

organization to approximate to it as far as is possible, 'endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Eph. 4: 3). Claims to the contrary are, of course, put forward. The Roman Church claims that the body of the faithful is the visible Church under one head, the Pope; High Episcopalians claim that the unity of believers culminates in the episcopal order; Presbyterians and Independents tend to claim that the unity of the Church is found in the assembled body of professing Christians, whether in Presbyteries, Synods, or Assemblies, but this is futile, since the oneness of believers does not lie in organization, nor in the region of Church government. The Church's unity may indeed be built up by all these agencies and denominations working within their own spheres in fidelity to God's will.

Thus we conclude that a unity of Spirit holding together diversities of worship, government, and tradition, may be God's will for His Church.

EVANGELICAL MISGIVINGS ABOUT THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

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IT has been said that the Ecumenical Movement and the inauguration of the World Council of Churches represents 'the great new fact' of our time. Certainly no-one can doubt the importance of this Movement or the vital role which it has begun to play. The eyes of the world are on the World Council of Churches as they have seldom been on any one Christian Communion. It has rendered splendid service in a post-war age in certain spheres of social welfare work which no one Denominational group could emulate. The work of Inter-Church Aid, for example, on behalf of refugees and migrants has been of the highest value. The World Council itself is well placed to act as a clearing-house for ideas or to provide for effective intervention on such issues as segregation or persecution. Yet many Evangelicals continue to feel serious misgivings with regard to the actual policy and the ultimate objectives of the World Council of Churches. The first phase of 'benevolent neutrality' has passed; the pressure of events makes it increasingly necessary to clear our minds and to formulate a right attitude which will be in harmony with strong scriptural convictions.

DOCTRINAL POSITION

The history of the Ecumenical Movement has its origin in the World Student Christian Federation which was founded in 1895. Perhaps it is not too much to say that the World Council of Churches is simply the projection of the World Student Christian Federation on to a world canvas. The spread of the ecumenical ideal was accelerated by the inauguration of the Life and Work Movement at Stockholm in 1925 and of the Faith and Order Movement at Lausanne in 1927. It was said of the Conference at Stockholm: 'It is not Credo that they wish to hear us say; it is AMO. There have been times when it was dogma that was needed; to-day it is action in charity and union.' And of Lausanne: 'The outward unity is lacking, but that within is becoming stronger. Yes, the unity is there, and from that religious unity of soul will come sooner or later outward unity.'

These two Movements each held Conferences in 1937, one at Oxford, the other at Edinburgh. They resolved to unite in a single Ecumenical Movement, and a provisional Constitution for a Council was worked out at Utrecht in 1938. The outbreak of war brought prolonged delay, and it was not until 1948 that the first official Assembly was held in Amsterdam. There were 352 delegates, and they represented 151 Churches. On 23 August, 1948, the World Council of Churches was formally constituted and its doctrinal position was defined in the tentative formula: 'The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of Churches which accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour.'

Perhaps the first area in which misgiving is felt is in connection with this formula. Criticism was voiced at the outset on the ground that it was inadequate as a Confession of the Trinity and was lacking in definite reference to the authority of the Bible. It has now been replaced by an amplified formula which came into operation at New Delhi, and which reads as follows: 'The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of Churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfil their common calling to the glory of one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.' This in itself need create no disquiet; but certain other factors do. The World Council of Churches is the meeting-ground for men from all schools of thought, and there is no clearly defined ecumenical theology. Thus the doctrinal formula is not meant to be a touchstone by which to judge the faith of the member churches; each church in the end must interpret the formula for itself. But in this case, who can cite it as proof that the Ecumenical Movement is orthodox in doctrine and theology? An illustration may be drawn from the Third Assembly at New Delhi. On the very first day, there was an act of notable deference to the Greek Orthodox Church in the omission of the *Filioque* clause from the recitation of the Nicene Creed. Such flexibility or accommodation raises the whole question as to the real value of the doctrinal formula. It leaves room for uncertainty at the very point where there ought to be absolute harmony. It is meant to stand for something, yet it yields no conclusive evidence for one who wants to know just what is the doctrinal position of the Movement. This is profoundly disturbing. What can one think of that kind of self-delusion which asks those who do not agree to join hands and to act as though they were one on the ground of a formula which each may interpret in his own way?

