

~~theological~~ ~~reference~~ is no theological difference between the two churches to the best of my knowledge. There is no reason why the two churches should not ~~form~~ ^{form} a united Lutheran Church in Ethiopia.

- c. As far as the Lutheran Church in Eritrea is concerned no steps have been taken up to now by way of initiating negotiations between the two churches. Understandably this is due to shortage of ~~time~~ ^{time} and manpower in the ECMY.
- 2.3. In the outline of tasks for the committee on inter-Church relationships point six in the terms of reference mentions ~~bi-lateral~~ contacts with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The Committee had two meetings at which persons knowledgeable about the history and the life of the Orthodox Church were invited to give basic background information necessary for future dialogue between the ECMY and the Orthodox Church. The meetings we have had have been very useful in providing first-hand factual information in preparation for negotiations.
- 2.4. Although we may say that much was not done by the Council for Cooperation of Churches in Ethiopia in the Course of 1977, the Council provided a forum where different views and opinions on matters of common interest could be discussed, thereby creating a conducive atmosphere for future joint undertakings by the member churches. The need for such a Concil is now being realized by many church leaders.
- 2.5. As the Roman Catholic Church in Ethiopia is an active member of the Council for Cooperation of Churches in Ethiopia, there is already a basis for unity and cooperation which should be broadened. The readiness of the Catholic Church to cooperate with other churches in promoting a better understanding among the Christian Churches as come as a surprise to many of us within the Council for Cooperation of Churches in Ethiopia. We are very happy for this Christian cooperation.
- 2.6.. So far steps have not been taken on an official level with the Ethiopian Adventist Church. The Adventist Church has been approached to consider a possible membership with the Council for Cooperation of Churches in Ethiopia. From the personal contacts we have had, it ^{seems} as if the Adventist Church has a positive attitude towards membership in the Council. We await their reply to this membership proposal. It is our earnest hope and prayer that our efforts in this area of inter-church relations may be a useful instrument in glorifying the Lord of the Church, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

III

- 3.1. Having touched upon the endeavours made in 1977 in the various areas of the vast responsibility given to the Committee on Inter-Church relationships, let us turn to the resolution of the ninth General Assembly

follows
especially as it follows: "That the Executive Committee be authorized to make a thorough study of the matter of membership of the ECMY in the World Council of Churches and report its findings to the Tenth General Assembly." (GA 9-94-76).

- 3.2. In following up this resolution the Committee on Inter-Church Relations gathered some information on the World Council of Churches. These are some of the facts about the WCC.

- a. "The world council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures and herefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

*beers has to be
and ful
eccl. bu*
b. Any church having not less than twenty-five thousand members and which would subscribe to the basis of fellowship referred to above may be considered for membership in this world-wide organization upon application of membership.

- c. In case there is a member church of the World Council in the country of *new app's land*, the church applying for membership, the member church of the WCC *and the former* should be consulted prior to acceptance of the applying church as member in the the World Council.

- 3.3 As this Gerneral Assembly considers a possible membership in the World Council, the financial responsibility which this membership entails should also be looked into. A certain membership fee *si required* annually from all member churches of the World Council. The amount of the membership fee to be paid annually depends on the size of the membership of the church. Regardless of the amount for the ECMY, this financial obligation must be taken seriously.

- 3.4 In case this Tenth General Assembly of the ECMY acts in favour of membership in the World Council of Churches, what would be the implications of such memberhsip as far as relations with the Orthodox Church and the evangelical churches in Ethiopia? This should be debated in a reasonable manner as regards the Orthodox Church, and seen in very sympathetic was as related to *A* evangelical churches.

- 3.5 Both the Orthodox Church and the ECMY are members of the All-African Conference of Churchrs. *This Committee* has not been able to make an evalutation as to whether the membership of the ECMY *in the* AACC has affected in a positive way the relationship between the Orhtodox Church and the ECMY. Lack of a study of the effects of membership on the realtionship between the two churches is due to a shortage of personnel. The fact that representatives of both churches discuss common problems at meetings called by the AACC on international levels should not be belittled.

