The evangelization of the world, not yet realized, called for continued effort, understanding, and cooperation. It was auspicious that men from all the mission fields in the non-Christian lands

¹Gaius J. Slosser, Christian Unity, London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Company, 1929, p. 254.

of the world could convene and earnestly seek for greater efficiency and effectiveness in their work. Furthermore, the modern ecumenical movement gathered impetus as the missionaries from various fields reported their experiments on the field. Some had found that comity agreements had advanced the cause and produced more efficiency in that effort was not duplicated in the same area. Others had worked out a system of federation, cooperating with other denominations in a common task, but maintaining the peculiar denominational marks. In India the various mission boards attempted a definite ecclesiastical basis in their federation in that they accepted a common evangelical creed and agreed upon:

The recognition of the validity of each other's ordinances, ministry, membership, and discipline, without thereby committing themselves to the approval of particular methods or practices.¹

Therefore, the churches at the home-base supplying the leadership and finance for these mission projects and noting what had been happening on the mission fields were being led into an era of experimentation in which "federation," "cooperation," and "unity," were to become key words. If these plans worked on the mission fields, perhaps they would work at home. Inherent in this entire scheme is the failure to understand that the church is one and will always be one that the world may believe. Any apologetic for Christian unity which omits the above consideration is invalid. Moreover, the work of propagating the gospel is not a grand experiment. Scientists may deal in experiments; but Christians must deal with a revelation.

¹Ibid., p. 268.

Even though these basic considerations were neglected at Edinburgh, the common problems of world-wide evangelization and the attendant heart-searchings experienced by the delegates charged the ecumenical movement with a powerful force. "Nearly all who attended that Conference returned to their homes determined to further, or to initiate, movements which would remove the scandals of Church division."¹

Since the missionary movement has been one of the most important tributaries flowing into the stream of the ecumenical movement, a closer examination will help us to evaluate its contribution. The Commission on Cooperation and Unity reporting to the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 pointed out that the inadequacy of forces and the instability of methods in propagating the gospel were pressing problems.

Without hearty alliance among the many Missionary Societies employed in carrying the Gospel to non-Christian peoples, and without the recognition of cooperative effort as the normal condition of missionary work, the most copious supply of workers and of means that could be hoped for, would still be ineffectual; while for the achievement of the ultimate and highest end of all missionary work--the establishment in these non-Christian lands of Christ's one Church--real unity must be attained.²

Yes, unity must be attained because "we are beginning to see that the Church is again facing a mighty conflict, like that

¹ Ibid., p. 351.

² Cooperation and the Promotion of Unity, Report of Commission VIII, World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh, 1910, New York, Fleming H. Revell Company, n.d., p. 5.

which arose when the living forces of the Gospel contended with the forces of the pagan world in the early centuries."¹

However, in the same connection an apology for the various missionary societies is made. Considered from the standpoint of efficiency, there was no doubt that the duplication of effort was wasteful; but "it is true that the conduct of the work by a number of separate but allied Societies (which might exist even within a single united church) is not necessarily inconsistent with a spirit of unity and full cooperation."² The advantages of separate Societies being located in a Christian community were listed as (1) affording an appeal to the many-sided interests and utilizing the many energies of the given community; (2) making for elasticity of operation on the mission field, for freedom of experiment and initiative, variety of method, attention to classes of people and branches of work that might otherwise have been neglected. Here is the recurrence of the appeal to sustain denominationalism. These arguments were not new because they had been presented many times during the previous century. There is not one suggestion pointing to the supposed advantages of sectarianism that is valid so far as the New Testament church is concerned.

Those who came to Edinburgh in 1910 were told that the task of evangelizing the world was a campaign of allies. Cooperation, alliance, combination--these terms became familiar expressions. At Edinburgh, Christian leaders did agree that

¹Ibid., p. 6.

²Ibid.

"our Lord intended that we should be one in a visible fellowship" and that the end of missionary work is to see the one united Church of Christ established in every non-Christian land.¹

Jerusalem--1928

At the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, 1910, the cooperation of Missionary Societies and Boards was highly recommended. The proposal was made that not only should the various Societies of a given nation cooperate; but that an International Committee be formed to serve as a medium of communication for all Missionary Societies. Dr. John R. Mott, a layman of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States, was appointed chairman of the Continuation Committee. This committee met with groups of missionary leaders in Europe, Great Britain, North America and continued the discussion of special problems arising out of the Conference in 1910. Arrangements were made for financial cooperation among foreign boards. The International Review of Missions, a publication dealing with missionary activity on a world-wide, international scale was published. From 1912 to 1920 the committee was busily engaged in extensive tours and International Missionary Promotion. In 1920, the First World War having been concluded, an international missionary conference was held near Lake Geneva. The formation of an International Missionary Council was proposed at this conference and the Council was formally organized at Lake Mohonk, New York in 1921.² From March 24 to April 8, 1928

¹Ibid., p. 131

²Slosser, op. cit., pp. 255, 256.

the International Missionary Council met in Jerusalem. Dr. John R. Mott stated that the Jerusalem meeting was the greatest single contribution made by the Council.¹

This Jerusalem meeting of the International Missionary Council heard seven reports which are preserved for us in as many volumes. The reports were upon the following themes:

1. The Christian Life and Message in Relation to Non-Christian Systems of Thought and Life. 2. Religious Education. 3. The Relation Between the Younger and Older Churches. 4. The Christian Mission in the Light of Race Conflict. 5. The Christian Mission in Relation to Industrial Problems. 6. The Christian Mission in Relation to Rural Problems. 7. International Missionary Co-operation.

The growth of the concept of cooperation in the Missionary Movement is clearly apparent. In 1910 only two national Christian councils existed. In 1928 twenty-six such associations were represented in the International meeting at Jerusalem. The "felt needs" and "the demands of an ever-expanding work" are given as reasons for this cooperative growth.² Although the organization of these councils found expression in many divergent types, "an underlying principle governing all these bodies is the deeply rooted desire to find in cooperation that unity of the Spirit stressed in Apostolic days, and lost through our unhappy divisions."³ Unity is the

¹International Missionary Cooperation, Volume VII, International Missionary Council, New York, Rumford Press, 1928, p. 27.

²Ibid., p. 51

³Ibid., p. 52.

objective and according to this pronouncement, unity can be found in cooperation.

This note is sounded clearly at Jerusalem. "The spiritual implications of the Gospel demand unity among those who are seeking to spread the Good News."¹ There is no direct reference in this pronouncement to the New Testament Church; but the simple statement that those who would propagate the Gospel effectively must be amiable and charitable toward one another. The dilemma lies in this: "The basis of cooperation has been a frank recognition of differences by an honest search for unity in and through the Holy Spirit, which transcends the divisive elements in present-day Christianity."² A frank recognition of differences is not long compatible with an honest search for unity. Cooperation is possible only where the combining groups minimize their differences and magnify the essential elements upon which there is agreement. (At the present time we are engaged in a School of Christian Leadership. This is a cooperative project sponsored by the Indiana Council of Churches. There are ten distinct church branches participating in the effort. The project, the design of which is to train Christian leaders, would have been impossible if we had said to one another, "there are too many serious differences in doctrine and polity for us to work together." Instead, we have agreed, in the spirit of cooperation, that our differences are insignificant in the light of the tremendously significant challenge to present Christ as Saviour and Lord.)³ The Jerusalem meeting made a bold

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³A project of the Protestant churches of Parke County.

claim when it announced, "unity has been attained through united service in a common task for the evangelization of the world."¹ Here cooperation is unity. Unity has been achieved through working at a common task. This may be unity; but it is not Christian unity. The crew of an airplane work together at a common task to bring their craft safely to its destination. Unity is there; but it is not Christian. It is at this point, the confusion of cooperation and unity, that we see the real fallacy of this Jerusalem meeting.

Various arguments were suggested at Jerusalem supporting the validity of missionary cooperation. Cooperation was becoming essential because the world was so well-organized internationally. Outwardly the world is unified; therefore the spiritual unity of the Church needs to be realized. This is certainly far removed from Jesus' plea that his disciples should be unified that the world might believe on him. The Church should have been in a position to transform rather than be forced to conform.

Cooperative work is better done than independent enterprises. Money is saved. Tasks beyond the capacity of any one group can now be done by united forces. Christians in a non-Christian land can speak with one voice on moral and social problems. The production and circulation of Christian literature and the adequate staffing and financing of schools and colleges are included as advantages of cooperation in the Jerusalem report on missionary cooperation. The emphasis shifted considerably from what it had been eighteen years earlier at Edinburgh.

¹Ibid.

Among other excellent sentiments expressed, perhaps this one sets the tone for the continuing missionary movement.

We are called today to a new discovery of spiritual unity, faith, and power that we may prove our message to be adequate to a world need. It is our conviction that this is impossible apart from that cooperation which is demanded by the Living Christ who indwells His Church Only in penitence for the past and in a new sense of our oneness in Christ can we go forward in the task of the days to come.¹

We must not be too quick to criticize those who blazed the trails and opened new frontiers before us in this great ecumenical movement. Those who assembled at Edinburgh and at Jerusalem were honest and sincere. We respect them for their bold departures from the accepted norm in Protestant Christianity.

Tambaram, Madras, India--1938

The Missionary Cooperation Movement continued. The International Missionary Council met at Tambaram, Madras, India from December 12 to December 29, 1938. This assembly heard reports on the following themes: The Authority of the Faith, The Growing Church, Evangelism, The Life of the Church, The Economic Basis of the Church, and The Church and the State.

In the report on "The Life of the Church" there is a section on "Cooperation and Unity". The remarkable development of cooperation within "the Christian Church since 1910" is pointed to with considerable satisfaction. However, this statement follows, "we are deeply humbled by the lack of unity in the Church."² The formula stated with so much certainty ten

¹Ibid., p. 57.

²The Life of the Church, The Madras Series, Volume 1V, International Missionary Council, New York, 1939, p. 372.

years earlier at Jerusalem had been proved false. "Cooperation is unity," Christian leaders had said at Jerusalem. Now, by 1938 cooperation had grown apace; but there was a serious lack of unity in the church. At Madras it was noted that cooperation had brought with it a great increase in mutual understanding and trust. It had brought a "unity of spirit" which revealed the gravity of divisions against the background of the message of the love of God. Cooperation was bearing fruit; but it was not the end in view.

This meeting in India encouraged the use of cooperation in religious education, production and distribution of Christian literature, social service, and "supremely in the Church's primary task of evangelism."¹ At this point, accomplishing the primary task of the church, cooperation is not sufficient.

There are certain parts of the Christian obligation which in our judgment demand more than a cooperative basis. In particular it has been found that in most cases cooperation in the great evangelistic task stops at the point where pastoral care is needed for the building up of the church.²

There may be cooperation in the presentation of the Gospel to a man; but when the man accepts Christ, whose church will he join? Because of this break-down of cooperation, it was suggested at Madras that "the Spirit of God is guiding the various branches of His Church to seek for the realization of a visible and organic union."

This missionary movement was felt throughout the world.

¹ Ibid., p. 373.

² Ibid., p. 375.

Whereas the nineteenth century had seen the formation of so many boards and societies and saw them competing in various fields, the twentieth century featured such concepts as cooperation, comity agreements, and organic unity. Through the great conferences at Edinburgh, Jerusalem, and Madras, representative Christian leaders mingled freely with fellow Christians. This fellowship expressed to their respective congregations and denominations helped Christians in each locality to understand that they were a part of a world fellowship. Yes, the missionary movement has contributed and is still contributing to the ecumenical movement.

