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The World Council of Churches: A Theological Appraisal

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NOTE: Mr. Meyer, who prepared Part I of this article, is one of the six 1952 graduates who were given a fellowship for 1952—53 to pursue graduate studies at Concordia Seminary and to assist various professors in research projects. Mr. Meyer's assignment is to help the managing editor of this journal in preparing the manuscript for a text in the field of Comparative Symbolics. This article is essentially a chapter from this proposed publication, and its republication in this journal was requested because of the present interest in the topic. — ED.

THROUGHOUT the history of the divided Church there have been earnest efforts to reunite the separated communions. The impetus for such a reunion usually was strongest in a period either of prosperity or of opposition. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Church experienced an era of revivalism and expansion, and shortly the former confessional boundaries were ignored, and in spite of divergent doctrinal views denominations united in organizing the several national Bible Societies and large Missionary Associations. When shortly afterwards a wave of secularism swept over the world, the various communions again set aside their confessional differences and organized the Evangelical Alliance (1846) to meet jointly the "common foe." The apocalyptic events and the catastrophic disasters which have fallen on large sections of Christendom during the past few decades have drawn the members of the separated Churches together and have quickened the desire in many leaders to unite all Christians in some sort of union in order to meet jointly the problems which face the world and the Church. It is

this desire which led to the formation of the World Council of Churches. The first part of this article will discuss the genetic history and the nature of the World Council of Churches. This is basic for the second part, in which the objective appraisal of the theological emphases present in this movement will be discussed.

I

The World Council of Churches grew out of three inter- and supra-denominational movements and programs of activities.¹

1. Movements that aimed at co-ordination of existing church work, and promoted co-operation to avoid overlapping and rivalry, e. g., the World Student Christian Federation and the International Missionary Council.

The International Missionary Council was organized at Lake Mohawk, New York, in 1921, after several preliminary meetings.²

2. Movements that aimed at bringing Christian consciences to bear on the practical and contemporary problems of the world, e. g., the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches, and the Universal Christian Council for Life and Work.

This organization has played an important part in the life of a large segment of Protestantism. It held meetings at Jerusalem in 1925 and Madras 1938.

The Universal Christian Council for Life and Work was initiated by the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America; the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches; the British Conference on Christian Politics, Economics, and Citizenship (COPEC); and the Church of Sweden, with the hearty support of the Swedish government and the ecclesiastical statesman Archbishop Nathan Söderblom. At its first meeting in Stockholm, 1925, this interdenominational agency deliberately by-passed all doctrinal issues and devoted itself to a "solution of the contemporary social and international problems." However, at the second meeting at Oxford, 1937, attention was given to some theological issues.³

3. Movements that aimed directly at the discussion of the doctrinal agreements underlying the disunion of Christendom, e. g., The World Conference on Faith and Order.

The World Conference on Faith and Order came into being largely in response to an invitation of the Protestant Episcopal Church under the leadership of Bishop Brent, asking representatives of all Christian bodies throughout the world which accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior to participate in a conference for the consideration of questions pertaining to Faith and Order of the Church of Christ.⁴

Many leaders in the ecumenical movement had realized that it was impossible to by-pass entirely the theological issues which separated the Churches. The invitation to the Conference on Faith and Order stated specifically that the purpose of the meeting was a discussion of the differences on "faith" and "order," i. e., the creed and the ministry. However, it was understood that no Church should lose its own individuality or independent sovereignty, nor be expected to ratify the deductions of this Conference. The first meeting was held at Lausanne, 1927. The theological basis for membership was the confession of the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior and acceptance of the Ecumenical Creeds of the Church as the acceptable doctrinal statement of the Conference.⁵ The second meeting was held in 1937 at Edinburgh,⁶ just prior to the Oxford meeting of the Council on Faith and Life. In the organizational meeting of the World Council of Churches in 1948 the Council on Faith and Order became the Commission on Faith and Order, and as such it functions somewhat independently of the World Council. It had its third meeting as the Council and its first as the Commission at Lund in 1952.⁷

In the opinion of the leaders the 1937 meetings showed that a merging of the Life and Work (Stockholm) and the Faith and Order (Lausanne) movements was highly desirable, in spite of the basic differences in purpose and plan of each. The former organization concerned itself chiefly with the alleviation of moral and social problems due to the maladjustments of human society, and with the removal of the universal provincial isolationism. The other movement dealt primarily with doctrinal matters and especially with the vexing problems growing out of the divergent views on the ministry. Life and Work took it upon itself to issue pronouncements and to express opinions concerning the world

problems and current issues. Faith and Order, however, prided itself in its independent structure that allowed for no resolutions that would commit a Church to a doctrinal agreement. It sought a theological statement sufficiently wide for universal approval and a *modus vivendi* to enable churches with divergent types of ministerial orders to unite in worship and work.

