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### Twentieth-Century Lutheran Attitudes Toward War

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TWENTIETH-CENTURY LUTHERAN ATTITUDES TOWARD WAR

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A Research Paper Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for elective  
HI-200

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by

Daniel Parsch  
March 1971

A-  
Your bibliography is very  
extensive, and your organization  
of your data is very adequate.  
Theater analysis and argumentation  
would have strengthened  
your presentation. But,  
in the main, you  
accomplished what you set  
out to do. RB.

Ralph A. Bohlmann  
Advisor

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This paper is an attempt to show the attitudes and ideas of leading Lutherans on the matter of war and the participation in war. The Lutheran Church has been, in the past, and remains an important part of the whole Christian witness. Therefore, the ideas of prominent men in this body are important for study in order to more fully understand the position which the whole Lutheran Church has taken in regard to this problem. In order to limit the scope of such a study, the paper will deal mainly with 20th Century attitudes. Likewise, the main Lutheran bodies to which attention is given are: The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, The Lutheran Church in America, and The American Lutheran Church. A brief examination of Dr. Martin Luther's stand will also be considered because he has greatly influenced these denominations in their positions. It is both necessary and important to include an examination of both Old and New Testament material relevant to the topic since the Holy Scriptures are the source and norm for the Lutheran faith, and because men of differing views turn to them in support of their arguments pro and con regarding war.

## CHAPTER II

### WAR AND PEACE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Do the Scriptures, especially the Old Testament, glorify war? Or does it only regard war as a result and consequence of man's sin and as a judgment of God resulting from that sin?

When one thinks of the Old Testament it is not difficult to remember its chapters filled with bloody accounts of the wars waged at God's command. Because of this, many have found the Old Testament less than attractive. A British scientist by the name of Lord Raglan held, upon addressing, the Society of Friends, that the Old Testament was not fit reading material for the young:

Moses, David Samuel, and others were monsters of aggression, cruelty, and atrocities unequalled in any modern conflicts. The fact that such cruelty both in peace and war was characteristic of the times and countries in which these Bible heroes lived, may explain them to an anthropologist, but does not excuse us in using them as examples of manliness and morality before the young people.<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult, and often impossible, to deny that the many accounts in the Old Testament are indeed bloody. In some instances none of the gruesome details are spared and nothing is left to the imagination of the reader. But the question must be asked whether the narration of facts actually carry with it approval of those facts. Is war the ideal of the Old Testament? Can the highest good which Israel might achieve come about only through the complete destruc-

tion of her enemies? Is the Old Testament only concerned with war? Upon further study one can see that it is not a question as to whether or not there are many examples of war in the Old Testament, but whether war is glorified and approved, or looked upon with scorn and contempt.

A frequent cause of wars in the Old Testament have to do with the history of Israel and God's purpose and plan for them. War was a judgment of God and one of His ways of punishing the wickedness of men, a punishment that not even the chosen people could avoid at times. War in defense against aggression, war when commanded by God is allowed, even demanded at times.

Joshua is seen as the leader of the Israelites who annihilates completely the Canaanites, sparing neither man, woman, or child. "For Joshua did not draw back his hand, with which he stretched out the javelin, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai." <sup>2</sup> We are told that this happened to the Canaanites "because of the wickedness of these nations the Lord your God is driving them out from before you." <sup>3</sup> Earlier in the wanderings of the people of Israel recorded in the book of Numbers we are told that Moses was commanded by the Lord to "avenge the people of Israel on the Midianites." <sup>4</sup> A thousand men were gathered from each tribe and every male of the Midianites was killed in the ensuing battle.

There are numerous other gory and detailed accounts in

the Old Testament which deal with Israel's wars on other nations. Besides the Canaanites and the Midianites, there are accounts dealing with Gideon's conquest of the Moabites,<sup>5</sup> Jephthah against the Ephraimites,<sup>6</sup> Saul and David warring against the Philistines.<sup>7</sup> Great numbers, reaching the tens of thousands, of the enemies of Israel fall in battle. Dr. Ralph Moellering comes to the conclusion that there is apparently a "close relationship between the evils of warfare and the announced purposes of God. According to every indication, Jehovah's will is often the causative factor in these wars."<sup>8</sup>

There is also to be found in the Old Testament praise to God in time of victory. The Song of Moses and the people after the incident at the Red Sea is a song of thanksgiving to God for His deliverance from their enemies and former captors. The people sang: "I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously.... The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is His name.... Thy right hand O Lord, glorious in power, Thy right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy."<sup>9</sup>

The prophetess Deborah's victory song recorded in Judges 5 can also be viewed as thanksgiving to God for deliverance in the face of foes. Psalm 144:1 appears to be an apparent glorification of war: "Blessed be the Lord, my Rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle." This is David's thanks to God for having given him power to subdue the enemy and thereby enabling him to bring peace to the land. Elsewhere, David gives God the credit for victory:

"The Lord lives; and blessed be my rock.... The God who gave me vengeance and brought down peoples under me, who brought me out from my enemies...." <sup>10</sup>

These are a few of the many examples of war in the Old Testament. For all the wars, the battles, the bloodshed, and killing, war is never glorified. War was recognized as a result of sin and condemned as such, and it was something which should be avoided whenever possible.

The future hope of Israel was not war, it seems, but peace. It is peace which is exalted time and again in the Old Testament: "Deliver me from my enemies, O my God, protect me from those who rise up against me. Deliver me from those who work evil, and save me from bloodthirsty men." <sup>11</sup> It is David who pleads: "Scatter the peoples who delight in war," <sup>12</sup> and who complains: "I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war." <sup>13</sup>

The great hope is for times of peace, as Isaiah says:

He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. <sup>14</sup>

All in all the Old Testament foreshadows what is so plainly stated in the New Testament:

What causes wars, and what causes fightings among you? Is it not your passions that are at war in your members? You desire and you do not have; so you kill. And you covet and cannot obtain; so you fight and wage war. You do not have, because you do not ask. <sup>15</sup>



## Chapter III

### PEACE AND WAR IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The ideal of peace is more fully developed in the New Testament. There is a positive praise of peace. It is pictured as a gift from God and as a virtue of men. It was prophesied by Zechariah that Jesus was coming into the world "to guide our feet into the way of peace."<sup>1</sup> His actual arrival was hailed by the choir of angels as bring peace to men of good will.<sup>2</sup> He preached peace when He said in the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called son's of God."<sup>3</sup>

When Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant in order to defend his Lord, he was rebuked by Jesus who said: "Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword."<sup>4</sup> Before He left them on Ascension Day, Jesus promised peace to His disciples: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you,"<sup>5</sup> and "I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace."<sup>6</sup> These latter two passages perhaps refer to a spiritual peace, but it still remains that peace is the ideal.

God is described as a God of peace in at least six passages.<sup>7</sup> The Corinthians are reminded and informed that "God has called us to peace."<sup>8</sup> The Ephesians are admonished to be always "eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."<sup>9</sup> To the Thessalonians goes the direction to "be at peace among yourselves."<sup>10</sup>

Finally, there are two statements, one of which sounds like an actual command. They are: "If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all,"<sup>11</sup> and

If you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This wisdom is not such as comes down from above, but is earthly, unscriptural, devilish. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without uncertainty or insincerity. And the harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.<sup>12</sup>

But there is another side to the picture with passages in the New Testament contributing to the arguments against pacifism. Jesus prophesied wars to come on several occasions.<sup>13</sup> According to George Koehler the passage of Matthew 10:34 when Jesus said: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword," was used by the press in times of trouble to stir up a war spirit in this country.<sup>14</sup> Two other texts used in defense of war is the statement of Jesus: "Render unto Caesar, the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's,"<sup>15</sup> and Romans 13:1-4 which appeals to the Roman people to subordinate themselves to the existing authorities. However, Dr. Ralph Moellering says he has difficulty in seeing how these verses can definitely settle the issue a Christian has to face in deciding whether or not to go to war.

