

# The World Council of Churches and “Co-operation in Externals”

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The true Church of Jesus Christ, the invisible body of which He is the Head, is a unit, one in faith, in hope and in love. The spiritual unity of true believers should also manifest itself outwardly by their teaching the same eternal, divine truths in brotherly harmony. Such external manifestation of the spiritual unity of the true Church becomes impossible, however, not only when Christians through the weakness of their flesh teach contrary to the Word of God in some particular, but also when they become indifferent to purity of doctrine and, in a spirit of false charity, tolerate errors and heresies contrary to the doctrine which they have learned. This indifferent spirit is an ever-present threat to conservative Lutheranism, i.e., true Christianity. But it seems to manifest itself in its boldest forms in post-war periods like ours today, when the disintegrating, demoralizing effects of war, that greatest scourge of men, become evident in so many fields. It may take different forms in different periods of history, and yet remain essentially the same unionist, un-Christian toleration of error and compromise of the truth. Thus it may, at times, profess agreement with the Biblical principle that there must be unity of doctrine before there can be fellowship in church worship and work, and yet attack the Scriptural position by calling many Bible doctrines “non-fundamental” or “non-essential,” and maintaining that there need not be full unity with regard to them. Such an attack on the true Lutheran position of the Synodical Conference was finally beaten back when the Missouri Synod in 1947 set aside the “St. Louis Declaration” as a basis for union with the “American Lutheran Church.”

At other times, the unionist may use another approach, Today the most insidious attack on “God’s Word and Luther’s doctrine pure” comes in the form of a plea for co-operation in so-called “externals” of church work, while leaving the doctrinal position of the churches concerned untouched. In many parts of our country, members of the Synodical Conference, too, are co-operating with errorists in various ways, not only defending this on the ground that it is only the “externals” of their church work that is affected, but also expressing the hope that they in this manner can bring about the long-desired unity of the churches. This form of unionism has a history back of it, which we need to study; if we are not to fall into the unionist’s trap and lose the heritage that God has given us as the spiritual children of Luther’s Reformation. We shall here, without reviewing the various instances of “Cooperation in Externals,” present a brief sketch of that history as a means toward understanding the union movements of our day and seeing them in the proper light.

By “Unionism” we mean joint worship or joint church work with those who do not confess the true faith in all respects. This is the definition of unionism that has been accepted in Lutheran circles from the beginning down to the present day. Thus the Concordia Cyclopaedia says:

Religious unionism consists in joint worship and work of those not united in doctrine... The indifferent and pacifist stand of the unionist is condemned in all those texts that bid us beware of false prophets and to be separate from those who deny the truth. (Tit. 3, 13–14; I Tim. 2, 12; 6, 14; II Tim. 3, 5; Matt. 7, 15; Jer. 23. 28; Acts 20, 29–30; Rom. 16, 17; I John 4, 1; II John 10, 11.) In the light of these texts all joint ecclesiastical efforts for religious work (missionary, educational, etc.) and particularly joint worship and mixed (promiscuous) prayer among those who confess the truth and those who deny any part of it is sinful unionism. (Sub “Unionism.”)

The Minneapolis Theses of 1925 (American Lutheran Conference) state:

According to the Word of God and our Confessions, church fellowship, that is, mutual recognition, altar and pulpit fellowship, and eventually cooperation in the strictly essential work of the Church, presupposes unanimity in the pure doctrine of the Gospel and in the confession of the same in word and deed. Where the establishment and maintenance of church fellowship

ignores present differences or declares them a matter of indifference, there is unionism, pretense of union which does not exist.

The “Doctrinal Affirmation” defines unionism as:

Church fellowship with the adherents of false doctrine, or, in other words, joint work and worship by which the truth is either denied or the appearance of denial or at least of indifferentism is given.

Whatever deficiencies the last two definitions may have, they agree in this that co-operation in church *work*, as well as in worship, is unionism wherever there is no unity in doctrine.

Although the term “unionism” may not have been much used in other churches, they also have stipulated through most of their history that there must be agreement in doctrine before there could be joint worship and joint church work. Thus the Catholic Church makes it a condition of fellowship that the authority of the pope be accepted. Without that “*sine qua non*,” it will not consider joining even such loose organizations as the World Council of Churches, which has made room for every other major church group, including the Eastern Orthodox, Old Catholics, etc. The Reformed Churches split off from one another—and the process is still continuing—refusing to worship or work together with others, even for such reasons as differences in the form of church government or ritual or other adiaphora, as well as for good doctrinal reasons.

We may say, then, that it has been a generally accepted principle in all Christendom, and down through all church history, that there could be no co-operation in church *work* unless there was agreement on the points of doctrine and practice which the various churches or Christians deemed essential, not only to salvation, but also to effective friendly co-operation. Thus the canons of the Church of England of the year 1603 said:

Whosoever shall hereafter separate themselves from the communion of saints, as it is approved by the Apostles’ rules, in the Church of England, and combine themselves together in a new brotherhood, accounting the Christians who are conformable to the doctrines, governments, rites and ceremonies of the Church of England to be profane and unmeet for them to join with in Christian communion, let them be excommunicated ipso facto. (“Approaches towards Church Unity,” Smyth and Walker)

So far from considering the possibility of co-operating with other churches in the “externals” of their work, the respective churches often carried their opposition and enmity into fields quite extraneous to their religion,—into politics, business, social life, etc.,—even persecuting with fire and sword those who disagreed with them.

