

Unity—A Gift from God

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cut deep and made unresolvable from the very beginning.

But this is not true in the forty years period which followed 1517, numerous attempts were made to unify the church. While the Augsburg Diet of 1530 officially rejected the Lutheran confessions an influential group of laymen and theologians met unofficially under the leadership of John Eck and Philip Melancthon to seek unity. These conferences brought the differences on such matters as the eucharist, confession of sin, sins, the episcopate, and marriage of the clergy to possible resolution, but Luther rejected them as impossible unless "The Pope will simply abolish the papacy."

The Divisions Hardened

Other occasions for reconciliation came with the imperial diets at Hagenau (June 1540), Worms (November 1540), and Ratisbon (April to July 1541). Out of this meeting came the Ratisbon Book which contained twenty-three articles on which tentative agreement had been reached. The Pope on the one hand and Luther on the other again could not, however, come to the point of common discussion.

Personal animosity was compounded by the independence of the Lutheran princes from the emperor. It was hoped by many Protestants and Catholics that in the spirit of Ratisbon a general council would be called to take up the issues of the Reformation, but when the council finally met at Trent it was strictly a Roman Catholic "ecumenical" council. The result was to uphold papal supremacy and to pronounce anathemas on those who held to Protestant doctrine.

The immediate reaction of the Protestants to the Council of Trent was doctrinal and structural hardening. The fluidity which had existed in early decades of the Reformation was gone. National churches came

into being; these churches tended to develop their own "style of life" and to think of all deviations as error. Furthermore with the beginning of the 17th century conflicts arose between those who wanted a free church and the established churches.

Movements of religious awakening such as pietism and the evangelical revivals of Wesley and Whitfield tended to further divide the church for when these religious movements seemingly could not be contained within the established churches religious societies grew up which in turn tended to take on churchly characteristics. This fragmentation process has tended to continue and in spite of the ecumenical movement will in all probability in the years ahead give birth to religious bodies who have discarded some new or neglected religious "truth" or "experience."

With the great migrations from Europe to America all of the fragments of European Christianity were transplanted to American soil. The more than 250 varieties of church life in America can largely be traced to immigrants who came from all over the world to settle upon American soil. Thus did not only Lutherans come but Norwegian, Swedish, Danish and a handful of German varieties of Lutherans, each to establish its own church in America. The same was true of the Reformed tradition and the Baptists and the Orthodox.

Yet parallel to the increasing proliferation of American Protestantism the ecumenical movement began to grow and develop. This stood as a judgment upon a divided Christendom declaring unequivocally that the Church of Christ is one, that the church must find means of expressing that unity in the world of man.

The earliest "ecumenical" among American Protestants was John Eliot (1604-90), the famed missionary to the Indians. He appealed for the re-

union of the Presbyterian and Congregational "parties" and he developed a combined Presbyterian-Congregational polity for his Indian congregations.

Eliot advocated cooperative missionary work on the part of the churches not only among Indians but in "heathen" lands and in "professing nations where there is darkness." He also urged that missionaries under cooperative sponsorship be sent out to the frontier communities and that in such frontier areas where churches emerge they be brought into the "communions of councils." Eliot's union plan provided for four orders of such councils: district (monthly councils), provincial (quarterly councils), national (yearly councils) and at the top an "ecumenical council."

Such a council would be located in Jerusalem and would be a representative of all churches. It would make use of the Hebrew language. Its particular duties Eliot did not sketch out but as far as the lesser councils were concerned they were to deal with those matters which create controversy, root out heresy, destroy schism, order feasts and fasts and promulgate "the great wheel of the publick prayer."

The second important name of the ecumenical pioneers of early America is that of Cotton Mather (1663-1728). While Mather has been tarred and feathered for his witch hunting activities he was noted for many other things and among those was his promotion of ecumenical interests. He strongly commended John Eliot's proposal to unite Presbyterians and Congregationalists and he advocated the formation of interdenominational and international missionary societies to bring about "the noble design of evangelizing the world." He set as his primary aim the union of all Christian churches, except the Roman church, in America and throughout the world.

Jonathan Edwards (1703-58)



Symbol of a Staunch Faith

Religious faith has been traditionally strong in America's villages and rural areas. It is the city that is "secular." Symbol of this is the Methodist Church which stands atop the hill in Phelps.

emerged as the third of the great advocates of ecumenical Christianity. Edwards along with George Whitfield, the English evangelist who came to America, were great forces in the revival movement. In these movements the various denominations united to preach the Gospel.

In connection with the revival Edwards urged the uniting of all Christian peoples in common prayer meetings. He further

sylvania Congregation of God in the Spirit" was founded. From 1742-48 a series of Pennsylvania Synods were held, attended by Lutherans, Reformed, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Quakers, Mennonites, Brethren, Sabatarians, Inspired Individual Separatists. While these meetings were largely for the development of personal religious life, they also urged practical work in mission, the interchange of ministers, the publication of devotional literature, and intercommunion. The synods as structural entities did not last, for denominational differences came to the fore as members met each other and began to argue their specific points. But the ecumenical spirit not only of Zinzendorf but of Edwards, Mather and Eliot became implanted in American soil and took root in a host of common endeavors, union movements and councils in the succeeding decades.