CHAPTER IV

THE FAITH AND ORDER MOVEMENT

The Beginning

Another movement running parallel with the missionary movement has been the Faith and Order Movement. The general results of the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910 were so gratifying that a favorable sentiment was aroused concerning a conference on Faith and Order. If so many divergent groups could be represented in a conference to discuss the missionary task of the church, perhaps a similar gathering could profitably study and discuss matters of faith and order. Charles H. Brent, bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Western New York, reported at the preliminary meeting on Faith and Order at Geneva in 1920 that "it was the sense of God's presence at that Conference (Edinburgh, 1910), and the wonderful and immediate results, that led some of us to believe that a similar Conference on matters of Faith and Order might be productive of good."¹

The formal beginning of the Faith and Order movement is dated from October 19, 1910. The general convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States was in session in Cincinnati, Ohio. Within the Episcopalian Communion a joint committee was at work taking

¹H. N. Bate, Ed., Faith and Order, Proceedings of the World Conference, Lausanne, 1927, Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., 1928, p. vii.

under advisement the promotion by this Church of a Conference following the general method of the World Missionary Conference, to be participated in by representatives all Christian bodies throughout the world which accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour, for the consideration of questions pertaining to the Faith and Order of the Church of Christ.¹

Upon the report of this committee to the convention, a committee composed of bishops, presbyters and laymen was appointed to make plans for the proposed conference. We pointed out earlier in this study that the Protestant Episcopal Church has been foremost in pressing the claims of the ecumenical movement. The initiation of the Faith and Order movement by this communion further substantiates the above fact.

However, the Protestant Episcopal Church was not the only communion considering the possibility of a greater sense of oneness in Christ. The National Council of Congregational Churches moved by the pronouncements of the Lambeth Conference of Bishops in 1908 concerning the discussion of church unity had a committee studying these proposals. The National Convention of the Disciples of Christ meeting in Topeka, Kansas in 1910 saw the organization of the "association for the Promotion of Christian Unity."² The purpose of this organization was "to watch for every indication of Christian unity and to hasten the time by intercessory prayer, friendly conferences and distribution of irenic literature 'till we all attain unto the unity of the faith'. "³ On this occasion those most concerned in the organization

¹Ibid.

²Peter Ainslie, Towards Christian Unity, Baltimore: Association for the Promotion of Christian Unity, 1918, p. 10.

³Ibid., p. 11.

were mindful of the contribution of Thomas Campbell in his Declaration and Address and the "Christian Association of Washington". When the organization was completed in Topeka, a message of greeting was sent to the Episcopal convention in Cincinnati. The Episcopalians sent a similar message to the Disciples of Christ. The Commission on a World Conference on Faith and Order and the Association for the Promotion of Christian Unity originated simultaneously. Neither convention was aware of the proceedings in the other.¹ Considerable joy was expressed with reference to the results of these two conventions.

The statement prepared and presented to the Protestant Episcopal convention in Cincinnati in 1910 is an important document and contributed much toward setting the tone of the Faith and Order movement. The essential section of the pronouncement declares:²

Your committee is of one mind. We believe that the time has now arrived when the representatives of the whole family of Christ, led by the holy Spirit, may be willing to come together for the consideration of questions of Faith and Order. We believe, further, that all Christian Communions are in accord with us in our desire to lay aside self-will, and to put on the mind which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. We would heed this call of the Spirit of God in all lowliness, and with singleness of purpose. We would place ourselves by the side of our fellow Christians, looking not only on our own things, but also on the things of others, convinced that our hope of mutual understanding is in taking personal counsel together in the spirit of love and forbearance. It is our conviction that such a conference for the purpose of study and discussion, without power to legislate or to adopt resolutions, is the next step toward unity.

With grief for our aloofness in the past, and for other faults of pride and self-sufficiency, which make for

¹Ibid., p. 45.

²Ibid., p. 46.

schism; with loyalty to the truth as we see it, and with respect for the convictions of those who differ from us; holding the belief that the beginnings of unity are to be found in the clear statement and full consideration of those things in which we differ, as well as of those things in which we are at one

An analysis of this statement reveals some significant facts. 1. It is not the kind of statement that would promote denominationalism. 2. There is in it a recognition of the ecumenical concept, "the whole family of Christ". 3. This committee believed that the spirit of God was calling and leading. It is of interest that the first subject considered in the World Conference on Faith and Order at Lausanne in 1927 was "The Call to Unity". 4. Great care was taken to suggest that any proposed conference on Faith and Order should be for the purpose of study and not for legislative or judicial purposes. 5. There is considerable confusion in trying to locate the point at which unity begins. Both matters held in common and things in which the various Communions differed were suggested as needing careful evaluation. "Things which we hold in common and things in which we differ" may all be humanistic considerations. If at this point there had emerged a willingness to engage in a common searching of the New Testament for the beginnings of unity, much subsequent confusion would have been avoided.

From the Initiation of the Faith and Order Movement to Lausanne

Because of the vision of Bishop Charles Brent of the Episcopal Church, who himself had been a missionary, the Faith and Order movement was making its contribution to the ecumenical concept. From 1910 to 1927 Bishop Brent continued as the

leading spirit in this movement. From the first it was clear that if the suggestions involved in the origin of the Movement were to be realized, the sympathy and cooperation of the Churches must be obtained. Since the whole family of Christ was involved in the proposals for the consideration of matters pertaining to Faith and Order, considerable propagandizing was necessitated. In 1912, after various churches in the Anglican Communion had expressed their intense interest in the conference idea, the Episcopalians sent a deputation to Great Britain and Ireland to acquaint the English Archbishops and the bishops of the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Church of Ireland with the proposed conference. This effort was quite successful. Various Protestant bodies were enlisted. By 1913 a total of thirty Commissions or Committees on Faith and Order had been appointed by church bodies throughout the world. In the same year another deputation was sent to contact the non-Anglican church bodies in Great Britain, Ireland, and Scotland. Thirty-one groups were contacted by this delegation. Their report was that every Communion which they contacted promised "a favourable consideration for the proposed Conference."¹

In addition to this method of enlisting support, a considerable body of literature had been developed. Under the enterprising direction of Robert H. Gardiner, Secretary of the Episcopal Commission, about twenty-five pamphlets describing the nature and aims of the movement had been prepared in several different languages and distributed in various parts of the world.

¹H. N. Bate, op. cit., p. ix.

This advertising and these delegations were possible because there were several liberal donations to the Episcopal Commission. One such gift amounting to \$100,000 was made by J. Pierpont Morgan.¹

By 1919, the first World War having intervened, a deputation of Episcopalians set out for Europe and the East. The Conference on Faith and Order, for which plans were being carefully laid, now became more certain. Ralph W. Brown had been named General Secretary of the Conference. This delegation in 1919 visited Athens, Smyrna, Constantinople, Sofia, Bucarest, Belgrade, Rome, Alexandria, Cairo, Jerusalem, Damascus, Paris, London, Norway and Sweden.² The unanimity accorded the delegation was astounding. When the Conference finally became a reality, the cooperation of the Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Com-munions of Norway and Sweden authenticated the delegation's report. Within six years, from 1913 to 1919, thirty-nine Commissions had been appointed, bringing the total to sixty-nine. There is evidence in the growth of this conference idea that Christians throughout the world were becoming concerned about their divisions.

Geneva--1920

Ten years had passed since the formal pronouncement concerning their desire to enter into conference had come from the Protestant Episcopal Church. The World War had consumed about half of those years and the remaining time had been

¹Peter Ainslie, op. cit., p. 45.

²H. N. Bate, op. cit., p. ix.

conscientiously used in acquainting the various Communions around the world with the possibility of discussing problems of Faith and Order and in convincing the churches of the profitableness of such endeavor. In 1920 there came together at Geneva representatives of forty nations and more than seventy autonomous churches. This was a preliminary meeting, the design of which was to make definite plans for a World Conference on Faith and Order. The most significant contribution was the appointment of a Continuation Committee. One section of this committee was to handle preliminary arrangements for the World Conference. The members in this section were Bishop Brent, chairman, Reverend Doctors Ainslie, Boynton, Stevenson, Archbishop Germanos, Bishop Cannon, Bishop McConnell, Mr. Zabriskie, Reverend Doctors Barbour, Scherer, and Cadman.¹ To the other section was assigned the title, "Subjects Committee". This committee's task was to prepare an agenda and to promote preliminary discussion of the problems involved. The members of this section were the Bishop of Bombay, chairman, Dr. A. Lang of Halle, Rev. Dr. Martin, principal of New College, Edinburgh, the Rev. Dr. Selbie, principal of Mansfield College, Oxford, and Professor H. Alivisatos of the University of Athens. Others who served with the committee were Rev. D. C. Lusk, Canon H. N. Bate, and Rev. Dr. Lofthouse.² In making preparations for the World Conference the Episcopalians wisely engaged a widely

¹ H. N. Bate, *op. cit.*, p. x, (footnote).

² *Ibid.*, pp. x, xi.

representative committee.

The endeavors of the Faith and Order movement from 1924 to 1927 are well summarized in the preface to the volume entitled Faith and Order, 1927. The story of this movement

consists in the maintenance of a worldwide correspondence and the output of much relevant literature; in the gathering together of many local groups for discussion and prayer; in the emergence and keen discussion of many problems connected with the Agenda; in patient efforts to secure the adequate representation of great Churches, Catholic and Protestant alike; in an energetic campaign in the United States for the raising of the necessary funds; and in the successive meetings of the Continuation Committee which brought the preparations for Lausanne up to their final stage.¹

The World Conference on Faith and Order
Lausanne, 1927

The plans of seventeen years came to fruition. From August 3 to 21, 1927 the World Conference on Faith and Order met in Lausanne, Switzerland. The extensive publicity through pamphlets and delegations resulted in an excellent representation at Lausanne of Christian bodies throughout the world "which accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour." Seven subjects were presented to the Conference for consideration and discussion. They were as follows: The Call to Unity, The Church's Message to the World: the Gospel; The Nature of the Church, The Church's Common Confession of Faith, The Church's Ministry, The Sacraments, and The Unity of Christendom and the Relation Thereto of Existing Churches. It is evident from the agenda that Christians attending the Conference would have their minds focused on matters peculiarly essential to the church.

¹H. N. Bate, op. cit., p. xi.

We can best evaluate the contribution of the Conference at Lausanne to the Faith and Order Movement by presenting a brief summary of some of the discussions.

The Call to Unity

Bishop Charles H. Brent delivered the opening message on the theme, "The Call to Unity". He prefaced his remarks with the prayer of Jesus recorded in John 17:20-23. He presented the call to unity as a call from God to man.

To us it has of late come with new force through the voice of God's Spirit speaking to the many divided communions of our day, as the call of a shepherd to his scattered flock. We have responded to His call. We are gathered here at His bidding.¹

He declared that the purpose of the assembly was conference and not controversy. The initial address closed with a reference to Paul's letter to the Ephesians (Ephesians 4:1-6) in which Paul reminded the Ephesian Christians of their essential unity in Christ.

The Archbishop of Armagh, the primate of Ireland, said, "Let us keep these great words in mind. The Church is one, and always has been, and must be, one; because its essence is the relation of human souls to Jesus Christ."² In expressing his concept of the purpose of the Conference, he added,

We are here, in the first instance at all events, to unite in prayer, in thought, in expression, in such a manner that the spirit of unity may find a home in our hearts and in our counsels. In other words, we are assembled in dependence on the Spirit of God, believing that if we yield ourselves to

¹H. N. Bate, op. cit., p. 4.

²Ibid., p. 24

Him, if we permit his directive and creative power to guide our wills, we shall be drawn together into a spiritual unity from which ultimately a great consolidation of the forces of Christianity must emerge.¹

The approach of each speaker was Biblical. The churches of the world were not called to meet at Lausanne because Bishop Brent had sent the invitation or the Anglican Church had sponsored the meeting. "The call to unity is the call of the Lord Himself. His will for His disciples is that they should form a world-wide Fellowship, under His leadership, inspired by His teaching, sharing that one life which is the very life of God imparted to man through Jesus Christ Himself."² Such passages in the New Testament as John 17; John 11:52; Romans 12:5 and Ephesians 4 were often quoted.