There have, of course, been many attempts made at various times down through history to unite the churches in some sort of organization, or to arrive at a working agreement in doctrine and practice. But these efforts stranded sooner or later on the stubborn fact of the irreconcilable differences of conviction between the churches with regard to Christian doctrine and life. Philip of Hesse and Melanchthon in the Reformation period, Grotius, Calixtus, Leibniz, etc., in later periods, labored in vain to unite Lutherans and Reformed or Protestants and Catholics. The King of Poland, Wladislaw IV, arranged for a conference in 1645 at Thorn of leading Catholics, Lutherans and Reformed, in the hope of dispelling some of the murderous hatreds left by the Thirty Years’ War. But “the several parties in it could not at the first session come to any agreement as to how they might pray all together.” And the conference was dissolved after three months without reaching agreement. (“Approaches towards Church Unity,” p. 115.) Evidently the theologians of that day were not able to draw the fine philosophical distinctions between prayer fellowship and other forms of church fellowship that have become so popular, even in allegedly conservative Lutheran circles, today!

The period of Rationalism in Europe brought the first union of Lutherans and Reformed in the Prussian United Church, one which had to be enforced, however, by the power of a tyrannical government to succeed at

all. It is significant that Rationalism was the author of that godless “shot-gun marriage” between Lutherans and Reformed, and that those church members who were not infected with the Rationalistic poison of the day resisted the Union, sometimes at great cost to themselves. In today’s world, as we shall see, Modernism, which has gained control of so many professing Christian churches, is fostering unionism.

The attempt to unite all churches is, then, nothing new in history. But the general assumption in earlier periods was that there could be no successful co-operation in church *work*, unless there was unity in *doctrine*; and the emphasis was placed upon establishing such unity, if only in the great fundamentals of the faith, or on the basis of the common denominator of all the creeds concerned, as in the Prussian Union. During the last decades, however, another type of church union has become popular and is today apparently carrying everything before it: the so-called “Ecumenical Movement,” the crowning achievement of which, to date, is the “World Council of Churches,” which met in Amsterdam, Holland, in August, 1948. It is this movement that has promoted so widely and successfully the program of “co-operation in externals.” Let some of its sponsors tell us what it is:

William Adams Brown, of Union Theological Seminary, wrote in his book, “Toward a United Church” (1946):

Those who have united in the Movement have recognized that when finite and imperfect men are dealing with matters as high and deep as those which concern the Christian faith, one cannot expect complete agreement as to their meaning and implications. In any unity worthy of the name, there must be room for honest differences of conviction, not merely in unimportant matters of habit and preference, but even in matters of vital belief. The aim of the Ecumenical Movement, therefore, is to commit the Church to a form of unity which is consistent with the recognition of honest differences, in the hope that when this has been done, the Spirit of God will lead those who make their start at this point into ever-expanding areas of common insight... (p. 4)

The Churches which unite in the Movement do not claim for themselves an exclusive possession of true Christianity. They recognize that others also possess truths which they themselves have not always cherished as they should... This association of churches, which differ in their understanding of God’s will for His Church, in common worship, common work, and common study is *something new in Christian history*... (p. 11)

What is new in the present Movement is the type of unity to which the churches have committed themselves. This is a unity which *has broken once for all with the ideal of conformity* and makes place for independence both of thought and action in the program for the future. (p. 16)

We received our first impressions of this Ecumenical Movement in China, where we heard Dr. John R. Mott, the recognized leader of the Movement, lecture to the missionaries in Nanking, in the spring of 1913. Christian truth, he said, is like a diamond with many facets. One church sees one facet of that truth; another church sees another facet of it; a third church still another facet, and so on. In order to get the whole truth, the whole diamond, we must combine all churches with all their distinctive teachings into one comprehensive body. Then the “rent and sundered body of Christ” will be made whole again... As there are said to be 168 facets in a diamond, this makes room for a satisfyingly large number of sects!

For 35 years, we have heard the changes rung on this theme. Dr. Raymond Calkins, “dean of Protestant clergymen in Greater Boston,” wrote in 1917, in “Approaches towards Church Unity”:

In a word, the one true, Catholic and Apostolic Church already exists, the Body and Bride of Christ. But it is not yet perceived, and it is not yet relished on earth. Each one of the separate communions on earth enshrines some portion of its total truth, and embodies some fragments of its total worth. But until each one perceives that it is not in itself that total truth and has not in itself that total worth, until each one comes to recognize the religious value of the truth embodied

in other communions and thus for the first time perceives the Higher Truth of which they are all a part—Church Unity lies in the realm of religious prophecy but not in the way of immediate fulfillment.

At the present time, therefore, the real labor of all who yearn for the unity of Christ's Church lies there. It lies in showing the entire compatibility of those seemingly opposite ideas of the Church for which the separate communions stand and to which they witness... It lies in showing that neither are all right nor all wrong, but that the truth lies in a synthesis of those religious values for which each stands. (p. 81)

He applies this not only to Protestant churches, but to Catholics also:

The Protestant must come to apprehend the indispensability of the Catholic position; and the Catholic must learn to recognize the validity of the Protestant witness; and together they must mount to the higher Truth which includes them both.

Then he quotes with approval Canon Rawlinson of England in his book, "Foundations," p. 405:

Each of the two great Christian types has need to be at once the scholar and teacher of the other. The final unity (which must assuredly be outwrought in God's good time) will come *not by way of compromise, but by way of comprehension*. (p. 88) (our italics)

At a meeting in Trinity Church, Boston, last fall, the same Dr. Calkins, in introducing Dr. E. Stanley Jones, who had been crusading to unite all Protestants into one church, said: "Nothing except inertia prevents a united church now. People are sick to death of this everlasting denominational rivalry." And Dr. Jones advocated a church "with a basis so broad that any group making the Petrine confession and acknowledging itself as a branch of Christ's church, would be eligible. Within such a framework, Catholics as well as Protestants would be eligible to join the united church."