3.6 The Orthodox Church and the ECMY are having minimal contacts with regard to official matters. We in the ECMY have received official letters of invitation from the Orthodox Church to their important celebrations.

~~OC + ECMY~~ In turn the ECMY has invited the Orthodox Church to send ~~Orthodox~~ representatives to our Assemblies and to participate in seminars conducted under the sponsorship of the ECMY. Such invitations have not always met with the positive responses we desired. However, our hope is that this slow process combined with the personal contacts being maintained ~~would~~ contribute to the cause of mutual understanding in ecumenical affairs.

~~OC breves~~ 3.7 Membership of the ECMY in the World Council may mean reinforcement of the contacts that now occur, whether official or personal, thereby accelerating the time for entering into official dialogue between the two churches. Whatever the outcome may be we tend to think that ~~ECO & ECMY~~ membership of the ECMY in the World Council may have a positive effect on the relationship between the ECMY and the Orthodox Church.

3.8 As to the effect of ECMY membership in the World Council on the relationships between the ECMY and the evangelical churches in Ethiopia, it appears to be somewhat difficult to forecast in substance. The evangelical churches in Ethiopia do not neglect ecumenical responsibility and because of this ~~best~~ interest in the majority of them are members of the Council for cooperation of Churches in Ethiopia. The point to be contended is why an evangelical church with a theologically conservative position should enter into membership in a world-wide ecumenical body. If we are convinced that we as an evangelical church have a firm Biblical faith, then we can argue that with this faith we can influence the thinking of other Christians in a positive manner. This implies that it is an opportunity for evangelical Christianity to witness afresh to the secularized Christians making use of the forum provided by ecumenical bodies as well as the non-Christians who have not had the opportunity of hearing the Good News.

3.9 In the present circumstances more than ever before our theological reflections ~~must~~ be sound so that the primary purpose of the Church, the proclamation of the Gospel of the risen Lord, is defined in an unequivocal manner. As we clarify issues and discuss means of achieving the goals set by the Lord for His Church, we must ever remember the urgency of making His plan of salvation known to this world and expounding the inescapable responsibility of a true church to her calling of discipleship. It must be our clear theological position that our conviction of our calling and our obedience to the commission of our Saviour re-enforces the relationship which the ECMY maintains with her sister churches here and abroad. The ECMY should not indulge in

3

(expediency) our actions must be justified on the theological grounds thereby promoting the mutual relationship between our church and the other evangelical churches of this country.

IV

- 4.1. In concluding this brief report on inter-church relations, let me quote a paragraph from a situation-analysis paper presented to a consultation sponsored by the Commission on Church Cooperation of the LWE in 1971 in Tokyo, Japan.

"The ECMY was organized in her present form in 1958. This is to say that she is a teen-ager, and needs all the care that tender age demands so that her mind and spirit may be moulded by sound \rightarrow solid teaching which will determine her future. The role that Bible studies play within her life will determine whether this young church will fall into the danger this age characterized by uncertainty is running. For us this is not the question of being a conservative church, or whatever label one may give it, it is a matter of life or death. This is because, as far as I understand it, nothing can bring a man to a living faith in the resurrected Christ except proclamation and teaching of the Living Word as "delivered to us", namely that as Christ died for our sins in accordance with Scriptures and was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures." (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

TOKYO

proclamation of
and as a unifying
force.