The Church's Message to the World: The Gospel

Dr. Adolf Deissmann of the University of Berlin stated emphatically in the opening message on this subject that the Church has a message. The message is the Gospel. The Gospel is directed to the world. He noted that Jesus came preaching and that he entrusted his message to those whom he called apostles. Because of its importance we present here the report of the commission on the Church's Message as it was accepted by the conference at Lausanne.

The message of the Church to the world is and must always remain the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel is the joyful message of redemption, both here and hereafter, the gift of God to sinful man in Jesus Christ

¹ Ibid., pp. 26, 27.

² Ibid., pp. 27, 28.

Through His life and teaching, His call to repentance, His proclamation of the coming of the Kingdom of God and of judgment, His suffering and death, His resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of the Father, and by the mission of the Holy Spirit, He has brought to us forgiveness of sins, and has revealed the fulness of the living God, and His boundless love toward us. By the appeal of that love, shown in its completeness on the Cross, He summons us to the new life of faith, self-sacrifice, and devotion to His service and the service of men.

Jesus Christ, as the crucified and the living One, as Saviour and Lord, is also the centre of the world-wide Gospel of the Apostles and the Church. Because He Himself is the Gospel, the Gospel is the message of the Church to the world. It is more than a philosophical theory; more than a theological system; more than a programme for material betterment. The Gospel is rather the gift of a new world from God to this old world of sin and death; still more, it is the victory over sin and death, the revelation of eternal life in Him who has knit together the whole family in heaven and on earth in the communion of saints, united in the fellowship of service, of prayer, and of praise. . . .¹

In this statement Christ is the center of the message of the church to the world. When a careful study of the Gospel is pursued, the unity of the body of Christ is seen clearly.

There was no effort here to defend the divisions and differences between men. Christ is central in the Gospel and this Gospel must be transmitted to the world through the church not through the churches. It is significant also that this Conference should agree that there is more to the Gospel than the amelioration of society, than "a programme for material betterment".

The Nature of the Church

Again the Conference gave attention to a theme of vital importance to the realization of unity. The ecumenical movement makes its greatest forward strides when there are serious

¹William Adams Brown, Toward A United Church, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946, p. 102.

attempts to reach a common understanding on such subjects as the nature of the church. In the discussions at Lausanne which were summarized by Dr. Friedrich Siegmund-Schultze of the University of Berlin the tension between the church as a divine foundation and the church as a human society was the most important single aspect. 1. He pointed out that the church is the body of Christ; however, it is also composed of human members and is identical with the fellowship of believers.

2. The body of Christ is one; but it is made up of many members and unity in diversity is a law of its being. 3. The church is universal as it was designed by God; however, the fellowship of Jesus is divided and men must order their lives in such a manner that they can realize God's design. 4. The revelation of God has been committed to the church and there has been a continuity in the transmission of that revelation; but in order to insure this continuity every local church must constantly trust in the guidance of the Spirit of God.¹ There are both the divine and the human elements in the church. One of the most important contributions of Lausanne to the Faith and Order movement was the attention it focused on the divine origin of the church. This was basic to all other considerations. If the church was designed by God, there is a real basis in the call to unity. If the church is the body of Christ in the world, this determines the message of the church. Likewise, the confession of faith, the ministry and the sacraments are all supremely important.

¹H. N. Bate, op. cit., pp. 146, 147.

The Church's Confession of Faith

In spite of the emphasis upon the divine origin of the church, there was considerable confusion evidenced in the discussion of the church's confession. Dr. Wilhelm Zoellner of the Church of Prussia gave an acceptable exposition of the confession of faith as it is recorded in the New Testament. The confession of Peter supported by numerous other references presents the New Testament confession of faith. Dr. Zoellner adds, "From the Lord of the Church, dwelling on earth, a Church upon earth comes into being. Through Him, and from His word and work, faith takes its beginning, and the dawning faith of His disciples is the dawn of the Church on earth."¹ The confession of faith is not in a system or code devised by theologians. This point is clear. The creed is the person, Jesus Christ, son of the living God, Lord and Saviour. However, this does not seem to be sufficient, for Dr. Zoellner departs at this point to survey the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed. He pointed out that these creeds were the common heritage of the severed churches and concluded that for the time being they must suffice. He indicated that a new confession of faith would be possible only when the "inward actualities" were right, only when "the music of belief finds spontaneous expression once more."² The most pertinent question in our mind remained unanswered. If the New Testament confession of faith in Christ as the Son of God was sufficient for the New Testament church, why is the same confession deficient today?

¹Ibid., p. 168.

²Ibid., p. 175.

The Church's Ministry

In the report of Section V which had to do with the Church's ministry five propositions were drawn up. Upon the following propositions the representatives of the churches were generally agreed.

1. The ministry is a gift of God through Christ to His Church, and is essential to the being and well-being of the Church.
2. The ministry is perpetually authorised and made effective through Christ and His Spirit.
3. The purpose of the ministry is to impart to men the saving and sanctifying benefits of Christ through pastoral service, the preaching of the Gospel, and the administration of the sacraments, to be made effective by faith.
4. The ministry is entrusted with a government and a discipline of the Church, in whole or in part.
5. Men gifted for the work of the ministry, called by the Spirit, and accepted by the Church, are commissioned through an act of ordination by prayer and the laying on of hands to exercise the functions of this ministry.¹

Even though there was substantial agreement in these expressions, yet there was great divergence in these matters of church order and the ministry. Bishop E. J. Palmer, an Anglican from Bombay, India, in his address said:

Many Protestants regard the notions both of the apostolical succession and of the conferment of divine grace through ordination as superstitious. Many Catholics consider ministers who have not been ordained in the apostolical succession as laymen, gifte, it may be, and preachers of righteousness, but laymen, and therefore having no right to administer the Lord's Supper While this continues, unity is impossible.²

Here the problem is brought into sharp focus. Until there is a mutual recognition of ministries the real goals of the ecumenical movement will not be realized.

¹Ibid., p. 377.

²Ibid., p. 236.

The Sacraments

The sixth subject discussed at Lausanne was "The Sacraments". In the discourses presented to the full sessions of the Conference were several widely divergent concepts of the sacraments. The Orthodox, Congregational, Evangelical-Reformed, Anglican, Evangelical-Lutheran, Baptist, and Methodist views were presented. The Orthodox position claimed the experience of the Apostles and of the saints as their rule of practice.¹ Dr. August Lang of the University of Halle, representing the Evangelical-Reformed Church, said, "We must leave every Church free to hold such opinions regarding the Sacraments as it desires to maintain, according to its understanding and to the enlightenment granted to it by the Holy Spirit in the past and in the present."² Each messenger in his presentation endeavored to accomplish two things. First, a presentation of his peculiar concept was given. In the second place, there came the expression "that we have so much that is essential and precious in common, and we can learn to understand and support each other in brotherly love."³ With regard to the question, "What is your basis for determining the number, nature, and validity of the sacraments which you observe?", three distinct answers were given. The Orthodox appealed to the experience of the Apostles and the saints (tradition). The

¹H. N. Bate, op. cit., p. 290.

²Ibid., p. 301.

³Ibid., pp. 311, 312.

Evangelical-Reformed stated that every Church had a right to its own opinions. The Baptist, Robert A. Ashworth of New York, declared that their communion receives "the New Testament as the only rule of faith and practice."¹ Where such sharp differences prevail, it is wonderful that such men would consent to meet at a conference table.

The Unity of Christendom

The concluding theme discussed was "The Unity of Christendom and the Relation thereto of Existing Churches." This was essentially a summary of the various subjects explored during the Conference. The decision reached by the section studying this specific problem is of interest.

In the united Church there must be:

1. A common Faith, a common Message to the World.
2. Baptism as the rite of incorporation into the one Church.
3. Holy Communion as expressing the corporate life of the Church and as its signal act of corporate worship.
4. A ministry accepted throughout the universal Church.
5. Freedom of interpretation about sacramental grace and ministerial order and authority.
6. Due provision for the exercise of the prophetic gift.²

When this report was read before the plenary session of the conference it was not accepted, but was referred to a committee for further study.³ Yet its significance lies in the fact that it was prepared and presented to the Conference. Each of the other six reports was accepted and sent out as a message from the Conference to the churches.

¹ Ibid., p. 313.

² Ibid., p. 436.

³ The business committee of the Continuation committee approved the revised report and this with the others was sent out to the churches.

There have been varied appraisals of Lausanne. Dr. Frederick D. Kershner styled the Conference as the "most notable of all the Christian councils which have been held for many centuries."¹ Graham Frank, at that time Secretary of the International Convention of the Disciples of Christ, pointed out that

It is also probable that the best contribution the Lausanne conference will make toward Christian unity will be the attempt on the part of those who participate in the conference to arrive at a better understanding of each other's positions.²

Others were quite disappointed and were quick to point out the failures as they saw them. Noting that unity was the goal to be realized, one man observed that "It is astonishing that the leaders of this present 'World Movement for Christian Union' have taken neither leaf nor paragraph from apostolic teaching in their well-meant efforts to secure this desireable end."³ Again, we need this word of counsel that we cannot expect too much from any conference. Divisions which have accumulated through centuries are not going to be dissolved in a decade. However, when men will converse together concerning their unities and their differences, there is hope that they will accept the fact that the Church of Christ is one and that they are one as they relate themselves to the body of Christ.

¹ Frederick D. Kershner, "The Press and Lausanne", Christian Evangelist, Vol. LXIV, No. , Sept. 8, 1927, p. 1201.

² Graham Frank, "The World Conference on Faith and Order," Christian Evangelist, Vol. LXIV, No. 29, July 21, 1927, p. 971.

³ B. J. Radford, "Blind Spot in Unity Conferences," Christian Standard, Vol. LXII, No. 37, Nov. 12, 1927, p. 883.

From Lausanne to Edinburgh

Through a Continuation Committee the results obtained at Lausanne were conserved and projected. This body was responsible for circulating the Conference reports and for making arrangements for the next World Conference. Bishop Brent was the chairman of this Committee and was succeeded upon his death by Dr. William Temple, Archbishop of York.¹ By 1930 the decision had been reached that the second World Conference on Faith and Order should be held in August, 1937 and a provisional program, "The Church in the Purpose of God", was suggested. The world-wide economic crisis came and the Movement was forced to limit its work. By 1934, after special appeal for funds, the work was resumed and the continuation committee was called to meet at Hertenstein, Switzerland. In 1935 the decision was reached that the Conference should meet in Edinburgh in 1937. Therefore, the Second World Conference on Faith and Order was held at Edinburgh, August 3-18, 1937.

Since we have given rather full treatment to the first World Conference on Faith and Order, we count it sufficient at this point to note the reports issuing from the Edinburgh Conference and evaluate them in the light of the former meeting at Lausanne. Five themes received attention at Edinburgh. They were as follows: The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, The Church of Christ: Ministry and Sacraments, The Church of Christ and the Word of God, The Communion of Saints, and The Church's Unity in

¹ Leonard Hodgson, Ed., The Second World Conference on Faith and Order, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1938, p. 4.

Life and Worship.