Then he proceeded with the familiar "ecumenical" theme:

I believe God raised up the denominations to emphasize forgotten truths. I found Christ at a Methodist altar and I shall never cease to be grateful; I am sure the Baptists are not going to apologize for their stand that the local church is the seat of authority. And Quakers are not going to say that George Fox was sinful when he followed the Inner Light that brought their fellowship into being.

And he voiced his conviction

that 90 per cent of the people are ready for a Protestant Merger, including an interchange of ministers, members and intercommunion. (*Boston Herald*, October 11, 1947)

How far this idea can be carried we see from the report in the *Boston Herald* (October 25, 1947), that 25 churches in Cambridge, *including two synagogues*, would participate in a "unique service of unity to commemorate Reformation Day, in the First Baptist Church, Central Square, Cambridge, on Sunday, October 26" (1947).

Surely the Satanic character of this "ecumenical movement" ought to be evident when even Christ-denying Jewish rabbis are invited to join in it, as has been repeatedly done, according to the daily Press. And yet the majorities of Lutherans in the world are joining it and have expressed their agreement with the fundamental premise of the movement, as outlined above. Thus the report of the Scandinavian Study Commission at the

Lutheran World Federation meeting in Lund, Sweden, written by Dr. Anders Nygren, now the President of the Federation, said:

The Gospel is so exceedingly rich that no section of Christendom can claim a full and exhaustive grasp of its richness. One church has grasped more of it, another less. One has penetrated to the central things, while another has remained to a greater degree at peripheral points. One has grasped one side, the other another side. In this respect the churches can learn from each other and help each other to arrive at a simpler, richer and deeper understanding of the Gospel. (NLC News Bureau Release, June 30, 1947)

Dr. Nygren makes his position entirely clear in an article in the *Lutheran World Review* (January, 1949), on "The Basis of Ecumenicity in Lutheran Theology." He writes:

At an earlier stage in the ecumenical movement it was sometimes thought that the various churches must move out from their respective traditional positions and meet one another half way, as it were. If they seem to hold varying convictions, each one must give up what is most unacceptable to the others. Each one must surrender something in order to reach a common result. It must be clear at once that for such a conception of ecumenicity a strong confessional consciousness is indeed a threat.

But, as a matter of fact, that is really a caricature of ecumenicity. We shall never reach unity among Christians by the route of mutual concessions. The most that could be attained that way would be a syncretistic mass that would have neither unity nor truth nor power. As Christians we must pray to be delivered from that kind of ecumenicity. Just as we Lutherans cannot give up any of the truth which has been given to us and recognized by us, *so we hope that other Christian churches will hold to their convictions.* (our italics.)

Some have tried to make out, by omitting the last sentence in the above quotation, that Dr. Nygren occupies a "confessional position" opposed to unionism (cf. *Lutheran Witness*, March 8, 1949, p. 69), and that he is anything but a follower of Archbishop Soederblom, the Modernist (p. 71). In reality, however, the "Lund theologians" look back to Soederblom as their "spiritual father," and would no doubt disagree both with the criticisms voiced in these *Lutheran Witness* articles of Bishop Soederblom and with the contention that they are opposed to "unionism" on the traditional Lutheran basis. In the article quoted above, Dr. Nygren shows that he holds the popular "ecumenical" principles of the World Council leaders. He identifies, as they do, the spiritual "body of Christ" with the visible churches, and argues from the unity of the "invisible church" in Christ over to the "ecumenical movement," basing the one on the other in the confused manner that is so typical of Dr. Mott and his fellows. He says:

Christian unity is something that is already present despite all varieties and in all varieties. The unity that we seek is no outward union; it is this inner unity, and it is already given to us. We meet one another as members in one and the same body, in the corpus Christi. God has given to us all one and the same Gospel (Eph. 4, 4–6). In this unity which is already present among us lies the promise of all ecumenical work.

The Lund Assembly adopted Dr. Nygren's statement, "Confessing the Truth in a Confused World," so that it could quite logically go on to arrange for representation in the World Council of Churches. The Executive Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, Dr. S.C. Michelfelder, was appointed to "serve as fraternal delegate to the organization meeting of the World Council of Churches at Amsterdam, Holland, in August of 1948."

There are, of course, those in this Ecumenical Movement who wish to do away with all denominational tenets and unite all Christians on the basis of some vague confession of Christ. Dr. Michelfelder referred to them as “ecumeniacs.” It is safe to say, however, that the leaders will stress their pet theory of the many “facets of divine truth” and welcome such more “confessional” groups as certain Lutherans. Dr. Ralph H. Long, formerly Executive Director of the National Lutheran Council, said with regard to this:

A strong Lutheran Church with unity of faith and of purpose can and will make a more definite and positive contribution to the World Council than a church divided and disjoined... We believe that the World Council xviii be a better balanced organization, if it has strong confessional groups within its ranks, than if it is made up of those who have little regard for confessional standards. There must be a proper and dignified respect for the confessional position of all the churches in the ecumenical group, and this can best be accomplished by each denomination presenting a united front. We are definitely in favor of the ecumenical progress that has been made and we want it to result in the strongest organization possible. This can result only from real honesty and a genuine purpose to cultivate a due respect for the right of each communion to adhere to and propagate its own confession. Through a common approach and a united front the Lutheran Church will be able to make a positive and worthwhile contribution to this world-wide movement of evangelical churches. (N.L.C. News Bureau Release, July 1, 1947)