Other cases in the New Testament, weak as they may seem, which are used by some to justify war is the advice the soldiers received from John the Baptist, the centurion whose servant

was healed by Jesus, and Cornelius to whom Peter was sent. The arguments stem basically from the fact that in these three instances there is no condemnation against the profession of being a soldier. Upon study of the passages mentioned it is difficult to find in the New Testament any justification for war, or any justification for opposing all wars. The most frequent impression one gets in reading the New Testament on this subject is that government has been instituted by God to preserve order and insure peace, nothing more and nothing less.

## CHAPTER IV

### MARTIN LUTHER'S ATTITUDES ON WAR

Anytime one attempts a study of Martin Luther's attitudes on war there is sure to be much of what he says in contradiction. At times it appears that Luther is almost entirely against war in all but a few exceptional cases. At one point he says:

A prince must also be very wise and not at all times undertake to enforce his own will, although he may have the authority and the very best cause. For it is a far nobler virtue to endure wrong to one's authority than to risk property and person. <sup>1</sup>

He quotes the Emperor Octavianus who said: "War is like fishing with a golden net; the loss risked is always greater than the catch can be." <sup>2</sup> On the other hand, Luther defends the profession of men in the military service.

I do not wish to be understood as breaking off...with soldiers, fighting men, and those whose business is war.. They, too, when they are obedient, help with their fist, to protect peace and everything. <sup>3</sup>

Luther approached the problem with a doctrine of two kingdoms. There is, first of all, a "Kingdom of God," and a "Kingdom of the world." The Christian belongs to both of them. In the Kingdom of God there is nothing but mercy, love, and kindness toward one another. There is no war, no sword, no conflict. The Kingdom of the World has been established to put a stop to and punish evil. To do this it was necessary for God to put into the Emperor's hand a sword. In an earlier period of his life Luther believed that the Christian,

because of his membership in the Kingdom of God, should not resort to the law for the redress of any grievance committed against him. However, he could and should use the law to help his neighbor. If the Christian is in a position of power, such as a prince or magistrate, he might use force and the sword in the line of duty. Luther also held that the executioner was not guilty of anything when he carried out the verdict of the court. Luther later came to a higher estimate of the State. He came to think of the State as not something established merely for the sake of punishing evil, but for positive good. The Christian then could co-operate and serve the State in the pursuit of that good.<sup>4</sup>

Luther recognized the fact that there existed the possibility of resisting tyranny. "When a prince is in the wrong, are his people bound to follow him too? I answer, no, for it is no one's duty to do wrong...."<sup>5</sup> At the same time, Luther urged the people to obey the commands of temporal powers.

How is it, when the subjects do not know whether the prince is in the right or not? I answer, as long as they cannot know, nor find out by any possible means, they may obey without peril to their souls."<sup>6</sup>

Luther often advised Christians to choose the lesser of two evils. When a Christian has to make a choice between two courses, both of which involve an amount of sin, the Christian should follow the course which seems to involve the least amount of sinning. He should, all the while, remember that these unavoidable sins are forgiven because of Christ's

death. In his writings on war and conscientious objection we see some of Luther's principles as put forth by Kramm:

1. War is an evil, a consequence of sin.
2. In certain circumstances, it may be the lesser evil. In an operation, it may be necessary to cut off a man's arm in order to save his body: God asks us to help our neighbor. Christian charity may demand such an operation. In the same way, war may be a necessary operation in order to save the life of a State and of innocent citizens.
3. But it is the lesser evil only if it is a 'just' war of defence, not a war of aggression or lust for power. The war must be ordered by the lawful government to whom God has entrusted the sword, and not by private enterprise.
4. If a Christian is convinced that the war is 'unjust,' he must refuse military service. The decision whether a war is just or unjust, therefore, lies ultimately on the conscience of the individual.
5. This means, of course, that the individual has to bear the consequences. It would be better for him to suffer persecution and even death at the hands of his own government as the result of his conscientious objection, than to take part in a war which to his conscience is unjust. For it is better to lose his body and his possessions than to disobey his conscience.
6. If, however, a Christian is in doubt as to the justice of the war, he should leave the responsibility to his own government. In this case the government is responsible before God. <sup>7</sup>

Luther accepted the view that the object of a just war was peace and war was to be only the last resort when all else failed.

Through peace we enjoy our body and life, wife, children, house, and castle, yes, all our members, hands, feet, eyes, health, and freedom. And we sit secure in these walls of peace. Where there is peace there is half of the Kingdom of Heaven. Peace can make a crust of dry bread taste like sugar and a drink of water like malmosier wine. I could more easily number the sands or count all the blades of grass than narrate all the blessings of peace. <sup>8</sup>

Luther held this view when he condoned action against and re-

sistance to the Turk, not because he regarded them as infidels, but because he viewed them as invaders.<sup>9</sup>

Luther has been accused of "Statism" because of his call to arms which he delivered to the princes during the outbreak of the peasants in 1525:

Dear lords, save us, help us, have pity on poor folks; use your swords, your bludgeons and your daggers as much as you can. If you die it is well, you cannot die a happier death, for you die in obedience to God and in service of love.<sup>10</sup>

Roland Bainton says that in making this appeal to the princes, Luther was not a traitor to his class. Luther had always maintained the position of suffering over resistance. He also maintained that the magistrate alone has God's authority to use the sword. From the beginning Luther was against the lords for their injustice, and against the peasants because they resorted to violence. He urged the use of the sword only because he felt that no justice could come from rebellion.<sup>11</sup>

## CHAPTER V

### ATTITUDES OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH-MISSOURI SYNOD ON WAR

Dr. A.L. Graebner, Missouri Synod theologian, writing at the turn of the century put forth his opinions on government and war:

The apostles describe government as exousia and hyper-echousia, powers and superior powers. It is essential for a government to be a power, and a superior power in order to fulfill its purpose. For only a superior power can assert itself to all evil doers and afford protection to all its subjects and defend their rights, not only in its own territory, but also against foreign powers and their subjects. In the performance of these duties, states and their governments must employ all lawful means necessary for the achievement of their purpose. The extreme measure to which they are bound to resort when other means have failed to secure the effective protection of the rights of the subjects is war. <sup>1</sup>

In speaking to the problem concerning a just war, Dr. Graebner was of the opinion that war is just when a government's rights or the rights of its people have been violated by another government. Especially is it a just war when that power is unwilling or unable to correct those grievances which it has caused. He used as his supporting Bible passages in this argument Numbers 10:19; John 18:36; Romans 13:3, 4,5; I Timothy 2:2; and I Peter 2:13f.<sup>2</sup> However, according to Dr. Graebner, since so much is lost by war in terms of life and property, war should have as one of its aims the restoration of peace. <sup>3</sup>

Graebner did not stop there. He believed that when the government, in the exercise of what he termed "police power," called upon the citizens to render service,



such service should be willfully given. The citizen now has a double duty; civilian responsibility to the government, and moral responsibility to God.<sup>4</sup> Dr. Moellering maintains that traditionally the Lutheran understanding of a just war, in its most liberal interpretation, did not imply "servile and uncritical compliance with the decisions of higher authorities." He quotes from Paul Gerhard regarding warnings against starting war without due provocation, involving many innocent people in a private grievance, and recklessly heading down the path to unnecessary bloodshed.<sup>5</sup>

Because it came under suspicion due to its close ties with Germany the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod strongly supported the United States government in its action in World War I. During this war the Lutheran Church was identified by many in this country with the Prussian Church, and in some circles became known as the "Kaiser's Church".<sup>6</sup> There was a country-wide campaign against German Language Lutherans resulting in verbal and physical abuse, fines for speaking German, and an attempt to eliminate the German language.

It was because of such attacks as these that Dr. Theodore Graebner, professor for many years at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, attempted to set the record straight concerning the loyalty of Lutherans of German descent in America and the support of the American government in World War I. He strongly asserted that the Lutherans of America regarded the United States, and not Germany, as their "fatherland,"

and that the Lutheran Church was loyal and in turn demanded loyalty to America and its institutions:

Our country has no stauncher defenders than our Lutheran people....I can give you no better proof of this statement than the thousands of young men who have flocked to the colors at the call of our country, and are now serving under the Stars and Stripes in the Army and Navy. Far more have volunteered than have been summoned....These young men, the bower of our country and the flower of our Church, are today offering their lifeblood in defense of our country, and many, many, more hold themselves in readiness to go out at a moments call. 8

Not only did the Missouri Synod contribute to the war effort in terms of manpower, but also in terms of financial support.