The chief manifestations of ecumenicity in the first half of the 19th century was the establishment of interdenominational societies to meet specific needs. This largely grew from the Second Awakening, the revival movement which brought great numbers of people into the churches and created a strong desire to share the gospel with others.

Such organizations as the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (1810), the American Home Missionary Society (1826), the American Education Society (1815), the American Bible Society (1816), the American Sunday School Union (1824) and the American Tract Society (1825) sought through specific means to evangelize America and the world.

Not only did the Second Awakening result in renewed interest in missions but also sought to deal with issues of American morality. Thus there came into being under ecumenical Protestant auspices the American Society for the Promotion of Temperance (1826), the American Peace Society (1828) and the American Anti-Slavery Society (1833). While these were the prominent ones there were scores of other non-

denominational societies dealing with almost every social issue.

Still Only Individuals

While the societies were very important, not only in the work which they did but in terms of setting firmly into American Protestantism the movement which later came to be known as Life and Work they had their serious limitations. They tended to be composed primarily of individuals and secondarily of denominations. While this involved a great many laymen in their work they were not directly related to very many American denominations as such.

What they did do was to show that Christians and to a limited extent denominations could join together in common effort in proclaiming the Gospel and meeting the issues of society.

A complete account of the story of Protestant ecumenicity would mean detailing the story of the Disciples of Christ, the union proposals of Samuel Schmucker 1799-1873, Phillip Schaff 1819-93, John Nevin 1803-86, Thomas Vail 1812-89, William Muhlenberg 1796-1877. Each in his own way made a plea for a deeper, more churchly unity. And each presented concrete proposals for the achievement of such unity.

The most active Episcopalian in the cause of Christian unity in the 19th Century was William R. Huntington (1838-1918). In 1870 he published the "Church Idea—an Essay toward the Reconciliation of the Protestant Episcopal and other Christian Churches." In this volume he proclaimed his own church, the Protestant Episcopal, as a "church of reconciliation" and he invited all other Christian groups to join it to form the "Catholic Church of America." As a basis of unity he listed four points: (1) the Holy Scriptures as the Word of God; (2) the primitive creeds as the rule of faith; (3) the two sacraments as ordained by Christ himself; and (4) the Historic Episcopate as the keystone of governmental unity.

In 1898 in a book "A National Church" Huntington substantially modified his earlier proposal. He gave up the idea



Vice President

PETER CONSOL has been appointed a vice president of Pepsi-Cola Rochester Bottlers, Inc., according to an announcement by Frank G. Staropoli, president. Consol has been with Pepsi-Cola since January, 1956 and has been Sales Manager of the company for the past seven years. In announcing the appointment, Staropoli indicated that Consol would continue to administer the sales and promotional aspects of the company's operations. Said Staropoli: "The rapid growth of our business in the past few years has increased the executive responsibilities within our organization. Mr. Consol's appointment will strengthen our management team and enable us to build properly for the future." Consol and his wife Anne reside at 106 Bedford Road in Rochester.

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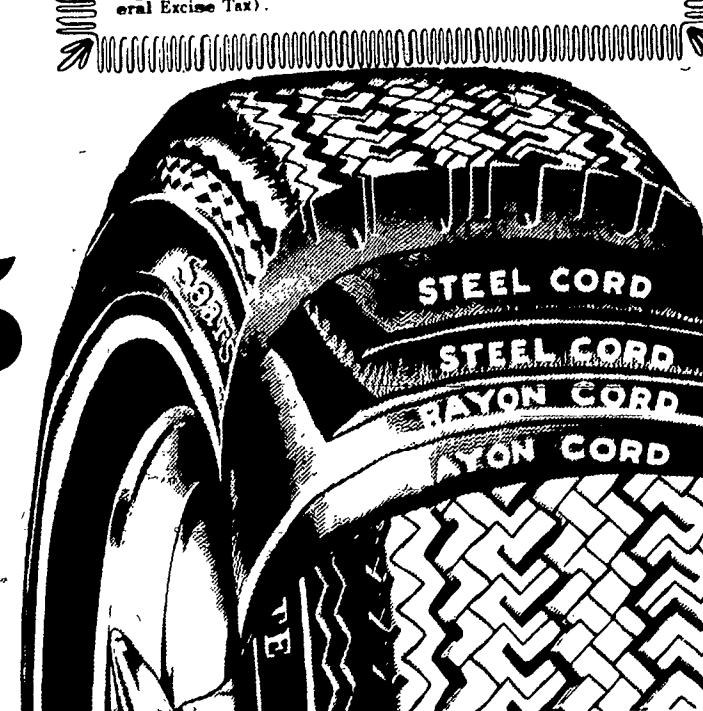
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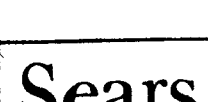
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