There are not wanting those in our circles also who think our church should join both the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches in order that we might make a “definite and positive contribution to it.” Just think what a powerful influence for good we might become in that World Council if only we, with our clear and definite teachings, would not hide our light under a bushel but join in with them and bring our testimony to them! Such dreamers forget, however, that our testimony includes, if it is honest Lutheran testimony, a forthright condemnation of all sectarians and errorists. And such testimony would either break up the Council in an uproar or result in the ignominious expulsion of the true Lutherans. Those who agree with Dr. Long and Dr. Nygren in their recognition of non-Lutheran communions and confessions and who place these error-ridden churches on a par with the Lutheran Church have little right to the name Lutheran. We do, indeed, recognize that there are Christians in other communions or churches, so long as they have the Word of God in their midst. But that does not mean that we therefore condone their errors and grant that they may have “something to teach us” too about divine truth. Nor does it mean that we can safely fraternize with those churches because we recognize that they are to be classed as “Christian,” and hence do not proselytize among them. It is one thing to believe that there are true Christians even in the “Church of the Anti-Christ,” the Roman Catholic Church. It is another thing to argue that we therefore should join hands with it or other erroristic churches on the basis of “the things we have in common with our fellow Christians of other groups,” as the Church Council of the E.L.C. advocates (*Lutheran Herald*, April 27, 1948), in order to “present a joint Christian testimony and make a united Christian impact upon the world wherever points of agreement can be found” (*Lutheran Herald*, p. 429). The prior assumption in all these “ecumenical endeavors” is that every church shall recognize the distinctive doctrines of other churches as of equal validity with its own distinctive doctrines, and that all shall work together on that basis. Thus there is not a word of truth in the claim made by the E.L.C. Church Council, in the *Lutheran Herald*, for April 27:

There is thus no “unionism” connected with participation in the World Council of Churches, unionism being described in the following words of the so-called Minneapolis Theses. (cf. above)

For the “ecumenical movement” not only “ignores present doctrinal differences” but requires that all members shall give such recognition and assent as Dr. Long and Dr. Nygren have done to the various sects and

their false teachings, not excluding even the most blasphemous Modernism. And yet, consider the praise that is heaped on such “Lutheran” leaders even in Missouri Synod periodicals today!

The exponents of the “facet theory” of the origin of church denominations do not hesitate even to re-write church history in line with their pet assumption. We have seen how attempts were made in the St. Louis “Declaration” to cite the “fathers” of the Missouri Synod in favor of a toleration of error in so-called “non-fundamentals,” which was actually entirely foreign to them. So, too, to quote but one example, N. N. Ronning says, in *Luther College Bulletin* for September 1947, with regard to the doctrinal controversies in the Norwegian churches in America:

The sharp differences which existed among the early immigrants were not matters of doctrines, but of emphasis on certain doctrines ... When the Hauge Synod, the Norwegian Synod and the United Norwegian Lutheran Church effected the second large merger in 1917, none of the church bodies acknowledged or was asked to acknowledge that it had harbored false doctrines.

No, all were right! One party only emphasized one facet of divine truth, another party another facet of the same truth! But could there be any worse insult to the memory of the staunch Lutherans who founded the Norwegian Synod, or any bolder perversion of historical truth than this? (Cf. Prof. N.A. Madson’s answer on this point in *Lutheran Sentinel* for Jan. 12, 1948.)

What shall we say to this defense of sectarianism, presented by so great a cloud of witnesses, including the most famous names in the Protestant churches today? It would be tempting to dismiss it with ridicule of its patently untenable statements. For it is simply not true that the various denominations differ from each other because they emphasize different *truths*. It is their *errors* that the sects emphasize most, the Calvinist his rationalistic predestinarianism, the Baptist his false doctrine of Baptism, the Episcopalian his unapostolic doctrine of the “Apostolic Succession,” etc. They have separated from each other because they at some point or other departed from the standard of true Bible teaching, which is the one truly unifying power in the world. The Lutheran Church alone, in its public Confessions, the Book of Concord, sticks to the whole truth of God’s Word, letting every facet of it shine with the brilliance that belongs to it. Thus when the Reformed churches call the Sacraments mere *signs* of grace, while the Lutheran Church calls them *means* of grace, they are not saying the same thing in different words, nor emphasizing different facets of the same truth, but one denies a Biblical doctrine, while the other affirms it. It is a demonstration of the superficiality and shallowness of modern man in religious matters that so many people want to ignore all differences between the churches and unite them at whatever cost on the basis of the muddiest and vaguest creed—or lack of it—that can be concocted, or on the theory that it is unnecessary to agree in doctrine at all in order to work together in the various fields of Christian endeavor. The only unity that counts in the Christian Church is the unity in the faith, which it is the first duty of the Church to maintain, defend and propagate. It is when church leaders forget this elementary fact and seek to turn the Church of Christ into a kingdom of this world, exercising the influence of its organizations and numbers on legislation, government, social and international affairs, etc. that they urge such mere external unity as is so popular today.

It will shed considerable light on the real character of the World Council and allied union movements today to review briefly the origin and history of the Ecumenical Movement. The first co-operative endeavors were initiated over a century ago to meet certain specific problems, where theological differences were assumed to play no vital part. Thus the London Missionary Society, in 1795, and the American Board of Foreign Missions, in 1810, were at first organized on an interdenominational basis to carry on work in heathen lands,—a task which seemed too great for any one church body to tackle alone. The British and Foreign Bible Society was organized in 1804, and the American Bible Society in 1816, to provide scriptures for these new missionary societies. The formation of the London Missionary Society was at the time heralded as “the funeral of bigotry.” But apparently “bigotry” did not stay buried. For the London Missionary Society, as well as the American Board, soon lost their interdenominational character and became agencies of the Congregational Churches in England and America respectively. Other societies organized on an interdenominational basis were The

Evangelical Alliance, in 1846; the Women's Christian Temperance Union, in 1888; the Christian Endeavor Union, in 1895; and the World's Sunday School Convention, in 1889.

