

THE EVANGELICAL FELLOWSHIP OF CANADA (III)

THE BEGINNING OF E.F.C.

The E.F.C. can trace its history to March 1964, when a call went out to ministers living within a 100 mile radius of Toronto to meet in the famous Knox Presbyterian church to consider the advisability of forming a fellowship of evangelicals in Canada. Speaker at this meeting was Dr. Everett Catell, then president of the World Evangelical Fellowship. This meeting produced a Steering Committee with Dr. H. Faught as chairman, charged with the responsibility of drafting an organizational program for the formation of a fellowship of evangelicals. A second meeting of interested evangelicals was held on February 15, 1965, in the People's Church, Toronto, and at this meeting the E.F.C. was officially born and Dr. Fought was named as first president. ⁽¹³⁾ After leading the E.F.C. from a small Ontario orientated group of evangelicals to a nation-wide organization, Dr. J. Harry Fought stepped down from the presidency in the beginning of 1968 and Dr. W. Fitch succeeded him. He accepted the post of presidency after much hesitation. After seriously and prayerfully weighing the pros and cons he was persuaded that he could do nothing else but accept. As he said "But persuaded as I am that evangelicals have a most significant part to play in the Canada of tomorrow, I could do none else." ⁽¹⁴⁾

Statement Of Faith

What are the objectives of the E.F.C.? They are "to reaffirm loyalty to the historic, evangelical doctrines of Christianity as represented in our Statement of Faith, and in mutual fellowship with all of like faith to stand against the apostasy of our day." ⁽¹⁵⁾

The statement of faith is as follows: "Statement of faith - Simple but absolutely basic. In unity with the historic creeds, we affirm that Jesus Christ is Lord and that His is a solitary throne. There is no rival to Jesus Christ; He reveals God the Father and He authenticates the Holy Scriptures. He is Saviour. and Judge of men. His servants are called to be witnesses to Him and this is our real mission. Yet, following Him, we share His concern for the suffering, the dispossessed, the outcast, the refugee, the poor, the helpless and the sinner. Here is the affirmation we make. The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada believes . . . ,

(1) That the Holy Scriptures as originally given by God are divinely inspired, infallible, and entirely trustworthy; and that they are the only supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

(2) That there is one God, eternally existent in three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

(3) That our Lord Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh and that belief in Him commands belief in His sinless life, His divine miracles, His substitutionary death, His resurrection and ascension, His mediatorial work, and His personal return in power and glory.

(4) That the salvation of lost and sinful man is won through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ by faith and apart from works; and that those who thus believe in Him are regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

(5) That the Holy Spirit indwells all who believe in Christ and that only through His indwelling is the believer enabled to live a holy life and to witness and work for the Lord Jesus Christ.

(6) That the Church of Jesus Christ is the unity of all true believers in Christ and by the Holy Spirit all such who believe are members of the Body of Christ.

(7) That there will be a resurrection of all, both saved and lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life, and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation." (16)

I am sure that we could certainly give our assent to this statement. It is clear, concise, and true to God's Word. It forms a good basis for dialogue. It also does recognize the social responsibilities of the evangelical. The quarterly publication of the E.F.C. *Thrust* bears this out. Rev. Leslie Tarr's article "Poverty and the Just Society" tries to stir Christians into a concerned outreach to the underprivileged. Gerald Vande Zande, the well known C.L.A.C. representative and chief editor of *The Guide*, and Robert N. Thompson, M.P. of Red Deer, are with a few others on the editorial staff of the *Thrust* as associate editors. These men are well qualified to speak for the evangelicals about the social problems our nation is facing.

Present Situation

Our relationship with the N.A.E. was broken because of an overreaction to fundamentalism. Dr. Faught mentioned that the E.F.C. was similar to the N.A.E., although there are some differences in approach and in scope of work. The differences referred to are due I believe to our different national heritage. In Eastern Canada, fundamentalism has been shaped by both American and British influence. Out West, fundamentalism is more of an American heritage. Extreme fundamentalism is not so wide-spread here as in the U.S.A. In Canada, there is a very favourable trend in fundamentalist and evangelical circles towards a better trained, clergy, and cultural involvement., Dr. Mariano DiGangi, in his keynote address of the Winnipeg Convention of this year said "With the liberal emphasis on high Standards of academic and theological training for the ministry and a seeming playing down of spiritual qualifications, the evangelical is inclined to react against intellectualism and to make a plea for getting back to the simplicity of teaching the Bible. But faith is not to be blind and credulous, rather, informed and intelligent. There must be an evangelical theological education that is academically acceptable in a day of advanced learning. Evangelicals must be able to say, not simply that they believe, but that having looked at all the questions, in the face of them they believe." (17) These words are well spoken and deserve our support. The E.F.C. is not made up of just "hot headed" fundamentalists who have joined forces in fear of being overrun by the liberals. The E.F.C. appears to be a positive movement.