Bishop A. Lehtonen of the Lutheran Church of Finland, chairman of the first section at the presentation of the report on "The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ," gave this refreshing word:

We have to send this positive message from this Conference of the Christian Churches, to a world which is in great distress and to a generation that has gone astray and is not able to help itself; we have to strengthen the Church's witness to the gospel and to give men a new trust in the regenerating power of the Christian faith. In our Section we have tried only to express quite simply the faith of that primitive Church which once triumphed in proclaiming the gospel of God's love and forgiveness of sins. All other gospels have heard of man's way to God; here they heard of God's way to man.¹

Several times the statement was made that in their study concerning "The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ", "We have found that here there ought to be no ground for maintaining any division between Churches."²

Two exceedingly important facts are noted in the closing paragraph of the report on "The Church of Christ and the Word of God." "Everything which the New Testament teaches concerning the Church presupposes its essential unity."³ Men are engaged in a futile effort if they seek to support sectarianism on the basis of the New Testament. The New Testament does have something to say about the church. The New Testament Church is one. Therefore, the report says, "We, as we confess our faith in the one Church, are conscious of a profound cleavage between that faith

¹Ibid., pp. 119, 120.

²Ibid., p. 226.

³Ibid., p. 235.

and the conditions of the present time."¹ There is but one solution. Leaders of the churches and ordinary men and women must learn that the "cause of Christian unity is implicit in God's word." I see in this the admission that the ecumenical movement has been too much concerned with leaders. Real Christian unity cannot be legislated or resolved by councils; it must begin where the people live and worship.

There were those who viewed the Conference at Edinburgh as marking considerable progress beyond Lausanne.² It does prove that there is a continuity to the Faith and Order Movement. There was open discussion in the attitude of good will. However, Lausanne demonstrated all of this. With reference to the study on the Ministry and the Sacraments, no advance had been made in overcoming the disunity apparent at Lausanne. At Edinburgh fresh emphasis was placed upon practical cooperation and federation. "Churches were recommended to undertake a number of different common tasks as the surest way to lead to more complete organic unity."³ There is not perfect agreement in this concept of organic unity. P. H. Welshimer has asked a pertinent question, "to have a working agreement, to sit beneath the same roof, to hear the same preacher, to sing the same songs may be fellowship in worship, but is it the unity we desire among Christians today?"⁴

¹ Ibid.

² William Adams Brown, op. cit., p. 115.

³ Ibid., p. 117.

⁴ P. H. Welshimer, "Unity Is Desirable, Restoration More So," Christian Standard, Vol. LXXVIII, No. 29, July 17, 1943, p. 629.

The chief contribution of the Faith and Order Movement was that men and women who claimed to give allegiance to Jesus Christ faced such questions as these: "What Faith do we hold in common? Why do we understand and use the Sacraments so differently? What is the Church? What are the real obstacles to a united church? Are our differences sufficiently important to warrant our continuing as different Churches today?"¹ The Faith and Order Movement has been a most important tributary to the stream of the ecumenical movement.

¹ Macy, op. cit., p. 6.

CHAPTER V

THE LIFE AND WORK MOVEMENT

The Life and Work Movement also had its inception in the World Missionary Conference of 1910. The leaders in this effort to mobilize the churches for united action were convinced that in spite of the tremendous differences in faith and practice the churches could work together to discover the Christian solution to the social, economic, and political problems of the day.¹ As the ominous clouds of World War I gathered, the pressure of these problems became more acute. Four agencies were largely responsible for the promotion of the Movement. They were the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, The World Alliance for International Friendship Through the Churches, The British Conference on Christian Politics, Economics and Citizenship, and the Church of Sweden under the leadership of Archbishop Nathan Soderblom.²

As in the Faith and Order Movement, there came simultaneous proposals for conference. In 1916 as the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America urged a union meeting to discuss the problems suggested above, the Swiss Church Conference and Christians in Scandinavia, Hungary and Great Britain made similar proposals.³ General wide-spread interest in a conference which would seek to concentrate the thought of Christendom on the great

¹Macy, op. cit., p. 7.

²William Adams Brown, op. cit., p. 64.

³Slosser, op. cit., p. 293.

social, industrial, and international questions was being generated. Under the auspices of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America invitations to a preliminary conference meeting at Geneva in 1920 were sent out. This conference was attended by ninety delegates from fifteen countries and present also was a delegation from the Eastern Orthodox Churches. The final name of the Conference was adopted at this session and the decision was made that Foreign Missions should not be a part of the program. An international committee was created and at Helsingborg, Sweden in 1922 a definite program and place for the Conference were chosen. The program consisted of six themes: The Church's Obligation in View of God's Purpose for the World, The Church and Economic and Industrial Problems, The Church and Social and Moral Problems, The Church and International Affairs, The Church and Christian Education, Methods of Cooperation and Federative Efforts by the Christian Communions. William Adams Brown, a professor in Union Theological Seminary, was appointed chairman of the program committee.¹ In the preparations for the Conference there were some rather difficult problems. Dr. Brown tells of a meeting of his committee in Zurich in 1923 during which the question of war guilt was raised. He said that the only reason their meeting was not broken up was because the French and German committeemen could not find a train available for a night journey.² These planning meetings helped clarify the problems to be treated and helped men understand one another better.

¹Brown, op. cit., p. 72.

²Ibid., p. 73.

Stockholm--1925

August 19, 1925 the Conference on Life and Work met at Stockholm. The Conference presented a document which was entitled, "The Message of the Conference". Expression of gratitude was given that such a representative conference was able to be convened. Following are some of the important statements from this message: 1. The world is too strong for a divided Church. 2. The duty of the churches is to apply the Gospel in every realm of life, industrially, socially, politically, internationally. 3. We must seek the peaceful removal of the causes of war because war affects the churches. 4. There is the need of the universal extension of Christian education. 5. All Christians should share in a wider fellowship. 6. Property should be regarded as a stewardship for which an account must be given to God. 7. We must affirm the universal character of the Church, and its duty to preach and practice the love of the brethren.¹ Edmund C. Soper's interpretation of the Stockholm Conference is correct in the light of the "Message" of the Conference.

The purpose of the Conference is not primarily to promote the reunion of Christendom, though such cooperation as is proposed will undoubtedly help to this end. It does not intend to deal with questions of Faith and Order. The purpose is rather to concentrate the thought of Christendom on the mind of Christ as revealed in the Gospels towards those great social, industrial and international questions which are so acutely urgent in our civilization.²

¹ G. K. A. Bell, Ed, The Stockholm Conference, 1925, London, Oxford University Press, 1926, pp. 711-713, 715.

² Edmund C. Soper, Lausanne, The Will To Understand, New York, Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., 1928, pp. 8, 9.

Indelibly impressed on the minds of the men who planned and participated in this conference were the morbid facts of a decadent civilization. A culture in which social justice is forgotten, which is marked by intermittent wars, which sets employer against employee, in which everyone is bent upon getting everything he can regardless of the expense to some-one else, and in the midst of it all, a divided Church--such a civilization must learn the law of love or it will commit suicide. In the face of these conditions our hearts are cheered when the leaders of men cry out, "Lord, to whom shall we go?", and Christians everywhere are called upon to concentrate their thinking on the mind of Christ as revealed in the Gospels. This was the great accomplishment of the Stockholm Conference.

Believing that only in Christ's way of life can the world find healing and rest, we desire to discover how best His message may be applied to those problems with which every nation has been confronted. We believe that the message and teaching of Jesus Christ afford the only solution. To set ourselves to discover His will, and under the guidance of His Spirit to find ways of applying His teaching, would seem to be the paramount task of the Church.¹

There is an apparent danger in our thinking in too broad terms regarding God's purpose towards the world. God so loved the world; but Christ died and rose again that whosoever would might believe on him. The world will be saved only as individuals respond to the love of God. What then is the purpose of the Church? George W. Buckner, editor of World Call, poses the following question and by it he seeks to answer the former question:

¹Macy, op. cit., p. 8.

What can hold the world together as a brotherhood now that it has become physically a neighborhood through modern communications and transportation? the answer is: The church, if and when it can hold itself together spiritually.

If you look hopefully about for some other social cement strong enough to bring world unity, you are in for a jolt.¹

The Church then, is the social cement which brings world unity. This description is entirely inadequate. The real purpose of the church is to present every member of the body of Christ perfect in Christ.² The church has to do with fellowship and is not concerned about being a social cement. Jesus, himself, made it clear that discipleship would in many cases totally disrupt the social system.³

However, having pointed out the need for thinking clearly on this issue, Stockholm's proposal that the churches apply the Gospel in life and in work at common tasks is well taken.

The Conference appointed a Continuation Committee under the chairmanship of the Archbishop of Sweden, Nathan Soderblom. The purpose of the committee was to carry on the work of the Conference and carry out as far as possible the proposals of the Stockholm meeting. Furthermore, the committee, composed of sixty-seven representative members was to arrange for any future conferences.

At Stockholm more than five hundred representatives from most of the Christian communions from thirty-seven nations heard the challenge to let religion permeate every area of life. In

¹George Walker Buckner, Concerns of a World Church, St. Louis, The Bethany Press, 1943, p. 11.

²Matthew 10:21, 34-38.

³Colossians 1:28

the opening sermon by the Right Reverend F. T. Woods, Bishop of Winchester, the call came to

Change your mind. "Repent ye for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." In the nineteenth century, for all their cleverness and energy, they forgot this. They built churches but they piled up armaments. They sang Christian hymns, hymns of love, but in commerce and in industry they were more often hymns of another kind. They talked much about Christian civilization but they forgot to apply their Christianity. The result was that the spiritual was kept separate from the material. Doctrines, Churches, Sundays, Services, they naturally went together in one carriage. Politics, commerce, industry went in another carriage. They were all very polite, but they kept their distance. They did not mix.¹

With regard to the ecumenical movement, the significance of Stockholm lies in the fact that for the first time since the beginning of Protestantism both Catholics and Evangelicals gathered in a union assembly. It was also seen at Stockholm that a better understanding in matters of faith and order would be very helpful, if not essential, in uniting the churches in life and work.

Oxford--1937

The Continuation Committee appointed at Stockholm in 1925 included the Most Reverend Nathan Soderblom, Chairman; the Right reverend F. T. Woods, Chairman of the Provisional Executive Committee; Dr. Henry A. Atkinson, of the National Council of Congregational Churches, U.S.A., General Secretary; Reverend Adolf Keller, of the Reformed Church of Zurich, Associate General Secretary.² To these men was entrusted the task of continuing what had been begun at Stockholm. Small-scale preliminary conferences were held. One met in 1933 to discuss the theme, "The

¹Bell, op. cit., p. 40.

²Ibid., p. 756.

Church and the Social Order". Another was called in Paris in 1934 and considered the subject, "The Church and the Modern Problem of the State." At this meeting in 1934 the decision was reached to convene a world conference of the churches and to study the subject of church, community and state. Dr. J. H. Oldham, a secretary of the International Missionary Council, was appointed chairman of the commission to make preparatory arrangements for the conference.¹ The preliminary study leading up to the conference consisted of the following subjects: The Christian Understanding of Man; The Kingdom of God and History; The Christian Faith and the Common Life; The Church and Its Function in Society; The Church and the Community; The Church and the State; Church, Community and State in relation to education; Church, Community and State in relation to the social order; The Universal Church and the World of Nations.² The Church was confronted with the problem of religious freedom in the face of the growing totalitarian state. Because of this peculiar problem the Oxford Conference was called.

The Conference met in Oxford, England from July 12 to 26, 1937. There were in attendance delegates from forty-five nations who represented one hundred and nineteen churches. As an evaluation of this meeting the following resume is helpful:

Major emphases in the deliberations of the Conference were the disintegration of modern society, the collapse of standards, the disappearance of time-honored sanctions,

¹J. H. Oldham, The Oxford Conference, Chicago, Willett, Clark and Company, 1937, p. 7.