Specific steps leading to the formation of the World Council were: (1) The meeting of the Committee of Thirty-five under Wm. Temple's chairmanship at Westfield College, Onson, England, 1937;⁸ and (2) the meeting of the Committee of Fourteen at Utrecht, 1938, whose chief task was to formulate a provisional constitution for a projected Council of the Churches of the World. This document was to be both a witness to the historic faith of the Church as expressed in the Nicene Creed, and an instrument which would deprive no church of its own specific interests or interpretations.⁹ The organizational meeting was scheduled for 1941, but had to be postponed until 1948 at Amsterdam.

According to its constitution the nature and purpose of the World Council of Churches is to be and to serve as a "fellowship of Churches which accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior." At the organizational meeting all sections of Christendom were represented, except the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁰ The World Council presents a new attempt and an unprecedented approach to the problem of interchurch relationships and is confronted with peculiar problems, the most difficult of which is formulating a definition that would account for the various ecclesiologies of its member Churches. The leaders have found it necessary to state as explicitly what the World Council is not as what it is.

The World Council claims to be a council, not a church, not a world-church, nor the *Una Sancta*. Its avowed purpose is

to bring the churches into living contact with each other and to promote the study and discussion of the issues of Church unity. The very existence and activities of the World Council are said to bear witness to the necessity of a clear manifestation of the oneness of the Church of Christ, without depriving a member church of its right and duty to draw its own conclusion from its ecumenical experience.

From the various discussions and reports the divergent ecclesiologies seem to be the greatest barrier to a union of Churches.¹¹ Probably a greater difficulty is the fact that there is no agreement concerning the concept of Church unity. It claims to stand for unity, but is compelled to recognize that there are member Churches that conceive of unity wholly as an agreement in the realm of doctrine; others as a sacramental union based on Church order; others who insist on both; etc. But according to the leaders none of these conceptions composed the ecumenical theory around which the World Council of Churches is formed.¹²

According to the Constitution the functions of the World Council are as follows:

1. To carry on the work of the Faith and Order and the Life and Work movements;
2. To facilitate common action by the Churches;
3. To promote co-operation in study;
4. To promote the growth of ecumenical consciousness in the members of all Churches;
5. To establish relations with denominational federations of world-wide scope and with other ecumenical movements;
6. To call world conferences on specific subjects as occasion may require, such conferences being empowered to publish their own findings.

To define the positive assumptions which underline the World Council of Churches, the Central Committee in its 1950 message emphasized the following points:

1. Conversation, co-operation and common witness of the Churches must be based on the common recognition that Christ is the Divine Head of the Body;
2. Though the New Testament unity is not one of churches with each other, the fact is that there can be only one Church of Christ.
3. The member Churches recognize that the membership of the Church of Christ is more inclusive than the membership of their own Church body. They seek, therefore, to enter into living contact with those outside their own ranks who confess the Lordship of Christ. Therefore the task is to seek fellowship with all those

who, while not members of the same visible body, belong together as members of the mystical body. And the ecumenical movement is the place where this search and discovery takes place.

4. The member Churches of the World Council consider the relationship of other Churches to the Holy Catholic Church which the Creeds profess as subject for mutual consideration. Nevertheless, membership in the Council does not imply that each Church must regard the other member Church as Church in the true and full sense of the word.

5. The member Churches of the World Council recognize in other Churches elements of the true Church. . . . They consider that this mutual recognition obliges them to enter into a serious conversation with each other in the hope that these elements of truth will lead to the recognition of full truth and to unity based on the full truth.

6. The member Churches of the Council are willing to consult together in seeking to learn of the Lord Jesus Christ what witness He would have them bear to the world in His Name. That is, the purpose is "that the world may believe" and that the Church may "testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world."