Dr. William Adams Brown, in his book, "Toward a United Church," gives a fairly complete survey of all these interdenominational organizations and indicates how these have led up to the organization of the World Council of today. According to him, there are three main sources of the Ecumenical Movement: The Missionary Movement, the Social Gospel, and the Student Movement. He says with regard to the first: "The missionaries felt the need of presenting a united front sooner and more keenly than it was felt by the home churches. It was not long, therefore, before we find missionary forces associating themselves in cooperative enterprises" (p. 37). Hence, interdenominational conferences were held in such fields as China, India, etc., at a very early date; and "World Missionary Conferences" have been held at intervals since 1854, the first in New York. The eighth such Conference was held in Edinburgh in 1910, the next in Jerusalem in 1928, and the last one was held in Madras, India, in 1938. The Laymen's Missionary Movement, organized in 1906, was an auxiliary organization to further the foreign mission enterprise. The Men and Religion Forward Movement, organized in 1912, performed a similar function for the home mission fields. The 1910 Edinburgh Conference was directly instrumental in arranging for the "Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work," held at Stockholm in 1925 under the leadership of the radical Modernist, Archbishop N. Soederblom. In the meantime, National Councils were formed in the various mission lands, China, India, etc., on much the same broad interdenominational basis as the Federal Council of Churches in America, organized in 1908. No attempt was made to arrive at agreement in doctrine in any of these Conferences and Movements. The whole emphasis was on co-operation in the practical work of the church, in so far as this could be attained without agreement in doctrine. Thus the National Christian Council of China in its constitution "expressly excluded ecclesiastical and doctrinal matters." Its slogan was: "Agree to differ and resolve to love." (*N. C. C. Bulletin*, June, 1926.) At the many meetings held during the last decades doctrinal questions have been touched, if at all, "only with a ten-foot pole." At the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work, held at Stockholm in 1925, seven addresses on "God's Purpose for the World" were delivered, but no discussion of them was allowed, because "they seemed to verge dangerously on the theological." (Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 78.)

This Conference revealed, however, that it is impossible to separate "Life and Work" from "Faith and Order," since views with regard to methods of church work are bound to differ in accordance with the divergent theological viewpoints. This gave fresh impetus to the demand for a World Conference on Faith and Order, which the Episcopalian Churches especially had agitated for. The first of these was held at Lausanne in 1927, the second at Edinburgh in 1937. This last, together with the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work held at Oxford in 1937, brought forth the World Council, establishing Continuation Committees to make all preparations for this first "Ecumenical Council" since the early Christian period. At the Edinburgh Conference, agreement of a sort was reached on "Faith"—what sort may be judged from the fact that Dean Sperry of Harvard's ultra-radical Unitarian Theological School was head of the Committee on Unity. But no agreement could be reached on "Order,"—the Church and the Ministry,—since Episcopalian opinions clashed too strongly with Non-conformist opinions on these points. The only agreement reported in this matter is in the "South India Union" of Protestant churches, which accepted this statement:

The principle of comprehension means that in government the episcopate, the presbyterate and the congregation should all in their several spheres have responsibility and exercise authority in the life and work of the Church. (Quoted in Dr. Henry Van Dusen's "World Christianity.")

Episcopalian missionaries, however, soon left this "Union" again.

The Edinburgh Conference could do no better, then, than to emphasize again the great theme of the ecumenical movement. For according to Dr. Brown:



Practical co-operation was recognized at Edinburgh as one of the legitimate forms of unity and the Churches were recommended to undertake a number of different common tasks as the surest way to lead to more complete organic unity. (op. cit., p. 117)

At the World Missionary Conference held in Madras, India, in 1938, Dr. Hendrik Kraemer read a paper showing that “Christianity stands in absolute contrast to all non-Christian religions except Judaism and Islam.” But the majority there contended, “non-Christian religions can also be regarded as showing forth divine revelation.” (Cf. Van Dusen, op. cit.) Many missionaries find “the Light of the world” also in the “Light of Asia,” Buddhism, as e.g., Dr. K. Reichelt, formerly missionary of the Norwegian Lutheran Church, now head of the Buddhist Christian Mission in China, a frankly syncretistic mission. Hocking’s “Rethinking Missions,” with its radical Modernism, represents the prevailing “theology” in these World Conferences. Hence Dr. Van Dusen concludes that “the theology of the world Christian mission, under Anglo-Saxon influence, is prevailingly that of liberal evangelism” (op. cit., p. 200), which is to say that Modernism has control of the mission fields of the world, since Anglo-Saxon churches conduct seven-eighths of that work.

