The use of the Bible in the World Council of Churches

ROGER BECKWITH

THE THIRD ASSEMBLY of the World Council of Churches (at New Delhi, in 1961) revised the basic definition of the WCC adopted by the first assembly (at Amsterdam, in 1948) so that it now reads: '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 together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.' This decision marks the high-water mark of the influence of the 'Biblical Theology' movement (led by Barth, Brunner, Cullmann and others) as it affected the WCC. The importance ascribed to the Bible in the early days of the Faith and Order commission, before it merged with the Life and Work council to give birth to the WCC, is briefly and clearly expressed in the report of the 1937 Faith and Order conference at Edinburgh, where the analogy (real though imperfect) between the inspiration of Scripture and the incarnation of Christ is fully acknowledged, though the questions whether tradition supplements Scripture and whether the church authoritatively interprets Scripture (as the Eastern Orthodox maintain) are noted as points of difference requiring further discussion.[1] By the time of the Amsterdam assembly, where both Barth and Brunner were present as consultants, the Biblical Theology movement had made further significant advance, so that

> 'When the World Council of Churches was founded, there was a strong hope, confirmed by facts, that in the different churches and theological schools the Bible would be read more and more along the same lines, provided by the development of the so-called "biblical theology" of that period. In its main trend this conceived of the Bible as unity, whose centre was the divine acts of salvation interpreted by a more or less harmonious community of witnesses. It found in the Bible a common message which seemed to throw light upon all kinds of problems with which modern man had to wrestle.'[2]

These words, which come in the report of the Bristol Faith and

Order meeting of 1967, and speak of the situation twenty years earlier, are followed by others which indicate the change that had since taken place (and especially since the New Delhi assembly). Among those who had contributed to the Amsterdam assembly had been not only Barth and Brunner but Niebuhr and Tillich. The heyday of Barth and Brunner had now passed, and had been followed by that of Bultmann, J. A. T. Robinson and the 'Death of God' theology. The inconsistencies of the Biblical Theology movement, constantly stressed by Evangelicals, had become generally recognised, even among those who did not react to the same extent as the radicals; reaction had not, of course, been in the Evangelical direction; and the WCC, embracing all the diversities of the contemporary church and subject to all its fashions, had altogether lost its confidence in future progress along biblical lines. So we read:

> 'Now, two decades later, attention is increasingly drawn to the diversity amongst or even contradiction between biblical writers. . . . As a consequence the hope that the churches would find themselves to have in the near future the basis of a common understanding of the one biblical message has been fading, even to such an extent that in the eyes of some the new exegetical developments seem to undermine the raison d'être of the ecumenical movement.'[3]

The ascendancy of the Biblical Theology movement might not have been quite so transitory if it had succeeded in making any significant headway with the problem of Scripture and tradition, outlined at Edinburgh in 1937. The Louvain Faith and Order report (1971) optimistically claims that this was 'to a large extent settled' at the Montreal Faith and Order conference eight years earlier.[4] In reality, the Montreal report leaves the problem where it finds it, simply defining Scripture as 'the (authentic) Tradition in its written form', and admitting that the problem of interpretation remains as great as ever.[5] Neither did Montreal settle the question whether or not Scripture contains the *whole* of the authentic tradition. Hence, in the Bristol report it is frankly recognised that the Montreal formula allows Scripture to be relativised, to any degree that one wishes, in relation to other sources of authority, ecclesiastical or secular, so that 'biblical statements may have to be declared inadequate, or erroneous, or as "without meaning" except as modified by truth arrived at from these other sources'.[6]

It is not, therefore, surprising that the Bristol report goes on to call for a re-examination of the whole question of biblical authority.[7] A re-examination was duly made, and the resultant report is included in the 1971 Louvain volume. Not surprisingly, its conclusions (though pious) are vague. The proof of the inspiration of the Bible is held to be its inspiring character, which admittedly belongs to other literature as well. The historic conception of biblical inspiration, effectively endorsed at Edinburgh, whereby 'the Bible is distinguished fundamentally from other books, since in it God has used human words and

formulations to reveal Himself' is described as 'a mere assertion or a dogma whose validity is presupposed'.[8] This is where biblical authority stands today.