Who are some of the leading men involved? Dr. William Fitch the present president needs no introduction. He is well known by our people through his staunch support for

the C.L.A.C. He is a very able Presbyterian minister and a Reformed scholar of rank. Dr. Harry Faught, a Pentecostal, is not anti-intellectual as are most of the old line Pentecostals. He has a bachelor's degree in political economy from McMaster's University, Hamilton, Ont., and a master's degree. He also holds a doctor of theology from Dallas Theological Seminary, which is a dispensationalist school of high academic standing. Rev. Leslie K. Tarr is on the staff of Central Baptist Seminary, Toronto, Ont. He is also a highly gifted journalist. Mr. Tarr is also well known to the C.L.A.C. supporters through his articles in *The Guide*. The evangelical Baptists have lately become quite interested in the C.L.A.C. and also in the Christian school movement. Their monthly magazine has carried recently an article written by Gerald VandeZande, and an article by an evangelical Baptist in support of Christian schools. These are only a few of the names. I mentioned them to show that the E.F.C. is not made up of culture shy negative, unintelligent fundamentalists.

MEMBERSHIP

Who are eligible to become members of the E.F.C.? You may join as an individual, a congregation, or organization. You may join as a group in any area-ministerial or "lay". You may join as a group of churches in a city or province. (18) There are enough possibilities from which to choose.

The E.F.C. is an ecumenical movement which needs our support. We are numerically strong compared to some other evangelical churches. We have a rich theological heritage and background and a closely tight church organization. The C.L.A.C. has made fruitful connections in the fellowship already and needs our further support in making an impact upon Canadian evangelicals. I do believe that the A.A.C.S. will also have a good opportunity for outreach through contacts with the E.F.C.

In the E.F.C. there is, besides Reformed Christians, a wider body of Christian people, who sincerely believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and love His cause according to their background and training. They have many misconceptions and errors, as we see it. Yet, we recognize them as fellow-Christians and include them in the one, holy Catholic church, which we confess each Sunday in one of our worship services. As such they are brethren and we have certain beliefs and concepts in common. Of course, as a Reformed Christian, I regret many of the features pertaining to Pentecostalism and other groups. We do not want these concepts in our churches. However, there is no reason why we should not join hands in an organization to attain a common cause. We live in days of upheaval. It is becoming increasingly difficult to remain orthodox in our nation. The voice of the liberal churches is heard everywhere. Let the evangelicals speak out now! If we see the E.F.C. going into un-Biblical ways, we can correct in love. They are willing to listen to us Calvinists. This has been shown already in their brief existence. We do not need to fear that our voice will be lost in the E.F.C. We will not be a lonely orthodox group crying in the wilderness. We will be respected for what we stand for. Next year, on Wednesday and Thursday, 5th and 6th March, 1969, in Knox Presbyterian Church, Toronto, the annual meeting will be held. The working sessions will be in the church and the closing meeting will be in the Massey Hall. There are many

of our churches in Toronto and vicinity. This presents a good opportunity for many of our people to attend the workshops and the main rally at Massey Hall, and find out first-hand what the E.F.C. stands for and purposes to do. Those wishing information on the E.F.C. please write to Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, Box 878, Terminal A, Toronto, Ont.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

13. Evangelical Thrust, Vol. I, No. 1, April 1968, p. 2.
14. Circular letter E.F.C., July 22, 1968.
15. Thrut Vol. I, No. 1, October 1968, p. 14.
16. Ibid., p. 14.
17. Evangelical Thrust, Vol. II, No. 1, April 1968, pp. 2f.
18. Ibid., Vol. I, No. 1, October 1968, p. 22.

Johan D. Tangelder
November, 1968