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J. T. Mueller

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Theological Observer — Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches

I. Amerika

U. L. C. and the Coming World Conferences. — From the minutes of the executive board of the U. L. C., published in the *Lutheran* of February 4, we see that, "it having been decided previously that the United Lutheran Church in America would participate in the World Conference of Faith and Order to be held in Edinburgh, Scotland, in August, 1937, the following were elected as regular delegates: Dr. A. Steimle, Dr. Charles M. Jacobs, Dr. A. R. Wentz, and Dr. E. E. Flack. The other members of the commission, Dr. John Aberly, the Rev. T. G. Tappert, and Dr. W. H. Greever, were elected as alternates." Concerning participation in the *Universal Christian Conference of Life and Work*, the report says: "Due to the fact that this conference, which asks for official representation from the churches, continues to exercise the practise of cooption of individuals as members of the conference, thereby vitiating the official character of the conference and giving much opportunity for special propaganda, the United Lutheran Church in America, through its executive board, declined the invitation to participate in the meetings to be held in Oxford, England, in the summer of 1937. 'Coopted' members are individuals selected and elected by the continuation committee of the conference itself without regard for the status of such individuals in the church-bodies of which they are members. The United Lutheran Church has consistently protested against this action on the grounds of both principle and practise, without admitting either an unwillingness to cooperate with others on a proper basis or a lack of interest in the great questions to be discussed in such a conference. The following was submitted by the officers as a part of their report and was adopted unanimously: 'It is recommended that the United Lutheran Church in America be not represented at the meeting of the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work, the chief reason being that the membership of the conference includes a large proportion of coopted individuals. The conference thus ceases to be effectually a conference of the churches.'"

It seems to us that this refusal of U. L. C. officials to be represented at Oxford this coming summer can justly be said to be based on a technicality. What one misses in the report is a discussion of the question to what extent participation in these conferences would involve disloyalty to Lutheran doctrine and principles.

A Pronouncement of the Executive Committee of the Lutheran World Convention on Intra-Lutheran and Interdenominational Relations. — A document having the title *Lutherans and Ecumenical Movements* was issued by said Executive Committee, and we here present it in toto. The text is that submitted in the *N. L. C. Bulletin*, which we now quote: —

"Among the many items that received the consideration of the Executive Committee of the Lutheran World Convention when it met in New York September 29 to October 6, 1936, was the participation of Lutherans in ecumenical Christian movements. On this subject a statement of principles was adopted. Before this statement could be announced to the

churches it had to be sent to Europe and submitted to representatives of the churches in the Scandinavian lands. This has now been done, official translations have been made, and the Executive Committee herewith presents its conclusions to the churches. It is believed that this message and these recommendations on ecumenical relationships will be found to accord with the Scriptures, and it is hoped that they will afford guidance to the various Lutheran churches and will help them to resolve perplexities and bring clarity into a confusing situation. The statement follows:—

"The Present Trend to Ecumenicity

"1. Ours is a day of enlarging relationships. The recent advances of the physical sciences and changed conditions in the economic, the educational, and the political realms have brought about a number of ecumenical movements. Organizations and fellowships hitherto largely limited in scope are galvanizing themselves into world-wide proportions.

"2. Religious bodies that have always laid claim to ecumenical character are pressing those claims today with new vigor. Prominent among these are Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism. New organizations are coming into being and are aggressively striving for ecumenical expression. In many quarters it is held that wholesale disaster to the Christian Church can be averted only by closer integration of the Christian forces of the world. So there have come to be a number of cooperative organizations seeking the participation of Christians and church-bodies across national boundaries. Such are the World's Conference on Faith and Order, the Universal Christian Conference on Life and Work, the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches, the International Missionary Council, and the World Student Christian Federation.

"3. With reference to participation in these ecumenical movements and others of more local scope our people are perplexed. With reference to their relations with other Christian churches making ecumenical claims our Lutheran churches are waiting for light and leading. The Lutheran World Convention has several times discussed these and related questions and has occasionally made pronouncements on certain aspects of the problems involved. Today the ripeness of the times and the urgency of the situation seem to call for a comprehensive statement that may serve to guide the churches adhering to the Convention. The Executive Committee therefore presents the following message and recommendations:—

"A. The Ecumenical Character of Lutheranism

"Amid the many claims upon Lutheran churches to participate in general ecumenical movements or to relate themselves to special Christian groups, it may be useful to point out the ecumenical character of Lutheranism itself. Even apart from the large number and the geographical distribution of its adherents, the very genius of Lutheranism is essentially ecumenical. It has always been so.

