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THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

THE RECENT MEETING OF THE SYNODICAL CONFERENCE

The church papers have related the chief facts pertaining to the meeting of the Synodical Conference held in Fort Wayne, Ind., August 8—11, and it is not necessary here to give a detailed account of what happened. Let me merely say that what cheered and encouraged all members of the assembly was the report dealing with the mission field in Nigeria, a field cultivated by the Synodical Conference as such and through God's grace blessed with an abundant harvest. But next to this bright picture was one that was not so pleasant to behold, that of a degree of disunity in certain areas of doctrine and practice. It may well be that some delegates, especially of the laity, went home with disturbed hearts and confused minds. The resolutions of the Missouri Synod concerning the *Common Confession* were reported, and in that connection the announcement was made in an official manner that leading men of the Wisconsin and the Norwegian Synods were not approving this document, while the representative of the Slovak Church declared that the leadership of his church body heartily accepted it. The church bodies themselves, of course, have not as yet taken action. It was mentioned, too, that in the doctrine of the Church and the Ministry, in the view to be taken of chaplaincies in the Armed Forces of our country, and of Boy Scouts and similar issues there is disagreement. While novices at the convention were startled, veterans were not surprised because they had seen phenomena of this kind before.

The question arises whether, apart from the joint missionary effort, the Synodical Conference as at present constituted serves a God-pleasing purpose and whether there should not be an entire change of the character of the meetings and of the union or, if that cannot be attained, a peaceful dissolution of the body with a cordial *Requiescat in pace!* from all concerned. The writer of these lines holds that the venture represented by the Synodical Conference should not be abandoned. It is a human organization, it is imperfect, but it fills an important niche in the Church's work and development.

When in 1872 Missouri, Ohio, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, and the Norwegian Synod formed the Synodical Conference, the constitution contained this paragraph, having the heading "Purpose and Aim": "An outward expression of the spiritual unity connecting the uniting synods; mutual strengthening in the realm of faith and confession; promotion of unity in doctrine and practice and removal of what might

disturb such unity; joint activity for common purposes; a furthering of the idea that synods should be constituted along geographical or territorial lines, provided that the language used does not necessitate overlapping; the uniting of all Lutheran synods of America in one orthodox American Lutheran Church."

This was an ambitious program. That the uniting of all Lutheran synods in America in one confessionally loyal body would be a difficult matter became apparent all too soon, that is, in 1881 when the Ohio Synod withdrew on account of the Predestinarian Controversy. Not long afterwards the Norwegian Synod, too, severed formal connection, but in a friendly manner, because it hoped, so it was stated by the leaders, that through this step it could more easily settle the Election Controversy in its own midst. Since that time Wisconsin and Minnesota have amalgamated and the Illinois Synod has been absorbed by Missouri. The Slovak Church joined in 1908 and the Norwegian Synod in 1920. Both bodies are small. Up to date accordingly the pious wish of the founders that around the banner which they unfurled in 1872 all Lutheran synods of America might gather has not been fulfilled.

The plan to form State synods, that is, to have all members of the Synodical Conference living in a certain State establish one body, so that in Wisconsin, for instance, instead of having two synods working alongside of each other, Missouri and Wisconsin, there would be but one synod, the Wisconsin Synod, did not meet with success either. It was soon declared impracticable. The item labeled "Joint activity for common purposes" has found fulfillment in the prosecution of work among the colored people in our own country and in Nigeria and, as briefly mentioned above, has borne rich fruit.

What of the other objectives, "outward expression of the spiritual unity connecting the respective synods, mutual strengthening in the realm of faith and confession, promotion of unity in doctrine and practice and removal of what might disturb such unity"? Here we are dealing with matters which chiefly lie in the region of thought, of sentiment, of belief, of conviction. What is presupposed is existence of spiritual unity. I believe that unity was a reality when the Synodical Conference was established. The founders were united by the bond of enthusiastic, joyful adherence to the Lutheran Confessions, in which they found, taken from the Scriptures, the good tidings of salvation, especially of justification by grace through faith. They were all like people who have made a great discovery and whom this discovery has made crusaders. All appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, I be-