And finally, as we have sent our sons, we have sent our dollars. And as we are ready to give more sons, so we are ready to give more dollars. With our boys in the trenches in defense of our institutions, we consider it our sacred duty to finance the war undertaking, and, as far as in us lies, to assist in carrying it to a successful termination. 9

Time and again Graebner sought to establish the fact that the Lutheran Church had an excellent record during the war, better than any other American Church, in terms of support, both in men and in money. 10

It seems that the support of the war effort was intense and widespread throughout the Missouri Synod. Evidence of this fact can be seen by a letter Graebner received from the Treasury Department and signed by Hans Reig, Chief of the Foreign Language Division:

It may be of interest to you to know that the number of replies, especially from Lutheran ministers, to our recent circular letter in behalf of War savings is most gratifying. Excuses for non-appointment of special committees within their congregations is most rare. Permit me to assure you that I most highly appreciate your

intense patriotic interest.<sup>11</sup>

Other Missouri Synod attitudes toward World War I seem to go beyond the limit of patriotic duty, and instead, give the impression that there is something divine and sacred about the American cause. W.H.T. Dau of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis spoke to a group of Lutheran soldiers at a dedication of a building for Lutheran boys at a camp in Funston, Kansas on March 17, 1918.

You have given yourselves—we have given you up—to our beloved country. This surrender, on your part as well as ours, is a holy act. We as well as you have regarded your call to colors as the summons of God. We are jointly rendering unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, because our Lord and Master Jesus Christ has pledged us to do so. Grim and terrible though the business be for which you are preparing, we consecrate even it to Heaven's exalted purpose. We enter upon it in the spirit of religious obedience for conscience' and for God's sake.<sup>12</sup>

Henry Frincke, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, Monroe, Michigan wrote the editorial committee of The Lutheran Witness proudly describing the patriotic activities of the congregation. Among the activities of the members were: The joining of the Red Cross, planting their vacant lots and backyards for food conservation, the buying of Liberty Bonds, the knitting of sweaters for soldiers, and the hanging of the flag. Pastor Frincke also pointed with pride that he was the only father in the town that had three sons in the service of the United States, and that all had joined voluntarily.<sup>13</sup>

In another tract entitled War And Christianity, Dr. Theodore Graebner held the position that the Christian should not be a pacifist. He wrote:

Christians are in sympathy with the Peace Societies, inasmuch, and in so far, as these seek to eliminate occasion for war. But they cannot agree with Pacifism, inasmuch as it asserts the sinfulness of war in itself.

Graebner cited the story of John the Baptist and the soldiers in Luke as proof that participation in war was not sinful according to the Scriptures. From Article XVI of the Augsburg Confession which states, "it is right for Christians to hold civil office, to sit as judges...to engage in just wars, to serve as soldiers,"<sup>14</sup> he came to the conclusion that Lutherans did not refuse service in time of war as "conscientious objectors." Graebner also urged service to the government based on Romans 13 and said the "the aggressor may have a good cause and the war he wages may be just" due to many reasons. Among the reasons he cited may be the threat to national security, broken treaties, bad politicians holding secret information, and economic conditions which force a nation in allegiance with a stronger power. In determining whether a war is just or unjust, Graebner advised that common sense should cause a person to give his own country the benefit of the doubt in such matters.<sup>15</sup>

Between World War I and World War II, Theodore Engelder wrote on obeying the call to arms:

We know that we must obey God rather than men, but that where God forbids a thing we must refuse obedience to a government which commands that thing, that, when a citizen can demonstrate beyond any doubt that, for instance, his government is engaged in an unjust war, he must refuse to follow the call to arms and take upon himself, for conscience sake, the evil consequences which will inevitably follow.<sup>16</sup>

In 1939, prior to the direct involvement of the United States in World War II, The Cresset, a publication of the International Walther League, contained several editorials regarding the threat of another global conflict. They concerned themselves, at this point and time in history, with the frightful prospect of what such a war would mean to civilization:

If another world war should come, will not every nation involved hold out to the bitter? Would the outcome not be the total exhaustion of both sides? Would the winners be much better off than the losers? <sup>17</sup>

The editors also put forth opinions before the war which were changed during and after the war due to the participants in the struggle. One such opinion dealt with Joseph Stalin and pro-Russian propaganda:

The attempt of Britain and France to stop Hitler and Mussolini with the aid of Soviet Russia is, in more than one respect, on a par with driving out a devil with the help of Beelzebub, the prince of devils. <sup>18</sup>

However, after the war in Europe had begun, the Nazi invasion of the low countries and the conquest of Denmark and Norway was written of as being "a moral wrong of the most infamous kind," and there appeared little or no anti-Russian propaganda. <sup>19</sup> Dr. Moellering states that there was no apparent concern about some of the countries under Russian "oppression" and that The Lutheran Witness hinted that Russia had "changed its colors."

What was once reprehensible about the Soviet system had in all likelihood been eliminated. The charges of atheism and ruthlessness once associated with the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 were dismissed as outmoded. <sup>20</sup>

Pastor Louis J. Roehm, writing in 1941, held to the position of government as ordained by God. He called Romans 13:1-7 the sedes doctrinae for the doctrine of civil government. When literally translated it means : "Let every soul (pas psyche) be subject to the superior powers." To Roehm there was no difference in the way a government came into power, even by bloody revolution, it still is ordained by God. <sup>21</sup> As such, the government is instituted to protect life and property and must enforce the duties assigned to it. The power which the government has is at its greatest in the sword, the ius gladii, the power over life and death. Roehm quoted Luther who said that "the sword in the hands of government is not a fox's tail." Rather, "he is a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." <sup>22</sup> In such a crisis, every citizen is to come to the aid and support of his government and when it is necessary for them to bear arms they should do so. "In the time of war, especially when the life of the nation hangs in the balance, those who refuse military service are regarded as enemies." <sup>23</sup> Pastor Roehm foresaw the difficulty which might arise and thus he concluded:

A Christian pastor should therefore counsel and exhort his parishoners to pray for their government and be alert citizens; through the orderly processes of democratic government to make their voices heard in opposition to all measures they consider as militating against security, order, and righteousness; in time of national stress to uphold the government loyally and to resist only when commanded to sin. <sup>24</sup>

Shortly after the shock of Pearl Harbor when America became totally involved in another world war, The Lutheran Church-

Missouri Synod seemed to take an even stronger position in support of the United States government and its actions against its enemies. The editors of The Lutheran Witness were firm in their opinion:

Loyalty demands more than following the call into military service and buying defense bonds. It means- and that is a fundamental law of all governments-that citizens do nothing by word or action to diminish the effectiveness of their country's war effort, but that they render that service which is demanded of every citizen. <sup>25</sup>

The editorial did not stop at a mere call to arms, but again, as in the past, duty was linked to faith.

This war is not only a calamity; it is an opportunity. It gives our people a chance to demonstrate that they have rightly understood the Fourth Commandment, which enjoins obedience to authority....We are not worthy of living in this great land that God has given us unless we show ourselves worthy citizens of it. <sup>26</sup>

There were those who did not absolve the United States entirely from blame. Dr. A.O. Geiseman said that no country in the entire world could call itself blameless in what was happening. <sup>27</sup> But that should not stop the U.S. from punishing those who committed the actions at Pearl Harbor.

