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THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

English
Consultative Committee

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What is it?

Should I support it?

During the last hundred years or so much effort has been directed towards bringing both Evangelical Christians and also the various branches of Christ's visible church, closer together. This is most praiseworthy, provided that fraternisation, co-operation and re-union are never at the expense of, but only in accord with, Scriptural Truth.

The same period saw sacerdotalism and semi-infidelity (under such names as higher criticism, religious rationalism, liberalism and modernism) largely capture and control most of what were previously the Evangelical and Protestant Churches of Christendom. To these there must now be added the neo-modernism known as Barthianism. Repeated conferences, with all that generally follows such deliberations, led to the formation of two Church Councils in Amsterdam in 1948, both of which were world-wide in scope. These were the International Council of Christian Churches, and the World Council of Churches, which should not be confused, as they are doctrinally poles apart.

The first met August 11-19, and is generally called the I.C.C.C. It represented 61 Evangelical Protestant churches or denominations, from 29 countries. The preamble to its constitution and its doctrinal basis are given on pages 6 and 7 and should be carefully studied.

PRICE THREE PENCE

The second met August 22 - September 5, and is known as the W.C.C. It represented 149 churches or denominations, from 43 countries. It declared itself to be "a fellowship of Churches which accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour". If this were its *genuine* credal basis, it would be excellent, but even this only as far as it goes. As a fence against serious error it would be utterly inadequate. Many sincerely subscribing to the Deity of our Lord would have very different views as to what being saved means, and as to how a soul is saved, and would in addition hold many doctrines contrary to Holy Writ. But the W.C.C. immediately qualified this single article of faith by stating:— "(a) That the foundation is not a touchstone, whereby the faith of the Churches can be judged; (b) that the World Council does not concern itself with the manner in which the Churches will interpret the foundation; (c) that it is left to the responsibility of every Church to decide whether it will co-operate on this basis". These three clauses really cancel out the first statement. They are in effect, in design and in practice, escape clauses whereby those who do not believe that the Lord Jesus "is equal to the Father as touching His Godhead" can yet be in the World Council. Small wonder then that the Unitarian Hicksite Quakers are members of this body, and that amongst its leaders are men who do not hold the great truths for which Athanasius so bravely contended concerning the Deity and the real but sinless humanity of our Lord Jesus. Indeed, one such leader declared them to be "distilled nonsense".

The W.C.C. therefore by its indeterminate doctrinal basis paves the way for the great objective of many of its most influential leaders—the re-union of Christendom. It is a re-union, as an esteemed Evangelical has written, "in which the tenets of the Roman, the Eastern Orthodox, and the Protestant churches are to find equal place: in which modernism and fundamentalism are alike to be merged: one, in short, in which doctrines long believed to be wholly incompatible are to be welcomed as differing aspects of final truth".

The Contrast

There is therefore a great gulf between the I.C.C.C. and the W.C.C., and this should be appreciated.

The I.C.C.C. is loyal to the Scriptures and emphasises particularly the truths connected with the Deity of Christ and His death as an atonement for penitent believing souls. It stands by the principles of the Reformation, and maintains that there should be no fraternisation, and co-operation with the Church of Rome until that Church repents of its persecuting past and of its errors, and brings its doctrines into alignment with the teaching of the Bible. Its clarion call is, "Repent of unbelief in the Word of the Lord and the Lord of the Word".

The W.C.C. however is honeycombed with Modernism, Sacerdotalism, Social Gospelism and even Communism. It begs the Church of Rome to join its ecumenical movement, regarding the Reformation as not only unnecessary but as sinful schism. Some of its leaders are as "red" as Dr. Hewlett Johnson, the present Dean of Canterbury. The slogan of many within its ranks is, "One Church for the World." If this aim is achieved—and prophecy seems to indicate that it will—there will be but one more step before the revelation of the

Scarlet Woman of the Apocalypse (Rev. 17). In its view the great sin is, not to respond to its appeals and to help forward its ecumenical goal.

The Rev. D. B. F. Carlisle of New Zealand has clearly contrasted these two World Councils somewhat as follows:—

(1) The W.C.C. cannot affirm its faith in the inspiration and final authority of the Holy Scriptures, because most, if not all within the Council reject the Bible as the very Word of God.

But the I.C.C.C. can!

(2) The W.C.C. cannot affirm its faith in the virgin birth of Christ, because many within its ranks completely reject this truth.

But the I.C.C.C. can!

(3) The W.C.C. cannot affirm its faith in the atoning death of Christ because many of its members completely reject the doctrine of the precious blood of Christ.

But the I.C.C.C. can!