"The heart of Lutheranism comes from the heart of the Bible and has its home in the heart of human personality. Based upon the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures and growing out of the elemental human experience of personal faith, the Lutheran interpretation of the Gospel is not bound to incidentals, such as polity or liturgy or type of piety. With the God-man as its center and the universal priesthood of believers as its radius, it covers the whole range of the human family and can never be the exclusive possession of any particular race, nation, or temperament. Because Lutherans hold that the only marks of the true Church are the Word and the Sacraments, they believe that there has been a true Christian Church through all time and that 'one holy Church will continue forever' (Augsburg Confession, Art. VII). Because they lay no emphasis upon such local and temporal forms as organization, human traditions, rites and ceremonies, but teach that for 'the true unity of the

Church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments' (A. C., VII), they are ready to recognize true Christians under whatever name or organization they may be found. The universal appeal of the Lutheran interpretation of the Gospel, the elemental quality of the Lutheran understanding of faith, and the catholic breadth of the Lutheran doctrine of the Church impart to Lutheranism an ecumenical quality that must be remembered in these days of emphasis upon externals. In the truest sense Lutheranism is itself an ecumenical movement.

"B. The Need for Lutheran Solidarity

"1. This fundamentally ecumenical character of Lutheranism should receive more concrete expression than has yet been done. This concrete expression is not a matter of principle, but only of expediency in view of the present religious situation in the world. The times seem to demand that the inner unity already existing among the Lutherans of the world be cultivated and mobilized in Lutheran world solidarity.

"2. The purpose of this outward expression of Lutheran fellowship is not ostentation, not the display of size or so-called achievements. Nor is it a political purpose, because Lutherans expressly renounce all secular motives and repudiate all intention of invading the proper sphere of the State. It is not in obeisance to an idealistic internationalism. Nor is it to form a super-Church; for that might hamper the individual churches in their work. The purpose in seeking to develop Lutheran solidarity is to help meet the difficulties that confront our churches just now in common with all Christendom, to unite our forces in support of our Lutheran brethren who even now are suffering for their faith, and to secure co-operation of Lutherans everywhere in entering the new doors and traversing the new paths that God has recently opened to the progress of the evangelical spirit. The purpose is to help one another in preserving, and sharing with all nations, the treasures we possess in the Gospel of our Lord, whom we know to be the Redeemer of the world from sin.

"3. This purpose is to be achieved —

"(a) By prosecuting vigorously all the objectives of the Lutheran World Convention as expressed in the resolutions adopted by its general gatherings;

"(b) By cultivating a Lutheran consciousness in individual Lutherans and in Lutheran church-bodies;

"(c) By furthering Lutheran unity within the several lands where Lutheran forces are not at present united;

"(d) By forming a practical *entente*, or alliance, among all the Lutheran church-bodies in the world; and

"(e) By harmonious voice and united action with reference to present-day ecumenical movements and general cooperative organizations among Christians, approving what appears to Lutherans to be evangelical in those movements and organizations and repudiating what appears to us to be unevangelical.

"4. In thus expressing the world solidarity of Lutheranism, it will be constantly incumbent upon the Lutheran churches of the world to bear unequivocal witness to the truth of the Gospel as they understand it. This will involve several relationships of these churches:—

"(a) Their relation to their common Lutheran heritage in the Word of God;

"(b) Their relation to one another as Lutheran churches; and

"(c) Their relation to Christian churches claiming ecumenical character in themselves and to other churches in those movements and organizations that aim at the solution of present-day problems of larger scope.

"C. Recommendations

"The Executive Committee of the Lutheran World Convention therefore makes the following recommendations:—

"I. Concerning Evangelical Consciousness

"1. That the Lutheran World Convention take all possible measures to deepen the evangelical consciousness of the Lutheran churches of the world, to intensify their devotion to the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to stimulate their fidelity to His revealed Word.