Even as we in our country find ourselves compelled to stop the enemy in his tracks, no matter what may have caused his deeds of crime, just so must we now also bring the full force of our military might to bear, to the end that international crime may be stopped and criminals on the grand scale may be brought to justice. <sup>28</sup>

Although Geiseman believed the government to be the constituted authority instituted by God and equipped with the sword, he still maintained the distinction between the duties of the Church and government: "The Church approaches the problem of life and humanity armed only with the message of

peace." Its only function was that of bringing the good news of God's love in Christ to the entire world. <sup>29</sup>

Much of the support which the Missouri Synod gave to the war effort came from the feeling that God was on the side of America and her allies. On V-E Day Pastor F.C. Proehl preached a sermon which likened U.S. victory over the Axis powers to Jacob's deliverance over his brother Esau. "We have become strong in the business of war and carried the war to the very strongholds of the enemy. The Lord has blessed our efforts. He has given success to our arms...." Lutherans were thankful that American cities were spared and contributed this fortune to "the sake of the righteous." <sup>30</sup>

Many analogies were drawn between our government's fighting and characters in the Old Testament. August F. Bernthal saw the Christian's call to duty similar to Abraham's call from God to leave his homeland. <sup>31</sup>

Sermons were not the only places which developed the relationship between battle and the Almighty. Hymns also showed the prevalent idea that God was on the side of America. Walter E. Buszin composed a song in honor of the Armed Forces of the United States which showed a definite militant tone:

Fear not the foe, ye men of war  
 Strong in the power of Almighty God;  
 Courage maintain, on, and fight,  
 Our cause is just, our faith is strong.  
 Forward to battle, win this war,  
 God be your shield, He's e'er by your side.

Fear not the foe, ye sons of peace,  
 Think of the outcome, ponder the end;



Forward to vict'ry, let freedom ring,  
 Loud songs of triumph sing with glee.  
 O God in heaven, hear our prayer,  
 Help those who battle, grant them Thy care. 32

Some in the Missouri Synod did not refrain from preaching the sinfulness of America and using the example of war as a call to repentance. One such preacher was Dr. Walter A. Maier, International Lutheran Hour speaker. Time and again he reminded America of her sin and constantly pleaded for repentance. In his sermons he stressed the importance of a "spiritual defense" as being far better than "military defense." 33

During the Korean War The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod took basically the same outlook and attitude as it had done in the past. An editorial in The Lutheran Witness, which appeared during this conflict, stressed the same ideas which had always been stressed by the Missouri Synod:

We are not pacifists who believe that wars can be entirely eliminated from this sinful world. Christ Himself declares that there will be wars and rumors of wars until the time when He returns for judgment. Only in the world beyond will the hope for eternal peace be realized. 34

The war was again thought of as a punishment for the sins of the world which God uses to return man from his sinfulness. 35

As the ideological demarcation line became less clear, more people became dissatisfied with the Missouri Synod's position on war, especially in the whole area of conscientious objection. At Houston, Texas in June of 1953, at its national convention a resolution was passed "to direct a theo-

logian of our Church to prepare a clear and concise statement on 'A Christian's Attitude Toward War'." <sup>36</sup> This statement was published in the Concordia Theological Monthly, the official theological journal of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and also in The Lutheran Witness. Dr. Lewis Spitz of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, presented the following points:

1. A Christian believes that his government has been instituted by God. In recognition of this fact he respects and honors it as God's servant, obeys its laws, pays his taxes, and prays for all that are in authority.
2. As God's servant a nation's government is obliged to protect its citizens in their natural and acquired rights, not only against domestic criminals, but also against foreign foes.
3. To enable it to carry out these obligations, the government is invested with police power. The exercise of this power implies authority to organize and control armed agents of the peace. The duty to protect citizens against the assaults of foreign foes involves the specific power to create and maintain weapons of war and to enlist the armed forces necessary to wage war.
4. God does not condemn the profession of a soldier, but concedes to the government the power of the sword. At the same time, however, He blesses the peacemakers. Accordingly a Christian prays for his government, personally works to maintain peace, and opposes the demonic forces which cause wars.
5. Although a Christian recognizes the right of the government to call him to arms in a just war, he does not concede that right to the government in an unjust war. In view of the complex nature of modern international affairs, it is extremely difficult for a citizen who is not acquainted with all the factors which may lead his country into war to determine whether or not a specific war is a just war. This difficulty also holds true for members of the church who are not acquainted with the international problems of their government. Therefore

the question whether in a specific case the government is waging a just or an unjust war is usually not for the church to determine, but must be referred to the judgment of the individual.

6. A Christian who believes that God has given the government the power of the sword is not a pacifist; but if anyone is convinced in his own mind either that the use of military force for any purpose whatever is wrong or that a specific war is not a just war, he must refuse to bear arms, for he must not violate the dictates of his conscience. If he is not certain, he should give his government the benefit of the doubt, since God, who has instituted the government, will hold it responsible for its acts.
7. A Lutheran Christian's attitude toward his government, also with respect to war, is aptly stated in Article XVI of the Augsburg Confession, which says: 'Of Civil Affairs they (the Lutherans) teach that lawful civil ordinances are good works of God, and that it is right for Christians to bear civil office, to sit as judges, to judge matters by the Imperial and other existing laws, to award just punishments, to engage in just wars, to serve as soldiers.'
8. In conclusion, inasmuch as the question of war has disturbed the conscience of some of the members of the church in the past and in view of the character of modern warfare may do so again to an even larger extent, our church should concern itself with the wider aspects of the problems involved and encourage its members, both individually and collectively, to study them. Above all, may our church continue to pray God to preserve us from war and bloodshed. 37

At a later convention of the Missouri Synod held in New York in 1967 an overture was submitted which urged the Synod to seek a halt in American bombing of North Vietnam. Dr. Oliver Harms, President of the Synod at that time, said:

We believe President Johnson will do the honorable thing under God. As dutiful citizens we hold that our officials in government know more about what to do than we do. We place our trust in our elected officials. 38

At the same convention, a resolution was passed which dis-

couraged selective conscientious objection on the grounds that it "tends to promote chaos and anarchy in time of national emergency," The resolution went further in pledging loyalty and obedience to the government in matters pertaining to military service.<sup>39</sup>

There have been, and still are, voices in the Missouri Synod who disagree with its position regarding war and the participation in supporting a war. One of these men, perhaps the best known, is Dr. Ralph Moellering, mentioned earlier, who is pastor for special ministries on the University of California's Berkeley campus, and author of several books on the subject of war and Christianity. He finds contradiction in the Missouri Synod's position in the wars of this century. Prior to April of 1917 Missouri Synod theologians remained neutral, yet seemed to favor the German cause. Suddenly Lutherans were supporting England and France in a move which proved their loyalty by submitting to the government. The killing of millions in prolonged battles does not seem to Moellering to come under the label of "just wars". Neither do the obliteration bombings in World War II of Germany "after it was defeated" come under that label. Worst of all, Dr. Moellering says, is America's involvement in Vietnam which, in his opinion, "violates every principle of the just war concept."<sup>40</sup> Moellering believes that the Lutheran Church has placed too much emphasis on Romans 13 and I Peter 2.

Subordination to government was stressed to such a degree in German Lutheranism that uncritical submission to Hitler was assumed to be a Christian obligation. Most of the faculty at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis vigorously opposed our entrance into World War I (some emphatically pronounced the German cause righteous). Yet, as soon as Congress passed an official declaration of war all moral misgivings were abruptly brushed aside and unwavering loyalty was proclaimed on the basis of Romans 13. The implication was that individual conscience can transfer responsibility to the government for the morality or immorality of all military decisions. Again, in the controversy over Vietnam many Lutherans take refuge in an unquestioning allegiance to government, utterly heedless of the criteria for evaluating the justice or injustice of the war. 41

As the number of young men seeking conscientious objector status became increasing larger, alternatives to actual service were drawn up and distributed in Lutheran circles.

The Walther League issued a pamphlet entitled "Christian Conscience And Military Service-A Guide to Decision-Making From A Lutheran Perspective." The following are some of the points of the pamphlet:

Both those Christians who decide to participate in military service and those who decide that they cannot have Biblical support for their positions. Both can also find support in the historic teachings and examples of the church. And both are entitled to the support and ministry of their families, pastors, congregations and church bodies.

Since neither the Scriptures nor the tradition of the Christian church offers a clearly defined rule which can be universally applied, perhaps it would be helpful to see how two sincere Christians might decide on opposite positions with regard to the same issue.