Applied Bible Study

AS H-R. Weber very properly remarks, the WCC and its parent bodies have never been

> 'just a Bible movement. Within ecumenical history one can point only to relatively few meetings which were exclusively devoted to Bible studies. The general pattern rather is to study the Bible in the context of the life, worship, witness and service of the Church in today's world. In the early days of the ecumenical movement the main context for Bible study was "the evangelisation of the world in this generation". Later the focus became much more "the Church's social and political message today". . . .'[9]

At both eras, of course, the WCC was also concerned to apply biblical teaching to the matter of Christian unity. Applied Bible study is a necessary discipline, even though it involves the danger of using the Bible to confirm one's preconceived ideas, and so making God the servant of man. However, this danger was kept within limits in the period when Biblical Theology was stressing the unity of the Bible. No doubt the theologians of that school did not always look for the unity of biblical teaching at the points where they ought to have done, and they regularly compromised their position by asserting the disunity of the Bible on what they regarded as minor matters, but the situation was quite different from the present one, in which all the emphasis is on disunity. Now, as Weber tells us, those involved in the WCC's social and political activities are

> 'in danger of losing their particular Christian faith and hope. . . . The "biblical theology" which led them to their involvement in the struggles of this world has run into a crisis. . . . Faith cannot be taken for granted. . . . Actual involvement in the struggles of our time is testing our faith, as does the dialogue with people of other faiths and ideologies which inevitably accompanies this struggle. A crisis of faith appears, and there is real danger that those who, through Christian faith, were led to acts of obedience, may gradually lose contact with the source and ultimate goal of their faith. The penultimate is then mistaken for the ultimate. Faith is reduced to a set of ideological rationales for action, be it for non-oppressive education, for economic development, against racial discrimination or for church unity. . . . In this context some turn to the Bible in the hope that biblical studies can inform, strengthen and direct their faith. Yet, as this happens, the last disturbing characteristic of the present paradoxical situation appears. Scholars who, ten or twenty years ago, spoke confidently about the biblical message which is relevant for today's Christian involvement in the struggles of the world have become much more hesitant. "There is no such thing as *the* biblical message," they say. . . . "You

must yourself attempt to re-interpret biblical faith in the context of the questions of today. . . ." Those committed to obedience by their biblical faith discover the weakness of their faith through their very participation in the struggles of our time and now, as they turn to the specialists in biblical studies, do not find the expected help.'[10]

In the light of Weber's words, it is not surprising that the Louvain report on the Authority of the Bible states:

'Even in the ecumenical movement a certain perplexity has arisen over the Bible. . . . Difficulties have cropped up as Churches have tried to speak and act together on the basis of the Bible. Occasional attempts to call the Christian answer to a specific problem more or less directly from the Bible have proved unsatisfactory. *As a result the tendency has been more and more to abandon the appeal to biblical grounds altogether.* Thus the problem simply is avoided, which is not a satisfactory course either.'[11]

Bible study on the sidelines

THIS is the background against which, in the same year of 1971, the WCC set up a new 'Portfolio for Biblical Studies' at its Geneva headquarters, entrusted to H-R. Weber. The purpose of the appointment is quite evidently not to provide a biblical basis for the current activities of the WCC, still less to control and correct those activities by means of biblical teaching, but simply to allow Bible study to go on in parallel with the other activities, so that the devotional needs of those engaged in them may be in some measure supplied, and so that the WCC can avoid being charged with having ceased to be a Christian body altogether. The Bible study that takes place will not necessarily intersect with the other activities of the WCC at all, and any attempt to make links between the two will, *ex hypothesi*, be of a purely personal and subjective kind.