"2. That the Lutheran World Convention urge each of the Lutheran churches of the world to take warning from the present religious situation and to multiply its efforts to cultivate the Lutheran consciousness of its members and their faithfulness to the Gospel of our Lord.

"3. That the Lutheran World Convention warn the Lutheran churches of the world against the growing range of such pernicious influences as atheism, secularism, syncretism, sectarianism, and politico-ecclesiasticism.

"II. Concerning Lutheran World Solidarity

"1. That the Lutheran World Convention take all possible measures to cultivate among the Lutheran churches of the world a sense of common interest and to fashion among them the implements necessary for Lutheran solidarity.

"2. That the Lutheran World Convention urge each of the Lutheran churches of the world to cultivate in its members a sense of common interest, above all with the Lutherans of the whole world.

"3. That the Lutheran World Convention with its volume of service to World Lutheranism present itself as the agent for such world-wide cooperation among Lutherans as the churches of the several lands may desire to employ in these efforts to cultivate their evangelical consciousness and their sense of Lutheran solidarity.

"4. That the Lutheran World Convention urge the Lutheran churches of the world in their relations with other churches and general ecumenical movements or organizations carefully to maintain existing unities among those who hold the Lutheran interpretation of the Christian faith and not to jeopardize the solidarity of ecumenical Lutheranism.

"III. Concerning Ecclesiastical Relationships

"1. That, recognizing that there are true Christians in every Church of whatever name, the Lutheran churches of the world should approach the question of their relationship with general movements in the spirit of catholicity and without hostility or prejudice. While they should make no effort to gloss genuine difference, they should nevertheless proceed in the sincere and humble desire to render service and cooperate in works of Christian love.

"2. That the Lutheran churches of the world should proceed with united front in their relations with ecumenical Christian movements, general cooperative organizations, or Christian churches claiming universality. They should agree among themselves as to their united participation or non-participation.

"3. That participation of Lutheran churches in cooperative movements or general organizations among the Protestant churches of the world can be effected only when the following principles are observed:—

"(a) The cooperative movement or general organization guarantees to every participating Church the right to declare unequivocally what it believes concerning Christ and His Gospel and to testify definitely and frankly against error; and the cooperative movement or general organization guarantees that such testimony will receive courteous and respectful hearing.

"(b) The cooperative movement or general organization specifically declares that the participating churches are not bound by the actions of the entire group nor are responsible for the opinions of the entire group, but only such actions and opinions as the individual church-bodies themselves may enact or adopt.

"(c) The cooperative movement or general organization in all of its assemblies, conferences, and parts is constituted of official representatives of church-bodies.

"(d) The cooperative movement or general organization cherishes only such purposes as lie within the proper sphere of church activity. It recognizes that the proper functions of the Church are the preaching of the Word, the administration of the Sacraments, and the performance of the works of Christian love. The true function of the Church does not include the use of the church organization as an agency for securing the enactment or enforcement of law nor the application of other methods of external force.

"(e) The cooperative movement or general organization recognizes the following doctrines and principles, derived from the Holy Scriptures, to be fundamental to the Christian message:—

"(1) The fatherhood of God, revealed in His Son Jesus Christ, and the sonship bestowed by God, through Christ, upon all who believe in Him.

"(2) The true godhead of Jesus Christ and His redemption of the world by His life and death and resurrection; and His living presence in His Church.

"(3) The continued activity of God the Holy Spirit among men, calling them into the fellowship of Jesus Christ and enlightening and sanctifying them through the gifts of His grace.

"(4) The supreme importance of the Word of God and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper as the means through which the Holy Spirit testifies of Christ and thus creates and strengthens faith. (In common with the whole Evangelical Lutheran Church we confess the mystery of the Real Presence in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and we invite all Christians to a renewed study of the teachings of the Holy Scriptures concerning this Sacrament and the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.)

"(5) The authority of the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the only rule and standard by which all doctrines and teachers are to be judged.

"(6) The reality and universality of sin and the inability of men, because of sin, to attain righteousness or earn salvation through their own character or works.

"(7) The love and the righteousness of God, who for Christ's sake bestows forgiveness and righteousness upon all who believe in Christ.