²Ibid., p. 8.

and the waning of spiritual authority on the part of the Church itself. There was an atmosphere of crisis and a corresponding urgency toward redemptive action which was felt from beginning to end.¹

In the additional report on Church and Community some practical suggestions are offered whereby the church might bring its influence to bear and might charge its environs with the spirit of Christ. God is calling every local congregation

1. to realize in its own self at any cost that unity transcending all differences and barriers of class, social status, race and nation.
2. to the different churches in any district, to come together for local ecumenical witness in worship and work.
3. to all Christians, to a more passionate and costly concern for the outcast, the underprivileged, the persecuted, the despised in the community and beyond the community.
4. to the church, to extend its concern to the particular areas of life where existing conditions in health, housing, employment and recreation in their distinctive rural and urban forms, as well as misunderstandings between old and young and tension between men and women, continually undo its work and thwart the will of God for his children.
5. to all Christians, to seek by simplicity and discipline in personal living to go beyond the accepted standards of the community in the direction of the love revealed in Christ.²

Again Christian men and women throughout the world were challenged with the call of God. Because of secularism, materialism, and sin, man finds himself in a predicament from which by his own power he cannot extricate himself. God is calling man to order his social and political affairs and to realize within himself the mind and the spirit of Christ.

Thus, the Life and Work Movement with the two monumental Conferences at Stockholm and Oxford forms a tributary flowing into the stream of the ecumenical movement. We have traced the

¹Macy, op. cit., p. 9.

²Oldham, op. cit., pp. 220-222.

rise and development of three major contributing factors to the ecumenical movement: The Missionary Movement with its call for cooperation in the preaching of the Gospel; The Faith and Order Movement which endeavored to clarify the faith held in common, to bring about an understanding of differences in matters pertaining to faith and order; The Life and Work Movement with its call to the churches to share in common tasks of peculiarly social, humanitarian, and political nature.

CHAPTER VI

THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

In the summer of 1937 the World Conference on Faith and Order met at Edinburgh. During the same summer the Universal Council on Life and Work met at Oxford. Within the two movements there had been a growing desire for coordination and combination of energies. At Stockholm in 1925 the real need for a common understanding of faith and order was very apparent. Churches may work together at common tasks; but perhaps only half-heartedly unless there is a better appreciation of the faith Christians hold in common. At Lausanne in 1927 the other side of the dilemma was seen in bold relief. Why clarify such matters as the call to unity, the nature of the church and the church's ministry only to have each communion return to its own narrow shell while the world is crying for Christian action.

As early as August, 1936, the Universal Council in Life and Work and the Continuation Committee of the World Conference on Faith and Order passed resolutions involving the appointment of a joint committee "to review the work of ecumenical cooperation since the Stockholm and Lausanne conferences."¹ This committee was designated "The Committee of Thirty-Five" and was directed to report to the Oxford and Edinburgh Conferences in 1937. In their report the formation of a World Council of Churches was

¹J. H. Oldham, op. cit., p. 261.

proposed. This council would be a "body representative of the churches and caring for the interests of each movement (Faith and Order, Life and Work)".¹ The nature of the new organization was generally outlined in this report.

The new organization which is proposed shall have no power to legislate for the Churches or to commit them to action without their consent, but if it is to be effective, it must deserve and win the respect of the churches in such measure that the people of greatest influence in the life of the churches may be willing to give time and thought to its work.

There are certain ecumenical movements such as the I.M.C. (International Missionary Council), the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches, the W.S.C.F. (World Student Christian Fellowship), and the Y.M.C.A., the Y.W.C.A. and the Central Bureau for Inter-Church Aid with which the new body should enter into relationship.²

With regard to the definite responsibility of the World Council of Churches, the committee proposed that the Council must:

- (a) Carry on the work of the two world conferences;
- (b) Facilitate corporate action by the churches;
- (c) Promote cooperation in study;
- (d) Promote the growth of ecumenical consciousness in the churches;
- (e) Consider the establishment of an ecumenical journal;
- (f) Consider the establishment of communication with denominational federations of world-wide scope;
- (g) Call world conferences on specific subjects as occasion requires.³

Other details regarding the organization of the council were suggested. The Oxford Conference approved the principle of the report by the committee of Thirty-Five and appointed a Constituent Committee of seven members to work with a similar committee appointed by the Faith and Order Conference at Edinburgh.⁴

¹ Ibid., p. 264.

² Ibid., pp. 264, 265.

³ Ibid., p. 265.

⁴ Leonard Hodgson, Ed., The Second World Conference on Faith and Order, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1938, p. 271.

This committee was assigned the important task of formulating a plan for the World Council of Churches and submitting this plan to the churches. The committee felt that its task was too great for such a limited number of persons. Therefore, they arranged for a delegate conference composed of delegates from the churches participating at Edinburgh and Oxford to meet in Utrecht, Holland in May, 1938.

Eighty persons attended the meeting and drew up a constitution for the World Council of Churches. It is significant that on that very day, May 12, 1938, the Council of the League of Nations met at Geneva and accepted the exclusion of Ethiopia from the League and thus the League of Nations began to disintegrate. However, it was encouraging that Christian leaders of the world were meeting in an effort to make the religion of Christ effective in the world. Dr. W. A. Visser t' Hooft was appointed General Secretary of the World Council of Churches. Dr. Henry Smith Leiper, Secretary of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, was appointed associate General Secretary of the World Council in America. Dr. William Paton was appointed to the similar office in Great Britain.¹ From this date, May 12, 1938, the World Council of Churches may be considered as in the process of formation.

The Constitution of the World Council of Churches

Our purpose in this dissertation can best be served by noting here some of the more significant elements of the Con-

¹H. G. G. Herklots and Henry Smith Leiper, Pilgrimage To Amsterdam, New York, Morehouse-Gorham Co., 1947, p. 18.

stitution which is governing the World Council of Churches. The first statement in the document describes the Council as "a fellowship of churches which accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour."¹ The basis of the World Council of Churches is definitely institutional and not personal. The fact of the existence of many denominations, many churches, is accepted. There is expressed here the hope that churches may be drawn together in cooperation. The approach is entirely different from that of Thomas Campbell who in the first proposition of his Declaration and Address stated emphatically that the Church of Christ is one. This one Church is composed of individuals "in every place that profess their faith in Christ and obedience to Him in all things according to the Scriptures, and that manifest the same by their tempers and conduct."² Cooperation as is suggested in the Constitution of the World Council of Churches may promote unity; but cooperation is not unity. Although much has been said in the great world conferences about sectarianism and its evil, there remains yet to be developed within the ecumenical movement the conviction that schism is sinful. I have also been aware that much emphasis has been placed on corporate action and comparatively slight emphasis has been given to the responsibility of the individual in the realization of the aims of a world-wide Christianity.

¹ Macy, op. cit., p. 31.

² Frederick D. Kershner, The Christian Union Overture, St. Louis, The Bethany Press, 1923, p. 81.

There is a section in the Constitution on the authority of the World Council of Churches. Four statements defining this authority are laid down:

- (a) The World Council shall offer counsel and provide opportunity of united action in matters of common interest.
- (b) It may take action on behalf of constituent Churches in such matters as one or more of them may commit to it.
- (c) It shall have authority to call regional and world conferences on specific subjects as occasion may require.
- (d) The World Council shall not legislate for the Churches; nor shall it act for them in any manner except as indicated above or as may hereafter be specified by constituent Churches.¹

Much concern has arisen in some quarters regarding the intentions of the World Council. Although it is specifically stated that the World Council shall not legislate for the Churches; yet by its Constitution the Council is left free to act for the Churches as it is directed by the Churches.

Though the World Council disavows any claim for itself as the fulfillment of the dream of a united Christendom . . . on the contrary, it accepts Christendom "as is," with its great array of "churches," and offers itself as a meeting point and an instrument for their cooperation. It emphatically disavows any pretension to be a "super-church" or even to foster organic union among the separated bodies.²

Such expressions as the following indicate that the World Council intends to wield its influence regardless of its Constitution. Stewart W. Herman, for some years an associate secretary of the department of inter-church aid and rehabilitation with the World Council, notes that S. M. Cavert has said that

¹Macy, op. cit., p. 31.

²Editorial, "Appraising Amsterdam," The Christian Century, Volume LXV, No. 39, September 29, 1948, p. 1000.

Man's Disorder and God's Design, (The Amsterdam Assembly Series), New York, Harper and Brothers, 1948, Section I, pp. 179, 181.

the World Council must be able to speak out regarding today's critical international problems, and he argues that the absence of specific delegation of authority from the constituent churches does not mean that the council must be mute.¹

At any rate, theoretically and constitutionally the World Council is an instrument designed to be directed and used by the participating churches.

The Constitution further arranges for an assembly to be called every five years and apportions the membership according to the various sections of the world. The Constitution also provides that one-third of the four hundred and fifty members be from the laity of the churches. The Constitution was adopted by the Assembly of the World Council of Churches in session at Amsterdam, Holland on August 30, 1948.

Services Rendered by the World Council

From its inception in 1938 the World Council of Churches has been bringing its influence to bear through several avenues of service. During the Second World War the Council appointed a Chaplaincy Commission for Prisoners of War. From 1940 this Commission operated in conjunction with the Y.M.C.A. War Prisoners' Aid. A Bible department was established within the Council. This would be indicative of interest in the Word of God throughout the world. A commission for refugees was appointed which was very active during the war and is still at work. The World Council created a new department of Reconstruction and Inter-Church Aid. Through this department by 1947 more than two hundred

¹ Stewart W. Herman, "Who Is The World Council?", The Christian Century, Volume LXV, No. 25, June 23, 1948, p. 625.

and twenty-five church buildings had been built in as many towns and cities. More than one thousand pastors were provided with many of the essentials for their homes and their work. The Ecumenical Press Service, an organ of information concerning important church activities throughout the world has been published. Along with the International Missionary Council the World Council has a Commission of the Churches on International Affairs. George W. Buckner has said that

of all groups which have something to say that the world needs to have said, there is none like the church. This was never more apparent than in the light of the resurgence of materialistic and selfish forces which has marked the past two decades. The widespread disregard for the rights of the individual, the deification of the state, the increase of racial pride, antagonism and persecution, the growth of cynicism and the common trust in force--these and other characteristics of the times have been in direct contradiction to the essential message and purpose of the Christian religion.¹

The World Council of Churches through its activities has been trying to stem the tide of these forces.

Conflicting attitudes towards the World Council of Churches have appeared through the years. Guy W. Mayfield, a missionary stationed at Bari, Italy and a special correspondent to the Christian Standard, writes:

Many of us have felt for a long time that the proposed World Council of Churches was not according to the Lord's plan for His church and that it would not forward His program upon the earth.²

An editorial in a recent Federal Council Bulletin points out

¹Buckner, op. cit., pp. 33, 34.

²Guy W. Mayfield, "World Council Leaders Refuse to Recognize Representatives of Fundamentalist Groups," Christian Standard, Volume LXXXIV, No. 41, October 9, 1948, p. 661.

that both the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America and the World Council of Churches have as their basis of unity a common faith in the deity of Jesus Christ and a desire to exalt His lordship in every aspect of life.

Neither the Federal Council nor the World Council is to be thought of as a humanitarian association for worthy social ends, however important these may be. Neither is to be understood as an organization for promoting morality--not even the supreme ethics of Jesus. The central genius of both Councils is a united witness to Jesus Christ as the incarnate Word of God.¹

This principle is true that a tree is known by its fruits. Perhaps we are too close to pass an ultimate judgment upon the World Council of Churches. The passing of a few years will bring us to a more satisfactory vantage point and to a better perspective.

Amsterdam--1948

Although the World Council of Churches had been in the process of formation since 1938, the Council formally came into existence on August 23, 1948. Representatives of one hundred and forty churches including groups as divergent as the Salvation Army and the Church of Abyssinia accepted the Constitution. The first Assembly of the World Council of Churches met in Amsterdam, Holland from August 22 to September 4, 1948. During this gathering the following subjects were considered and discussed: The Universal Church in God's Design, The Church's Witness in God's Design, The Church and the Disorder of Society, The Church and the International Disorder.

¹Editorial, "Philadelphia 1908 and Amsterdam 1948," Federal Council Bulletin, Volume XXXI, No. 8, October, 1948, p. 4.