lieve this unity is still a great, blessed reality. Through human weakness the inherent selfishness which troubles every child of Adam, the lack of true humility in spite of loud profession of it, the wish to see one's own opinion prevail at all hazards—all indications that the flesh is still strongly with us—the existence of this unity is frequently obscured. Let these weaknesses not be overemphasized. Where is there a household in which clouds do not occasionally appear, threatening a storm? The Synodical Conference by its very existence gives outward expression to the unity of the spirit which binds pastors and lay members together in one bond of brotherly fellowship. The "promotion of unity in doctrine and practice" is by no means an easy matter on account of the deplorable imperfections from which we all suffer. When we try to remove what disturbs, we often do not exercise that loving patience which should characterize all our dealings with the brethren. What is sinful in our brother's conduct or teaching must be reproved. The very attempt to do this will create the impression that we are contentious, self-willed, quarrelsome. But we owe our brother such admonition. In speaking of weaknesses in doctrine and practice which we observe in our fellow Christians and of our attempts to correct the wrong things we observe, Dr. Walther makes the striking statement: "Nevertheless, we consider it our duty to criticize, refute, oppose, contend against, and reprove whatever error becomes manifest in the teaching of those who wish to be our brethren, whether this error pertains to a fundamental or a non-fundamental teaching of the Word of God. By taking this course we merely follow all faithful servants of God, from the Prophets and Apostles to the most recent acknowledgedly loyal ministers of our Church. The result, of course, is that the Church never for a long time enjoys peace, and that precisely the orthodox Church usually presents the appearance of a body torn by internal dissensions. But this, far from being an indictment of a servant of God and of the Church, is rather an indication and seal that the servant of God is faithful, and it gives the Church the assurance that it belongs to the *ecclesia militans*" (*Lehre und Wehre*, Vol. XIV, 1868, p. 111).

That there should be differences of opinion in Synodical Conference circles on this or that point is not surprising. How could it be otherwise in this imperfect world! What is incumbent on all members of the individual synods is the sacred duty to discuss whatever imperfections they think they see in a spirit of humility and true love, avoiding fanaticism as well as latitudinarianism, and thereby to bring about a removal of whatever is wrong and harmful. Fortunately the differences

that exist lie largely merely in the field of church practice, and there especially patient procedure is required. The fundamental question must be whether loyalty to the Scriptures and to the Lutheran Confessions, and especially to the heart of them, the doctrine of justification by grace through faith, is still not only the slogan, but the ideal which all prayerfully have in mind and cultivate. My observation is that this loyalty is still alive and operative.

W. ARNDT

"THE THEOLOGY OF THE COMMON CONFESSION"

Under this title Dr. Edward C. Fendt in the *Lutheran Quarterly*, August, 1950, discusses the genetic history and the purpose of the *Common Confession*. Dr. Fendt, a member of the Committee on Fellowship of the American Lutheran Church, points out that "the underlying motivation [in drafting the *Common Confession*] was to give expression to existing doctrinal unity rather than to rehearse past doctrinal disagreements or to seek compromises or conversions among the negotiators." Prior to the *Common Confession* there was no joint statement which set forth the *doctrina publica* of both synods. This statement sets forth the "doctrine taught by both synods. One or both synods may reject the *Common Confession* as a basis for future fellowship, but neither synod is likely to disavow what is true about its *publica doctrina*." Dr. Fendt emphasizes strongly that there was no thought on the part of the representatives of either the American Lutheran Church or The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to hide possible differences or to employ ambiguity or to intimidate one or the other to recant. So much on the history of the document.

Commenting on the purpose of this joint declaration, Dr. Fendt states that the authors of the *Common Confession* were concerned primarily with drafting a statement on the Christian faith as it is held by the entire membership of the two synods. This document is not intended for pastors only, but for the laity as well. The *Common Confession* "seeks to glorify God and points to His Word as the source and norm of what is believed and taught," and therefore avoids "the glorifying of synodical tradition." Its first purpose is not to serve "as a doctrinal basis for merger of the synods, but a Common Confession of faith," rising above the consideration to establish altar and pulpit fellowship or offering a scheme to re-align Lutherans with or against each other. The *Common Confession* "purposes to be a faithful statement of the Scriptural doctrines of salvation, . . . and its strength lies in this area of faithfulness to the Scriptures." The only criterion on the basis of which the *Common Confession* should be tested is whether it truly sets forth the Scriptural doctrine. And the members of all

other Lutheran synods owe it to the two participating synods to point out where the *Common Confession* is in error or where there are serious omissions, and to submit their critiques in the light of the Scriptural norm. All Lutherans are given an opportunity for such study, since Dr. Fendt appends the full text of the *Common Confession* to his article.