"(8) The present existence upon earth of the kingdom of God, founded by His Son Jesus Christ, not as an external organization, but as a spiritual reality and an object of faith.

"(9) The hope of Christ's second coming to be the Judge of the living and the dead and to complete the kingdom of God.

"4. That the Lutheran World Convention urge the Lutheran churches of the world to maintain a united front in combating militant ecclesiasticism wherever it seeks to invade evangelical ranks or with politico-ecclesiastical measures to oppress evangelical minorities, and that the Lutheran World Convention authorize and implement a special agency to have charge of this matter."

This is a long statement, but it is undeniable that it is important, constituting an earnest attempt to lay down correct principles to guide Lutherans in their attitudes toward each other and toward other denominations. We are here stating our first reaction. The document, while commendable in many particulars, has its weaknesses and faults. For

one thing, the authors do not differentiate sufficiently between a nominal and a real Lutheranism. By implication something is said on this point, but there should have been incorporated a more vigorous and direct reference to it. With respect to contact with other Christian bodies, the authors insist, as a condition of cooperation, on acceptance of certain doctrines and principles which indeed are important, but which, on the one hand, are too comprehensive for determining whether or not a given church-body should be regarded as Christian and which, on the other hand, are not comprehensive enough for the establishment of church-fellowship. It seems to us there is a chasm here which the authors have failed to bridge. They recognize that "there are true Christians in every Church of whatever name," and still they limit the circle of those church-bodies with which they are willing to cooperate to those that accept the nine doctrines and principles given under III, 3, e. We ask, By what are they guided in deciding with whom to cooperate? Must the respective church-body merely be one that can be called a Christian Church, or must it be Christian and orthodox, or must it be Christian and in the greater part of its doctrines orthodox? One gets the impression that the authors have unwittingly slipped from a discussion of the question of outward cooperation into that of church-fellowship. Furthermore, a person naturally asks, What is meant by the expression (III, 1) "to render service and cooperate in works of Christian love"? Have the authors in mind outward cooperation (as we just surmised), for instance, Lutheran representation on a governmental commission for Army and Navy chaplaincies and participation in a campaign for famine relief in China, or do they think of joint religious endeavors, such as the evangelization of China or Afghanistan would be? If cooperation in externals is thought of, why the insistence on the above-mentioned nine points of doctrines and principles? Let us hope that, as a discussion of this statement of the Executive Committee will be carried on, these and other matters will receive clarification and, where necessary, correction. A.

Free Conference on Theological Trends. — Wartburg Theological Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa, the Western School of Prophets of the American Lutheran Church, is planning the establishment of an intersynodical Luther Academy for the second half of July, 1937. This is envisaged as a sort of free educational conference on a higher level, open to any one who cares to participate. Its object is to bring leading men of our Church into closer contact with one another and also to enable our pastors to become more conversant with the theological, social, and generally current questions of the day. That both are necessary if our Lutheran Church is to recognize and discharge the function which it has for our land and people hardly needs further comment. The conference is to meet for ten days (July 19—29), and on the basis of well-prepared lectures by leading men in their lines is to discuss important questions in the field of theology and the practical work of the Church in this day and age. The full name given to the enterprise is Luther Academy for Religion and Life, a name suggested by the *Lutherakademie* of Sondershausen, Germany, a similar undertaking, which has produced most valuable results for mutual recognition and

understanding of Lutherans over there. If it meets with the necessary support, it will be continued from year to year. The cost will be nominal, just enough to cover expenses. A letter or postal card to Dr. Emil Rausch, President, Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa, will bring more detailed information.

The above report is taken over from the *National Lutheran Council Bulletin*. We have received the personal assurance that this Luther Academy will be conducted strictly as a free conference and that participation in it will not involve unionism. The lecturers are Drs. Hult, Reu, Mellby, Gullixson, Schaefer, all of whom are Lutherans, and one man from the University of Chicago, Dr. John T. McNeill. A.