The Assembly at Amsterdam followed generally the pattern laid down in earlier conferences. After a series of eighteen addresses which focused the attention of the gathering upon the mission and tasks of the church, the delegates were placed in four sections to study the specific themes indicated above. After about a week's deliberation and study each section produced a report on its findings.¹ Our purpose is to survey briefly the highlights of these reports.

The Universal Church in God's Design

This report begins with an affirmation of unity and maintains that in spite "of our divisions, we are one in Jesus Christ."² A common concern for the Church is the reason for convening the Assembly. In seeking to comprehend the universal church in God's design, some difference in understanding appeared. These had to do with the relation between the old and the new Israel, the relation of the visible church to the new creation in Christ, the relation between objective redemption and personal salvation, between scripture and tradition, and the founding of the church. There were divergent views on the place of the ministry in the church as there had been from the first. The closing paragraph of the report states that "there is but one Lord and one Body. Therefore we cannot rest content with our present divisions."³

¹Harold E. Fey, "The Amsterdam World Assembly of Churches," The Christian Century, Vol. LXV, No. 40, Oct. 6, 1948, p. 1034.

²Man's Disorder and God's Design, Section I, p. 204.

³Ibid., p. 209.

The Church's Witness to God's Design

This section dealt with the urgency of the missionary task and in its report pointed out that Christ laid this task upon His Church. The necessity of overcoming all class distinction and racial discrimination is emphasized. Furthermore, "the Church must go out and find men in the midst of the battle of life; it must identify itself with their struggles and sufferings."¹ This section called attention to the fact that the missionary task is the responsibility of the whole church, of every member. They presented anew the challenging vision of "the whole church militant mobilized to evangelize the whole world."

The Church and the Disorder of Society

The Christian Church approaches the disorder of our society with faith in the Lordship of Jesus Christ. In Him God has established His Kingdom and its gates stand open for all who will enter. Their lives belong to God with a certainty that no disorder of society can destroy, and on them is laid the duty to seek God's Kingdom and His righteousness.²

Because God has endowed man with the right and the ability to choose for himself, man was designed to be a member of a responsible society. "Man is not made for the State but the State for man. Man is not made for production, but production for man." Wherever the inalienable rights of man are denied, the purpose of this report is to condemn those who are responsible for this denial. With regard to Communism and

¹ First Assembly of the World Council of Churches, The Woodhaven Press, 1948, p. 24.

² Man's Disorder and God's Design, Section III, p. 189.

Capitalism, the areas of conflict are defined and Christians are urged "to seek new, creative solutions which never allow either justice or freedom to destroy the other."¹

The Church and the International Disorder

This report states clearly that war comes because man has forgotten God. The fallacy of believing that some strange fate bears mankind irresistibly on to international conflict is pointed out. Since the world is controlled by God, if men will return to Him, peace will come. Some salient facts are posited: (1) War is contrary to the will of God. (2) Peace requires an attack on the causes of conflict between the powers. (3) The nations of the world must acknowledge the rule of law. (4) The observance of Human Rights and the Fundamental Freedoms should be encouraged by domestic and international action. (5) The churches and all Christian people have obligations in the face of international disorder. It was further suggested that the World Council should bring its influence to bear in the hastening of international reconciliation. However, the most important statement presented war as contrary to the will of God, and presented man as a worker together with God.²

Man's disorder and God's design was a thought-provoking theme, a subject worthy of the consideration of such an assembly as that which met at Amsterdam. Of course, the final word was not spoken there, but we are much encouraged that men in responsible positions of leadership and ordinary persons out of the

¹Ibid., p. 195.

²Ibid., pp. 218-223.

churches are concerned about discovering God's design.

In 1947 S. M. Cavert, chairman of the World Council's Committee on the 1948 Assembly, saw clearly that the Amsterdam Assembly had a full schedule before it. First, the organizational details in establishing the World Council had to receive much attention. Extensive study in the field of the Church's relationship to the world had to be summarized and presented.¹ Perhaps when the Assembly convenes in 1953 the time can be used entirely for study, deliberation and planning that the church may be more effective in the world.

We have endeavored to mark the development of the ecumenical movement, suggesting that much serious thought was given to cooperation and organization in the nineteenth century. The roots of the movement are found back there. Then we have studied the Missionary Movement, the Faith and Order Movement, the Life and Work Movement and have tried to evaluate the impact of each as the world-wide cooperative movement has evolved. We noted that the Life and Work Movement along with the Faith and Order Movement produced the World Council of Churches.

Since we have dealt largely with Conferences and Councils, this word should be added:

periodical meetings of leaders do not constitute an ecumenical movement. It is the desire of those who attended the Assembly (Amsterdam) that the rank and file of the Churches should be penetrated by the same spirit of dependence on God and the same concern for unity.²

¹Henry S. Leiper, Ed., Christianity Today, New York, Morehouse-Gorham Co., 1947, p. 450.

²First Assembly of the World Council of Churches, p. 5.

CHAPTER VII

THE CHURCH REFLECTED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Having traced the rise and development of the ecumenical movement and having noted some of the contributing factors, we now turn to the concluding section of our study. The question we shall answer is, "To what extent has the ecumenical movement incorporated within itself the concept of the New Testament Church?" In this introductory statement we are affirming that there is discernible in the New Testament an organism called the "church". We are also of the opinion that any movement among men calling itself "Christian" must establish its relevance to Christ and his body, the church.

The Unity and Identity of the Church

There is only one church revealed in the New Testament; however this one church is clearly identified. Matthew 16:15-19 records the statement of Peter's confession of Christ and Christ's response that on this confession of himself as the Son of God he (Christ) would build his church. In the same connection our Lord indicated that the founding of his church would sustain a relationship to his death, burial, and resurrection.¹ In Acts 5:11 we read that "great fear came upon all the church." The occasion of this wave of fear was the removal of Ananias and Sapphira from the fellowship of the believers. There can be no doubt that the church was in existence before this time, but evidently it was so well known that Luke did not have to mention

¹Matthew 16:21.

it. Early in the narrative of Acts persecution arose against the church.¹ This persecution informs us that not everyone was friendly toward the followers of Jesus and those who were persecuting knew well the identity of the ones whom they were seeking out. The church was distinguishable as an institution. Herod began persecuting certain ones of the church. He killed James, the brother of John, and had Peter put in prison.² The church was more than a spirit or a shadow, it was actually existing and functioning, and it was common knowledge that James and Peter were leaders in the church. When the followers of Jesus learned that Peter was in prison, the church made prayer without ceasing to God in Peter's behalf.³ After his deliverance from prison Peter knew where to go to find at least a portion of the church. "When he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname is Mark, where many were gathered together praying."⁴

By the time the narrative progresses to the thirteenth chapter of Acts the church has gone beyond Jerusalem even to Antioch.⁵ In writing to the Romans Paul sends greetings to the church in the house of Priscilla and Aquilla.⁶ In Romans 16:16 Paul writes, "the churches of Christ salute you." In 1 Corinthians the letter is addressed to the church of God which is at Corinth. There is no reason to suppose that this letter was not sent through the regular postal system. If so, the church must have been identifiable or else the postman would not have delivered the letter. When the New Testament records were written there was an institution called the "church" and there was only

¹Acts 8:1

²Acts 12:1, 2

³Acts 12:5

⁴Acts 12:12

⁵Acts 13:1

⁶Romans 16:5.

one such body that claimed Christ as its head.

The Creed of the New Testament Church

According to Matthew 16:16-18 Christ not only said that he would build his church, but he said that the very foundation of the church would be the confession that he himself was the Son of God. The organism not only had a name, but it also had a creed--the person, Jesus Christ. In Mark's account of the commission Jesus gave to his disciples this creed must be subscribed to in order for one to be saved.¹ The good news was to be preached by the Apostles and believed by the hearers. They preached a message which was to be believed. On the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ, Peter preached a stirring message about Jesus who was the Christ. At the conclusion of the discourse the people were pricked in their hearts, they believed and all their other actions stemmed from this new faith. In Samaria Philip preached and the people gave heed to him, and "when they believed Philip preaching the things of the kingdom of God they were baptized."² To the people gathered in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia Paul preached saying that all who believed in Christ were justified from all things.³ In his letter to the Romans Paul points out that it is faith that justifies.⁴ 1 Corinthians 15:1 presents Paul's reminder to the Corinthians of the gospel which he had preached and which they had received. The New Testament Church had a creed. This creed was the person, Christ.

¹Mark 16:15

²Acts 8:6, 12

³Acts 13:29

⁴Romans 4:3f

The Sacraments of the New Testament Church

The New Testament also records that this church observed certain sacraments. The initiatory rite of baptism is a peculiar mark of the New Testament church. When belief in Christ was produced by Peter's message on Pentecost and the people asked what they should do, Peter told them to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.¹ Mark, in giving his account of the great commission, gives us Christ's words, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."² Jesus commissioned the apostles and told them to go and "make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."³ When the Ethiopian eunuch confessed Christ, Philip baptized him.⁴ Lydia and her household were baptized.⁵ The Philippian jailor and all his household were baptized.⁶ In Corinth, Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and many of the Corinthians were baptized.⁷ Paul writes concerning baptism to the Romans (6:3-5), "are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life." From all these passages the facts are clear that when the word is heard and Christ is confessed, then baptism is the initiatory rite into God's family.

¹ Acts 2:38

² Mark 16:16

³ Matthew 28:19

⁴ Acts 8:38

⁵ Acts 16:14

⁶ Acts 16:33

⁷ Acts 18:8.

Another sacrament of the New Testament Church is that of the Lord's Supper. Luke, in his Gospel, reports that Christ ate the Passover with his disciples, then "he took the bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them saying, This is my body which broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new Testament in my blood which is shed for you."¹ In some special way this supper was to be observed in Jesus' memory. Jesus had died and the supper had taken on new meaning when in Acts 2:42 we read that one of the marks of the church was the breaking of bread. We are informed that at Troas "upon the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached."² This would suggest a regular recurrence of the observance and also that everything else was incidental as far as the worship service was concerned. The first letter to the Corinthians reveals the gross abuses of the Lord's Supper in the church at Corinth. In an effort to correct these abuses several references are made to the sacrament. "The cup of blessing which we bless is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread."³ "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils."⁴ In 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 Paul says, "I have received of the Lord that which

¹Luke 22:19, 20 ²Acts 20:7 ³1 Corinthians 10:16, 17

⁴1 Corinthians 10:21.

also I delivered unto you," then he tells how Jesus instituted the Supper and adds that "as oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." This passage is exceedingly important because Paul claimed that he received this account of the Lord's Supper and its significance directly from the Lord, himself. One of the peculiar marks distinguishing the church from other societies was the regular observance of the Lord's Supper.

The Mission of the New Testament Church

According to the New Testament, the church has a mission.

In the great commission given by Jesus to the apostles, he told them to go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them, teaching them to observe all things that Jesus had commanded the apostles.¹ The church had been instituted on Pentecost and the record would indicate that it was not too conscious of its mission until persecution broke out after Stephen's death.² The church was scattered abroad throughout Judea and Samaria and the followers of Jesus went about preaching the word. Philip went to Samaria and preached Christ. The Samaritans believed.³ Peter went down to Lydda and Sharon healing and preaching and he also went to Joppa and Caesarea.⁴ We learn from Acts 11:19 that those who were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch speaking the word to none save only to Jews; but there were some who came to Antioch who spoke also to the Greeks preaching the Lord Jesus. They had a mission.

