

New Zealand van Echten, 1991 Fellowship of Christian Churches (NZFCC)

*(Open Letter by the NZFCC's first President, Mr. A.
van Echten, 1991)*

January and February 1988 in New Zealand saw the dissolution of the National Council of Churches (NCC) and the commencement of a new body called the CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND (CCANZ).

This new body, unlike the former NCC, has the Roman Catholic Church as a member, thus joining ranks with 33 other countries around the world who also have the Roman church as a full member of their respective national church councils.

The MAORI church Council, Te Runanga Whakawhanaunga I Nga Hahi o Aotearoa (formed in 1982 as an autonomous body from the Maori section of the NCC) also has on board the Roman Catholic church as a full member.

Together, Te Runanga and the CCANZ "present the face of ecumenical life in Aotearoa" (Executive secretary CCANZ), and both these have been formally received as JOINT ASSOCIATE MEMBERS of the World Council of Churches (WCC) at the World Congress in Canberra in 1991.

Also in New Zealand, in 1982, another body was formed under the name of The Scripture Preservation Society, an alliance of a number of Bible-believing protestant Christian churches around the country, with the purpose of providing and promoting a fellowship for Christians committed to the great common doctrines of our historic Christian faith, the faith "once delivered to the saints". During the last two years the Society underwent a name change also, now called The New Zealand Protestant League, and joined in with the newly formed New Zealand Fellowship of Christian Churches (NZFCC), which was closely aligned to the world-wide fellowship of similar churches under the name of the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC), all standing together in "like precious faith" in total dependence on the great God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This fellowship was recently demonstrated when members of the NZFCC joined with members of the ICCC from many parts of the world, in a collective protest at the 7th Congress of the World Council of Churches.

These two bodies, the ICCC and the WCC on the international level, and the NZFCC and the CCANZ on the national level, are separated by essential differences that make it impossible for them to unite; simply, the one holds to the historic Christian position that there is only ONE Mediator between God and man, there is only ONE name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, and there is

ONLY ONE WAY, to the Father and eternal life, The LORD JESUS CHRIST, while the other openly acknowledges "a theology that does not confine salvation to the explicit personal commitment to Jesus Christ as only Saviour and Lord" (WCC official literature).

Any mature person recognises that we live in an imperfect world; that while we may define and seek the "ideal" in home, business and church life, because Man is what he is, reaching that ideal is rarely if ever possible.

A business requires a debtor's ledger and credit control because even though the goods were what the customer ordered and the price agreed, experience demonstrates that the ideal of "payment as arranged" is all too frequently not reached. So also in the family circle, where the husband, wife and child usually do not always perform to the ideal. Equally so in the churches of Christ.

So what is the answer?

The answer is compromise, i.e. considered and *legitimate* compromise as is shown in the Holy Scriptures in such passages as Romans 14.

A charitable adjustment to as close to the ideal as the "nature of the beast" will allow. Without this neither peace nor healthy growth in any sphere can be obtained. And no thoughtful person will disagree. But there is always and MUST be a point at which, in home, business, and church life, we say "THUS FAR AND NO FURTHER".

The NZFCC came into being to say to such bodies as the WCC and the CCANZ - "You've gone TOO FAR!".

What may have begun as genuine and charitable compromise and adjustment within the different traditions and cultures of the various churches has now reached past compromise into DISOBEDIENCE TO CHRIST, and disobedience has produced apostasy and then idolatry.

The Baptist child of God may have precious fellowship with his Reformed brother in Christ even though his judgment on matters surrounding the doctrine of paedobaptism is different. Equally the Postmillennial or Amillennial Presbyterian saint recognises that a spiritual and intelligent and well-read brother of the Christian Brethren persuasion can hold with conviction his pre-millennial or even Dispensational view of historical and prophetic events.

But every true Christian, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, knows the "essentials" or the "fundamentals" of the faith, as are enshrined in the historic statements of faith, and at this point he says, "THUS FAR!".

This then is the charge that the NZFCC has against the CCANZ . . . "You've gone TOO FAR!".

You have gone too far when you allow our Bible to be rated with other "holy books". You've gone too far when you say that Christians are to be "active builders of a Communistic society". You've gone too far in legitimising African witchcraft.

You've gone too far in "working for visible unity" with blasphemous and idolatrous Romanism, and you've gone too far in rejecting a theology that DOES "confine salvation to the explicit personal commitment to Jesus Christ as only Saviour and Lord".

THAT IS TOO FAR!

Thus it is the responsibility of the NZFCC to separate from and "rebuke sharply" this apostasy of the Conference of Churches in Aotearoa and the Maori Te Runanga. It is also our responsibility to strengthen the Biblical fellowship of Christ's TRUE and faithful churches in New Zealand, while each church in the NZFCC and the ICCC maintains its individual candlestick displaying their various gifts, cultures and traditions, but all presenting in the darkness of this world, the ONE and ONLY LIGHT in all its fullness, the Lord Jesus Christ.

God is faithful. He requires of his churches that they be faithful, and those churches and individual Christians and institutions that comprise the NZ Fellowship of Christian Churches, know that God's true people are "called and chosen and faithful".

We encourage all who are interested in standing with the NZFCC testimony to send for a copy of the NZFCC booklet 'Kept Pure'.

A. van Echten,

President

NZFCC,

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