Gudina Tumsa, Chairman
Committee on Inter-Church Relations

THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH MENAKE YESUS
THE TENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
January 24-31, 1978

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ECUMENICAL TOWARDS ECUMENICAL HARMONY
By Gudina Tusma

I

- 1.1. When we speak about ecumenical relationships I believe that we need a definition of the term so that what we are talking about will be clearly understood by all concerned. The term "ecumenical" is not what our Lord prayed for in the Gospel of John, chapter 17. The prayer of our Lord was and still is for the oneness of His church.
- 1.2. The word "ecumenical" ^{describes} the common strategy of the churches in working together for the furtherance of causes of common interest. The word describes two or more churches engaged in common responsibilities. Practically this may mean churches of the same confessional family or various denominations with different confessional backgrounds.
defn
- 1.3. The Amharic word "andnet" is misleading when we discuss ecumenical affairs. This became quite clear to me in the course of the discussions we have had with our sister churches during the last two years. The Amharic word "andnet" describes the "oneness" of the church spoken of in John, chapter 17, particularly verses 11, 21, and 23. To avoid confusion another word "hibret", which may be translated "association", is preferable in describing ecumenical relationships.
andnet means
Hibret
- 1.4. For the sake of clarity one may distinguish different stages as we march forward in working together for the unity of the people of God, the Church of Jesus Christ.
stages expected
 - a) The first stage is the ecumenical stage where the churches have a readiness to come together for discussions, prayers, and reading of the Scriptures thereby doing away with their historical hatred and paving the way for joint activities.
readiness
→ hatred消除
 - b) The second stage is "that they may be one" (John 17:11,21). This we may call the complete stage. The priestly prayer of our Lord is not
complete stage

only for the ecumenical affairs of the churches but primarily for the oneness of His church.

- 1.5. The ECMY has an inescapable responsibility to make all efforts that the prayer of our Redeemer for the oneness of His church may be fulfilled.
Specific areas for actions to be taken will be mentioned later in this paper.

II

- 2.1. In discussions on the unity of the Church of Jesus Christ we come across opposing views or theological positions.

→ never spiritualize
↓ even if organization
↓ and structure

a) One school of thought spiritualizes everything to the extent that tangible, visible things are denied proper consideration. This group condemns all forms of structure and fails to see the place of structure or organization in carrying out the mandate of Christ's Church.

Secularizers

b) The second group is what we may call the secularizers. This view contends that the church is an organization like any other worldly organization and refuses to recognize the Church of Christ as an assembly called by God for a purpose, redeemed by Jesus Christ, and enlightened by the Third Person of the Holy Trinity.

- Spiritualizers*
- 2.2. The spiritualizers and the secularizers are diametrically opposed to each other. Whereas the spiritualizers try to transfer everything to the other world and refuse to accept responsibility for the pressing social problems of our planet, the secularizers are blind to see other than the material and see their responsibility only as contributing to the improvement of the living conditions of human society.

- Spiritualizers nor*
- 2.3. In my opinion neither what we call the spiritualizers nor the secularizers are true to the Biblical understanding of reality. Whereas secularizing is a denial of the Creator of the universe, the God who has revealed himself through Jesus Christ, spiritualizing is interpreting the scriptures in such a way that all social problems find their solutions in the hereafter thereby denying the reality of the Incarnation and leaving the world to atheism.

- 2.4. The third school of thought is what I would call the wholistic position. In wholistic theology both the spiritual and the physical are taken seriously in an inseparable manner. This theological position contends that the right Biblical understanding takes seriously both dimensions of human existence, the spiritual and the physical, thereby opposing compartmentalization of fragmentation of human life. The God of the

Bible is the source of life both in its spiritual and physical dimensions. He has the proper claim on human life both on this planet and in the world to come. There is no portion of human existence which can be free from God.

- 2.5. Since the purpose of this short paper is not to present the basic theological postions of churches represented in the ecumenical movement in our country by to define specific responsibilities of the ECMY towards ecumenical harmony, it would be out of place to deal with the various presuppositions of the different views towards ecumenical matters.
- 2.6. Prior to proceeding to the third part of this paper, let me recite the classical Lutheran definition of the Church as "the communion of saints where the word of God is proclaimed rightly and the Sacraments are administered rightly". This is to say that the Church is located where grace is offered, the bitterness of sin is taken away, the blessings of God appropriated, and the joy of the Lord's forgiveness is experienced. This is meant to remind ourselves that when we are clear about the primary purpose of the Church and our ecumenical responsibilities for the unity of the Church of the Saviour, then whatever structure is chosen is of lesser significance.