One of the first examples of the new method of Bible study is to be found in the basic study booklet for the Nairobi assembly of the WCC, *Jesus Christ Frees and Unites* (London, SCM, 1974). The booklet begins with outlines of the six topics which will be assigned to the six sections into which the assembly is to be divided. After this, and quite separately, the booklet provides four Bible studies, on Mark 9, Romans 8, three passages in John's gospel and three passages in the Old Testament. In line with the atomistic approach to the Bible which now prevails in WCC circles, every passage is dealt with quite independently, though the studies are grouped in four chapters, each with an introduction. Again, in line with the prevailing fear of applying biblical teaching anachronistically, the possible relevance of the passages to the present-day Christian is rather hinted at than asserted: everyone is left to take responsibility for making the application himself. Finally,

in line with the current activities of the WCC, the applications that are hinted at are nearly all of a social and political kind. Thus,

> 'Such expectation (i.e. of the kingdom of God) is perhaps best understood by those who frame their hopes and longings in terms of the sharp "break" caused by political revolution. With such experiences vivid in our minds, it is not strange that in our day we should use the word "liberator" of Jesus' (p. 26, on Mark 9).
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> 'So today Western Christians may feel the burden of centuries of colonial expansion—resulting in the imposing of rightful burdens of slavery and disruption on people. . . . And the guilt continues. Can we think of ways in which decisions of Western industries and governments have a direct effect upon conditions in Latin America, Asia and Africa?' (p. 31, on Lam. 5).
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> 'The Hebrew word we translate "salvation" includes the idea of having space to live in; we could ask the tenants of multi-occupied houses about that, or those living under Land Apportionment Acts' (p. 32, on Isa. 40).
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> 'What could it mean, in our day, to be on the side of the "poor" in our society and in the world? God being on our side ensures the victory (v. 39). Among those hoping for revolution in Latin America, there is a ritual greeting: "Unto victory: We will win. . . ." When three disciplined members of a black-power group once marched into a cathedral during united intercessions for peace, and briefly explained their point of view, some took it as an interruption. But it could also be seen as an aid to worship that is in "truth" ' (p. 37, on Rom. 8).
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> 'The Passover—the commemoration of God's initiative to turn an immigrant work-force into a free and united nation. . . . In what sense do we interpret him (i.e. Jesus) as an angry militant, alienated from his society and its religion?' (p. 39, on John 2).

It is in passages like these that one finds the only links between the Bible studies and the six main topics for discussion, the last four of which ('Seeking Community: the Common Search of Peoples of Various Faiths, Cultures and Ideologies', 'Education for Liberation and Community', 'Structures of Injustice and Struggles for Liberation' and 'Human Development: the Ambiguities of Power, Technology and Quality of Life') are of a social or political kind.

The real relevance of the Bible to current WCC activities

THE current loss of nerve about the unity of the Bible and its relevance to the contemporary church is mercifully not as general outside the WCC as it is within. Even within, it is not of course shared by the Eastern Orthodox representatives or by any of those Protestants who still regard the Bible as the Word of God, written for our learning. This is not to say that those of more conservative outlook discount the variety within the Bible or the historical background against which it was written, but they believe its variety to be transcended by a higher unity, and its original historical setting by a providential purpose

directed towards the church of all ages. In other words, they still believe it to have a divine as well as a human character, to be the message of God as well as the messages of men. It is only through forgetting or rejecting this truth, as modern secularism is prone to do, that others can see nothing in the Bible but its individual human authors and the mundane conditions under which they wrote.[12]

But if the Bible does really speak with no uncertain sound to our own condition, the urgency of bringing its teaching to bear on the current activities of the WCC is apparent, and likewise the serious and increasing danger of the present situation, in which the WCC is proceeding on its way without biblical guidance. The present activities of the WCC are, of course, manifold. The original union of Faith and Order, Life and Work, brought about at Amsterdam in 1948, has since been augmented by the incorporation of the International Missionary Council at New Delhi in 1961, and still more recently by that of the World Council on Christian Education. The action of Eastern Orthodox churches from behind the Iron Curtain in joining the WCC in 1961 has also made a considerable difference. So has the setting up of the Programme to Combat Racism in 1969. The WCC was at no period a mere forum for discussion and pronouncements: it always aimed at action, whether ecumenical, missionary, or social and political. But its ecumenical achievements, though real, have been surprisingly limited, and for a long time its practical activities were largely confined to relief work. As to its missionary activities, these have been increasingly negative in character. Such a state of affairs is the more deplorable when one remembers that it was from the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910 that the modern ecumenical movement began, and that the International Missionary Council, while it remained independent, did some sterling work, despite the fluctuations of its history.[13] But the WCC's Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, which has taken over the IMC's responsibilities, has sought to replace evangelism of the non-Christian world by partnership with non-Christian religions, to achieve a 'moratorium' on the sending out of missionaries, and to secularise the concept of salvation.[14] All these tendencies were prominent at the CWME's now notorious Bangkok conference, held in 1972-1973 under the title 'Salvation Today'. In pursuance of the same aims, the WCC in 1971 took two significant steps: it appointed a Buddhist as its executive secretary for Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, and it co-sponsored what can only be called an indiscriminate libel on missionaries in Latin America, entitled 'The Declaration of Barbados'.[15]