The church in Antioch championed the cause of the

¹Matthew 28:18-20 ²Acts 8:1 ³Acts 8:5 ⁴Acts 9:32-35.

evangelization of the Gentiles. Acts 13 records the account of the call of Barnabas and Saul to fulfill a mission. Here the great activity of Paul begins and before the closing chapter of his life is written, nearly every great center of population had heard the story of Jesus Christ. The mission of the church reached beyond the Jews, beyond Jerusalem to Corinth, Ephesus, Colosse, Philippi, Galatia, Thessalonica, Athens, and Rome. Jesus had said that all authority had been given unto him and the followers of Jesus knew that the mission of the church was based upon the authority of Christ to send them forth preaching. Paul felt this so keenly that he exclaimed on one occasion, "for if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; for woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel."¹ To carry the good news of redemption through Jesus Christ to the ends of the world was the mission of the New Testament Church.

The Message of the New Testament Church

The church had a message. The commission to the apostles concerning the message was "go teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you" (Matthew 28:20). In Acts 1:8 Jesus again speaks to the apostles telling them that they were to be his "witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth." The substance of the message on Pentecost was that Jesus of Nazareth was now both Lord and Christ. On Solomon's porch Peter preached again about Jesus "the Prince of life; whom God raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses" (Acts 3:15). Peter and John were put in prison because they "proclaimed in Jesus the resurrection from

¹1 Corinthians 9:16.

the dead."¹ Stephen witnessed concerning Jesus, the Righteous One, and for his testimony he was stoned.² Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed unto them the Christ.³ In Damascus Saul confounded the Jews and proved "that this is the Christ."⁴ At Lydda Peter was confronted with a man named Eneas, who had the palsy and Peter told him to arise from his bed for "Jesus Christ healeth thee" and straightway he arose.⁵ Wherever the apostles or followers of Jesus went their message was simply that of proclaiming the glad tidings concerning Christ. This was the message Paul proclaimed in Thessalonica as he went into the synagogue and "reasoned with them from the Scriptures, opening and alleging that it behooved the Christ to suffer and to rise again from the dead; that this Jesus I proclaim unto you is the Christ."⁶ To the Corinthians Paul said, "I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received; that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."⁷ To proclaim this message, to bear witness to Christ was a major concern with those who believed in Jesus.

The Ministry of the New Testament Church

The New Testament Church had a ministry. This is evident from what has been said before. Many of the servants of Christ have been named. Peter, John, Philip, Stephen, Barnabas, Paul, James and many others were in this group. The apostles, particularly Peter and James (Acts 2 and 15) accepted the responsibility

¹Acts 4:2

⁶Acts 17:2, 3

²Acts 7

³Acts 8:5

⁴Acts 9:22

⁵Acts 9:34

⁷1 Corinthians 15:3, 4.

of leadership. Paul, after his experience on the Damascus road, knew well that he had been chosen for a particular ministry--carrying the gospel to the Gentiles. In Paul's efforts there were those who helped him, among whom were John Mark, Timothy, Titus, and many others. Very soon after the institution of the church Luke tells us in the book of Acts that seven deacons were chosen to minister to the physical needs of the people in serving tables. Stephen was one of these men of good report, and full of the Spirit and of wisdom.¹ In this case the apostles assumed the place of leadership as they called the multitude of the disciples to them.² In Acts 15:23 the apostles and the elders of the church in Jerusalem send a letter to the brethren of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia. Paul addressed the followers of Christ at Ephesus and among the gifts God gave to men he lists apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. The purpose of all these is "the equipment of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God."³ Paul was hurrying to be in Jerusalem for Pentecost, but at Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church.⁴ The letter to the Philippians begins after this manner: "Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons."⁵ The church did have a ministry; but in a true sense every follower of Jesus was a servant, a minister. There is no concept of clergy in the New

¹Acts 6:1-6 ²Acts 6:2 ³Ephesians 4:11-13 ⁴Acts 20:17

⁵Philippians 1:1.

Testament. In no place does the New Testament even intimate that any authority was vested in the ministry. The authority was in Christ and the greatest minister was one who served most humbly.

I have made no attempt to be exhaustive in this treatment of the New Testament Church because the New Testament has much to say about the body of Christ. However, I have indicated six marks of the church which are essential. The church was identifiable and distinguishable from other associations. It was marked by a creed which was not human, but divine--Christ the Son of the living God. In order to enter into the fellowship one observed the initiatory rite of baptism. In order to continue in the fellowship there was the regular observance of the Lord's Supper to be kept. The mission of the church was to carry the Good Tidings concerning Christ to the ends of the earth. The message of the church derived from and consisted of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ and God's purpose toward men as manifested in Christ. The ministry of the church included apostles, prophets, teachers, pastors, elders, deacons. Every servant of Christ was his minister.

CHAPTER VIII
THE RELEVANCE OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT
TO THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

The Fact of the One Church

Therefore, the New Testament records the facts regarding the church and defines the marks by which the church may be known through the centuries. The project before us is that of determining the extent to which the ecumenical movement has tried to incorporate within itself this concept of the New Testament church. The following pronouncement was made at the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910: in order to achieve "the ultimate and highest end of all missionary work--the establishment in these non-Christian lands of Christ's one Church--real unity must be attained."¹ Here is the assertion that Christ knows only one church and that unity must come not merely for unity's sake, but that men may know Christ.² This is a wonderful sentiment, truly relevant to the New Testament church; but it is not followed through. Instead of courageously facing the issue, the International Missionary Council meeting at Jerusalem in 1928 confused cooperation with unity. Again it was noted that "the spiritual implications of the Gospel demand unity among those who are seeking to spread the Good News."³ However, it was claimed that unity is attained through united

¹Cooperation and Promotion of Unity, p. 5.

²John 17:21.

³International Missionary Cooperation, Vol. VII, p. 52.

service in a common task for the evangelization of the world. In effect, they said, "Christ's one church must be established, but we are members of many churches and we must justify our position." By 1938 it was clear that cooperation had not produced unity and the conclusion was that "the Spirit of God was guiding the various branches of His Church to seek for the realization of a visible and organic union."

This matter of the unity of the church has constantly tantalized the ecumenical movement; yet there has been no concerted effort to deal with it. At Lausanne Bishop Brent in his address, "The Call to Unity", gave expression to the concept of the one church. Out of that conference came this admonition, "Let us keep these great words in mind. The Church is one, and always has been, and must be, one."¹ The Assembly at Amsterdam also faced the problem of justifying the existence of many churches. The first section was assigned the subject, "The Universal Church in God's Design." Many persons in the section confessed quite frankly that

the chief problem was that we met to discuss the Church and found ourselves compelled to speak about the churches Some would have liked to go on record that the very name of "the World Council of Churches" gave expression to a scandal which ought not to be. The New Testament allows us to speak of the universal Church and of local churches, but we were using the plural, in quite un-biblical way, to mean our "denominations".²

Of course, this sentiment was not shared by all; but a sufficient number of members in this particular section were adequately

¹ Bate, op. cit., p. 24.

² First Assembly of the World Council of Churches, p. 11.

acquainted with the New Testament and the one church to be disconcerted in their deliberations.

Although occasionally a ray of light breaks through and the one church of the New Testament is recognized, the general tenor of the ecumenical movement up to this time has not been in accord with the New Testament church. Within the ecumenical movement

the aim is to preserve and amalgamate in some way all the historic values which have been prized and preserved by each body.

As a people (Disciples of Christ) we differ in approach in that we plead for all to step back beyond the accretions of history to the original source and pattern. It may be said that the watch-word of the ecumenical movement is "preservation," while our watch-word is "restoration."¹

Perhaps it is well to balance our thinking with this statement:

Too often the church has gloried in its denominationalism. The World Council of Churches is not organic unity. It is not the answer to our Lord's prayer that His disciples be one. It is still only a council. But it is a council. And there has to be a recognition of unity before there can be a council. It is a declaration to the whole world that these churches recognize that one another belong to the church, that they are going to continue to seek the strong foundation for unity, and that they are going to present a common front because of their oneness in Christ before this pagan and desperate world.²

The Creed of the New Testament Church

Karl Barth in his address at Amsterdam on "The Church--the Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ," said that the church is a congregation which "is that event in which the absolute sovereignty of Jesus Christ--its Lord, and also the Lord of the world--finds its proper answer and response in the perfect freedom of obedience of those who have been called,

¹E. Lyall Williams, "Whither Our Brotherhood?", The Christian Evangelist, Volume 86, No. 30, July 28, 1948, p. 754.

²Editorial, "A Date In History," The Christian Evangelist, Volume 86, No. 37, September 15, 1948, p. 924.

called out, and called together by Him, and summoned to gratitude and to service."¹ He continues by pointing out that when the church no longer is concerned about continuing its historical purpose in Christ, when the "vital current passing and re-passing between the Lord and His congregation is blocked by man's sin" then the church has ceased to exist.²

In diagnosing "The Disorder of Man in the Church of God," H. Richard Niebuhr states that "all our human wrongness in the Church is related to a disorder in our relation to its Head. We disobey Him because we do not trust Him. In faith we acknowledge Him as the risen Christ who gives us in our time His order and commandments; in doubt we think Him dead and believe that it is we who must give others His orders. So we arrogate to ourselves the right to rule His Church for Him."³ Each of these statements expresses forcefully the absolute necessity for the acceptance of the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

At Amsterdam the delegates were told that "the tragedy of our divisions is precisely that we are not agreed about the necessary 'marks' by which 'the Church' is discerned." However, in outlining the essentials of the Church as the Anglicans conceived them, the following elements were listed:

- (1) Holy Scripture as the final criterion by which all beliefs claimed as necessarily to be confessed for salvation are to be tested;
- (2) The full faith of the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene

¹Man's Disorder and God's Design, Section I, p. 68.

²Ibid., p. 71.

³Ibid., p. 87.

Creed;

- (3) The unfailing use of the two great Sacraments of the Gospel as ordained by Christ, and
- (4) The Apostolic Ministry of Bishops, Priests and Deacons, transmitted by those having authority to transmit.¹

With regard to the creed, much has been said within the ecumenical movement concerning the value of the historic creeds, the Apostles' and the Nicene. The fact that these are human instruments has never been very disturbing. There is the realization that allegiance must be given to Christ; but to make the creed more ornate it must be phrased by uninspired men. For the ecumenical movement it is not enough to say, "Christ is my Creed." The first article of the Constitution of the World Council of Churches states that "The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of Churches which accepts our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour."

Theologically speaking the basis is probably not the best that could be found. It has, however, played a considerable role in the history of the ecumenical movement since its earliest beginnings and has the merit of pointing definitely toward the central moments of our Christian faith. It reminds us therefore of the fact that our unity is not found in ourselves but in our common relatedness to a common Lord.²

Where this recognition of the Lordship of Jesus appears there is a relevance to the creed of the New Testament Church. However, in the ecumenical movement there is a striving for something more, for a new confession of faith. Again, the question is, "If the New Testament confession of faith in Christ as the Son of God was sufficient for the New Testament Church, why is the same confession deficient today?"

¹Ibid., p. 65.

²Macy, op. cit., p. 25.

The Sacraments of the New Testament Church

The World Conference on Faith and Order at Lausanne dealt with the sacraments of the church. In the account given earlier in this dissertation we noted that there were conflicting opinions on this subject.¹ Three divergent answers were forthcoming in response to the question, "What is your basis for determining the number, nature, and validity of the sacraments which you observe?" The Orthodox representatives claimed as their basis the experience of the Apostles and the saints. For them the New Testament does not give the final word about the sacraments; however the New Testament forms a partial basis for their decision. The second view expressed by the Evangelical-Reformed Church made no appeal to the New Testament, but held that each Church was free to choose for itself regarding the sacraments which it should observe. Under such a plan a church might choose to observe only the two undisputed sacraments of the New Testament Church. A church might select to observe several sacraments. Again, a church might see no value in any sacrament and discard completely these marks of the church. The third view was that of the Baptists which discounted entirely the value of tradition, and denied emphatically the right of each church to choose for itself in these essential matters. They claimed to receive "the New Testament as the only rule of faith and practice."² Certainly this is

¹See page 40 of this dissertation.