III

- 3.1. Comments are heard that the ECMY ~~does not~~ interest in ecumenical affairs thereby placing herself in isolation. Such comments are due to lack of information on the active participation of the ECMY in ecumenical endeavours even before she was organized into her present structure in 1958. Lutheran groups were playing active roles in the annual meetings of evangelical believers who came together to discuss the common problems they faced as new groups left behind by the missions who left the country during the Italian occupation during the Second World War. That our congregations received delegations from various Christian denominations and in turn sent representatives to annual evangelical meetings is evidence of the long-standing interest of the ECMY in ecumenical affairs.
- 3.2. Documents from the meetings of those days were kept by the late Pastor Badima Yalew of the Addis Ababa Mekane Yesus Church and are available for reference. It is very interesting to note how the evangelical believers were trying to find solutions to the problems confronting them in an ecumenical manner when they were ~~neophytes~~ with minimal experience.

- Question of
Ecumenism*
- 3.3. One may wonder why the ecumenical movement begun during the difficult days of the Second World War ceased to exist about the end of the nineteen-fifties. The main factor for the dissolution of the evangelical ecumenical movements was the ready answers which the believers received from their respective missions to the burning issues facing them in their daily work such as polygamy, relationship to the state, etc. Thus they didn't need to consult and work with each other.
 - 3.4. By way of criticism let me say the evangelicals formed an ecumenical movement out of practical needs without defining the Biblical or theological basis for the unity of the Church. Lack of precise definition of objectives beyond the practical needs led to the dissolution of the ecumenical movement when their immediate needs were met.
 - 3.5. To bring about desirable results as ecumenical movement should set a clear goal for itself. In my opinion this clear goal is a united witness to the saving power of Christ as we unequivocally work for the unity of the church of God.
 - 3.6. Those who contend that there is no possibility for the unity of the Church of Jesus Christ except in the hereafter should be refuted on theological grounds. The point I want to make is that we do not need to define the limits of what God can do, including in our prayer only that which we think is possible for Him and leaving out of the agenda the impossible, or what we imagine He cannot do.
 - 3.7. In case there is a god for whom man has to think and put limits to what he can do, such is not the God we have known in the Scriptures or rather by whom we are known. Such a finite God is not the God of the Bible, the Father of Jesus of Nazareth, but the god of human creation[¶], the projection of human imagination (the god of Feuerbach).
 - 3.8. Ours is the God who orders light out of darkness, brings order out of chaos, life out of death, peace out of anarchy. This mighty process is beyond the human mind and refuses to be manipulated by men. What He can do in His church and with His Church should not be seen only in eschatological perspective in terms of the long future, but also in the context of today. He is the God who performs miracles today as he did in the past, saving His people from slavery, liberating them from oppression, providing them with the necessities of life on their journey to the Promised Land, judging them when they are disobedient and forgiving ^{them} when they have confessed their sins.

*faith is based
on the impossible*

3.9. A question may rise: Is it necessary to refer to the omnipotence of God when we discuss the unity of the church of God? It seems to be necessary to remind ourselves of the mighty power of the Bible's God because there are Christians who argue that there cannot be a unity among the churches. Biblical faith is based on the impossible, on miracles. In the Old Testament the deliverance of the people of Israel from Egypt and the dividing of the Sea; in the New Testament our Lord's birth from the Virgin Mary and His resurrection from the dead are central to what the Church of Christ confesses as a faith by which she lives. These are impossible miracles, and miracles are contrary to the laws of nature. Ours is still the God of miracles and one of the miracles he may perform today is to bring about unity among His churches. Let us then talk about His Church rather than our churches.