However, it is not only the negative activities of the WCC in the missionary field which have caused disquiet in its member-churches, but its activities, both positive and negative, in the social and political fields. Its relief work (co-ordinated by the Division of Inter-Church Aid) has, when genuinely such, been of great value. But the WCC,

like its predecessor Life and Work, has not been afraid to enter the arena of political conflict as well, at first by pronouncements, and more recently by monetary grants. At the Amsterdam assembly in 1948, two of the four sections were on 'The Church and the Disorder of Society' (criticising communism and capitalism impartially) and on 'The Church and the International Disorder' (stressing the evil character of war and the right of religious liberty). But since that time there have been six significant shifts of opinion and policy:

(i) the same theological secularism which has turned the WCC against evangelism has made it concentrate all its efforts in the social and political fields. This change of emphasis is very apparent in the report of the fourth assembly of the WCC, at Uppsala in 1968, and seems likely to be still more apparent at Nairobi.

(ii) Criticism of communism has become muted, partly no doubt because of its agreeably secularist character, and partly because of the presence in the WCC since 1961 of the Orthodox churches from communist countries. Instead, it has become normal to praise communist regimes as liberators of the oppressed (ignoring their totalitarian nature) and to denigrate the democracies of the West which are in opposition to communism. This trend has been increasingly apparent since the Geneva conference on Church and Society (1966), with its outright condemnation of American policy in Vietnam.[16]

(iii) Concern for religious liberty has been replaced by concern for racial equality. In pursuance of the statements on religious liberty issued by its first and third assemblies, the WCC formerly maintained a secretariat for religious liberty, which lapsed in 1967 and was formally disbanded at Uppsala in 1968. The main enemies of religious freedom had been the Roman Catholic Church (which has now made amends in the second Vatican Council's declaration on that subject) and the communist regimes. Instead, the focus of attention was switched to racial discrimination. This had long been a concern of the WCC, and properly so, but attention now became much more specific, starting with the condemnation of South Africa and Rhodesia at the Geneva conference on Church and Society.[17]

(iv) Concern for peace has been replaced by encouragement for violent revolution on the communist pattern. Despite earlier hints of things to come, this was effectively initiated by the action of the central committee of the WCC in 1969, when (with a somewhat dubious mandate from the Uppsala assembly of the previous year) it set up the Programme to Combat Racism, with a fund for making monetary grants to revolutionary bodies. The new departure has gravely compromised the attempt of the WCC secretariat to act as an agent of reconciliation in political conflicts. Despite some apparent success at a later date in the Sudan, its offer to mediate in Ulster was understandably treated with scorn.[18]

(v) In taking such a step, the WCC has moved out of the realm of

exhortation into that of direct political action. In 1970, the new Programme to Combat Racism started making grants to African guerilla organisations. The same year, the WCC raised a separate fund to help deserters from the American army not wishing to serve in Vietnam, and in 1973 a fund to help deserters from the Portuguese army, not wishing to serve in Portuguese Africa.

(vi) Finally, by its grants to guerilla organisations in Central and South Africa, the WCC secretariat has ceased to work through its member churches in those countries, and adopted an independent, indeed antagonistic, stance towards them. It has antagonised not only South African churches outside the WCC which support apartheid, but South African churches inside the WCC which oppose it. The South African churches protested most earnestly against this action, as wrong in itself and as bound to impede the peaceful moves towards racial equality which were already taking place, but their protest was rejected, and the WCC is now planning to increase its grants to South African guerillas, since those in Portuguese Africa no longer need its help. The South African churches then seriously discussed leaving the WCC, and did actually resolve to take the more moderate step of withholding their dues, while continuing their protest from within. In view of the fact that the decision to set up the Programme to Combat Racism was made since the last plenary assembly of the WCC (at Uppsala in 1968), one would expect opportunity to be given for the decision to be very fully reviewed and debated at Nairobi: it would be sad if, in a professedly democratic body, the case against the decision were never allowed to be stated as publicly and as freely as one can be sure the case in favour of it will be.