The authors of the *Common Confession* have been faulted that they have not stated the Christian truth in theses and antitheses, particularly on those doctrinal points where there had been controversy during the last century. Dr. Fendt replies to this criticism as follows: "The committees evidently concluded that it was sufficient to rely on the truth as taught in the Scriptures, to state it boldly and forthrightly without adducing damnatory clauses to belabor an errorist if such an one should be discovered. The committee wrote a 'Common Confession' of the Christian faith as held and taught within their synods by the rank and file of their pastors and believed and practiced by their entire membership. To question such omissions may indicate a psychological rather than theological attitude and may call for psychiatric analysis rather than theological reflection. . . . To seek to determine the rightness or wrongness of former contestants in doctrinal controversy was not the task of the committees, nor is that the task of the synods today."

In conclusion Dr. Fendt answers the critique raised by some that the writing of new doctrinal statements is an *opus supererogationis*. To this he answers: "It is a thoughtless clamor that insists that Lutherans should not write more documents that deal with Christian doctrine. That is equivalent to saying that preachers should no longer preach or that Christians should no longer testify."—All those who fear that the adoption of the *Common Confession* by the two negotiating synods may interfere with a larger Lutheran unity are asked to consider seriously that "agreement in doctrine is certainly basic to fellowship in the Church." To enter into complete fellowship in spite of doctrinal differences "savors more of deceptions than of truth." When two church bodies find themselves in doctrinal agreement, they certainly should not be counseled to keep silent, but to testify of their common faith. "The two participating synods still hold that it is important that there be an expression of the God-given unity, oneness of faith, in a confession of faith into which the Holy Spirit has led them. They think of this confession as a contribution, not a hindrance, to Lutheran unity. It was not conceived to create disunity. It was prayerfully executed to be a step toward Lutheran unity in America and the world."

F. E. M.

PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

At the convention of our sister synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia, assembled at Toowoomba, Queensland, during March of this year, Dr. H. Hamann, the headmaster of Concordia College at Adelaide, read a paper on "Prayer Fellowship." He presented the following five theses:

"I. The command and assumption of Holy Scripture that Christian believers pray for and with one another must not be set aside except upon the plain direction of Scripture itself.

"II. Religious fellowship with unbelievers and heretics, including fellowship in prayer, is plainly forbidden by Scripture.

"III. Since only the truth of God's Word is to be proclaimed in and by the Christian Church and all other teachings are to be avoided, false doctrine or doctrine contrary to Scripture is sin; and religious fellowship with the persistently heterodox is to be avoided (sinful indifferentism or unionism). Prayers that are either in themselves or by implication unionistic are likewise to be shunned by the earnest Christian.

"IV. There are contacts between Christians not in fellowship where the denial of truth and the espousal or condoning of error do not take place and cannot be presumed. Prayers arising from such situations are not necessarily to be condemned as unionistic.

"V. One must beware of false arguments drawn from the spiritual fellowship of all true believers and from Christian love and charity; one must also be on guard against exaggerated statements and expectations."

What Dr. Hamann said in elaborating on Theses IV and V will be of particular interest to our readers. We herewith reprint a part of what he said in reference to Thesis IV and his entire elaboration of Thesis V.

"IV. But let us, without multiplying cases, come to the question that is perhaps uppermost in the minds of all of us: Can or must joint prayer at the intersynodical meetings now being held for the discussion of doctrinal differences and the establishment of full doctrinal agreement, be regarded as unionistic prayer, as an instance of sinful prayer fellowship? The only test that will lead us to a reliable judgment, based ultimately upon Scripture itself, is the test which we have consistently applied in this paper. Does prayer at intersynodical meetings—joint prayer—imply the sacrificing or denial of Biblical truth? Does it involve making common cause with error? In other words, does it show the characteristic marks of unionism—the features that make union-