²Bate, op. cit., p. 313.

catholic ground; but no common understanding of it was reached at Lausanne.

Graham Frank, writing prior to the convening of the Conference at Lausanne pointed out that the goal is organic unity. However, the points of most probable disagreement at Lausanne would be the nature of the church, the ministry and the ordinances. It was his hope, nevertheless, that Lausanne would be a step toward the reunited church.¹ Therefore, these conflicting ideas regarding the sacraments were expected to come.

In surveying the addresses made at the Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in 1948, there is considerably more unanimity than we have noted previously in regard to the sacraments of the church. It is made clear that the speakers are not delivering their discourses as official spokesmen for their traditions.² Perhaps, for this reason there is more agreement. In the first message, "The Doctrine of the Church," Gustaf Aulen, the Bishop of Strangnas, Sweden, and former Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Lund, says that

The New Testament gives us a very clear view of the constitutive elements of the Church. . . . Therefore, according to the New Testament, the constitutive factors of the Church are the Word of God and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist.³

When one takes the New Testament as his guide in determining the essentials of the church, the quarrels with tradition and the uncertainty of man's choices are eluded.

¹ Graham Frank, "The World Conference on Faith and Order," The Christian Evangelist, Vol. LXIV, No. 29, July 21, 1927, p. 971.

² Man's Disorder and God's Design, Section I, p. 17.

³ Ibid., p. 22.

Clarence T. Craig, Professor of New Testament at Yale University, speaking upon the same theme as Bishop Aulen, said that "entrance to the Church (the New Testament Church) was by faith and baptism." He also said that "the life of this brotherhood in Christ was nourished by the celebration of the Lord's Supper."¹

George Florovsky, Professor of Dogmatics, Orthodox Theological Institute, Paris, in his address pointed out that "the unity of the Church is effected through the sacraments: Baptism and the Eucharist are the two 'social sacraments' of the Church."²

In the addresses on "The Universal Church in God's Design," the statements reproduced above were made. They are indicative of this fact that when we become concerned about discovering God's design for his church, the achievement of the knowledge of this design awaits only our quest.

However, when the World Council of Churches produced its "Message" addressed to all who are in Christ there was the realization that "we are divided from one another not only in matters of faith, order and tradition, but also by pride of nation, class and race."³ Although there has been on the part of some communions within the ecumenical movement some investigation toward the establishment of a relevance with the New Testament Church in the matter of the sacraments, the movement itself

¹Ibid., p. 36.

²Ibid., p. 47.

³First Assembly of the World Council of Churches, p. 8.

has not arrived at the point where it is willing to take the New Testament as the only rule of faith and practice.

The Mission of the New Testament Church

From the beginning of the movement there has been rather a clear concept of the mission of the Church. The Missionary Movement within the ecumenical movement continues to make its contribution in the sharpening of the Christian conscience on this matter. One idea in the term "mission" is that of territory or space. Inherent in the term is the authority of the one who sends and also the willingness of him who is sent to carry out his assignment. At Edinburgh in 1910 the point was made that "the end of missionary work is to see the one united Church of Christ established in every land."¹

Clarence Craig in his address at Amsterdam said,

The New Testament Church was pre-eminently a witnessing community, for its members were under obligation to proclaim the Word of God and to live in obedience to Him. The good news of His salvation was not to be enjoyed in quiet satisfaction. The risen Christ had called them to be His witnesses to the end of the earth.²

He further notes that not only apostles like Paul accepted this challenge, but those who took Christ as Lord and Saviour proclaimed him wherever they went. The authority of Christ to send ambassadors, the willingness of men and women to take their commission seriously, and the vast scope in which the Gospel must be proclaimed have been sounded again and again through the ecumenical movement. In my judgment, the mission of the church has been a compelling factor in drawing the forces of Christianity

¹ Gaius Slosser, op. cit., p. 131.

² Man's Disorder and God's Design, pp. 36, 37.

toward one another. We have a mission to fulfill, a world-wide task to do for our Lord; but we are divided. The world is too strong, our mission too comprehensive for a divided church.

The ecumenical movement, however, can establish relevance with the concept of the mission of the New Testament church only when it can speak distinctly and unitedly on the matters of creed, sacraments, and ministry.

The Message of the New Testament Church

One of the finest statements appearing in the records of the ecumenical movement is that address by Dr. Adolf Deismann of the University of Berlin delivered at Lausanne. His theme was "The Church's Message to the World: The Gospel." I have given a fuller account of this earlier;¹ but a summary of his statement will be helpful here. He said emphatically that the church's message is the gospel and that the gospel is the "joyful message of redemption the gift of God to sinful man in Jesus Christ."² The life, death, burial and resurrection of Christ are the essential elements of the gospel. He made the statement that Christ is the gospel. Convincingly he said that the gospel "is more than a philosophical theory; more than a theological system; more than a program for material betterment."³

Those gathered at Amsterdam were reminded that the Gospel is that act of God which cannot be understood except as His proclamation of salvation for the whole world. At this point as at so many others, the Church can

¹See pages 35 and 36 of this dissertation.

²Brown, op. cit., p. 102.

³Ibid.

be the Church only be a return to the New Testament and by a recovery of New Testament perspectives and categories of thought.¹

In the report of Section II at Amsterdam which was endorsed by the Assembly, the first paragraph deals with the purpose of God which is contained in and expressed through the gospel.

The purpose of God is to reconcile all men to Himself and to one another in Jesus Christ His Son. That purpose was made manifest in Jesus Christ--His incarnation, His ministry of service, His death on the Cross, His resurrection and ascension. It continues in the gift of the Holy Spirit, in the command to make disciples of all nations, and in the abiding presence of Christ with His Church. It looks forward to its consummation in the gathering together of all things in Christ.²

This is the Gospel, the Church's message to the world. All that we need to know is already revealed in Christ. It is God's will that the gospel should be proclaimed to all men everywhere. God is pleased to use human obedience in the fulfillment of his purpose.³

The ecumenical movement has achieved its nearest relevance to the New Testament Church in the matters of the Church's mission and message. However, the church will be truly effective only when all the "marks" are restored.

The Ministry of the New Testament Church

Within the ecumenical movement there have been from the first, two conflicting views regarding the ministry of the church. The Anglicans have consistently demanded that apostolical

¹ Man's Disorder and God's Design, Section II, p. 116.

² Ibid., p. 212.

³ Ibid.

succession and the transmission of divine grace by the laying on of hands by those qualified to ordain are essential to the restoration of unity. Furthermore, those who have not been so ordained are regarded by the Anglicans merely as laymen, and consequently unqualified to administer the Lord's Supper. Others within the movement, generally classified as Protestants, regard both apostolical succession and the conferment of divine grace by the laying on of hands as superstitious and unwarranted on any basis. In spite of the several conferences and the general growth of the ecumenical movement, this conflict is still very active. It is perhaps the most serious single obstacle to unity today.

Something of the real magnitude of this problem is reflected in a proposal for unity suggested by the Protestant Episcopal Church in 1880.

As inherent parts of this sacred deposit, and therefore as essential to the restoration of unity among the divided branches of Christendom, we account the following: (1) The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the revealed Word of God; (2) The Nicene Creed as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith; (3) The two sacraments, baptism and the Supper of the Lord, ministered with unfailing use of Christ's words of institution, and of the elements ordained by him; (4) The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of his church.¹

In answer to persistent Episcopal proposals for Christian unity, M. P. Hayden presented an article in the Christian Standard. He stated that in the light of Episcopal bids for unity it is not clear that such unity would be Christian. Christ

¹Jackson, op. cit., pp. 80-82.

alone is the authority in his church. The historic episcopate lacks divine authority. The historic episcopate came into existence through a departure from the primitive church.¹ Here the issue rests. Until men refuse to rely upon tradition, refrain from succumbing to ecclesiastical ambitions, get beyond the accretions of the centuries to an unbiased study of the ministry of the New Testament church, this conflict will continue.

Gustaf Aulen, to whose message reference was made earlier, said that

the task of the Ministry is to serve Christ by serving the Church in her endeavours to penetrate the human world as deeply and as widely as possible. In this work the Ministry possesses authority given by Christ, but this authority is not a personal authority, only an authority of service.

Finally, service in the Church is obviously not confined to the Ministry. In fact, all the members of the Church are called to be servants in different ways.²

Again, the World Council heard Clarence Craig say that "Jesus made it clear that here was no place for lordship among His disciples. Pre-eminence comes only through humble service."³ He also noted that the words "minister" and "servant" are alternative translations of the Greek. He mentions apostles, prophets, teachers, bishops, elders, deacons and indicates that they were all engaged in ministry, in service. He says "there was no place in the New Testament for ministers who should bear the title of priest" because all believers were priests and Christ was the great High Priest.⁴ There was no hierarchical development

¹M. P. Hayden, "Episcopal Proposals For Christian Unity," Christian Standard, Vol. LXII, No. 37, Sept. 10, 1927, p. 870.

²Man's Disorder and God's Design, Section I, pp. 27, 28.

³Ibid., p. 36.

⁴Ibid., p. 38.

within the New Testament Church. Craig frankly says that "ultimately the Church was to develop an administrative hierarchy of bishop, elders, and deacons, but this is not found within the New Testament, which prescribes no one particular pattern of administration."¹ Therefore, any attempt to establish such hierarchy must use extra-biblical reasons for the basis.

The best that could be done at Amsterdam was to acknowledge that "Our churches are too much dominated by ecclesiastic officialdom, clerical or lay, instead of giving vigorous expression to the full rights of the congregation and the sharing of clergy and people in the common life in the body of Christ."² The ecumenical movement has failed to establish a relevance with the New Testament concept of the Ministry.

¹Ibid., p. 38.

²Ibid., p. 209.

Conclusion

Though we have been unable to find much in the ecumenical movement that is perfectly relevant to the New Testament Church, are we warranted in neglecting the movement altogether? There are some among us who have answered this question in the affirmative.

To our sorrow we find every phase of the original unity violated. There is confusion as to creed, name, organization, worship, method and ideals of evangelism and objective for church activities. . . . I am not interested in uniting denominations. I am interested in uniting God's people. . . .

"World Fellowship"--many leaders undertake too much. If I can maintain a spirit of brotherly love in the church where I minister, I have fully met my responsibility in the whole matter of Christian unity.¹

There are others who protest that this is not sufficient.

Some, therefore, may counsel isolation from such a movement. But dare we keep out of a movement, the face of which is toward the unity which we exist to promote; to do so must mean that we shall become an insignificant backwash at the edge of a mighty stream. . . . But if we have a real contribution--and we verily believe we have--we must be in the ecumenical movement to make it.²

My conclusion is that my first and most important responsibility is to the people whom I serve. My calling is to serve and teach and live that I may be able to present every person I serve perfect in Christ Jesus. A man cannot begin to approach the high goal of having Christ perfectly formed within himself unless he is acquainted with the universality of the Christ who is saving him. Christ loved me and gave himself for

¹W. R. Walker, "When All God's People Are One," Christian Standard, Vol. LXIII, No. 43, Oct. 27, 1928, pp. 1091, 1093.

²E. Lyall Williams, "Whither Our Brotherhood," The Christian Evangelist, Vol. 86, No. 30, July 28, 1948, p. 754.

me; but God so loved the world that he gave his Son. Our fellowship in Christ would be limited indeed if it were bound to the one congregation with which we are locally associated. For this reason the study of the ecumenical movement has broadened my vision. As long as there is an opportunity within the movement to raise a voice against sectarianism or a voice in favor of realizing the church as God designed it, we ought to be a part of it. Since there is some concern in the movement about the New Testament church, the Disciples of Christ with their plea for restoration ought always to be encouraging this concern.

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