This indicates how quickly unionism leads to outright denial of Christ and every specific Christian truth. The conservative Lutheran who unites with the liberal Lutheran is thereby connected also with the Modernist with whom the liberal Lutheran fraternizes; and the Modernist is already in the middle of heathenism. There is only a short step after all from Christianity to heathenism, as the Old Testament prophets in particular teach us with all emphasis and clarity. In unionism, as in other things, the principle holds accordingly: “*Principiis obsta!*”

The second main source of the Ecumenical Movement, according to Dr. Brown, has been the so-called Social Gospel. He says:

Under its inspiration, forward-looking spirits from all denominations associated themselves either for direct attack upon specific social evils or for closer fellowship across denominational lines... (p. 41)

Two influences were prominent in the minds of those who sought co-operation in the Council (Federal Council, etc.), evangelism and the concern for the social application of the gospel,—the latter was the dominant motive. (op. cit., p. 48)

Since the “social ideals of the churches,” according to such Modernists as Josiah Strong and Walter Rauschenbush, demanded that “every phase of human life must be brought under Christ’s control” (p. 39), their chosen tasks were obviously too great for any one church to manage alone. Dr. Brown also names such Higher Critics as Simon, Astruc, Baur, etc., as scholars who furthered the cause of church union. Modernism, the Social Gospel, Higher Criticism, Rationalism,—the whole illegitimate brood of heresies that has afflicted the Church especially this last century—are interested first and last only in *this* world, in building the Kingdom of God, so-called, here on earth. Logically, to them it is of little importance what a church teaches, if only it works for a better “social order,” for “peace on earth,” etc. Thus, as Dr. Van Dusen says:

Discussions of Christianity and international affairs had found an important place in every one of the sequences of both missionary and Life and Work Conferences,—Edinburgh, 1910, Stockholm, Jerusalem, Oxford, Madras. A larger and weightier impact by the world church upon the relations of the nations is clearly demanded.

One of the topics discussed was “The Responsibility of the Church for the International Order.” And in August, 1946, a Commission of Churches on International Affairs was formed, which was, in preparation for the World Council meeting in Amsterdam, to

study selected problems of international justice and world order, including economic and social questions, and to make the results of such study widely known among all the churches. (Van Dusen, op. cit.)

This Commission commanded a “sizeable budget for its program.” And it would, according to Dr. Van Dusen, give the churches “a more effective instrument to mobilize Christian insight and opinion in support of world order,”—that is, it would carry on propaganda for a World State, the surrender of our national sovereignty and the establishment of a worldwide Socialistic government. John Foster Dulles is the liaison man, or agent, of the World Council in the political and diplomatic world; and the importance given him will indicate to what extent the political activities of the World Council are succeeding. (Even the *Walther League Messenger* has been opened to his propaganda, under its new socialistically-inclined management, February, 1948.) Dr. Van Dusen shows how the Continuation Committee of the World Council kept up its political activities also during the war, and says:

A careful compilation by the Geneva staff of documents and declarations reaching them from all over the world up to 1944 revealed that there was then actually more nearly a single Christian mind concerning political and economic order than there had been on September 1, 1939, or at any previous date! Could there be more convincing proof of the reality of Christian world community?

Bishop Berggrav of Norway is quoted as saying, at the ecumenical service, with Holy Communion, held in the Cathedral of Geneva on February 20, 1946: “During the war Christ has said to us: My Christians, you are one” (Van Dusen, op. cit., p. 148). That is, the war united all the churches, Lutheran, Reformed, and Catholic, in their resistance to the tyranny of the State; and this proved to the minds of some church leaders that the churches can and should be united in all their work, not only in political matters! By such a union, they expect to bring about world peace and the World State that is to guarantee peace on earth forevermore! In this propaganda, the World Council works together with the World YMCA, World YWCA, World Student Christian Federation, World Alliance for International Friendship through Churches, and the Lutheran World Federation, all of which have their headquarters at Geneva.

At the World Council meeting in Amsterdam, there was a Commission on “The Church and International Affairs,” as well as one on “The Church and the Disorder of Society.” The former followed as its “guiding line” this statement:

The nations are faced with the necessity of political action of unprecedented gravity. Peace must be achieved. The chaos of war must be overcome. The economic and political life of the world must be reshaped. International law must be established. In what spirit shall this be done? Here the Church has a word to say that no one else can say. It does not speak as the representative of any one nation, class or group, but on behalf of the God Who is no respecter of partial interests and is the Judge and Savior of all. The Church knows of a forgiveness which includes but also transcends justice and so makes possible a new beginning where international relations have broken down. (“The World Assembly,” p. 7.)

The latter defined its aim, in part, as follows:

It will be necessary to study the ways in which the churches are themselves involved in the disorder of society. The ambiguity of the Church, as a divine-human community, is to be seen clearly in this connection. ... It reflects many of the social stratifications and conflicts of the world. Its own divisions frequently correspond to national, racial, and class divisions in society.

Hence the Church finds it very difficult to keep under the divine judgments social groups that are in conflict with each other or to be to them a ministry of reconciliation.

In plainer language, the World Council tells the churches that they must solve all the social problems resulting from the rivalries between nations, races and classes, as if there were no other divinely instituted organization, the civil “powers-that-be,” to deal with them!

In accordance with these pronouncements, the world press proclaimed the World Council as an organization that would, perhaps, solve problems none else could handle successfully. We are told, for example:

Main topics of this epochal convention will be world problems which are festering sores that have plagued the surgeons of international affairs. ... This great conclave will seek through Christianity to cure the ills of a bewildered and frustrated world. Many believe it will succeed where ambitious diplomats have found little success... This international throng of Christians will be looked on as a new special kind of League of Nations. (*Boston Post*, May 31, 1948)