IV

*60s took
with the
Bethel's*

4.1. Presently the ECMY is contributing to the strengthening of ecumenical endeavour in our country. These contributions are in various ways. As indicated in preceding paragraphs, the history of the ECMY is partly the history of the evangelical ecumenical movement. During the nineteen-sixties the involvement of the ECMY was limited almost entirely to negotiations with the Evangelical Church Bethel, with occasional invitations to other churches to attend our General Assemblies. The negotiations with the Bethel Church resulted in the merge of the two sister churches in 1974. This in itself is a big step forward in setting an example for Christian denominations in our country and it can be said to be one of the results of the ecumenical movement started during the Second World War.

*Worship fellowship
many issues
in society*

4.2. Ecumenical relations among the evangelical churches are looked at very naturally at least on an informal level even to the extent that pulpit fellowship has been in practice since the founding of the evangelical churches. What does irritate many evangelical leaders is when we begin talking about the possibility of initiating discussions on ecumenical affairs with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Although evangelicals are irritated when the question of relationship with the Orthodox Church is taken up, foreigners are confused as to the actual position of the evangelical churches, especially the attitude of the ECMY since among the evangelical churches in this country the ECMY is more widely known in broader ecumenical circles.

- Serial
CC-1*
- Dear Sirs
the church*
- 4.3. In the circumstances of today it is not necessary to discuss problems of an historical nature which are seen as hindrances to real ecumenical dialogue with the Orthodox Church. ^{When} the discussions were under way for the formation of a council for cooperation of the churches in Ethiopia, naturally the possible membership of the Orthodox Church was discussed. At that point one of the evangelicals related the bitter experience of his church at the hands of the Orthodox Church. However, all were willing to participate in council for cooperation of churches with the Orthodox Church.
- 4.4. Some of us in ECMY leadership are maintaining personal contacts with some in the leadership of the Orthodox Church in order to pave a way for ecumenical leadership to be established between the two churches. It gives me pleasure to say that some of the personal contacts I have had with some of the leaders of the Orthodox Church have been refreshing experiences. I feel that these informal contacts should be broadened to include as many as possible of the leaders of the Orthodox Church and the ECMY. (For additional information see paper I presented to the Commission of Church Cooperation in Tokyo, Japan, 1971.)
- 4.5. In case this Tenth General Assembly of the ECMY decides in favour of membership in the World Council of Churches, this may accelerate the time when the two churches, the ECMY and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, may start discussions on how to discharge their responsibilities for the Ethiopian people. From one point of view it appears to be easier, in case real efforts are made, to work for a meeting among the three churches, Orthodox, Catholic, and ECMY. There are theological and historical reasons for maintaining this view. As a matter of fact in some areas of concern there have been real contacts and discussion with the Orthodox Church in a semi-official manner. One instance is the seminar on Urban Industrial Mission conducted last year which was more or less sponsored by the Orthodox Church but jointly planned with the ECMY and the Catholic Church. We should remind our congregations that they may make as an object of their prayer the good relationship among the churches of Ethiopia, especially between the Orthodox Church and the ECMY.
- 4.6. A Council for Cooperation of Churches in Ethiopia was formed in 1976. The occasion was brought about by a series of seminars on Christianity and Socialism in Makinissa sponsored by the ECMY. The majority of the evangelical churches, the Catholic Church and a small section of the Orthodox Church (one Orthodox mission headquartered in the Trinity

Cathedral) are represented in the Council for Cooperation of Churches in Ethiopia.