7. A further practical implication of common membership in the World Council is that the member Churches should recognize their solidarity with each other, render assistance to each other in case of need, and refrain from such actions as are incompatible with brotherly relationships.

8. The member Churches enter into spiritual relationships through which they seek to learn from each other and to give help to each other in order that the Body of Christ may be built up and that the life of the Churches may be renewed.¹³

II

The problem which confronts the member Churches of the W. C. C. is a definition and an adequate description of "ecumenical theology." Some seem to follow the lead of Georg Calixt, the 17th century theologian, who advocated an "ecumenical theology" in the form of *consensus quinquesaecularis*. Their motto is: "In essentials unity, in nonessentials diversity (liberty), in all things charity." In their quest for a least common denominator

in Christian theology as a basis for the reunion of all sectors of Christendom, they have tentatively agreed on a brief credal statement which recognizes "Jesus Christ as God and Savior." But even this laconic statement is subject to varying interpretations. The majority of member Churches realizes that more is involved in finding an "ecumenical theology." The many studies submitted to the Christian Churches prior to the Amsterdam meeting are an eloquent testimony to the fact that a large number of leaders recognizes the need of thorough theological discussion, as well as the great difficulty of arriving at some degree of unanimity.¹⁴ It appears that the following postulates were generally followed in formulating theological statements which would find general approval:

a. It is necessary to recognize and accept the proper perspective in doctrine, in other words, to make the correct distinctions between primary and secondary doctrine.

b. The "universal church" is not merely an ideal, but a reality.

c. Ecumenical theology must have a focal point, a central doctrine which serves as the *leitmotif* of theology.

d. All Christian doctrines have grown out of specific life situations, and are determined, modified, or accentuated by a continuous life experience.¹⁵

1. On the basis of these assumptions the following doctrines have received chief emphasis in the theological discussions: The doctrines of God and Christ; of sin and redemption; of the Church and the kingdom of God. It appears at first glance that ecumenical theology has found a *leitmotif* or the key which will open the door to a common faith in the statement that in Christ the Church has the entire Christian truth; that the central fact of theology is God's revelation in Christ; that Christ is the living Word through which God speaks to His Church. However, it must be kept in mind that among ecumenical theologians "Christ" Himself is subject to a variety of interpretations. Ecumenical theologians seem to run the danger of supplementing the central fact of Christian revelation with a human interpretation of this fact. Many leaders of the Ecumenical Movement are keenly conscious of this. Visser 't Hooft, the secretary of the World Council, sought

the judgment of several theologians on his essay "The Significance of the World Council of Churches" and submitted these with his essay to the theological commission at Amsterdam. In our critique we said in part:

Since only the living Christ can establish the New Testament *koinonia*, the foremost problems to be solved are: Who is Jesus Christ? How does He establish the unity? What is the Word? What is the essence and which are the marks of the Church? In fact, it seems to us that, as Dr. 't Hooft points out, the paramount and basic problem is: To what extent is Holy Scripture final? or does the experience of the Churches modify or supplement this Word? We believe that this problem is basic and therefore suggest that a study of this problem be included in the agenda of the Amsterdam meeting.¹⁶

2. Ecumenical theologians are correct in maintaining that the proper distinction between primary and secondary doctrines must be observed and that all theology must have a focal point. Unless this is done, theology which like the Scriptures is intended as a wading pool for infants may become the body of water to drown elephants. A good case in point of the tremendous problems confronting ecumenical theologians in finding a theological *leit-motif* is the basically different approach of Eastern Orthodoxy and Lutheranism to theology and Christology. The Eastern theologians are thoroughly familiar with the great Trinitarian and Christological controversies and adhere strictly to the Athanasian, Nicene, and Chalcedonian terminology. The Lutheran theologian employs the same terminology, and his dogmatical categories are probably identical with those of Eastern Orthodoxy. But there is one difference, and that makes all the difference in the world: The Greek theologians move chiefly in the realm of "orthodoxy," "Rechtgläubigkeit," the Lutheran in the realm of *faith*, "Rechtgläubigkeit." The Lutheran removes the doctrinal discussion from the realm of speculation into the area of the needs of the soul; from philosophy to soteriology.

