

Editorial

ECUMENISM AND THE "ECUMANIACS"

THE MOST STRIKING FEATURE of Church life in the twentieth century is the deep and wide-spread concern, articulated in the ecumenical movement, for a fuller appropriation and expression of the unity which the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has given to his people. This concern marks a great awakening of the conscience of Christendom. If it is true that the desire for unity is often aroused by the pressure of an indifferent or hostile world, it is no less true that profound theological reasons, integral to the Christian revelation itself, compel responsible believers to pray and work for the reconciliation of separated brethren. It is no accident that the classical statement of the Christian faith gives unity first place among the notes of the Church: "I believe One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church." The affirmation that the one God has called all men into union with himself and with each other in the one Body and the one Spirit of the one Lord is at the heart of the Christian gospel. God "has made known to us his hidden purpose . . . to be put into effect when the time was ripe; namely, that the universe, all in heaven and on earth, might be brought into a unity in Christ" (Eph. 1:9f. NEB). No man who invokes the name of Jesus Christ can dare to be disobedient to this heavenly vision of human and cosmic unity. No man who takes the New Testament witness seriously can pretend that the visible unity of the historical Church does not belong in the centre foreground of the vision.

But it does not follow that any particular plan for bringing divided Christians under one ecclesiastical roof must be accepted without question as the work of the Holy Spirit. It does not follow that visible unity, crucially important though it is, can rightly be pursued without regard for other Christian values, or (worse still) that a feverish "ecumania" can really compensate for theological superficiality or pastoral inertia. It is the authentic unity of Christ's own Church that we must be seeking—not a purely material togetherness, formless and purposeless. The "One" Church of the Nicene Creed is further characterized as "Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic," and these three words define its true unity. The Church is truly one in the worship of the one God and the indwelling of the one Spirit; it is truly one in the wholeness of the one Body and the fulness of the one hope; it is truly one in the reality of the one Lord, confessed in the one faith and conveyed in the one Baptism and the one Bread. We do the cause of Christian unity a grave disservice if we forget that unity is inseparable from holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity, and that all must be sought together.

No doubt it is only too easy for mere obstructionism to don the cloak of

theological responsibility. But it is no less easy for theological irresponsibility to disguise itself as an urgent desire for unity, and in an age when ecumenicity is almost dangerously fashionable this may well be the greater threat to authentic ecumenism. Greater threat or not, "ecumania" must in any case be carefully guarded against, not merely because it plays into the hands of obstructionists, but more fundamentally because it distorts the ecumenical ideal. When the distinction is drawn—as we sometimes find it drawn—between the "ecumenically minded" and the "critical," genuine ecumenists must protest that the ecumenical movement, like every other historical development, is subject to criticism in the light of theological truth. If Christian unity is too urgent an imperative to be frustrated by obstructionists, it is also too serious an issue to be left to "ecumaniacs."

E. R. F.

Lord's Day Alliance Contest

THROUGH THE GENEROSITY of the Lord's Day Alliance of Canada, we are able to offer substantial prizes for scholarly articles on the Lord's Day, considered from the standpoint of biblical studies, theology, worship, pastoral care, or public policy. Articles should be approximately 4500 words in length, and must be typewritten, double spaced, with all notes gathered at the end. They should be clearly marked "Lord's Day Alliance Contest" and sent to the Reverend Professor D. W. Hay, Acting Editor, Knox College, Toronto 5, Ontario, not later than June 1, 1964. Prizes offered are: First Prize, \$200; three prizes of \$50 each. Any prize may be withdrawn if, in the opinion of the judges, no article of sufficient merit has been submitted. Judges will be appointed by the Editors, and their decision will be final. Prize-winning articles will be published in the *Canadian Journal of Theology*.