- 4.7. It is essential to increase the participation of the ECMY for the strengthening of the Council whatever form such participation may take. The Council has not found it possible to rent a room for an office, a place to keep its documents and where the secretary could coordinate the activities of the Council. This is a specific responsibility for the ECMY. Ato Tesfatsion Delelew, reactor to this paper, has contributed in many ways to the formation of the Council for Cooperation of Churches in Ethiopia and is still making strong efforts inviting others to be members of the Council. I hope he will enlighten us on the specific needs of the Council for Cooperation of Churches at this initial stage in its history, and for the long future.
- 4.8. As stated in the preceding paragraphs involvement in ecumenical affairs with the evangelical churches of Ethiopia is part of the history of the ECMY from her beginning. Earlier I mentioned that during the nineteen-sixties the main involvement of the ECMY was with the Bethel Church. The evangelical churches have shown a strong interest in being promoted through a very active committee set up to make the necessary preparations for evangelical church leadership conferences held two times in Nazareth, September 1976 and September 1977, with a wide representation from all evangelical churches. Speakers are invited from abroad as well as from within the country for revival preaching. Revival meetings and movements should be encouraged and guided in such a way that the various gifts within the different churches can be shared for the enrichment and edification of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 12 & 14).
- 4.9. The importance of work among the youth cannot be overemphasized in the present situation within our country. It is quite clear that the young people in this country, perhaps as elsewhere, are not interested in denominational doctrines but rather attracted by Bible studies, prayers, and discussions with any Christian from any Christian denomination. The ECMY contributed in the formation of associations for high school and university students. A young man, Ato Tekste Teklu, was employed for this responsibility and did a tremendous job in achieving the objectives set for him. For me it was inspiring to listen to five of the representatives of the students tell of their activities among the youth. There is much more awaiting the ECMY in this area of ecumenical endeavour.

responsibility of our church. Lack of information and personal prejudices are contributing causes in hindering participation in ecumenical movements.

- 4.11. In obedience of the Lord of the Church and in order that the prayer of our Saviour may be fulfilled, the ECMY should continue its efforts and strengthen its work in areas of ecumenical cooperation.

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THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH MEKANE YESUS

TENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

January 24-31, 1978

REPORT ON INTER-CHURCH RELATIONS

- 1.1. *Tables* The Seventh General Assembly of the ECMY in Debre Zeit in 1971 debated the question of membership of the ECMY in the All-African Conference of Churches and in the World Council of Churches. The matter of membership in the ecumenical bodies was tabled by the Seventh General Assembly. Membership in the All- African Conference of Churches was again debated by the Eighth General Assembly in Yirgalem in 1973 and this time the Assembly voted in favour of membership in the All- African Conference of Churches.
- 1.2. *Voted in favor* In following up the question of membership of the ECMY in ecumenical church organizations, the Ninth General Assembly conducted at Medjo in April of 1976 authorized that "the Executive Committee establish a committee to study the inter- Church relationships of the ECMY; that the Executive Committee be authorized to make a thorough study of the matter of membership of the ECMY in the World Council of Churches and report its findings to the Tenth General Assembly.
- 1.3. *Authorized* *Ex. Comm* *to Study* As directed by the Ninth General Assembly the Executive Committee of the ECMY formed a Study Committee on Inter- Church relations and approved the terms of reference at its 41st meeting in January of 1977. Copies of the terms of reference are attached to this report so that this Assembly can see the mandate given to the Committee on Inter- Church relations by the Executive Committee.
- 2.1. *Approved* As seen from the list of tasks, the responsibility of the Committee on Inter- Church relations is very broad. It was not possible to do as much as we desired within the short period of time since the terms of reference were approved by the Executive Committee at its meeting in January 1977.
- 2.2. *f close* The terms of reference indicate that a closer unity should be sought between the ECMY and other churches of Lutheran confesion within this country, namely the Evangelical Church of Eritrea and the Lutheran church of Ethiopia.
- a. we were not able to pursue this unity in the area of inter- church relations during the past year with the Evangelical Church of Eritrea except to invite their representatives to this Assembly.
 - b. When we look at the relationship between the ^{ECMY} and the ^{Lutheran} Church of Ethiopia it is important to note the two sister churches were running a mass- media program until recently. It is quite clear that there