3. Ecumenical theology hopes to find the *locus* for the New Testament *koinonia*. Many hold that Christian unity must not be sought in doctrinal agreement, but rather in the diversity of theological opinions and in an alleged sharing of divergent views

and worship. In such a fellowship a denomination inclined toward contemplative and mystical theology is said to have an opportunity to share in the religious experience of an activist communion; in the joint worship of the member Churches the nonliturgical Churches would be enriched by the liturgy of other communions, and in the "oneness with Christ" the anticredal denominations would profit from the strongly confessional groups.¹⁷ And this type of fellowship is said to equip all the Churches to fight and conquer the common enemy of the Church. Some hope to devise such an ecumenical theology as will become the instrument to widen the range of each unit of Churches and ultimately to establish a world-wide brotherhood. Such an ecumenical brotherhood is expected to solve the problems which arise from the diversity of races and cultures, and merge all Christians into one unit. This does not necessarily mean — so the leaders state — that all denominations will ultimately unite and form a supraracial, a supra-national denomination, since each denomination with its divergent views would continue its separate existence and as such make its contribution to the whole.¹⁸ In short, ecumenical theology does not strive for a universal denomination, but for a universal "church" in which the richness of the Christian faith is expected to come to life in diversity rather than in conformity.

All Christians are, of course, agreed that it is every Christian's and every Church's sacred obligation to share in the bounteous treasures of the Gospel. But two factors dare not be overlooked. The one is that such sharing can be done in various ways and need not necessarily be done by membership in a man-made organization. In fact, under prevailing conditions such membership may imply violence to a Christian's conscience. Second, worship is not the whole of Christian theology, nor activism, nor confessionalism. A sharing of these things is not yet the New Testament *koinonia*. This fellowship is one of faith.

4. At the present moment the ecclesiastical and eschatological problems are given priority. At Amsterdam in 1948 the doctrine of the Church received chief consideration under the general heading of "Man's Disorder and God's Design." The second

meeting, scheduled for 1954 at Evanston, Ill., will devote much study and time to eschatology under the general heading "Jesus Christ, our Lord, the only Hope of the Church and the world." The type of theological discussion which now occupies the theological leaders was unthinkable twenty-five years ago. The impacts of World War II brought about a tremendous readjustment in theological thought, especially in two directions. In the first place, the fortunes of war compelled the continental, racial, national isolationism to make room for a "one-world" concept. This new outlook deeply affected Christian thinking. Denominationalism was considered in large areas as part of the former provincialism, which was doomed in the modern world. Many believed that a composite ecumenical theology could dispense with denominations completely or at least reduce denominationalism to a status where each denomination would retain its denominational emphasis but also recognize the other denomination's points of view. In the second place, the former voices of modernistic theologians have been silenced to a large degree by the sobering effects of the war. After the war the conservative theologians seemingly were much more influential in the forming of an ecumenical theology than liberal theologians.¹⁹

In ecumenical theology much thought has been given to the place of the Bible in formulating theology.²⁰ The prevalent view seems to be that "the Bible itself must lead us back to the living Word of God, which is Christ." Because of the many divergent and conflicting theological views in ecumenical theology, it is difficult to determine the precise meaning of this "Christo-centric" approach to the Bible. The general opinion is that if the Holy Spirit is to find us through the Scriptures, then it becomes necessary to discover the degree in which our particular situation is similar to the one in which the Holy Spirit spoke in Bible times. Of course, the situations in either the Old or the New Testament are never perfectly identical with those of today, and for that reason it becomes necessary to adapt the Holy Spirit's original message in accord with conditions as they exist today.

5. Ecumenical theology began to take more definite shape after the "third" meeting of the Commission on Faith and Order (for-

merly the World Conference on Faith and Order) in 1952 at Lund. The tendency seems to be to find a combination of a Christocentric and an ecclesio-centric theology. One statement adopted at Lund reads as follows:

