

Editorial....Ecumenicity

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One of the most “talked-about” issues today is that concerning the World Council of Churches (hereafter-WCC) and ecumenicity. The Church papers and periodicals, also those of the Reformed community, are full of articles discussing the pros and cons of membership in the WCC. In not a few such articles it is argued that it is the calling of the Reformed denominations to join the WCC. That there should be articles and discussion on the subject is understandable: but, that there are those who openly (among Reformed leaders) advocate membership in the WCC is indeed strange and lamentable. It ought to be very clear what our reaction to the WCC should be, yet evidently to some it is not.

In the December issue (1963) of *Stromata*, a periodical published by students of Calvin Theological Seminary, there appeared an article entitled, “Catholicity and Ecumenicity” by Mr. Henry Venema. In this article Venema concludes that the Reformed denominations (particularly the Chr. Ref.) ought to join the WCC. He arrives at his conclusion by pointing out that the aims of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (RES) and the WCC are essentially the same. Since this is true, argues Venema, members of the RES should also be members of the WCC.

Catholicity must be understood in a qualitative, not a quantitative sense, writes Venema. Writes he: “In this way we acknowledge that Christ is King of all creation and that this kingship is visible or ought to be visible especially in the Church....The Church’s only task is to confess His rule and display it in word and deed....This is true catholicity.”

About Ecumenicity Venema states: “...the picture of a truly ecumenical Church is one which is organizationally one and spread over the whole world.” Understood in the above senses the two ideas are closely related according to Venema. “If a Church is truly catholic it cannot help but be ecumenical”; he writes. Furthermore, according to Venema: “...the reverse is also true. Catholicity must also be the aim and goal of ecumenicity.”

He goes on to say that since the definition of the WCC states: “that the WCC is a fellowship of churches which....seek to fulfill together their common calling...”, its aim is catholicity and only then ecumenicity. The WCC is geared to that purpose *viz.* “...to uncover the fact that Jesus Christ is Lord....”

The aim of the RES is essentially the same says Venema. “What we have observed so far in essence is that the primary goals of both RES and WCC are the same. Both are trying to deepen the Churches (*sic.*) understanding of catholicity first of all. Only then true ecumenicity, true church union, is possible.”

Finally, he writes in the last section of his article as follows: “on the basis of these considerations, it is clear that our church should not belong only to the RES but also to the WCC simply because the primary aim of both organizations is very similar. It seems to me that every church which confesses that Christ is Lord has the duty and obligation to find out what this means in cooperation with other churches which hold to the same confessions. Only in this way will churches learn from each other and grow together toward the universal Church of Christ.”

With these sentiments we disagree. Certainly these are strange words to be coming out of the Reformed community. Our calling, our “duty and obligation” is certainly not to join the WCC in order to find out what it means that Jesus Christ is Lord. The WCC is composed of many denominations which in fact deny the Kingship of Christ. They deny it in that they deny the virgin birth, the atonement, the resurrection and many more cardinal truths of Scripture.

How can we who are truly Reformed have fellowship with this? How can we work with such people?

The Apostle John writes in I John 4:1-3: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God...Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.” It’s as simple as that! Taking these words as our criterion, we should have no problem in concluding that we do not belong in the WCC.

Our prayer is that God give us the grace to remain faithful to His Word—rejecting all that is contrary to it—even until He comes again.

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