THE MISSIONARY SPHERE

Another area of concern is in the field of missionary enterprise. In 1910 the first world-wide Missionary Conference was held at Edinburgh. There were 1,200 delegates and they represented 160 Societies. This Conference produced a profound impression and led to the formation in 1921 of the International Missionary Council. Further Conferences were held at Jerusalem in 1928, Tambaram in 1938, Whitby in 1954, and Ghana in 1958. Finally, at New Delhi in November 1961, the integration of the International Missionary Council with the World Council of Churches took place, and the I.M.C. has now become the Division of World Mission and Evangelism within the larger structure of the W.C.C. The integration of these two movements had long been in view, but it presents certain problems of a serious character. No-one will quarrel with the ideal that the whole Church is charged with missionary obligation; but the facts of Christian history show that missionary vision tends to die when voluntary Societies are merged in an over-all enterprise. There are two special sources of anxiety, one at the centre and the other in the actual areas of missionary activity.

1. Evangelical Missionary Societies are deeply concerned about their

freedom of action. The Comity of Missions has long received widespread recognition as a principle which has guided many individual Churches and Societies in their choice of fields of labour. This has never been too rigid and has had obvious advantages in the wisest use of man-power and in general strategy. This however is totally different from the suggestion that the member churches of the W.C.C. must abstain from what is called 'proselytism'. This would mean for example that no Evangelical Society will be free to carry on work where the Orthodox Churches are established, because the Orthodox Churches are now members of the W.C.C. Evangelical minorities cannot look to foreign Evangelical Societies to strengthen their hands lest offence should be given to the member church which has local dominance. The doctrine of Mutual Respect, cultivated by the Communist Government of China in 1956, will make it increasingly difficult to evangelize countries where an unreformed church is in the seat of authority. Will this compel Evangelical Societies to close their eyes to the needs of Europe and South America where the Church of Rome is entrenched, or to the Balkan countries and countries like Abyssinia where the Orthodox or Coptic Churches are established?

2. There are many countries in which 'Younger Churches' have been established and where missionary enterprise is still active which have their own Christian Councils. This is true both in Asia and in Africa. Thirty-eight National Christian Councils and National Missionary Councils were linked with the International Missionary Council and are now an integral part of the Ecumenical Movement. Many of these Councils have rendered fine service and have acted as an excellent medium between the churches or Missionary Societies and the Governments in newly independent countries. Difficulties in some cases however have been encountered by those Societies which for conscientious reasons have not felt able to join the Christian Council in the country where their work lies. This may result in a situation in which Christian Councils will find themselves able to exercise their power to the exclusion of all who lack their *imprimatur*. This is already evident in the case of Indonesia where no Missionary Society can secure a visa for its missionaries unless they are sponsored by the Christian Council. This in turn must limit freedom of action for Evangelical Societies, for if they should develop their work contrary to the policy of the Christian Council, sponsorship would be withdrawn.

INTERDENOMINATIONAL BODIES

This suggests another area of misgiving. There are many interdenominational movements, strictly evangelical in character, whose freedom is in danger of curtailment. Some interdenominational movements (such as the S.C.M.) are willing to transform themselves into ecumenical movements; they may become 'Divisions' of the W.C.C. for work in certain recognized areas. But what is the future of a movement which feels called to preserve its own separate entity in order to maintain its witness to certain truths which do not receive similar emphasis on the part of other movements in the same field? This applies to bodies such as the Inter-Varsity Fellowship, the Scripture Union and the Evangelical Alliance. They are not churches; therefore they are not eligible to join the World Council. But are they to be forced into growing isolation? The Christian Council in one country (known to the writer) where evangelical missionaries have long been at work wrote to such interdenominational movements during 1961 to ask them not to attempt new work in that country as this would be contrary to the policy of the Christian Council. Are such movements to find that their freedom of action and *entré* into new fields is in danger of ever-increasing restriction?

UNITY AND REUNION

One other major area of concern is in connection with unity and reunion. Ecumenical thought is utterly impatient with the Reformed doctrine of the Invisible Church; this is regarded as an opiate for a divided Christendom. Therefore it looks upon denominational churches as now being in a state of schism, and all non-collaboration with the W.C.C. as near sin. This was made clear in a statement in *The Christian Century*: 'It remained for Amsterdam to speak with prophetic clarity to the conscience of a divided Christendom and to call its divisions by their right name. . . . With one voice, in every session, from beginning to end, our divisions were branded as SIN. No hint or whisper of a dissent was heard.' Thus all separation between denominations is a sin to confess and to forsake; for true Christian unity must be expressed in the organic reunion of the Churches here upon earth. But there are many Evangelicals who do not believe anything of the kind; nor do they believe that each one is required to go into his own corner and to repent because he is an Anglican or a Presbyterian, a Methodist or a Baptist. The Reformed doctrine of the Invisible Church is firmly rooted in the teaching of the Scriptures; and diversity in this Church's expression on earth is not inconsistent with the inner fundamental unity of all who are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