Brief Items.—The year 1936 marked the jubilee of the Bethel Mission. It was founded in Berlin fifty years ago in connection with the acquisition of German colonies in Africa. In its fields the Bethel Mission has eighteen chief stations and 169 outstations, 10 native pastors, 339 men and 59 women helpers, and 17,945 Christians. In the 174 village schools and two intermediate schools for boys and two for girls there are 8,501 pupils. In the Bukoba field the mission is experiencing a remarkable revival among the heathen. New groups constantly offer themselves for Baptism, and the capacities of the few missionaries are strained to the utmost. (*The Presbyterian*.)—The Archbishop of Canterbury, so a correspondent of the *Living Church* writes from London, is being bitterly attacked by several British newspapers on account of what he said when King Edward abdicated and on account of his "recall to religion." We are told, however, that the public, generally speaking, is inclined to support the archbishop and that his "recall to religion" is bearing good fruit.—In the question-box column of the *Christian Century*, where in a recent issue the matter of Christian union and the Episcopalian insistence on acceptance of the historic episcopate as a condition of union were discussed, the editor says: "Little progress will be made toward the conversion of the free churches to the acceptance of the historic episcopate, particularly when the validity of Anglican orders is denied by the Roman Church." What a dark day it would be for Christianity if the church-bodies professing it all agreed to accept this condition of the Protestant Episcopal Church and of Rome as one laid down by Christ, the Head of the Church!—One of our exchanges reports: For half a century the North Africa Mission has maintained a healing and preaching center in Tripoli, the only evangelical witness in the whole of Libya. Complying with government requirement, the purpose of the mission was described as "explaining the way of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ in obedience to His commands and also endeavoring to show the love of God in our medical consultations." A government ordinance authorized the mission on three conditions: (a) No religious propaganda; (b) nurses to have Italian diplomas; (c) promises to conform to hygiene inspector's regulations. The missionary doctor was unaware of this ordinance until it was read to him at the police station on October 13, last, and then, charged with not observing its terms, a second ordinance, dated October 1, was handed to him, and this ordered the closing of the mission.—The magazine *This*

Week is quoted as stating that America's current annual crime bill is fifteen billion dollars. Stated simply, that amounts to \$120 a year or \$10 a month for every man, woman, and child in the United States. Every year our prison population increases by 25,000 inmates. Felonies now number 5,000 a day, or more than 1,500,000 annually. The Federal Government records 5,000,000 persons in its criminal files and estimates that 500,000 professional criminals are at large. According to one authority, 135,000 murderers are at large, or more than all the policemen in the land. (*The Presbyterian.*)—A person can hardly trust his eyes when he sees in recent reports from New York City that the Protestant membership in that metropolis is merely 454,045, which means less than 7 per cent. of the population, and that the Sunday-school enrolment is merely 194,428, which makes it a little more than 2 per cent. What a mission-field!—In the American Lutheran Church the golden jubilee of the New Guinea Mission at Madang was observed last March. The Rhenish Society founded this mission, and during the World War its management and maintenance were assumed by the Australian Lutheran Church and the Iowa Synod. In 1932 the field was taken over definitely by the American Lutheran Church. The mission numbers 9 stations and 16,000 members.—The shah of Iran has given his strong support to the unveiling of women. The queen and court appear in public unveiled; all the more educated women have followed their example. Cinemas, shops, and public places are barred to veiled women. (*The Presbyterian.*)—We learn from the religious press that in Indiana a Baptist minister, Rev. Verdi Allen, pastor of the Beech Grove Baptist Church of Indianapolis, is valiantly testifying against the false teachings of evolution and the attempt to teach this theory to pupils in the public schools of the State. It is reported that he found evidence that pupils in the eighth grade of some school in Indianapolis were taught Darwinism. He discovered furthermore that the infamous book of Van Loon in which the animal ancestry of man is taught as a fact had been put on the State's list of reference books. First there was some talk of a debate, before a scientific jury, between Van Loon and Pastor Allen; but the former has now, as reported, definitely refused to engage in such a debate.—Who are the Uniats? One sees the term occasionally, and hence we herewith submit a definition which appeared in the *Living Church*: "The Uniats are Christians of various Eastern rites who have at one time or another split off from the Eastern orthodox communion and accepted the papal obedience, retaining many of their own rites and ceremonies." Dwelling on the Roumanian Uniats, this paper, quoting *America* (Catholic), informs us that these people are permitted to celebrate mass in their own language. Rome has here adapted itself to the exigencies of a particular situation.—In Roumania a strange anti-Semitic fanaticism is said to be manifesting itself. The leader of the movement is Cornelius Z. Codreanu. Opposing Communism as well as the Jews and their influence, this man and his followers are described as being brutally intolerant, not stopping at torture and murder in carrying out the dictates of their misguided, unbridled religious ardor. If the report before us is correct, then this movement wants to "purge public life, exterminate corruption and cor-