ism sinful? In setting forth his conviction that the features or marks of unionism are excluded by the very nature, character, and purpose of the meeting now under consideration, the essayist can but repeat what he said publicly elsewhere. These meetings are arranged and held, not to disregard, ignore, or compromise the truth revealed in the Word of God, but to arrive at a common understanding and confession of that truth; not to hide, gloss over, or minimize error, but to arrive at a common understanding of what is to be avoided and denounced as doctrinal or practical error; not to ignore and obscure existing differences, but to examine these differences in the light of Holy Writ and to remove them; not blandly to decree a non-existent unity or pretend to establish it by some meaningless formula of the give-and-take variety, but to bring about complete doctrinal unity and harmony on the basis of God's Word by scrutinizing these differences closely in the clear light of the Holy Bible. Not unionism, but anti-unionism in its clearest, strongest, most positive and unmistakable form is the general characteristic of our intersynodical discussions. The entire procedure is a continued outspoken condemnation of unionism and unwarranted church fellowship. This being so, one does not see how a simple prayer for divine guidance as well as for love of the truth and for charity, when spoken at such meetings, can in any proper sense of the term be called unionistic. For the marks of unionism are conspicuously absent. — The argument that such prayers are always necessarily contradictory, one side praying against the other, and hence displeasing to God, is so doubtful as to be valueless. We pray constantly to be guided into all truth, and to be preserved from error, even while we are sure of having the truth. Hence a prayer for God's blessing upon the discussions does not at all mean that each side necessarily prays against the other. The argument that we are anticipating church fellowship by joint prayer at intersynodical meetings may be met by a flat denial. We are not *anticipating* church fellowship by such prayers, for we are not *practicing* church fellowship by such prayers. Joint prayer upon occasion cannot be regarded as an effort to establish fellowship by that very act of prayer; still less can it be looked upon as being in itself an act of church fellowship. To pray jointly for God's aid and blessing signifies no more than that here are Christians — Lutherans in our case — who are deeply and prayerfully concerned about reaching full harmony, agreement, and unity on the basis of God's Word. Not a man present would suppose that, by the act of prayer, this purpose had already been accomplished and further effort rendered unnecessary. Such prayers have not accomplished, as

they were not meant to accomplish in and by themselves, the establishment of that permanent relationship which we call church fellowship. Hence, in the absence of those elements which constitute unionism, we cannot regard the joint prayers spoken of as sinful prayer fellowship condemned by the Scriptures.

"V. Although the chief matter with which this paper was to deal has been presented both completely and with sufficient fullness, as it is hoped, yet it may be well to enter briefly upon some arguments which are often introduced into discussions touching unionism and unionistic prayer.

"One such argument is drawn from the spiritual oneness of all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Roughly, it runs thus: 'Since God has made all Christian believers one, they should all acknowledge one another as Christian brethren and pray with one another.' We may note at the outset that men who argue thus prove far too much, and hence prove nothing. For, since we believe that there are true believers wherever the essentials or fundamentals of the true Gospel are still proclaimed, the plea just noted would logically lead to the establishment of fellowship with all bodies that may be classed as Christian, whether Reformed bodies or the Roman Church or separatistic sects. The oneness or spiritual unity of all believers is of course a fact—a glorious fact. God has made them one in Christ through His Holy Spirit. They are one in the one holy Christian Church, the communion of saints. They are all one in Christ Jesus, Gal. 3:28; they are one body in Christ, Rom. 12:5; they are the body of Christ, 1 Cor. 12:27; they are one flock under one Shepherd, John 10:16. But no human eye has ever seen this one holy Christian Church. This oneness is to be believed; it is an article of faith. The outward, visible Christendom presents an altogether different aspect. It is 'by schisms rent asunder, by heresies distressed.' And here our action must be dictated not by some human argument drawn from the spiritual oneness of all believers—incidentally our greatest comfort in view of the sadly divided state of Christendom—but by the plain directions of the Word of God, which bids us be a confessing Church and to separate ourselves from errors and errorists, as has been amply shown before.

"The great law of Christian love is wrongly appealed to, in this connection, when people say: 'Love can overcome all obstacles. Once we let go our self-love and our prejudices and really begin to love our fellow Christians, we shall soon find the way to union and forget our petty differences.' But again, the general law of Christian love dare not be brought into play against the very definite and specific commands

to hold and confess the whole truth of God's Word and to resist, denounce, and avoid all opposing errors. Who are we to claim greater love than God's by setting aside His own directions concerning error and errorists on the plea that they are opposing the law of love? Besides, toleration of error and fellowshiping errorists is not the outflow of Christian love. For we are 'to speak the truth in love,' Eph. 4:15; and 'love rejoiceth in the truth,' 1 Cor. 13:6. Only God's truth can save and edify. The fact that there are true Christians in heterodox bodies is due not to the error held and taught by them, but to the Gospel truth which they still possess. True love is displayed not by the unionist and the advocate of unionistic prayer, but by the anti-unionist who recognizes the surpassing value of purity of doctrine and desires most heartily to see the full truth of God's Word prevail.