It was but a very small “mouse” that this great “mountain” brought forth in Amsterdam by all its labors, and we have no reason to believe that it can manifest any good fruits hereafter either. For “except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain” (Ps. 127, v. 1). And the Lord has not given His Church the tasks this World Council would lay upon it. Nowhere in Scripture has the Church been given the authority to “reshape the economic and political life of the world,” or “to establish international law,” or to arbitrate between classes and races and nations. It is a part of the spirit of Anti-Christ for the Church to arrogate such powers to itself, as the Roman papacy does. If anything, Scripture shows that it is a Utopian dream to think of ever ending the curse of war or of establishing a Babel’s tower of international law to bind all men and nations together. It is no accident that the most terrible wars in history have burdened this world just at times when men in their overweening pride were planning most busily and arrogantly for permanent peace. Thus Mr. Carnegie in 1914 subsidized the Church Peace Union to the tune of \$2,000,000.00, expressing the conviction that “war certainly will be abolished some day, and that sooner than expected.” But the first Conference of Roman Catholic Churches sponsored by this Church Peace Union was to have been held in Liege, Belgium on the very day it was attacked by the Germans in the First World War. And the first Protestant Conference was held in Constance, Germany, on August 1, 1914, the day that war was declared between Germany and Russia. We know of no more mischievous activities in the field of Foreign Affairs, as well as in social legislation, than those sponsored by the World Council of Churches and its allied organizations. True statesmanship has been defined as “the art of the possible.” But this, these would-be spokesmen of the Christian churches of the world today ignore completely.

A third main source of the World Council, according to Dr. Brown, has been the Student Movement. It was important particularly as providing “a Training School for Leaders” of the ecumenical movement. The YMCA was organized on a non-denominational basis in 1844, the YWCA in 1855. The Inter-Collegiate Christian Movement was organized in 1877; the Student Volunteer Movement, in which Dr. John R. Mott has played such an important part, in 1886; and the World’s Student Christian Federation in 1895, of which Dr. Mott was the General Secretary for 25 years. Dr. Van Dusen says that the Student Movement was “the most potent force in furthering the advance of Christian unity on every front, it was a testing ground also for a sound and stable community of nations.” With regard to the Oxford Conference of 1937 he says:

A score of men stood together, guiding its progress,—Wm. Temple, John R. Mott, J. H. Oldham, Henry Sloane Coffin, Adolf Keller, Reinhold Niebuhr, etc.... They were almost all old friends,—friendships dating from young manhood,—they had learned to know and believe in one another through a common devotion in student days... Today when the leaders of Protestant Christendom come together, it is like a reunion of old schoolfellows. The great majority have been trained within the fellowship of the World’s Student Christian Federation... (op. cit., p. 90–91)

Spiritually, if not organizationally, the youth movements are the parents of ecumenical Christianity of today. (p. 157)

The leadership of all these modern union movements forms, in short, a sort of “interlocking directorate,” in which the same persons hold all the key positions and guide the policies and activities of the various movements in the same general direction. It takes only a slight acquaintance with these leaders to know that they are all Modernists. John R. Mott and his Student Volunteer Movement have done more than any other agency that could be named to bring Modernism to the great mission fields of the world and to reduce the mission activities of practically all Protestant Missions to a mere ineffective piddling with social service in the fields of education and charities. And yet even this arch “misleader of missions” has been invited to Concordia Theological Seminary and is given high praise in the *Lutheran Witness!* (November 18, 1947, p. 381.) Most Lutheran missions have long been fraternizing openly with these deniers of Christ in such organizations as the National Christian Council of China, the Foreign Missions Conference, etc. And syncretism with heathen religions is the order of the day, so that one cannot but wonder if the difficulties the foreign missionary movement has had to contend with in recent years all over the world do not represent a judgment of God upon the faithless churches that no longer preach the Gospel in its truth and purity. Even the Missouri Synod Mission in China has not been allowed as yet to cleanse itself of the syncretism that underlies the use of the heathen idol name, Shang-Di, for God, in China.

The Ecumenical Movement is, then, not only unionist in the most extreme degree, but is rooted historically in Higher Criticism, Modernism, and Socialism, and has had as its recognized leaders the chief exponents of the Social Gospel and Liberalism in theology and of International Socialism and Radicalism in politics. This is so obviously the case that Fundamentalist groups in our country have not only refused to join the World Council and its subsidiaries, but have organized an “International Council of Christian Churches” to counteract the World Council, just as they had earlier organized “The American Council of Christian Churches” and the “National Association of Evangelicals,” to counteract the radical “Federal Council of Churches” with which such Lutherans as the United Lutheran Church are connected. In their “International Call,” issued in February 1948, the officers of the “American Council” said:

The projection of the proposed World Council of Churches has given ample evidence that those who believe in an infallible, inerrant Bible and the whole counsel of God revealed therein cannot be a party to that body. Its use in its leadership of prominent Christ-rejecting and Bible-contradicting ministers, its championship of the inclusivist church displaying complete doctrinal indifferentism with believers and unbelievers partaking of the communion, its union with the Greek Orthodox churches with their idolatrous mass, superstitious intercession to the Virgin and the Saints, its open invitation to the Roman Catholic Church to join, and its deceptive use of traditional Christian phrases while denying the historical meaning thereof—all combine to project an organization which will be expressive of apostasy and filled with abomination. The untold harm which such a body will do in misleading the nations, in opposing the pure Gospel, in closing doors to faithful missions and in advancing socialism and political intrigue with the State can hardly be overstated. This situation challenges every Bible believer through the world who desires to lift high the banner of the Cross, and to glory in the precious blood of the Lamb.

In response to this “Call,” many conservative churches sent delegates to a meeting held in Amsterdam, August 12 to 19, and organized, “an International Council” to “stand against the World Council” (The World Council met in Amsterdam August 22 to September 5).