A. The man who conscientiously decides that he must serve in the armed forces may do so for some or all of the following reasons:

1. He may feel that the government has the right to inflict the death penalty and to wage just wars on the basis of St. Paul's statement that

"He (the government) does not bear the sword in vain; he is the servant of God to execute his wrath on the wrong-doer." In being subject to his government and in carrying out its orders he may feel that he is not only relieved of the personal moral guilt of taking human life but that he is also carrying out the will of God.

2. He may feel that war and the taking of human life is evil but that it may be preferable to the consequences which result from the failure to restrain aggression. In other words, he would be choosing between the lesser of two evils.
  3. He may feel that as the citizen of a nation which provides for many of his needs he is morally obligated, out of loyalty to that nation, to fight in its defense.
  4. He may feel that there is precedence for his choice in such Biblical heroes as David and Samson, and in the tradition of the church in such men as King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, "The Lion of the North."
- B. The man who conscientiously refuses to bear arms, as well as the man who sincerely refuses to participate in war in any way, may do so for some or all of the following reasons:
1. He may feel that the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," is an absolute expression of the will of God. He would feel that it is wrong to take the life of another human being under any circumstances. He would feel, with the Apostle Peter, that "We ought to obey God rather than men." He would, therefore, not feel that obedience to the government would relieve him of his personal moral responsibility to God.
  2. He may believe that violence only causes more violence and that war actually undermines peace rather than protects it. He would take at face value the words of Jesus, "You have heard it said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." Nonviolence would be the only road open to him.

3. He may believe that the possibility of total annihilation of the human race through nuclear destruction would make war today insane. He may believe that the triumph of totalitarianism, from which there might be hope of recovery, would be preferable to nuclear war.
4. He may consider the example of pacifism in the first three centuries of the Christian Church as a strong argument that this is the correct interpretation of the teaching of Jesus.<sup>42</sup>

In the 1969 convention held at Denver, Colorado, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod resolved to encourage its members toward a renewed loyalty and obedience to government, also in the matter of military service. It reaffirmed its "historic theological position" whereby it recognized that individuals may object to an unjust war and that such a decision is to be respected. It was also resolved that the Synod petition the government to grant equal status to a person who objects to a specific war as it does to those who object to all wars.<sup>43</sup>

As a conclusion to our description of the position of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod regarding war, and in order to update its attitudes, we turn to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations. In its pamphlet "Guidelines for Crucial Issues in Christian Citizenship," the Commission deals with a number of issues involving the Christian in his relationship to government, civil order, violence and war, and conscience. It also reiterates the traditional criteria for judging whether a war is just.

- A. Is war being fought under legitimate authority?

- B.. Is it being conducted within the framework of international agreements?
- C. Is it being waged in the interest of vindicating some obvious right that has suffered outrage?
- D. Have all peaceful means of achieving a settlement been exhausted?
- E. Is the destruction incurred excessive in terms of the goals to be achieved?
- F. Is it being waged with good intentions, or has it been undertaken for purposes of aggression?
- G. Will the results achieved by engaging in hostilities provide greater opportunity for justice and freedom to prevail than if such a war had not been entered into? 44

Finally, on February 1, 1971, Dr. J.A.O. Preus, president of the Missouri Synod pledged a five-point program seeking to aid American prisoners of war and those missing in action. On February 1, at a news conference, Dr. Preus said his plan would:

Declare a Day of Prayer in the congregations of the Missouri Synod on March 14 for American servicemen who are prisoners of war (POWs) or missing in action (MIAs).

Direct a 'sustaining program of education and prayer' in all congregations of the Synod for a one-year period on behalf of POWs and MIAs.

Invite heads of all major Christian denominations to undertake a similar program in their congregations and urge radio and TV programs to include special prayers for POWs and MIAs.

Urge world Lutheran leaders to bear on the communists of Indo China to follow the humanitarian treatment of prisoners of war as called for by the 1949 Geneva Convention.

Organize a group of churchmen who would ask the president of North Vietnam and other communist leaders for permission to inspect POW camps 'in order to give an unbiased account to the American people and the people of the world of the conditions that existed in these camps.' 45



In summary, it should be stated that this chapter does not attempt to deal with all the areas The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod is involved in regarding the government and military service. These areas include: the military chaplaincy, The Armed Services Commission, service centers for the military men, spiritual aids published for men away from home in the military, and so forth. In summarizing the position of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in regard to war and military service, it can be said that it has always maintained a position of loyalty to the government, recognizing that the government was ordained by God. It has also taken steps to clarify precisely what the term "just war" means in order to help its members decide on the crucial issues facing them in this matter. In an attempt to show that it recognizes the fact that some people may have objections, due to conscience, against specific wars, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod maintains the right of such individuals, and holds that their objections be respected equally with those who choose to bear arms for their country.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA AND WAR

Somewhat contrary to the position of The Lutheran Church Missouri-Synod, which maintained the importance of loyalty to the government and the justifiability of World War II, The Lutheran Church In America allowed for a greater latitude of opinion in its official publications.<sup>1</sup> The views of pacifists were voiced and conscientious objectors were given tolerance and understanding.

One of those giving support to pacifism during World War II was Herbert T. Weiskotten. In a two-part series appearing in The Lutheran he stated that the time had come when the Christian pacifist believed man must find an alternative to war to help him solve his problems. That alternative can be found in the message of Christ. Weiskotten read the Golden Rule as a positive, not negative, approach and this calls for an aggressive good will on the part of the Christian who overcomes evil with good.<sup>2</sup> He next referred to the broader expectations of a higher authority in the Scriptures, namely, love and mercy.

The Christian conscience will some day cease to argue that war is justifiable because Paul advised the Christians of his day to obey the powers that be. For we shall find a higher authority in the Gospels and feel ourselves compelled to push the horizon of our Christianity beyond the limits of Paul's vision on the question also.<sup>3</sup>

Taking the anti-pacifism position was T.A. Kantonen in the same series of articles. After surveying and discussing

the arguments and attitudes of pacifists and non-pacifists, Kantonen comes to the conclusion which is expressed by a resolution adopted by The Lutheran Church In America at an Omaha convention: "We hold that a justifiable war not only may be possible, but that the Christian is in duty bound to bear arms and to offer his life if need be in defense of his country." He goes on to say that he believes this position in is accord with Scripture, the witness of the Church, and a high morality.<sup>4</sup>

There were men in The Lutheran Church In America, like the Missouri Synod, who did not agree with placing the blame for the Second World War entirely on one side. Dr. C. Franklin Koch wrote:

As Christian people we recognize the truth today that Germany alone is not guilty; that even Hitler alone is not guilty. Hitler and all he stands for were made possible by the injustices of the Versaille Treaty and the stupidity of the Allies in not righting some of the wrongs under which Germany was smarting. . . . Yes, we citizens of the United States of America are not without our share of the guilt in this world catastrophe.<sup>5</sup>

While the war in Europe was raging, Dr. Traver insisted that it was up to the church to speak out for peace. The church must be against war because the end never justifies the means, and no Christian could follow the principle that "of two evils choose the lesser."<sup>6</sup> At the same time, Douglas Conrad, a Canadian pastor from Novia Scotia, felt that:

September 10 will be an outstanding date in the history of the Canadian nation because it was on that day that

a formal declaration of war was made by the elected representatives of the Canadian people against the German Reich.

He considered the war to be a just war, even the most just, the history of England. He urged that there would be prayers for victory on the side of the righteous.<sup>7</sup>

Others foresaw far greater dangers coming about as a result of the war. Luther A. Krouse was one who foresaw the possibility of military victory with spiritual defeat:

In our zeal and enthusiasm to win the war--and certainly we do want to win the war...but in our enthusiasm and zeal there is the danger of an all-out blackout. A high official in Washington said (These may not be his exact words, but they convey his thought) 'The only thing that counts is that we win the war!' That's a dangerous bit of philosophy. Certainly, I say, we want to win the war, but what shall it profit America if she win the war but lose her soul?...If winning the war means that there must be a blackout of God and a blackout of the Lord's Day and a blackout of the Church and a blackout of the Bible, then it were better that we should lose the war.<sup>8</sup>

The Board of Social Missions took action and issued a statement in January of 1940 which urged a recourse from war.