Quite evidently, it is these policies and activities of the WCC that are to provide the agenda for the last four of the six study-sections at Nairobi, with their secular emphasis and their themes of partnership with other religions and ideologies (sections 3 and 4), struggles for liberation (section 4 and 5), and the raising of sub-standard living conditions (section 6). How is one to assess WCC policies and activities in these matters? It would be possible to assess them, as others have done, on technical grounds—to ask whether the WCC's social and political decisions over the years have been based on thorough and impartial study by competent persons, and have influenced events. Assessed in this way, a somewhat negative judgment might have to be passed. The rather grandiose claims made by Paul Abrecht and O. F. Nolde in their respective essays 'The Development of Ecumenical Social Thought and Action' and 'Ecumenical Action in International Affairs', contributed to the second volume of the official history of the ecumenical movement,[19] are not endorsed by other qualified judges. Kenneth Slack's remark, made in 1969, that the WCC had become 'an amateur and third-rate United Nations'[20] can draw support from the examples of incompetence in the field of economics detailed by D. L. Munby and

others,[21] and from the charges of superficiality in the field of ethics levelled by Jacques Ellul[22] and Paul Ramsey.[23] The preparatory material for Nairobi—the brief booklet and the scrappy dossiers—give little indication that anything has been learnt from these criticisms. As to influence on events, the modest list of successes drawn up by Visser't Hooft[24] (to which the Programme to Combat Racism would now add the collapse of Portuguese rule in Africa) might be much longer if the background work had been better. It could be matched, as he freely admits, by a similar list of failures; and one of the failures has been the failure to help or gratify, by the policies lately adopted, the Orthodox churches from behind the Iron Curtain. In 1973, when the WCC reached its 25th anniversary, Orthodox leaders took the opportunity to send messages of greeting to the general secretary, in which they condemned the WCC's change of emphasis; and the first of these messages (a particularly outspoken one) came from the patriarch of Moscow.

But to assess the WCC's policies and activities on technical grounds of competence and efficiency is not enough, especially here, where our subject is the use of the Bible. What, then, has the Bible to say about the matter? There will not be room here to reply to this very broad question except in a summary fashion, but a few pointers towards an answer are as follows:

(a) Christ's missionary mandate is unmistakable (Matt. 28:19f.; Luke 24:47-49; John 20:21-23; Acts 1:8), and so is Paul's teaching on the plight of those from whom the gospel is withheld (Rom. 1-3). It is not optional whether or not missionary work continues, quite apart from the known desire of indigenous church leaders that it should. Here the WCC is utterly astray.

(b) The freedom that Christ brings is primarily freedom from sin, Satan, the Law and death, not from human oppressors (Mark 3:26f.; John 8:34-36; Acts 15:10f.; Rom. 6:18-23; 8:20-25; Gal. 4:21-5:1; etc.). The WCC gives no sign of recognising this primary meaning of liberation.[25]

(c) The Bible does, however, condemn human oppressors also, particularly oppressors of the poor and defenceless (Prov. 22:16; 28:3; Isa. 1:17; Amos 4:1; Zech. 7:10; Jas. 2:6) and oppressors of strangers (Exod. 22:21; 23:9; Jer. 7:6; Ezek. 22:7), and it is therefore the duty of Christians to use all legitimate means to secure justice for those oppressed, whether the oppression they suffer is economic exploitation, racial discrimination, tyrannical government or foreign domination. Consequently, where such conditions really exist, the WCC's call for justice is entirely right.