(4) The W.C.C. cannot affirm its belief in the bodily or physical resurrection of Christ, because many of its leaders reject the actual physical resurrection of our Lord Jesus.

But the I.C.C.C. can!

(5) The W.C.C. cannot affirm its faith in the personal and visible return of Christ, because many within its circle deny and even ridicule this revealed truth.

But the I.C.C.C. can!

(6) The W.C.C. cannot refer to Heaven or Hell as places of habitation, because many of its leaders scorn such facts.

But the I.C.C.C. can!

The English Consultative Committee

The leading Churches of Great Britain—the Anglican, Baptist,* Congregational, Methodist and most but not all of the Presbyterian Bodies—are in this World Council of Churches. This has troubled and pained many Bible believers both within and without these denominations. It led to fifteen of them attending the Third Plenary Congress of the International Council of Christian Churches which was held in Philadelphia, U.S.A., 31 July—13 August, 1954. At the same time some forty evangelical clergy and laymen of the Church of England sent an open letter of sympathy and good wishes to the President of the Congress (see page 8) which greatly stirred and heartened the 1,400 delegates, and visitors attending the sessions. Before the British delegation left they discussed the situation in these islands with the President,

* The Strict Baptists are not in the W.C.C. From the utterances of their leaders and the editorials of their magazines they are evidently in hearty agreement with the doctrinal basis of the I.C.C.C. and most sympathetic towards the movement. Neither is the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches in the W.C.C.

Dr. Carl McIntire, and it was arranged that he should visit these islands in the spring of 1955, and address as many meetings as possible in the limited time at his disposal. Wherever the Doctor went—London, Birmingham, Leicester, Bristol, Brighton, Glasgow and Belfast—hearts were searched, issues clearly seen, and many resolves made to take a definite stand under the I.C.C.C. banner for the purity of the Church against the apostasy of these times. This seemed in accordance with the Scripture, "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him" (Isaiah 59:19). As a consequence, in the absence of a Regional Church Council for the British Isles, the English Consultative Committee, as the type of auxiliary best suited to the conditions here, was formed. Each member serves in his individual capacity and not as representing a Church or Society, and must subscribe to the Preamble and Doctrinal basis (see pages 6 and 7).

The Directions of Scripture

What should be the attitude of Bible-believers who love the Truth towards this great World Council of Churches, with its extreme doctrinal laxity and its undermining and repudiation of the principles of the Reformation? The answer is clearly given in Ephesians 5:11, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them". This definitely means, that God's people should keep out of such an organisation.

But some faithful men, ministers and laity, find themselves, through no fault of their own, in denominations, missionary societies and other organisations, which are in membership with the W.C.C. and its missionary arm, the International Missionary Council. Is there any Word of the Lord for them? Yes, a general principle is given, but it must be stressed that the application of that principle will depend on God's way and God's time, which will be related to the special circumstances and perhaps many other factors of each case. Hasty and ill-considered decisions are to be deprecated. Nevertheless when the Lord has revealed His will, His way and His time, there must be no hesitation, whatever the cost. That principle in broad outline, is given in 2 Cor. 6:17, "Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing," and again in Revelation 18:4, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues".

It is well to recall that the greatest preacher of the last century, the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, was troubled and pained by the rise and progress of doctrinal error within his own denomination. He raised his voice in protest, in what became known as the "Downgrade Controversy," hoping to stem the tide and and other basic doctrines of the Christian Faith. He was grieved to discover that he was but the voice of a helpless minority, and that even many of these could remain in a Church which they could not guide to a sounder policy. He wrote, "As soon as I saw, or thought I saw, that error had become firmly established, I did not deliberate, but quitted the body at once. Since then my counsel has been 'come out from among them'. I have felt that no protest could be equal to that of distinct separation".

Many, like Spurgeon and his congregation, could comparatively easily, withdraw from their present affiliations, taking their property and assets with them, and so maintain a pure testimony. But others find themselves in very different circumstances, and have many other factors to consider. To them the time is not ripe for such a move. These however, have a duty to perform; that is, to help educate Christian opinion on this issue, and to protest, in season and out of season, strongly and courteously, to their Church authorities against aiding and abetting the forces of apostasy.

Present Duties

In this connection the Bible presents the believer with a two-fold duty. On the one hand he must not aid the enemy; on the other hand he should help to the utmost of his ability and resources those who are engaging the foe.