rupters, and reorganize social life on a new basis.—Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, a Protestant Episcopal school located at Evanston, Ill., "now requires students to obtain their bachelor's degree in arts or science before beginning the study of theology. Students without a bachelor's degree from an approved college are accepted as special students only and cannot become candidates for the bachelor-of-divinity degree."—The total Moslem population of India, 77,500,000, exceeds the combined Moslem populations of Arabia, Persia, Turkey, Egypt, Syria, and Palestine. Indian Moslems have sent missionaries to Europe, Africa, and America and support mosques in Berlin, London, Australia, Brazil, and Trinidad. (*The Presbyterian*.) A.

II. Ausland

E i n e, heilige, christliche Kirche. In einer „liturgischen Glossen“ unter dem Titel *Una Sancta?* behandelt D. Fr. Braun-München die Tatsache, daß in den Worten des dritten Artikels „eine, heilige, christliche Kirche“ das *e i n e* als Zahlwort und nicht als unbestimmter Artikel gemeint ist. Beiläufig wirft aber seine Diskussion auch Licht auf das Wort „christliche“, das das lateinische Wort *catholicam* wiedergibt. Hochkirchliche Kreise in protestantischen Gemeinschaften haben je und je für „christliche“ auch im Deutschen oder Englischen „katholische“ oder „catholic“ regitiert, und eine neue hochkirchliche Richtung wirbt gegenwärtig geradezu um dies Wort als besonders passend für unsere Zeit. Aber das Wort „christliche“ ist hier durchaus passend, und schon vor Luther, wie D. Braun zeigt, war dieses Wort im dritten Artikel im Gebrauch. D. Braun schreibt in seinem Artikel, der in der „A. G. Z. N.“ erschienen ist: „Nur zwei Beispiele monumentaler Art seien dem Leser vorgeführt. Jeder der überlebensgroßen Apostelgestalten, die zwischen 1459 und 1487 über den Arkadenpfeilern des Mittelschiffs der Frauenkirche zu Memmingen auf die Sargwand gemalt sind, ist in hochgeschwungener Schriftband das nach der mittelalterlichen Zwölfteilung des Krebo zukommende Bekenntnisstück beigegeben. Man liest zu Häupten des Matthäus und des Bartholomäus: ‚Ich glaub in hailgen gait — die cristlichen hailgen kirchen gemeinschaft der hailgen.‘ In der Vorhalle von St. Zeno vor Vad Reichenhall sind in die Seitenwände im Jahre 1521 zwei prächtige Tafeln aus rotem Marmor eingelassen, auf denen der ganze Katechismus der mittelalterlichen Kirche, wie ihn nach seinem wesentlichen Stoff Luther übernommen hat: *De calog, credo, Vaterunser* usw., dem Kirchenvoll vergegenwärtigt ist. Hier ist die Formel: ‚Ich gelaub in den heiligen Geist Dy hehlig christenlich kirchen gemeinschaft der hehlichen.‘ — Nebenbei wird der Leser, dem der lateinische Wortlaut des dritten Artikels ‚*Credo in Spiritum Sanctum, sanctam ecclesiam catholicam*‘ usw. gegenwärtig ist, die Wahrnehmung sich nicht entgehen lassen, daß in den mitgeteilten Beispielen (es gilt dies von allen oben erwähnten) das *catholicam* verschwindet, daß also Luther einer alten Überlieferung folgte und nicht eine Fälschung des Apostolikums, bzw. des Nizänums, sich herausgenommen hat, wie ein Kontroversist des 18. Jahrhunderts (vgl. Schellhorn, *Briefw.*, S. 340) ihm vorwarf, wenn er, hier mit der oberdeutschen Tradition einiggehend, den ihm geläufigen Wortlaut in den Kleinen, bzw. Großen Katechismus einstellte.“ Die Bezeichnung „christliche“ im dritten Artikel ist deshalb heute so zeit-

gemäß, weil sie unserer veräußerlichten Zeit die große Wahrheit ins Gedächtnis jurückeruft, daß die wirklich allgemeine oder katholische Kirche, die *communio sanctorum*, nur aus solchen besteht, die im wahren Sinn christlich, i. e., an Christum gläubig, sind. Das Ideal, das unserer Zeit gewöhnlich vorschwebt, ist das einer großen, allgemeinen, sichtbaren Kirche, eine irdische, äußerliche Organisation, also das Ideal Roms.