The statement read:

Whereas it is constantly being said, whether rightly or wrongly, that a true unprejudiced study of the teachings of Jesus disclose the fact that war is "per se" evil;

Therefore we recommend that the United Lutheran Church In America, through its proper authorities restudy and reinterpret the declaration referring to war in its confessions.

We believe that it is the bounden duty of the Christian Church to stand resolutely in teaching, in speech, and in political action against recourse to war.

We believe that the Christian Church must admit the inviolability of the individual conscience in its attitude

toward war.<sup>9</sup>

Also looking at the problems of the conscientious objector was the executive board of The Lutheran Church In America. By request of President Knubel, a statement was prepared and submitted by Dr. Paul H. Krause. The statement held that the Christian must obey and support lawful government, which is clearly taught in the Scriptures. It also realized the possibility of a justifiable war and in such a case the Christian citizen is duty bound to bear arms and "offer his life in defense of his country." However, the final authority in determining action is the conscience of the individual. This did not necessarily mean that the Church approved the position of the objector, but it did approve "the scripture principle of the supreme moral responsibility of the individual conscience." Finally, it felt that the Church must defend the principle and the person who exercises that responsibility.<sup>10</sup>

The attitudes of Martin Luther toward war were re-examined by Pastor C.G. Georgi of St. Louis who concluded that Luther could not support the concept of modern war. Georgi felt that no Christian could fight in a war based on three facts:

1. It is against the command of Christ.
2. It hurts the Church.
3. Civilization is nowhere Christian. If it were, it would not want to be helped by war.<sup>11</sup>

After America's involvement in World War II became

greater there seemed to be a better co-operation by Lutherans with the war effort. Most of the writings and speeches asked the people to search for peace. The military chaplaincy was increased and was called a necessity. In addition, service centers were established and supported around the world for the men in the military. <sup>12</sup>

On July 10, 1942, a National Lutheran Council bulletin attempted to define more clearly the relationship between the Church and a world at war:

1. We call all people to repentance and a rededication of their lives to the will of God.
2. We call upon our people in particular, and all Christian people in general, to dedicate themselves wholly, with every resource of heart and mind and conscience, to the defeat and destruction of this evil. We call upon our own people to give our coun- the fullest measure of devotion and support, as the duty and privilege of Christian citizens.
3. We summon our people to an earnest, searching study of the ways and means to an enduring world peace.
4. If enduring peace is to come to mankind it can come only to and through men who are wholly dedicated, through faith in Christ, and by the power of His Holy Spirit, to righteousness and good will.
5. (Warns Christians against the passions of hate and revenge.)
6. (Calls for a generous support of relief programs.)
7. (Advises that we seize the opportunity presented for world missions.)
8. The paramount service the Church has to render to a world at war is to proclaim the redemptive love of God, and to make men, indeed, the sons of God by the power of His Holy Spirit. <sup>13</sup>

To bring the position of The Lutheran Church in America up to date, we turn toward the present day conflict in Viet-

Nam, and the difficulty this war poses for the people of today, especially in the area of conscientious objection. In the February 14, 1968 issue of The Lutheran the readers were asked to submit their opinions on the fighting in Vietnam. The results were published in the March 27, 1968 issue of The Lutheran. Seventy per cent of the readers who responded to the poll disapproved of the way the war was being handled by President Johnson. Of the 7,171 readers who responded, 5,065 said they were dissatisfied with the war effort. This percentage is considerably higher than the number (54%) uncovered by the Gallup Poll surveying all Americans. In addition, 31% wanted to see a halt in the bombing of North Vietnam, while 62% wanted the bombing continued, and 7% voiced no opinion. 58% felt that the U.S. should go all out, short of nuclear war, to win, while 37% disapproved with this strategy, and 5% had no opinion. In the area of conscience 56% said the Church should not defend conscientious protest, while 38% felt the Church should defend conscientious protest and 6% had no opinion. It is interesting to note that the numbers are almost exactly reversed on the question of whether the churches should provide information and assistance to those who refuse induction on the grounds of religious conviction. On this matter 57% approved, 36% disapproved, and 7% had no opinion. <sup>14</sup>

They did take a more definite step when the delegates to their convention held in Atlanta, Georgia in June of 1968

put that denomination on record as the first among Lutheran denominations to recognize selective objection to a "particular" war deemed by "conscience" to be unjust.<sup>15</sup> The statement of this convention begins by recognizing that war and service in the military has always been a source of conflict among people. Some bear arms to restrain evil and maintain good order. Others refuse military service because they cannot reconcile the things associated with war to the principles of Christianity which culminate in love and justice. There is a third group who either serve or do not serve without solving the ethical problems facing them. A man is to determine whether or not he participates in the military after working through the competing claims from both sides. As a result of this, he can be considered a true conscientious objector without being opposed to all forms of conflict. Consistent with the above idea, the responsible choice of the individual is to be upheld. Both the profession of the soldier and the position of the conscientious objector is to be respected and given the freedom that comes from civil order. Governments recognize that there will be conscientious objectors and for this reason have allowed for alternative service to take the place of military duty. These objectors make a more valuable contribution to their country in such alternative service than they could if they were put into jail. In addition to such service, the moral attitude of the objector can have a beneficial influence upon the whole



country. However, exemption from military duty is to be considered a privilege, not a right. It is up to the government to determine when and where an exemption is to be granted. The Lutheran Church In America recognized its responsibility to assist its members in working through this area dealing with conscience. It called upon its pastors and agencies to develop people who can respond in mature and responsible action. It also pledged to stand by and assist those of its members who conscientiously object to military duty, as well as those who, for conscience sake, choose to serve. To this end, pastors of the church are directed to minister to all in their care who are conscientious objectors.<sup>16</sup>

The Lutheran Church In America, like the Missouri Synod, held that there can be a "just war", and that the Christian, as a citizen, should bear arms in defense of his country. However, it firmly held that war is evil and should be avoided, and peace should be the ideal sought. In dealing with the problems of conscientious objection, The Lutheran Church In America placed the final authority in determining a person's action on the conscience of the individual. It also believed that the Church must defend this principle of conscience and that the person who exercises such a right should be respected and ministered to.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH AND WAR

During World War I and World II there was general and widespread support in The American Lutheran Church of our country's efforts. However, from time to time there were dissenting voices in the matter. On the whole, the tone seems to be that of recognizing the spiritual dangers of war and the unsavory things war causes. There was always the call for spiritual aid to the servicemen, which led to the establishment of Lutheran Service Centers in the military. Spiritual need in the dark hours of wartime is a constant theme expressed in The Lutheran Standard, the official publication of The American Lutheran Church.

Early in the war Pastor R.F. Kibler, President of the California District of The American Lutheran Church, mailed a presidential bulletin to the district pastors after California had experienced air raid alarms and blackouts. The dangers of bombing and invasion did not seem unlikely and Kibler exhorted the people to "carry on for Christ." From a condensed form of his statement we can see the emphasis on things spiritual in wartime.

1. The Church must remain an open channel for the grace of God to the people of this earth. If a substitution of war hysteria and hate be made for the voice of God, we shall enter a world blackout deep and dismal as the abyss of hell.
2. Keep your mental and spiritual balance! Serious danger may come near your door. Be unafraid. As God's children we can never lose.

3. Spiritual aid is the need of the hour. We face death hourly and we need to be instructed and prepared. Satan will attempt, in this emergency, to wipe out the Church with bombs, indifference, and discouragement. He shall not have the victory.
4. In all civic matters follow the instructions of our government. We are citizens of two kingdoms. Render to Caesar the things which belong to him, and to God the things He has required in His Word.