The struggle of Israel, under the inspiring leadership of Deborah and Barak, against Jabin King of Canaan illustrates this. When the conflict was over, some of the Hebrews were praised but others severely censured for what they did, or did not do, at that time. Although Meroz did not side with the enemy, yet the judgment of God fell upon it for not helping their valiant fellow-countrymen when facing such tremendous odds and fighting their adversaries. Doubtless it stands written for our heart searching and warning and stirring, "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty" (Jud. 5:23).

There are many worthy men who do not have fellowship with evil and yet do not identify themselves with those who are exposing and opposing apostasy. This is surely a grave dereliction of duty. Edmund Burke obviously had this attitude in mind when he said, "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing".

These are facts which have a special bearing upon the situation in England to-day. There are many true men of God, a few denominations, a number of independent congregations, also missionary societies and other organisations, who on principle have no association with the World Council, and are earnestly contending for the faith, and yet have not seen their way to align themselves with the International Council of Christian Churches. Such should reflect that the Lord Himself, in the light of the judgment on Meroz, calls them to do more than they are doing, even to take a more positive and definite line still, and to throw in their all—all that they are and have—and to join the army battling against the corruption of the Church on earth. A person or group, by himself or itself, can do little to stem the tide of apostasy. But the godly remnants and their organisations united, and having something of their witness and activities co-ordinated, without any member losing its individuality and independence, would make for a strength, a power and an influence to be reckoned with. It would, by God's grace, not only prove to be a revival blessing to themselves, but hold the forces of evil at bay and perhaps even drive them backward. And such a unity in this land under the ægis of the English Consultative Council, or better still a British Regional Council of

Evangelical Churches, in happy fellowship with similar bodies throughout the whole free world, could and would prove a decisive factor in the age long conflict between light and darkness.

All this constitutes a call to "true-hearted, whole-hearted, faithful and loyal" sons and daughters of the Reformation, not only to stand aloof from the W.C.C. which would obliterate the distinction between Truth and Error, but to come to the help of the Lord by joining the I.C.C.C. with its worldwide testimony to the Historic Christian Faith.

A Final Word

This Committee seeks, first and foremost, the fervent and unceasing prayers of the People of God, that its witness, and also that of the whole constituency of the I.C.C.C., may be in the power of the Spirit, in the spirit of the Bible, and to the glory of God. It prays, lovingly, that those who are misguided and in error may be brought into the light of God's Truth, and that the timid may be given courage to take a bold stand, and if need be, to come out and be separate. It would commend to itself, and to its fellow members in this world-wide testimony, the exhortation of the warrior Paul the Apostle as given in Eph. 6: 10-20. With two only of these verses this appeal will conclude:—

"Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might . . . For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places".

The International Council of Christian Churches

Preamble to Constitution

WHEREAS, It is the duty of all true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ to make a clear testimony to their faith in Him, especially in these darkening days of apostasy in many professing Churches, by which apostasy whole denominations in their official capacity, as well as individual Churches, have been swept into a paganizing stream of modernism under various names and in varying degree; and

WHEREAS, There has been a notable growth of autocratic domination on the part especially of modernistic leaders by whom the rightful powers of true Churches are often usurped and are now being usurped; and

WHEREAS, The commands of God to His people to be separate from all unbelief and corruption are clear and positive; and also

WHEREAS, We believe the times demand the formation of a world-wide agency, for fellowship and co-operation on the part of Bible-believing Churches for the proclamation and defence of the Gospel, for the maintenance

of a testimony pure, steadfast and world-wide to those great facts and revealed truths of historic Christianity and especially to the great doctrines of the Protestant Reformation, for the accomplishment of tasks which can better be done in co-operation than separately, and to facilitate the discharge of the obligations which inhere in the Commission of Christ to His Church to make known the Gospel of Christ to every kindred and tongue and tribe and nation.

Therefore, the bodies of various nationalities and languages forming this Council, do now establish it as an agency, without compromise or evasion, unreservedly dedicated as a witness to "the faith once for all delivered unto the saints."

Doctrinal Statement

Among other equally Biblical truths, we believe and maintain the following:—

- a. The plenary Divine inspiration of the Scriptures in the original languages, their consequent inerrancy and infallibility, and, as the Word of God, the supreme and final authority in faith and life;
- b. The Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;
- c. The essential, absolute, eternal Deity, and the real and proper, but sinless, humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ;
- d. His birth of the Virgin Mary;
- e. His substitutionary, expiatory death, in that He gave His life "a ransom for many";
- f. His resurrection from among the dead in the same body in which He was crucified and the second coming of this same Jesus in power and great glory;
- g. The total depravity of man through the Fall;
- h. Salvation, the effect of regeneration by the Spirit and the Word, not by works but by grace through faith;
- i. The everlasting bliss of the saved, and the everlasting suffering of the lost;
- j. The real spiritual unity in Christ of all redeemed by His precious blood;
- k. The necessity of maintaining, according to the Word of God, the purity of the Church in doctrine and life; And, still believing the Apostles' Creed to be a statement of Scriptural truth, we therefore incorporate it in these articles of faith.

