

The Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus  
9th General Assembly: April, 1976

Motivation for Policy Decisions by the Executive Committee in 1975

1. It is the prerogative of a higher authority to review the decisions of a lower body in a given hierarchy. The decision of the Executive Committee at its 38th Meeting was based on this principle when it directed that an explanatory note be submitted to the 9th General Assembly in connection with the policy decisions made in August and October, 1975. This is to say that this General Assembly as the supreme organ of the ECMY can confirm, modify or reverse the major policy decisions passed by the Executive Committee of the Church. Without going into an analysis of the situation that came about as a result of the changes taking place in our Country, I would like to point out a few of the main factors which led the Executive Committee of the ECMY towards the adoption of a new policy. What should be clear to all concerned for the life of this Church is that there is no hidden motive whatsoever behind the actions taken by the Executive Committee in adopting the new policy.

Raising the minimum salary to seventy-five dollars a month had to lead to the reduction of a certain percentage from the salaries of those receiving over two hundred Ethiopian dollars a month, setting the maximum of six hundred dollars. The point of the argument is not that those who received over two hundred dollars are getting too much, but that those earning less than the minimum are in a worse economic condition and should get seventy-five dollars a month. In a Society where there is a class struggle among the rich and the poor, among the bureaucrats and the labourers it is logical to make an effort to narrow the wide gap between them as much as possible. It is assumed that the animosity or rather the tension existing between the workers of the Church will be reduced to the minimum as the result of minimizing the existing gap between the classes. The decision on salary reduction should be understood as an act taken out of Christian love for our co-workers rather than as a law directed to any group or groups. Christian love compels us to share the burdens of our brothers, thereby enabling us to practise in our daily life the love enjoined by the Lord of the Church.

So far as the downtrodden and the unfortunate are concerned

Christian love and Marxist humanism complement each other.

2. Another factor to be seen in connection with the reeducation of salaries is the policy that one should be allowed to be engaged in only one type of activity. It is a well-known fact that quite a number of our co-workers have had plots of land owned or rented to do some farming to help support their families. In the present situation it is not clear whether one would be able to obtain any kind of income besides the salary or wage one earns. It is because of such an uncertain situation that the Executive Committee had to act in favour of reducing the higher and increasing the lower salaries.

3. It is a confirmed fact that local income from our congregations had been decreased for the year 1974. It has not been reported as yet for 1975 as to how much of the expected income had been collected; but the prospect seems to be that the financial situation of our Church does not appear to be better than that of 1974. Adjustments are therefore needed.

4. If we take a look at the international scene, there are economic crises caused by the oil producing countries. As a result communications have been received from some of our Co-operating Agencies overseas informing the ECMY that their financial situations would make it difficult for them to meet the requests of the Church. As a matter of fact the budget worked out by the Church for this fiscal year and presented to the Co-operating Agencies was not met in full. Seven hundred thousand dollars less was granted than requested. In short, this indicates the complex problems facing the ECMY due to the present social and economic changes taking place in the Country as well as the impact the international situation is making on our Church.

5. The political and economic situation such as the one in which the ECMY finds herself calls for a decision on new policies, exploring possibilities for existence and making every effort to find her role in a socialistic environment.

Historically, Churches were too late in reacting to emerging new situations which were regrettable and damaging to the lives of those Churches. This is not to pass judgement on the positions taken by Churches in the past. However, in times of revolutionary

change affecting all dimensions of life, a Church must define on a Theological basis her relationship to the new situation.

6. Time has gone once for all when Theology was defined as the queen of the Sciences. At present in our society the Theological task is to make all possible efforts to interpret the signs of the times and to clarify issues as they relate to the life of the Church and to that of Society. It should be noted that this is not an easy task as it demands rededication to the God of the Bible (Is.50:4-5).

7. Another point is the test of our faith as practising Christians. We have to be honest and frank in our dealings with one another as a Christian community and with the Society in which we live as citizens. This is to say baseless rumours circulating around should not be allowed to misguide us. Issues of whatever nature should be discussed openly at any time in any meeting. One may ask why anonymous letters are being circulated? The answer to this question must be that those who spread such letters do not have facts to be presented for discussion and clarification. People engaged in such base activities are not only dishonest, but for the sake of their personal interests, will do all in their power to destroy the Church of Jesus Christ. Their Theology is that the Church lives for them as opposed to the teaching of the Gospel. Christian commitment requires the maintenance of integrity. This is foreign to the mind of those who have the form of religion but deny its power (2 Tim. 3:1-9).

8. The ECMY has been practising democracy since her establishment in her present form. Our congregations have been and are the source of authority. No one commands power at any level of this Church unless he/she is elected. The democratic system being introduced into our Country has been in practice in the ECMY for years. This must be appreciated and acted on.

9. That theory and practice are essentially inseparable can not be over-emphasized in a socialistic environment. Christians are good at talking about the theory of love rather than practising this Biblical truth by which the Christian is shown as separate from others. Socialism as explained by Karl Marx is to change the world, not to indulge in abstract theories only. The

desire of our God is that "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind, and that you shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Matt.22:37-40). This should be lived in the present situation, sharing with our brothers and co-workers whatever is made available to our Church in the interests of the Kingdom of our God and Saviour.

10. This is just a brief explanatory note on the motivation for the policy decisions made by the Executive Committee of the ECOMY at its two Meetings in August and October of 1975; this is not a position paper; there is a big difference between a note and a position paper. As background material to the decisions the Memorandum of July, 1975, should be studied in relation to the present situation. The policy decisions were made about nine months ago. The trends in the Country since August, 1975, support the actions taken. To get the feel of the magnitude of the problems involved the issue must be studied from different aspects, Theological, political and economic.

For a national Church to be always dependent on overseas grants is a sure way of saying that it can never stand on its own feet. This would be tragic for this Church in a fast moving and changing world. As the General Assembly well-knows, the question of stewardship and eventual self-support and self-reliance has been a matter for study during the past several years. The ECOMY has set this goal for herself. Can any one in his senses say that what the Executive Committee undertook to put into effect in the name of this Church is not in line with our goal or the present situation in our Country? As followers of Christ we cannot do less than those who profess that Christ is irrelevant to the problems of this age and so strive to bring social and economic justice to the underprivileged through ideologies thought out by men.

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