J. L. W.

Zur Lage in Deutschland. Etwas Einblick in die Zustände drüben liefert ein Artikel des Herausgebers der „A. C. L. N.“, Pfarrer D. W. Laibles, den wir wegen der Wichtigkeit der Entscheidungen, die zu treffen sind, hier vollständig abdrucken. Der Titel des Artikels ist „Eine Stunde der Kirche“.

„Der Erlass des Reichskanzlers zur Wahl einer neuen Generalsynode ist weithin mit Dank und Genugtuung aufgenommen worden. Er bekundet den festen Willen des Führers, daß er Frieden in der Kirche sehen will; und da dies auf dem bisherigen Weg nicht gelungen ist, soll eine Neuordnung geschaffen werden, zunächst durch die freie Wahl einer Generalsynode. Die Kirche soll in voller Freiheit nach eigener Bestimmung des Kirchenvolks sich selbst die neue Verfassung und damit eine neue Ordnung geben. Die Kirche in voller Freiheit, damit ist deutlich gesagt, daß der Staat sich jeder Einmischung in den Neuaufbau der Kirche enthalten will, entsprechend dem Wesen des neuen Staates, der, wie der ‚Völkische Beobachter‘ ausführt, ein Reich von dieser Welt sein will und ‚die Glaubensfreiheit jedes einzelnen unangetastet läßt.‘ Die Generalsynode soll einen Zustand herbeiführen, der die Frage des Bekenntnisses von jeder auch nur scheinbaren Verquickung mit dem Staate löst und ganz offensichtlich zu dem macht, was sie für die Nationalsozialisten immer war, zu einer privaten Angelegenheit. So der beachtliche Kommentar zu dem Kanzlererlass im ‚Völkischen Beobachter‘. Die Kirche hat das Wort, so schließt der Kommentar.

„Wie wird sie das Wort nehmen? Sie steht vor Entscheidungen, wie sie nie gestanden hat seit den Tagen der Reformation. Es ist nicht mehr die Zeit zu kleinlichen Kämpfen; es ist eine Stunde der Kirche von eminentem Maß angebrochen, und der müßte taub sein, der nicht aus dem Freiheitserlass des Kanzlers die Stimme Gottes heraushörte: Stunde der Kirche! Läßt sie die Stunde ungenützt, wehe ihr! Mißbraucht sie die Stunde, nochmals wehe ihr! Zunächst wird sie die ‚Vorbereitung‘ der Wahl zur Generalsynode abzuwarten haben, die dem Reichskirchenminister von dem Führer übertragen wurde. Aber die Hauptsache ist die Wahl selbst. Schon vor ihrem Beginn muß sich die Kirche klar sein, was sie will, um was es sich für sie handelt.

„Es ist kein leerer Platz, auf dem die Kirche steht. Zunächst steht sie auf dem Artikel 1 des Reichskirchengesetzes, wonach die Grundlage der evangelischen Kirche das Evangelium von Jesus Christus ist und die Bekenntnisse der Reformation. Diese Grundlage ist unaufgebbar. Gibt die Kirche das Evangelium auf, hat sie aufgehört, Kirche zu sein. Diese Grundlage muß das Fundament auch für die Wahl werden. Wer die Grundlage verläßt, hat damit die Kirche verlassen und hat kein Recht, sich bei ihren Wahlen zu betätigen. Damit scheiden von selbst die aus, die aus der Kirche ausgetreten sind, ebenso die Anhänger der Deutschen Glaubensbewegung, die sich notorisch von dem Glauben der Kirche los sagten; nicht minder alle, die den Kampf