The Commendation by Evangelical Anglicans of the I.C.C.C.

Forty churchmen of the Anglican Communion in England sent greetings to the Third Plenary Congress of the International Council of Christian Churches. The signatories were ministers and lay people from all parts of England. They commended the I.C.C.C. for its faithfulness to the Bible and also registered their strong disapproval of the World Council of Churches, describing it as "a grave peril . . . and a hindrance to the proclamation of the gospel."

The text of the greetings sent to the Congress, and the list of signatories are as follows:—

"We, the undersigned members of the Established Church of England (both clerical and lay), standing 'for the proclamation and defence of the Gospel,' and loyal to the great doctrines of the Protestant Reformation, send Christian greetings and prayerful good wishes to the International Council of Christian Churches assembled in Philadelphia, U.S.A., for its Third Plenary Congress.

"We desire to record our appreciation of the firm stand made by your Council for the preservation of that true religious liberty which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Gal. 5:1), and we pray that guided by God the Holy Ghost you will be led to resolve upon appropriate means, in accordance with the Word of God, of maintaining and extending this inestimable blessing.

"We declare therefore our own conviction that the World Council of Churches by inclusion within its organisation of bodies which would undermine (either by doctrinal addition or subtraction) the full inspiration, supreme authority, and all-sufficiency of Holy Scripture is a grave peril to Protestant and Reformed Evangelical Christianity and a hindrance to the proclamation of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"We affirm our adherence to the Bible as the Word of God (the principle laid down in Article VI of our own 'Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion' and throughout our formularies), and in that we believe we are standing where our Protestant Reformers stood in relation to both the falsities and also the subtleties of Papal Romanism.

"We stretch forth the right hand of fellowship to you and express our earnest hope that you may be led to formulate and implement plans whereby all Reformed and Protestant Churches may be strengthened.

"Our sincere prayer is that being guided and governed by God's good Spirit you may be led in the way of truth and hold to the faith in righteousness of life.

"With cordial greetings, yours in our Lord Jesus Christ."

C. W. Hale Amos, M.A., D.D., Bath, Somerset; L. Atherton, Vicar of St. Simon and St. Jude, Southport, Lancashire; Basil F. C. Atkinson, M.A., Ph.D., University Library, Cambridge; Daniel H. C. Bartlett, M.A., D.D., Hon. Secretary of the Bible Churchmen's Missionary Society, 1922-45; Harold B. Barkworth, M.A., Churchwarden and Lay Reader, Felixtowe Parish Church, Suffolk; Cyril B. Carter, Vicar of St. Stephen's, London; A. L. Chapman, Rector of Denton, Sussex; Francis Coxon, Lay Reader, Long Eaton, Nr. Nottingham; F. Martyn Cundy, M.A., Vicar of Christ Church, Westbourne, Hampshire; W. Russell Davey, Rector of Nailsea, Somerset; Stanley Duthie, Vicar of St. Philemon, Toxeth, Liverpool; R. S. Eddleston, M. A., Rector of Tollard Royal, Salisbury; F. Ferguson, M.A., Vicar of Patcham, Brighton, Sussex; I. P. Goldsmith, B.Sc., Welwyn, Hertfordshire; Hugh P. Griffiths, M.A., Vicar of Axmouth, Devonshire; R. H. Haste, Rector of Raydon, Suffolk; H. G. N. Hensman, Secretary of Berean Band of Bible Learners, London; D. R. Hill, L.Th., B.A., Hon. Secretary, Truth and Faith Committee; H. Gordon H. Hill, Rector of Whinburgh, Norfolk; Harold R. H. Hill, L.Th., Rector of Stoke Ash, Suffolk; Thomas R. Horan, M.A., Supt. Irish Church Missions to Roman Catholics, Dublin; J. A. Kensit, Church Councillor, Protestant Truth Society, London; H. J. W. Legerton, Secretary, Lord's Day Observance Society, London; Z. Elfria Lyne, Winchester; T. G. Manly, B.A., A.K.C., East Tuddenham, Norfolk; F. W. Martin, L.Th., Rector of Great Hawksley, Essex; Basil C. Mowll, M.A., Vicar of Hemingford Grey, Huntingdonshire; J. K. Page, Vicar of Greyfriars, Reading, Berkshire; F. Harold Peacock, Minister, St. Mary Church, Castle Street, Reading; Hewlett J. Peacock, M.A., Headmaster, Eversfield School, Solihull, Birmingham; R. F. Pearce, M.A., East Sheen, London; Alfred Phibbs, President, Ipswich Clerical Society, Ipswich, Suffolk; Fredk. J. Pizzey, F.C.I.S., Vicar of Christ Church, Brixton, London; C. R. Pridmore, Vicar of North Frodingham, Yorkshire; P. E. H. Stott, Rector of Gislingham, Suffolk; Hugh E. Wallace, Minister of Trinity Church, Buxton, Derbyshire; R. Bracewell, Vicar of St. Paul's, Halliwell, Manchester; Henry Anton, Incumbent of Immanuel Church, Brighton, Sussex; L. W. Kemmis, Vicar of Renhold, Bedford.