In His eternal love the Father has sent His Son to redeem creation from sin and death. In Jesus Christ God's Son became man. By word and deed he proclaimed on earth the arrival of God's kingdom, bore away the sins of the world on the Cross, rose again from the dead, ascended into heaven, the throne of his kingdom, at the right hand of God. At Pentecost God poured out His Spirit upon the Church, giving all who believe in Jesus Christ the power to become God's children. Through the indwelling of His Spirit Jesus Christ dwells in the midst of his Church. As Lord and King he will come again to judge the quick and the dead and to consummate the eternal kingdom of God in the whole creation. . . . In our work we have been led to the conviction that it is of decisive importance for the advance of ecumenical work that the doctrine of the Church be treated in close relation both to the doctrine of Christ and to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. We believe that this must occupy a primary place in the future work of this movement, and we so recommend to the Faith and Order Commission, and to its working committee.²¹

The centrality of the doctrine of the Church in ecumenical theology becomes quite evident in the *Omnibus Volume* published after the Amsterdam meeting in 1948. One of the most difficult problems confronting ecumenical theology is a satisfactory description of the nature and the function of the Church.²² At Amsterdam, the theologians agreed on the following statements to be submitted to the Churches for further study:

A. We all believe that the Church is God's gift to men for the salvation of the world; that the saving acts of God in Jesus Christ brought the Church into being; that the Church persists in continuity throughout history through the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Within this agreement, we should continue, in obedience to God, to try to come to a deeper understanding of our differences in order that they may be overcome. These concern:

1. The relation between the old and new Israel and the relation of the visible church to "the new creation" in Christ. It appears

from our discussion that some of our differences concerning the Church and the ministry have their roots here.

2. The relation, in the saving acts of God in Christ, between objective redemption and personal salvation, between Scripture and tradition, between the Church as once founded and the Church as Christ's contemporary act.

3. The place of the ministry in the Church and the nature of its authority and continuity, the number and interpretation of the sacraments, the relation of baptism to faith and confirmation, the relation of the universal to the local church, the nature of visible unity and the meaning of schism.

B. We believe that the Church has a vocation to worship God in His holiness, to proclaim the Gospel to every creature. She is equipped by God with the various gifts of the Spirit for the building up of the Body of Christ. She has been set apart in holiness to live for the service of all mankind, in faith and love, by the power of the crucified and risen Lord and according to His example, by faith, in the eternity of the kingdom of God and waiting for the consummation when Christ shall come again in the fullness of His glory and power.

Within this agreement also, we should continue, in obedience to God, to try to come to a deeper understanding of our differences in order that they may be overcome. These concern:

1. The relation between the Godward vocation of the Church in worship and her manward vocation in witness and service.

2. The degree to which the Kingdom of God can be said to be already realized within the Church.

3. The nature of the Church's responsibility for the common life of men and their temporal institutions.²³

A second problem concerns the Church's witness to God's design in the disorder of mankind. At Amsterdam the purpose of God was formulated as follows:

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

gathering together of all things in Christ. Much in that purpose is still hidden from us. Three things are perfectly plain:

All that we need to know concerning God's purpose is already revealed in Christ.

It is God's will that the Gospel should be proclaimed to all men everywhere.

God is pleased to use human obedience in the fulfillment of His purpose.²⁴

It seems that ecumenical theology views the function of the Church largely in terms of the Calvinistic theocentric emphasis of Christ's universal kingdom, namely that the Church must remedy the disorder of society. This disorder is due to the crises of our age as they come to the surface in the clash between capitalism and communism, the result of unequal distribution of the world's goods, and in the light of man's unfreedom, statism, fascism, communism, capitalism. The Church must resolve the resultant tensions by freeing mankind from racial prejudices and by bringing about a full recognition of the worth of the individual.²⁵

Ecumenical theologians have attempted to find the answer to the many problems growing out of the international disorder and the Church's mission in the current situation. Many believe that every war is contrary to the will of God and therefore Christians must critically examine every governmental action which would tend to create an international tension, demand that human rights and fundamental freedom be encouraged, especially the freedom of religious worship and assembly.²⁶

6. At the present moment ecumenical theologians are giving primary attention to eschatology. As stated, the theme of the second meeting of the W. C. C. will be: "The Christian Hope." There is probably no topic of Christian theology where the views are as far apart in the member Churches. There is no agreement among the American denominations on eschatological questions. Liberal theology is this-worldly in its basic orientation; in large sections of neo-orthodox theology the eschatological portions of the New Testaments are taken to be merely symbolical and must therefore be "demythologized"; others are inclined toward a literal-

istic pre-millennialism. The conflicting views come into still sharper relief as one contrasts the European apocalypticism and the American eschatological optimism.

