

- g. Better witness to fulfilling the commands of Jesus.

This is the great call of ecumenists...It is articulated well in Cavert: ON THE ROAD TO CHRISTIAN UNITY, Chapter VIII. It is a common theme among ecumenical leaders. It is also hard to deny that a united front would be a more credible witness to truth...but, as Calvin said it.."a witness that began and ended in Thee.." is the real witness. It does not seem that the church was a better witness in pre-reformation times when it was more concentrated and less individualistic in character.

4. Organizational steps in the development of the modern ecumenical movement and thrust.

I am not indicating that the movement was worked out in broad detail in some sort of executive session or international conspiracy. That there are forces at work in it or an unhealthy nature cannot be denied. But many of the pieces are forced in or simply fit with the passage of time. We look at the matter in historical perspective as it occurred and view the result of what we have today as the logical conclusion of what has gone before.

a. The Church Councils

(1) The Federal Council of Churches...1908

(a) Founding moves:

The concept of such a council probably found its roots in the World's Evangelical Alliance, founded in London in 1846. At the same time Schmucker, the Lutheran theologian, was advocating a world church with unity in structure and individuality in local expression. American churchmen were involved in the Alliance and these two forces gave the idea of the hope of a similar body in the U.S. The Alliance had a nine-point statement of faith that was very evangelical and the insistence on doctrinal orthodoxy tended to discourage liberals from seeking inclusion. This limited participation and resulted in the Open Church League of 1894...with a broader base and not much doctrinal commitment. This body did not have a long life. But the idea of a central organizing religious body was very strong.

The American Evangelical Alliance was formed in 1867 and headed by the strongly evangelical James McCosh. In 1885 it was superceded by a body known as the American Congress of Churches. Neither of these fellowships was a church council per se but a working fellowship within denominations.

A more particular fellowship developed in New York with the 1894 conference at Union Seminary and the