(The International Council of Christian Churches, English Consultative Committee, Tract and Booklet Series, Number 3. Price 3d. or 2s. 9d. per dozen post free).

Literature and Book Reviews

Two books are indispensable to the student of the ecumenical movement. Readers are urged to secure, and then to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them. They would make most acceptable gifts to evangelical ministers.

The first is, **Ecumenism and the Bible**, by Dr. D. Hedegard of Lund University, Sweden. In cloth covers, 252 pages, price 8s. 6d. Our reviewer writes:— "All who would learn the evolution of this movement in the last hundred years, leading up to the formation of the W.C.C. must read this. It is full of historic facts well documented. It outlines the viewpoints of such leaders as Archbishops Soderblom and Temple, Bishops Aulen and Oxnam, T. C. Chao, H. P. Van Dusen, J.C. Bennett and E. Stanley Jones. There is valuable information concerning the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches. Evidence is given that the goal of the ecumenical leaders is nothing less than a World Church embracing the Protestant, Orthodox and Roman Communion, in, as Evangelicals would express it, a Babylonian confederacy. The final chapter deals with the two Evangelical Ecumenical movements. Of these the I.C.C.C. rightly holds the highest place in the esteemed author's heart and mind. He briefly recounts its story and constitution."

The second is, **Servants of Apostasy**, by Dr. C. McIntire; 414 pages; cloth covers 25s.; paper 21s.

Our reviewer writes:— "Our readers, we doubt not, seek that before the Lord they may prove to be servants of the Truth, and that will mean that they oppose the rising apostasy. The book before us characterises the promoters of the modern inclusivist ecumenical movement as represented by the W.C.C. as servants of apostasy. What a gulf between servants of the truth and servants of apostasy!

The author's case is sustained not by a ranting, railing accusation or tirade, but by well documented examination of the Evanston report. The book should be read from beginning to end by all Christian leaders and workers who would be well-informed as to the character of the W.C.C. and the Evanston Congress of 1954 in particular, and who would comprehend the difference between the W.C.C. and the I.C.C.C.

The Evanston theme was, 'Christ the Hope of the World', but the final document left out any specific reference whatsoever to the bodily, visible return of Jesus Christ to the earth (page 30). Not only was there confusion on this theme, but the delegates could find no vital basis for Christian unity except the name Christian!

There are three chapters shewing that some of the twelve delegates from behind the Iron Curtain were Communist agents. Chapter 14, The Witness of the Scriptures, is a call to faith in Holy Writ and submission to its authority, a note altogether absent from W.C.C. reports and literature. Chapter 15, The Challenge of Faith, is the story of the formation and progress of the I.C.C.C.

We warmly commend Chapter 16, The Spirit of Compromise, to the careful and prayerful reading of all evangelicals who are tempted to despise, criticise or misunderstand the I.C.C.C. It should warm their hearts to prayerful sympathy and also to decisive action.'

A twelve page pamphlet, **The World Council of Churches: Whence . . . and Whither?** issued by the British Evangelical Council, price 3d., is a valuable contribution to this subject. It is *multum in parvo*.

The Reformation Review is a quarterly, the official organ of the I.C.C.C. Subscription 14s. per annum. Its pages usually furnish scholarly articles on themes of interest and importance, and summaries of papers read at Conferences. 3s. 6d. per copy.

The following also are worthy of purchase and circulation:—

What's Wrong With Britain? by Reginald Morrish, 2s. 6d.

Satan's Master Plan to Destroy the Work of God by Dr. Kenneth R. Kinney, 1s.

The Evangelical Church and Modernism by Dr. David Hedegard, 6d.

Have We A Reliable Bible? by Rev. W. J. McDowell, 4d.

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The Reformation Link, the occasional magazine of the English Consultative Committee, 6d.

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THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

English Consultative Committee

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