It is the fond wish that a thorough discussion of the topic "Jesus Christ, Our Lord, the Only Hope of the World and the Church" will prove to become a centripetal force in W. C. C. A committee composed of theologians from all branches of Christendom met at Zetten, Holland, in 1952 and presented a study of the Biblical meaning of "hope."²⁷ This report was received with mixed feelings, as could be expected, because of the wide divergence of theological and eschatological orientation. The committee issued a second report, a synopsis of which is found in the Theological Observer section of this issue (p. 224ff.).

It seems to us that ecumenical theologians must become keenly aware that all theology is confessional theology. This means that where conflicting views are present, the theologian must not only say yes, but also no. The first chapter of the Committee's report, for example, contains some excellent theological statements. But in the current milieu it is absolutely necessary that eschatology be presented not only in theses but also in antitheses. If this is not done, theologians will not only talk past each other, but will also confuse the simple Christian.

The Committee to prepare the theological studies for the 1954 convention of W. C. C. concludes its report:

. . . This task of witnessing in word and deed to the Lordship of Christ and the hope of the Kingdom is the most urgent responsibility laid upon the church as a pilgrim people . . . the People of God, freed from all entanglements which hinder the fulfillment of its mission. These entanglements have partially caused, as they tend also to perpetuate, the scandal of the church's division. At no point is this scandal more grievous in its consequences than in the church's endeavor to proclaim the Hope of the Kingdom to all nations. . . .²⁸

If the Church is to fulfill this glorious task, it must clearly understand the foundation and nature of the Christian hope. Unless it does so, the eschatological discussions at Evanston in 1954 will prove to be centrifugal rather than centripetal.

St. Louis, Mo.

REFERENCES AND FOOTNOTES

1. Leonard Hodgson, *The Ecumenical Movement*, The University of the South Sewanee, The University Press, 1951, p. 8.
2. William Adams Brown, *Toward a United Church*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946, pp. 54—55. For the resolutions on organization of the Continuation Committee of the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh, 1910, see Brown, *ibid.*, pp. 206—207; *World Missionary Conference*, 1910, nine volumes, p. 95, New York: Revell Co.; William Richey Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations*, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952, especially cf. pp. 15 ff.; G. J. Slosser, *Christian Unity, Its History and Challenge*, New York, 1920, pp. 256—257.
3. Brown, *op. cit.*, pp. 64, 82, 83. Cf. Slosser, *op. cit.*, p. 294. Hodgson, *op. cit.*, 13 f. For the official reports of the Stockholm Conferences see G. K. A. Bell, *The Stockholm Conference on Life and Work*, 1925; and J. H. Oldham, *The Story of the Oxford Conference*, 1937.
4. Leonard Hodgson, *op. cit.*, p. 15; cf. H. N. Bate, *Faith and Order (Lausanne)*, Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, Doran and Co., 1928, p. vii; also Bishop Brent in *Report of the Preliminary Meeting at Geneva*, p. 19. Hodgson, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
5. Cf. Bate, *op. cit.*, pp. 461—463; also see Brown, *op. cit.*, pp. 51, 83, 101, 110.
6. Leonard Hodgson, *The Second Conference on Faith and Order*, New York: Macmillan Co., 1938, pp. 1—14, 224 ff.; Brown, *op. cit.*, 115 ff.; *The Report of Second World Conference on Faith and Order* published by the Secretariate, November, 1937, New York. A number of significant studies by various commissions had been prepared for the Edinburgh meeting, and subsequently published by Harper and Bros., and distributed by the Continuation Commission, 111 Fifth Ave., New York. The American Theological Committee of the Continuation Committee prepared *The Nature of the Church*, Willert, Clark and Co., 1945, New York, which contains the ecclesiastical views of theologians from sixteen American denominations.
7. The report of this meeting was published in *Ecumenical Review*, October, 1952.
8. The first direct step leading to the formation of the World Council took place in 1933 at Archbishop Temple's home at York. Each of those present held an important place in the movement of which he was a member: Dr. J. H. Oldham and Dr. William Paton represented the International Missionary Council; Dean H. N. Bate and the Archbishop of York (Wm. Temple), the Faith and Order; Dr. Samuel Mcrea Cavert and William Adams Brown, the Life and Work; Bishop Valdemar Ammundsen and Rev. H. L. Henrod, the World Alliance; Charles Guillon and Dr. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, the Youth Movement. Cf. Brown, *op. cit.*, pp. 134, 138—144.
9. Membership was opened to all historically Trinitarian Churches in the phrase: "which accept our Lord Jesus as God and Savior." Cf. Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 146. But this phrase has been subjected to criticism. Brown comments that this phrase has a heretical flavor and could harbor the old Docetic error. He suggested insertion of "incarnate," i. e., "as incarnate God and Savior." A contrary view is taken by Prof. Craig of Yale, stating that the term "God" can be misunderstood if used with Jesus' nature, and therefore should not have been used at all, cf. *Christendom*, Winter, 1946, Vol. XI, No. 1, pp. 13—22. — Hodgson states that everyone at this meeting demanded the acceptance of the Nicene Creed as the basis of the Council