An editorial in the September, 1943 issue of The Lutheran Outlook also warns against the dangers associated with war. War sears the souls of men, it stated, and blunts human sensibility. The conscience remains silent and cruelty, hatred, revenge, and fear invade men's souls. It was of the opinion that people are no longer shocked by cities which are destroyed and thousands of people killed, as long as they are the enemy. It felt that there was a feeling of satisfaction when the news tells of thousands of soldiers killed, when those killed are Japanese, German, and Italian.<sup>2</sup>

During the Korean War there were some militant voices heard. Another editorial in The Lutheran Outlook stated that the only encouraging thing about the world situation was the fact that the United States action in Korea had the endorsement of the United Nations. It went on to call for a showdown and said that the United Nations would either demonstrate itself as a power on the side of law and order, or that it would fail miserably as the League of Nations did when it failed to take action against Mussolini in Ethiopia. The editorial concluded that "this war must be won in the name

of the United Nations and humanity. Pray that the Lord of the Nations will step in on the side of human freedom and peace." <sup>3</sup>

There were, as mentioned, dissenting views. One writer, David Owens, said that the church must condemn war if it is not to become captive of the state. The church, he says, has done so in recent years, but usually in such terms and tones that the average Christian goes right on believing that war, if not good, is at least excusable. <sup>4</sup> Dr. O. Frederick Nolde, Dean of the graduate school of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, felt that while some believed force should never be used, the majority accepts, though reluctantly, the necessity of military strength to serve as a deterrent to aggression. He urged the determination of some affirmative steps which decrease the need for military measures. He held that there are no "holy wars" and all the right is not on one side of any conflict. No situation may be described as completely "black and white." A consistent note of Dr. Nolde's was the urging of calmness in facing the Korean situation and he strongly condemned as morally wrong the dropping of the Atomic bomb. <sup>5</sup>

Gerhard Lenski placed the blame for the world situation squarely on the shoulders of Christianity because it didn't assert itself as it should.

Christians are not militarists. They are not versed in strategy, diplomacy, and the building of alliances. At the same time they are not to sit down like dumb dogs, failing to speak and act while their world is

being torn to pieces by war. . . . Very correctly can it be said that our world is bad off because Christianity has been passive while Communism hasn't.<sup>6</sup>

Recently, The American Lutheran Church has made some definite statements about war and also about conscience in relationship to war, especially Vietnam. At the General Convention of The American Lutheran Church in October, 1966, the Commission on Research on Social Action presented a statement on "War, Peace, and Freedom." The statement was adopted as an expression of the American Lutheran Church. The following are some of its points:

War is an evil scourge. It is a result of sin and is not required by God's purposes. War cannot be called good, righteous, or holy. Under some circumstances the only alternatives may be either the peace of surrender to tyranny and totalitarianism or the security and freedom bought by risking and engaging in war.

The committee recognized that a changing world causes different conditions, and the statement admits to the difficulties in deciding whether or not a war is "just," as that concept is expressed in the Augsburg Confession. Nuclear weapons, however, do not change the basis for determining one's position regarding war. The Christian should "obey the demands of his government unless he feels conscience-bound to resist," but it allowed for conscientious objection. The statement also placed responsibility on persons both in the armed forces and those who object to the government's policy.<sup>7</sup>

In matters pertaining to Vietnam the 1966 convention said it was "uneasy and troubled" over Vietnam, but nevertheless endorsed and supported "the stated aims of our nation's

government in assisting Vietnam."<sup>8</sup> However, a supplementary motion seeking approval of selective conscientious objection, which deals with a person on the basis of his objection on moral grounds to a specific war, rather than all wars, was rejected at the 1966 convention after debate. This resolution was also deferred at the 1968 convention in Omaha on the grounds of being too liberal a resolution.<sup>9</sup>

Dr. Fredrick A. Schiotz, president of this Church went beyond this denomination's official position in an address before a chapel audience at St. Olaf college in 1968: "Today I would have to say to you personally, not officially, that a youth who feels conscience bound not to fight in Vietnam receives my spiritual support." In this same address Dr. Schiotz also called for no further escalation of the war and a termination of the bombing of North Vietnam.<sup>10</sup>

At a district convention of the Western North Dakota held in Minot, North Dakota, March 25-27, 1969, a resolution was easily passed supporting selective conscientious objection. The district, by its actions, became the first to endorse selective conscientious objection since the referral in Omaha.<sup>11</sup> Following this example, the Michigan District Convention held May 11-14, 1969 at Kalamazoo, Michigan stayed in late session until 11 p.m. to pass by a vote of 177 to 76 approval of selective conscientious objection.<sup>12</sup> The South Dakota District held its convention June 2-4, 1969 in Sioux Falls and also affirmed, after lengthy debate, its

support for selective conscientious objection and went on to urge alternative government service for such objectors.<sup>13</sup> The action of these conventions paved the way for other conventions to follow suit in their determination of the policy and position of The American Lutheran Church pertaining to war.

Recently, The American Lutheran Church, along with The Lutheran Church In America and the Missouri Synod, designated a Sunday to be determined later as a special Day of Prayer for American prisoners of war and those missing in action.<sup>14</sup>

In summary, The American Lutheran Church looked upon wartime as a period of spiritual darkness. It called for a renewed spiritual awakening on the part of the people. The people were exhorted to remain alert to the dangers affecting their souls which could lead to disaster spiritually. There was a general support of the war effort although war was recognized again as a result of sin. The individual was called upon to obey the government unless his conscience told him to resist. If the person is a conscientious objector he too has a responsibility, and must suffer the consequence of his action.

## CONCLUSION

While recognizing the fact that this paper does not deal with all the material available pertaining to the subject matter discussed, several points can be summed up in conclusion.

The three Lutheran denominations, The Missouri Synod, The Lutheran Church In America, and The American Lutheran Church, discussed in this paper all subscribe to the position that war is a result of man's fallen nature, in conflict with God's created order. While admitting that war may be unavoidable, especially a just war, the ideal to be sought is a peaceful existence.

The three denominations hold to the fact that God has ordained government as a means of maintaining peace and order. As a result, man is to subordinate himself under the government and obey its dictates. However, the final authority in determining a person's participation in any military conflict is the individual's own conscience to which he alone is responsible. Every person has the responsibility to decide on the question of war in general situations and in specific actions. Each person is also held accountable and must suffer and face the consequences of his decision. Above all else, what he chooses to do is to be carried out in accord with the principles of God's will, and on account of his faith in Christ.



## FOOTNOTES

### CHAPTER II

<sup>1</sup>Ralph L. Moellering, Modern War And The American Churches (New York, N.Y.: The American Press, 1956), pp. 13-14.

<sup>2</sup>Joshua 8:26 (All quotations from the Bible are taken from the Revised Standard Version, New York: Collins Press, 1952).

<sup>3</sup>Deut. 9:5

<sup>4</sup>Num. 31:1

<sup>5</sup>Judg. 8:5

<sup>6</sup>Judg. 12:4

<sup>7</sup>I Sam. 14:36; I Sam. 27:9ff

<sup>8</sup>Moellering, War And Churches, p. 118.

<sup>9</sup>Ex. 15:1ff

<sup>10</sup>II Sam. 22:47-49a

<sup>11</sup>Ps. 59:1-2

<sup>12</sup>Ps. 68:30

<sup>13</sup>Ps. 120:7

<sup>14</sup>Is. 2:4

<sup>15</sup>James 4:2

### CHAPTER III

<sup>1</sup>Luke 1:79

<sup>2</sup>Luke 2:14

<sup>3</sup>Matt. 5:9

<sup>4</sup>Matt. 26:52

<sup>5</sup>John 14:27

- <sup>6</sup>John 16:33
- <sup>7</sup>Rom. 15:33; 16:20; II Cor. 13:11; Philemon 4:9; I Thess. 5:23; Heb. 13:20
- <sup>8</sup>I Cor. 7:15
- <sup>9</sup>Eph. 4:3
- <sup>10</sup>I Thess. 5:13
- <sup>11</sup>Rom. 12:18
- <sup>12</sup>James 3:14-18
- <sup>13</sup>Matt. 24:6; Mark 13:7; Luke 21:9
- <sup>14</sup>George Koehler, "Statements of Jesus on War", The Lutheran Outlook, XVI (April 1951), 109.
- <sup>15</sup>Matt. 22:21
- <sup>16</sup>Moellering, War And Churches, pp. 28-29.