(d) Justice, however, is essentially impartial. The great charge which the Bible levels against corrupt judges is that, unlike God, they are 'respecters of persons' (Lev. 19:15; Deut. 1:17; 16:19; 2 Chr. 19:6f.; Prov. 24:23; Acts 10:34f.; Rom. 2:11; Col. 3:25; Jas. 2:1-4; 1 Pet. 1:

17). The WCC's selective moral indignation, fierce against white racism in southern and central Africa, and against Western colonialism of the nineteenth century, but comparatively indifferent to black racism in Uganda and elsewhere, and to communist colonialism today, incurs precisely this charge.[26]

(e) Legitimate means of securing justice for the oppressed do not include doing evil. Paul is emphatic that the end does *not* justify the means (Rom. 3:8). Nor must justice be separated from mercy, with which the Bible regularly links it (Hos. 12:6; Mic. 6:8; Zech. 7:9f.; Matt. 23:23; Jas. 2:13); otherwise the gospel is changed into a new and terrible law. But this means that armed rebellion has to justify itself as good, not evil, if it is to reconcile itself with the Bible; and that terrorism, which is essentially merciless, can never reconcile itself with the Bible. The WCC's grants to terrorist organisations are therefore quite contrary to Scripture.[27]

(f) What is one to say, however, about revolutionary movements of a more responsible, though still violent, kind? Can they justify their actions as good? Possibly, when they are rebelling against foreign domination. There are several such rebellions in the Bible which win approval, though others, such as the ungodly Zedekiah's rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar, do not (Jer. 27f.). 'The powers that be are ordained of God' (Rom. 13:1-7), and this may even hold true of foreign powers, as is indicated by Christ's words when questioned about the Roman rulers of Israel, 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's' (Mark 12:13-17). The claim that Christ sympathised with the Zealots has been thoroughly refuted in recent studies of the biblical evidence and its Jewish background.[28] For domestic rebellion it is still more difficult to find biblical support. If this seems surprising, it should be remembered that firm and stable government is a great good, even when somewhat oppressive, and that change which is slow and peaceful is probably the only sort that is not liable to lead to anarchy or to even greater oppression.[29]

[1] *The Second World Conference on Faith and Order*, ed. Leonard Hodgson (London, SCM, 1938), p. 229f.

[2] *New Directions in Faith and Order: Bristol 1967* (Geneva, WCC, 1968), p. 40. The report of the Amsterdam assembly is entitled *The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches* (London, SCM, 1949). The reports of the other plenary assemblies of the WCC mentioned in this article are *The New Delhi Report* (London, SCM, 1962) and *The Uppsala Report 1968* (Geneva, WCC, 1968).

[3] *op. cit.*, p. 40f. See also H-R. Weber, 'The Bible in Today's Ecumenical Movement' (*Ecumenical Review*, October, 1971).

[4] *Faith and Order: Louvain 1971* (Geneva, WCC, 1971), p. 10.

[5] *The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order: Montreal 1963*, ed. P. C. Rodger and L. Vischer (London, SCM, 1964), pp. 51-54. Such points of agreement on biblical interpretation as the WCC has succeeded in establishing may be found in *Biblical Authority for Today*, ed. A. Richardson and W. Schweitzer (London, SCM, 1951), pp. 240-244, and in *New Directions in Faith and Order*, pp. 32-41.

[6] *New Directions in Faith and Order*, p. 39f.