- and that no one voiced the modernist liberalism which would have been prominent a quarter of a century earlier. *Ecumenical Movement*, p. 33.
10. Though invited, the Roman Catholic Church's claim that it alone is *the* Church made it impossible for the Pope to permit participation in any conference which places other Churches on a par with the Church of Rome. There were, however, unofficial gatherings of Roman theologians with some of the Protestant theologians during the Amsterdam Conference in 1948; cf. Hodgson, *op. cit.*, p. 44. For statements of the Roman reaction to the World Council see *Ecumenical Review*, Vol. II, No. 3, pp. 296ff.
 11. *The Church, The Churches and the World Council of Churches*. A statement commended to the Churches for study and comment by the Central Committee of the Council, meeting at Toronto, July, 1950; New York: World Council of Churches, 297 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y.
 12. *Ibid.*, p. 8. How can the Churches find a "golden mean" between the extreme hierarchical system and highly sacramental worship of, for example, Eastern Orthodoxy and the highly "democratic" form of Baptist church government or the unliturgical form of worship of the Quaker-type bodies?
 13. American Office of the World Council of Churches, 297 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y. English Office, 21 Bloomsbury Street, London, W. C. 1.
 14. *The Amsterdam Assembly Series*, "The Universal Church in God's Design," Harper and Bros., 1949, Vol. I.
 15. Lewis Mathews Sweet, "Toward an Ecumenical Theology," *Christendom*, Vol. VI, No. 1, 377 ff., has been very helpful for a proper evaluation of the present status of "ecumenical theology."
 16. *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, Vol. I, 196.
 17. The men who advocated an out-and-out "ecumenicity" proposed to organize the World Council along geographic lines and to do away completely with any denominational blocks. The Lutherans, especially the participating American Lutherans, protested vigorously against such a plan and in accord with their Lutheran consciousness advocated the organization along denominational lines.
 18. See Daniel J. Fleming, *Bringing Our World Together*, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1946, Preface.
 19. O. S. Tomkins, "Implications of the Ecumenical Movement," *Ecumenical Review*, October, 1952, p. 20.
 20. "The Bible and the Church's Message to the World," report of the Study Committee of the World Council of Churches, *Ecumenical Review*, Autumn, 1949.
 21. *Ecumenical Review*, October, 1952, pp. 67, 69.
 22. Edm. Schlink, "Die Kirche in Gottes Heilsplan." *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, November, 1948, republished in *Ecumenical Review*, 1949, p. 150ff.
 23. *The Amsterdam Assembly Series*, I, p. 206.
 24. *Ibid.*, II, p. 212.
 25. *Ibid.*, III, pp. 189—197.
 26. *Ibid.*, IV, pp. 215—223, see "The Declaration of Religious Liberty," pp. 225—228. Cp. also *Pilgrimage to Amsterdam*, Chs. V—VII; Harold Fey, *Amsterdam World Assembly*, 15 ff.
 27. The report is published in *Ecumenical Review*, July, 1952, 419ff., and a synopsis of the report was given in this journal, November, 1952, p. 846ff.
 28. Published in *Ecumenical Review*, October, 1952, and summarized in *Christian Century*, December 31 and January 7. The entire report is available at World Council of Churches, 156 Fifth Ave., New York 10, N. Y.