It was said at Amsterdam that 'the Council exists to serve the Churches and not to control them. . . . All ideas of a unified ecclesiastical structure dominated by a centralised administrative authority must be put away.' This served as an official disclaimer that the policy of the W.C.C. is to promote the corporate and organic reunion of the member churches in one body. But this was not a fixed or final idea. It was elastic and capable of change. Indeed the large poster which was displayed in rooms where the Assembly was held declared: ONE WORLD, ONE CHURCH. Many leading spokesmen of the W.C.C. have made it clear that this is their goal. Member churches may not yet be capable of union with each other, but neither are they capable of separation from each other. They know that there is no unity without truth; they know equally well that truth requires unity. They have come together; and they intend to stay together. Thus Dr. Visser't Hooft himself has said: 'The only goal worthy of a Council of Churches is to manifest the one undivided Church. Our Council therefore represents the emergency solution — a stage on the road — a body between the time of the complete isolation of the churches from each other, and the time — on earth or in heaven — when it will be visibly true that there is one Shepherd and one flock.'

This goal of corporate and organic reunion is based on a quite false exegesis of the words in the prayer uttered on the eve of His death: 'That they may be one' (Jn. 17: 11). Those for whom He prayed were first of all those who had kept His word (17: 6), those whom He had kept through His Name (17: 12), those who were not of the world (17: 16), those who were sanctified through the truth (17: 19). All this referred to the band of men whom He had chosen as companions and apostles; Judas was the only exception. Then He opened His arms in a mighty embrace to take in 'them also which shall believe on me through their word' (17: 20). Three times over He prayed 'that they all may be one' (17: 21, 22, 23). But the essential condition for the absolute harmony to which this prayer refers is that direct trust in Him on the part of each individual. Where this spiritual note is present, there is a true inner unity which will transcend all the barriers of race, colour and denomination. Where this note is lacking, no form of external reunion will ever fulfil the prayer of Christ. The great difficulty in connection with the Ecumenical Movement is that its spokesmen do not seem to aim at the realization of this prayer in a

way that will harmonize with the salient conditions which the Lord Himself laid down. They think in terms of an organized corporate external reunion rather than of authentic unity based on common faith in and love for the Lord Jesus Christ. But in doctrine, fellowship and Christian enterprise, Evangelicals from all denominations have known oneness of heart in Christ which those who have experienced it can never deny: and such spontaneous fellowship is a more excellent way than any artificial form of organic reunion imposed from above.

What ought the attitude of Evangelicals to be? This needs much more thought than it has yet received. It will be a fatal mistake to play the role of an ostrich and to pretend that there is no problem. This would only expose us to isolation of a most serious character. Evangelicals ought to maintain themselves in a state of constant awareness concerning the whole Ecumenical Movement. This may in some respects best be achieved by a positive engagement in 'encounter' and 'dialogue' with Ecumenical leaders. Failure to keep a firm touch on the pulse of world movements could result in Evangelicals finding themselves by-passed, out of date, and ineffective. It is also the strong conviction of the present writer that Evangelicals ought to address themselves to a fresh and careful study of the teaching of Scripture on certain key doctrines. It is all too easy to be zealous for the traditions of our fathers, but not to share the real insight which led to the formation of those traditions. There is great need for a fresh and thorough study of the New Testament doctrine of the Church and the real nature of the unity which it enjoins. What do Evangelicals believe that the Scripture teaches on these subjects? We will argue from a position of serious weakness if our minds are not clear on this; we will act in something like strength if we are well taught in the Word of God.

THE CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TO WEALTH

By H. F. R. CATHERWOOD, M.A.

A further article based on the series of discussions in the Graduates Fellowship Industrial Group

THE Christian attitude to work which was discussed in the previous article¹ results, not unnaturally, in a substantial increase in wealth. It is noteworthy that the Bible does not condemn wealth in itself. It is not money, but 'the love of money', which is the root of all evil. The fruits of the earth are the gift of God and not to be despised. The bounty of nature is there to be used, and there is enough for all if only we have sufficient energy to lay claim to it. It may be that God uses poverty to bring men to a sense of spiritual reality, and it may be that some men, as the apostles, are called to a life of poverty; but poverty brings suffering and great distress, and this cannot be an end in itself.

The teaching of the Bible would appear to be that it is not the amount of a man's wealth which matters; what matters is the method by which he acquires it, how he uses it and his attitude of mind towards it. Paul tells Timothy, 'Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in

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