gegen Apostel und Propheten, gegen den Glauben und die Bekenntnisse der Kirche auf ihre Fäbne geschrieben haben. Wir gönnen ihnen die Errichtung einer eigenen ‚Kirche‘, oder wie sie es nennen wollen; sie sollen geruhig in einem Volke wohnen, in dem jeder ‚nach seiner Fassung‘ selig werden kann. Nur bei der Generalsynode einer Kirche, die auf jener genannten Grundlage steht, haben sie nicht mitzukommen. Das ist das eine. Zum andern sind im Reichskirchengesetz die Kirchen der einzelnen Gebiete anerkannt, deren Bekenntnis nicht angetastet werden soll. Damit sind die lutherischen Kirchen anerkannt, ebenso die Reformierten und Unierten. Diese Kirchen sind noch da; und was die lutherischen Kirchen anbetrifft, so haben sich diese zum größten Teil im ‚Rat der Lutherischen Kirche Deutschlands‘ zusammengeslossen. Dieser Zusammenschluß darf und soll nicht wieder weggetwischt werden; er bildet einen wertvollen Faktor bei den Wahlen zur Generalsynode. Denn wenn eine Kirche auf dem Evangelium und den Bekenntnissen der Reformation steht, sind es in erster Linie die lutherischen Kirchen. Für den ‚Lutherischen Rat‘ gilt unzweifelhaft die Mahnung: ‚Halte, was du hast!‘

„Aber nicht nur dieses äußere Kirchengebilde und nicht nur der Artikel 1 des Reichskirchengesetzes stehen auf dem Kirchenplatz. Inzwischen haben sich starke Bewegungen der Kirche bemächtigt, Bewegungen um Schrift und Bekenntnis, auch diese sind da. So viel Menschliches dabei unterlaufen ist, es ist durch sie viel geschehen, um die Gemeinden bei Gottes Wort zu halten, den Glauben zu stärken, ritterlich für die Sache Gottes einzutreten. Sie haben Opfer gebracht, große Opfer, und gehören schon deshalb in eine Generalsynode hinein. Wie im einzelnen die Wahlen zu gestalten sind, welche Ordnung sich die Generalsynode geben will, überlassen wir den berufenen Führern. Auf sie wird man hören müssen; Pfarrer und Kirchenvoll werden sich strengste Disziplin geloben, damit zustande kommt, was zustande kommen soll.

„Nur eins sagen wir noch, und das ist das Wichtigste. Ihr lieben Brüder hin und her, wir beschwören euch vor Gott, daß ihr das Kriegsbeil aus den Händen legt. Es gilt heute nicht mehr eine ‚Gruppe‘, sondern die Kirche. Die ‚Stunde der Kirche‘, die uns Gott gegeben hat, muß eine Stunde des Begräbnisses werden, des Begräbnisses von Streit und Zank, von Gericht und Verdammnis innerhalb der gläubigen Gemeinde; eine Stunde des Händereichens der Getrennten, der in Spannung Lebenden, des Friedemachens vor dem Angesicht Jesu Christi. Keiner kann es verantworten, wenn wir wieder getrennt die Sache der Kirche führen, vielleicht gar in die Wahlen den alten Streit hineintragen. Es geht um eine Kirche, die Kirche Christi, und um ein Bekenntnis, das der Reformation. Wir sind ja doch von ‚einem Stamm‘ und sollen daher auch ‚für einen Mann‘ stehen. Werden wir untereinander Frieden machen, dann wird der Gott des Friedens mit uns sein; wenn nicht, wird er uns verlassen, und sein Gericht ist unaufhaltsam. Der Ernst der Zeit ist groß; vieler Herzen sind mit Sorgen erfüllt; niemand weiß, wie es enden soll. Es ist große Gnade, daß Gott uns den Weg zeigt, den wir gehen sollen, den Weg seines Evangeliums, den Weg des Bekenntnisses, den Weg des Friedens untereinander. ‚Tu du das Deine, so tut Gott das Seine.‘ Gehen wir seinen Weg, wird er auch durch große Wasser Bahnen machen; und die Kirche der Freiheit wird eine Kirche seiner Ehre werden, ein Segen für unser Volk, ein Hort für die Zukunft.“ J. L. M.