In spite of the patently Modernistic character of the World Council, or should we say because of it, practically all Lutheran Churches in the world have joined it directly, besides being connected with it through the Lutheran World Federation. The ULC, the ALC, the Augustana Synod, etc., have joined. The ELC (Norwegian Merger) leaders tried at the 1946 convention of the ELC to get it to join. But action on this proposal

was postponed. At the 1948 Convention a lively debate was carried on in the ELC with regard to the World Council. The leaders, who were members of their “Church Council,” agitated in favor of it. They insisted that membership in the World Council would not involve their church in “unionism”; that it concerned cooperation in “externals,” such as relief work in Europe, a “righteous and lasting peace based on Christian principles,” etc. They wrote, as quoted in *Lutheraneren*, October 2, 1946:

While the world burns, must we wait two full years before we can decide whether to join hands with fellow-Christians to put out, or at least to check, the fire, in a planned, organized attempt? Surely we are agreed with our fellow-Christians that a righteous and lasting peace must be based on Christian principles. But still we must, at a time when every minute counts, wait at least two years before we can contribute our mite toward the united Christian effort to exercise influence on those who are to make the peace! We must wait two years before we can join in with the unanimous testimony of fellow-Christians against oppression of minorities, against the fateful signs of the times pointing to a new increase of the Fascistic spirit, etc. ... A frank recognition of the spiritual fellowship which we express in the third article of the Apostles’ Creed (I believe—the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints), and, on the basis thereof, a presentation of “a united Christian front over against the situations that confront the churches all round the world,” is something else” (than unionism). (Tr. from the Norwegian.)

Note the utter confusion of thought which identifies “the communion of saints,” the spiritual body of Christ, with all those who call themselves Christians throughout the world. It is only according as we preach the truth in Jesus Christ and testify against the Lutheran World Federation, most of whose members belong to the World Council, and which as a unit was and make its influence felt in the world by joining hands with a multitude of people who deny, either *every* fundamental of the Christian faith, or at least many of the Biblical, Lutheran teachings, such as that concerning the inspired Word of God and the Holy Sacraments as divine means of grace. We expect our confirmants to know the difference between the visible and the invisible church, but these people do not!

Many members of the ELC spoke up against joining the World Council, calling attention to its Modernistic, Christ-denying character. And the 1948 Convention voted decisively against joining it. However, these objectors have had nothing to say against the Lutheran World Federation, most of whose members belong to the World Council, and which as a unit is to be represented at the World Council by Dr. Michelfelder. They have little ground to stand on, then, in their opposition to the World Council, since they themselves belong to the Lutheran World Federation, which has its full share of Modernists and critics of the orthodox Lutheran faith. When people join hands to form a ring, they are connected not only with those whose hands they touch directly, but also with all those in the circle. So these ELC Lutherans are connected with the World Council, the Federal Council of Churches, and other Modernistic, Socialistic organizations through their membership in the Lutheran World Federation, whether they like to admit it or not. Dr. Nygren, the new president of the Lutheran World Federation, has been praised, even in the Missouri Synod press, as a conservative Lutheran. Yet he and Bishop Aulen who lead the so-called “Lundensian” school of theology take considerable pains in their writings to show that they are really quite “modern” in their outlook. (Cf. *Theol. Quarterly*, October, 1948, p. 247ff.) Thus Dr. Conrad Bergendoff, in summarizing the report of Commission One, headed by Dr. Nygren, to the Lund Convention, says with regard to these “Lundensian theologians”:

They have delivered Lutheran theology from the stale intellectualism which resulted from an orthodoxy which believed itself capable of preserving the Spirit of God in the bottles of “pure” doctrine. The result is a theology which more than ever throws the church back on the gospel and gives added meaning to the term “Word of God,” but will not allow itself to be mechanized and materialized by formulae of inspiration so dear to rationalists of both the orthodox and pietist types. (*The National Lutheran*, Fall, 1947, p. 8)

Thus if the members of the ELC wish to avoid unionism with such as “deny the Lord Jesus Christ,” they will have to break with the Lutheran World Federation, as well as keep out of the World Council. For it is evident that the Lutheran World Federation will use all its influence toward breaking down the walls between Lutherans and other churches. As Dr. Michelfelder said at Lund: “Our provincialism must come to an end. Since our Lutheran Church embraces almost half of Protestantism we must assume the largest share of responsibility. The Lutheran Church should take its rightful place in the World Council of Churches.” (N. L. C. News Bureau Release, June 30, 1947.)

Luther rejected Church Councils as an authority in matters of faith. Yet many who call themselves by his name are ready to support the aims and plans of a Council that publishes, as a “prophecy” of what it can expect to accomplish, this papistic dream:

It is the fate of our generation to be forced to deal at once with too many problems for which no solution is in sight. At every point where it seeks to take hold it seems to be in a vicious circle... The Assembly must be free to speak its own word to the Churches and the world,—to give a message that is both centrally Christian and immediately relevant to the needs and the questions and the burdens of men today... We may pray that the Assembly will be so guided by God’s Spirit that out of its deliberations may come an authentic voice of the *Una Sancta* (the Holy Christian Church), recognized to be such by countless Christians who will find in it the light of truth that will be both a divine warning and a divine promise. (“The World Assembly,” p. 8)

In the face of all the proud attempts made today to build a kingdom of God here on earth to solve all “economic and political problems,” true Lutherans need to heed the admonition: “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord.” (II Corinthians 6, 17.) There is no greater or more important issue before our church today than this: that we not only keep separate from such organizations as the World Council, but also contend against them and fight them with the sword of the Word without ceasing. And this we must do, even if we stand alone, or see one after the other of those who formerly took a firm stand against unionism succumbing to its blandishments and compromising with the world. To those who seek in World Councils and Federations new light and better guidance than the Word of God offers them, we say: “Should not a people seek unto their God, for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. ... And they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness.” (Is. 8, 19ff.)