[7] *op. cit.*, p. 58f.
[8] *Faith and Order: Louvain 1971*, p. 20f.
[9] art. cit., *Ecumenical Review*, October 1971, p. 340. He remarks that the last phrase is from the subtitle of the 1951 WCC symposium *Biblical Authority for Today*, mentioned earlier, which was concerned with applying biblical authority to social and political issues.
[10] art. cit., pp. 337-340.
[11] *Faith and Order: Louvain, 1971*, p. 9. Our italics.
[12] The belief that the Bible not only has divine origin but also has permanent relevance is one which of course pervades the Bible itself: no 'variety of theologies in the Bible' here! Witness the status of the Mosaic Law throughout the Old Testament history of Israel, the application of Old Testament quotations to Christ and to Christians in all parts of the New Testament, and the specific statements of Romans 4:23-25; 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:6,11; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:19-21.
[13] Examples of this sterling work are Hendrik Kraemer's *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (3rd ed., London, James Clarke, 1961), written for the 1938 IMC conference at Tambaram, and M. Searle Bates's *Religious Liberty: an Inquiry* (New York, IMC, 1945).
[14] The latest call from the CWME for the moratorium was made on February 7th, 1975 (*Ecumenical Press Service*, February 13th, 1975, p. 6f.). For fuller discussion of WCC policy on missions, see E. S. Fife and A. F. Glasser, *Missions in Crisis* (London, IVF, 1962), ch. 5; Douglas Webster, *Not Ashamed* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1970); Ralph Winter, ed., *The Evangelical Response to Bangkok* (South Pasadena, William Carey Library, 1973). For inside information about the background of this policy, see W. A. Visser't Hooft, *Has the Ecumenical Movement a Future?* (Belfast, Christian Journals Ltd., 1974), ch. 3.
[15] The indignation aroused by this document (which was also directed against the governments in Latin America, but specifically accused the missionaries of every kind of exploitation) led to denials from the WCC secretariat that they had endorsed its findings. Later, however, they republished it in a sumptuous edition under the title *The Situation of the Indian in South America* (Geneva, WCC, 1972, £4.00). The issue of the *International Review of Mission* for July 1973 was devoted to the document, and was impartial enough to include a thorough exposure of its faults by A. R. Tippett. The same issue revealed (p. 279) that only 11 of the 20 participants at Barbados (though presumably a picked team) consented to sign it.
[16] *World Conference on Church and Society* (Geneva, WCC, 1967), pp. 127, 160.
[17] *op. cit.*, pp. 160, 162, 176.
[18] For earlier successes of WCC diplomacy, see W. A. Visser't Hooft, *Has the Ecumenical Movement a Future?*, p. 87f.
[19] *The Ecumenical Advance*, ed. H. E. Fey (London, SPCK, 1970).
[20] In *New Christian*, November 27th, 1969, p. 7.
[21] D. L. Munby, *Christianity and Economic Problems* (London, Macmillan, 1956), pp. 99-103; *God and the Rich Society* (London, OUP, 1961), pp. 137-146, 153-156. See also J. D. Carmichael and H. S. Goodwin, *William Temple's Political Legacy: a Critical Assessment* (London, Mowbray, 1963), which maintains that Temple inaugurated in the church a tradition of uninformed and uncritical acceptance of socialist economic theory.
[22] *Violence* (London, SCM, 1970), p. 70, where he writes, 'The worst failure is that of the World Council of Churches, which regularly bypasses the *fundamental* problems of our time and devotes its energies to the most superficial ones'.
[23] *Who Speaks for the Church? A Critique of the 1966 Geneva Conference on Church and Society* (Edinburgh, St. Andrew Press, 1969). On p. 179 he says, 'I am suggesting, in effect, that ecumenical ethics needs to return to Oxford (i.e. the 1937 Oxford Life and Work conference) and start again'.
[24] See note 18.
[25] A startling example of perversion of this teaching occurs on p. 20 of *Jesus Christ Frees and Unites*, where, after stating that Christ frees men from sin, it immediately re-interprets this as meaning that he frees them from being sinned against! 'What forms of human sin are responsible,' it asks, for the poverty, discrimination etc. that people suffer?
[26] It is no defence to say that it is worse for oppression to be perpetrated by

professedly Christian nations than by others, true though this is. The scale of the evil has also to be taken into account, and the question whether it is being perpetrated today, or happened in the past and is today being put right. The many oracles against the nations in the books of the prophets show that pagan nations should not be exempted from criticism but should be called to repentance for their crimes.

[27] The charges of terrorism against organisations supported by the Programme to Combat Racism are well authenticated: see John Eppstein, *Does God Say Kill? An Investigation of the Justice of Current Fighting in Africa* (London, Stacey, 1972). The WCC's claim that it tells such bodies not to use its grants for military purposes would be laughable if it were not tragic.

[28] See Oscar Cullmann, *Jesus and the Revolutionaries* (New York, Harper and Row, 1970); Alan Richardson, *The Political Christ* (London, SCM, 1973); Martin Hengel, *Victory over Violence* (London, SPCK, 1975).

[29] For further discussion of revolution, see Jacques Ellul, *Violence*, cited above; Brian Griffiths, ed., *Is Revolution Change?* (London, IVP, 1972).