

- C. "World" fellowships that promote ecumenical advance with greater and/or lesser success.

The chief purposes in these fellowships as originally constituted was to give a fellowshipping opportunity to persons of different individual denominations but common denominational heritage. Many of the denominational bodies were purely geographic and these had no real difference with another body..across the water. Therefore there was no need for theological rapproachment...they already believed the same thing...but what was needed was an opportunity to share in the work of one another and to have a fuller understanding of what the commitment of the group was to the total world. Many of these groups are much earlier than the modern movement (ecumenics) but most have come to have a role in it...probably a lot of it due to the loss of theological vitality on the part of the group. After all, is neither group really believes anything definitive, there is no reason for two groups. Well, here are a few:

1. The World Alliance of Reformed Churches

Formed in 1875, the group was headed by some strongly evangelical presbyterians seeking cooperation among churches that held to a presbyterial form of government. With the passage of time the Alliance has seen itself as a catalyst in relations between reformed and other churches and has held talks with the Roman church (following Vatican II). It merged with the International Congregational conference (a similar body serving in the Congregational community) about 1970 and following talks with Lutheran leaders produced the Luneburg Concord in 1971...a document intended to lessen tension in Reformed and Lutheran circles.

2. The Baptist World Alliance

The Baptist World Alliance came into being in 1905 as a cooperative agency to give a more uniform Baptist witness to the world. Today it represents about 25 million baptists in bodies on all the inhabited continents. In many places it has been occupied with church-state relationships and has been increasingly liberal in pronouncements in these areas. Meeting on a five year basis, the Alliance is still pretty much working on areas of general interest to Baptists but has given effort to the ecumenical attempts at the better understanding of the sacraments and the ministry.

3. The World Methodist Council

A general fellowship to which many of the Methodist bodies belong, the council claims a membership of about 20 million and a representative community of about 40 million. It has sought to rally the descendents of Wesley to a common stand and has offered ecumenical discussions and fellowship to many other bodies.

4. The Lutheran World Federation

Organized in 1947 as the consummation of a number of world conventions, the Federation has its world headquarters in Geneva and, when I last knew anything about it, met every 6 years.