## CHAPTER IV

- <sup>1</sup>Martin, Luthern. "Treatise on Good Works," Works of Martin Luther (A.J. Holman Co., Philadelphia, 1915) Vol. I, 265.
- <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.265
- <sup>3</sup>Martin, Luthern. "A Sermon on Keeping Children in School," Works of Martin Luther (A.J. Holman Co., Philadelphia, 1915) Vol. IV, 167.
- <sup>4</sup>Umpfrey Lee, The Historic Church and Modern Pacifism (New York: The Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1953), pp. 131-132.
- <sup>5</sup>Martin Luther, "Secular Authority: To What Extent It May be Obeyed," (A.J. Holman Co., Philadelphia, 1915) Vol. III, 270.
- <sup>6</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup>H.H. Kramm, The Theology of Martin Luther (London: James Clarke & Co., L.T.D., 1947), p. 65.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Paul Ramsey, War And The Christian Conscience (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1961), p. 120.

<sup>11</sup>Bainton, Christian Attitudes, p. 140.

#### CHAPTER V

<sup>1</sup>A.L. Graebner, "Anthropology," Theological Quarterly, III (1899), 431-432.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 432.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 433.

<sup>5</sup>Ralph L. Moellering, Modern War And The Christian (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1969), p. 47.

<sup>6</sup>"A Synodical Council of War," The Lutheran Witness, XXXVII (July 9, 1918), 218-219.

<sup>7</sup>"A Grave Situation-Act," The Lutheran Witness, XXXVII (April 16, 1918), 130.

<sup>8</sup>Theodore Graebner, Testimony And Proof-Relation Of The American Lutheran Church To The German Emperor (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1918), p. 9.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 14-15.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>13</sup>Henry Frincke, "Patriotic Activities of Our Church," The Lutheran Witness, XXXVII (January 8, 1918), 3.

<sup>14</sup>Theodore S. Tappert, editor. The Book Of Concord (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), p. 37.

<sup>15</sup>Theodore Graebner, War And Christianity (Tract No. 20, New York: American Lutheran Publicity Bureau), Available at Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri. n.d.

<sup>16</sup>Theodore Engelder, "My Country Right Or Wrong," The Lutheran Witness, XLIX (September 30, 1930), 325.

- 17 "What Another World War Would Mean," The Cresset, II (June, 1939), 7.
- 18 "The Russian Terror," Ibid., p.11
- 19 "Moral Wrong," The Cresset, III (June, 1940), 2.
- 20 Moellering, War And Churches, pp. 39-40.
- 21 L. J. Roehm, The Christian's Attitude Towards His Government And On War (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941), pp. 1-2. Reprint from Concordia Theological Monthly, May, 1941.
- 22 Ibid., p. 5.
- 23 Ibid., p. 9.
- 24 Ibid., p. 23.
- 25 "War- A Duty And An Opportunity," The Lutheran Witness, LX (December 23, 1941), 437.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 O.A. Geiseman, "We Are At War," The Cresset, V (January, 1942), 16.
- 28 Ibid., p. 17.
- 29 Ibid., p. 18.
- 30 Moellering, War And Churches, p.37.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Ibid., p. 38.
- 33 Ibid., p. 41.
- 34 "The Brutalizing Effect of War," The Lutheran Witness, XLIX (October 3, 1950), 313.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the Forty-Second Regular Convention, June 17-26, 1953. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), p. 743.
- 37 Lewis Spitz, "A Christian's Attitude Toward War," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXVI (January, 1955), 127-128.

<sup>38</sup>Ralph L. Moellering, "The Lutheran Church And Selective Conscientious Objection To War," Essay presented to the floor committee at the Forty-Eighth Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, June 11-18, 1969, at Denver, Colorado, p.5. Unpublished material. (mimeographed)

<sup>39</sup>Ross Jensen, "War And Conscience," The Lutheran Witness, 87 (November, 1968), 287.

<sup>40</sup>Ralph L. Moellering, "Especially For Lutheran," p.2. Unpublished material. (mimeographed)

<sup>41</sup>Moellering, "Lutheran Church And Selective Objection," pp. 3-4

<sup>42</sup>"Christian Conscience And Military Service," Published by the Walther League, 875 N. Dearborn, Chicago, Illinois, 60610.

<sup>43</sup>The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the Forty Eighth Regular Convention, July 11-18, 1969. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1969), p. 94.

<sup>44</sup>The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, "Guidelines for Crucial Issues in Christian Citizenship," n.p., April 4, 1968, p. 8.

<sup>45</sup>"Dr. Preus Initiates Plan For Benefit of POWs," Lutheran Witness Reporter, 7 (February 7, 1971), 3.

#### CHAPTER VI

<sup>1</sup>Moellering, War And Churches, p.6.

<sup>2</sup>Herbert T. Weiskotten, "The Status of War In Christian Morality," The Lutheran, XXIV (November 19, 1941), 11.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., (December 17, 1941), p. 11.

<sup>4</sup>T.A..Kantonen, "The Status of War in Christian Morality," The Lutheran, XXIV (December 17, 1941), 11.

<sup>5</sup>C. Franklin Koch, "A Pastor Faces War," The Lutheran, XXII (October 4, 1939), 9.

<sup>6</sup>Moellering, War And Churches, pp. 46-47.

<sup>7</sup>Douglas Conrad, "Canada At War," The Lutheran, XXII (November 8, 1939), 7.

<sup>8</sup>Luther A. Krouse, "The Great Menace," The Lutheran XXIV (March 18, 1942), 8.

<sup>9</sup>"War Problems," The Lutheran, XXII (January 17, 1940), 25.

<sup>10</sup>"Conscientious Objector," The Lutheran, XXII (January 24, 1940), 6.

<sup>11</sup>C.G. Georgi, "What Did Luther Think?" The Lutheran, XXIII (October 9, 1940), 28.

<sup>12</sup>Moellering, War And Churches, p. 49.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 49-50.

<sup>14</sup>"The Vietnam Poll," The Lutheran, VI (March 27, 1968), 18-19.

<sup>15</sup>"Recalling The Fry Tradition," Christianity Today,

<sup>16</sup>The Lutheran Church In America, Fourth Biennial Convention, June 19-27, 1968. Board of Social Ministry.

## CHAPTER VII

<sup>1</sup>"The Need of The Hour," The Lutheran Standard, 6 (January 3, 1942), 9.

<sup>2</sup>"Ministry of Church In Warring World," The Lutheran Outlook, VIII (September, 1943), 196.

<sup>3</sup>"Hot War," The Lutheran Outlook, XV (August, 1950), 228.

<sup>4</sup>David H. Owens, "The Church And War," The Lutheran Outlook, XVI (April, 1951), 103.

<sup>5</sup>O. Frederich Nolde, "What Hope For Peace," The Lutheran Standard, CIX (January 20, 1951), 6-7.

<sup>6</sup>Gerhard E. Lenski, "What Shall We Do About Korea?" The Lutheran Standard, CIX (December 22, 1951), 10.

<sup>7</sup>"War, Peace, And Freedom," The Lutheran Standard, VI (November 15, 1966), 23.

<sup>8</sup>"Vietnam Involvement," Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>9</sup>"Plot Thickens In Lutheran Love-In," Christianity Today, XII (November 18, 1968), 46.

<sup>10</sup>"Spiritual Support," The Lutheran Standard, VIII (April 16, 1968), 46.

<sup>11</sup>"The Border of Our Lives," The Lutheran Standard, IX (April 15, 1969), 28.

<sup>12</sup>"Advice To Legislators," The Lutheran Standard, IX (June 20, 1969), 28.

<sup>13</sup>"Double The Money," The Lutheran Standard, IX (June 24, 1969), 24.

<sup>14</sup>"Lutheran Council Urges Day of Prayer, Reelects Officers," Lutheran Witness Reporter, VII (February 21, 1971), 2.

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