"The warning against exaggerated statements and expectations, which has special reference to the probable influence of joint prayer upon the progress of our intersynodical discussions, perhaps merits a few reflections. At the time when, possibly owing in part to greater uncertainty about the doctrinal position of the U. E. L. C. A., there were among us more scruples about the permissibility of joint prayer than there appear to be at present, one occasionally heard the statement: 'Fruitful negotiations cannot be expected while joint prayer is refused.' We have always deprecated this opinion. For not only was it open to the other side to look upon us as Lutherans suffering from an erring conscience, but both sides certainly implored God's blessing upon the discussions, and there was no need to discount the validity and the efficacy of separate prayers from the very outset. And now the undue pessimism of former years is sometimes replaced by an optimism that is equally unwarranted. For now that objections to joint prayer have been dropped, so a number of people seem to think, all difficulties have disappeared and the desired goal is already within sight and reach. This is of course not the case. For just as the objection to joint prayer did not signify a refusal to acknowledge the Christianity of others, so the introduction of such prayer does not signify the establishment of church fellowship. It is indeed an event fraught with hopeful expectations. For one thing, joint prayer has already created greater confidence and a better atmosphere, and will continue to do so. What is more important, we do not doubt that the precious promise of being heard in the name of Jesus rests upon these prayers. Still, it must be realized that joint prayer is not a sort of magic by which all difficulties are suddenly made to vanish. It does not take from us the duty of continuing to enquire carefully into the doctrinal differences that once existed and perhaps

still exist between the two Lutheran bodies, so that these differences may be composed in accordance with the teaching of the divine Word and all may with one heart and mind joyfully confess the full truth of that Word. May these very joint prayers, then, help to foster and increase in the hearts of all who hear and follow them the highest regard for the truth that is in Christ; and may the God of peace and truth mercifully hear these prayers and grant us unity in truth and in spirit!

"While not everything that can be said on the subject of joint prayer, or prayer fellowship, has been included in this brief study, it is hoped that nothing has been omitted that should be stated or considered in a paper suitable for presentation before this convention. The difficulties frequently attending the practical application of our sound, Scriptural principles will have become clear. Not all questions that arise can be settled in advance. Cases that may crop up from time to time may have to be examined for unionistic implications. Meanwhile, should there be no complete agreement or unanimity in our own church, there must be mutual respect for conscience, as well as the earnest will to give no offense to brethren, whether or not we think of them as 'weak brethren.' Matters such as these can never be settled by bandying about terms such as 'unionist' or 'separatist.' Continued and earnest study of Holy Scriptures, and the determination, flowing from faithful acceptance of the divine Word, to insist upon all that is taught by Scripture for Christian faith and life, but to raise no demand that goes beyond Scripture, will keep us from error and lead us to certainty and unanimity. This is the soundly Scriptural and Christian method; it is also the traditional and confessional Lutheran way."

J. H. C. FRITZ

NIEMOELLER ON CHURCH AND COMMUNISM

In a recent issue of *Christ und Welt*, a weekly published in Stuttgart, appears a statement on Church and Communism released by President Niemöller to the Evangelical press of Germany. He made the statement *apropos* of what he asserted to have been false interpretations by the press of previous statements by him on Church and Communism. Out of consideration for both *Christ und Welt* and President Niemöller, we have attempted to translate his statement as accurately as possible. We believe it worthy of serious thought. The translation from *Christ und Welt* reads:

I am directing myself exclusively against the frequently heard statement that a war against Bolshevism is necessary in order to save Christianity and the Christian Church. It is un-Christian, however, to carry on war for the purpose of preserving the Christian Church,

for the Church is not in need of being saved. She has no fear of Bolshevism because she has the promise that even the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. She is rather to serve, with her message, the Communists as well as all men, while she rejects Communism as a doctrine of salvation as well as all other doctrines of salvation. Communism, however, must and may be opposed only with spiritual weapons and lifted out of its joints. All application of power will prove in vain. The great sorrow of the West results from the fact that until now it has not been in a position to oppose Bolshevism with a spiritual power and a spiritual dynamic. The Church of our day, which so emphatically stresses peace, does so on account of human beings who again are in danger of being sacrificed for allegedly "higher purposes" and hurled into misery. According to Christian teaching, a so-called "higher purpose" does not exist because Jesus Christ died and rose again not for indiscriminate higher purposes, but for men. And, indeed, for *all* men: good and bad, just and unjust, capitalists and Communists, democrats and National Socialists.

Some comments are in order. It certainly is true that there is no justification for a war against Communism to save Christianity and the Church. Christianity is surviving even now in countries which are wholly under Communistic control. The gates of hell will not prevail against the Church. It is also true that the weapons of the Church are spiritual and not carnal. Again, Niemöller may be right in fearing that in the next war human beings will be sacrificed for the realization of played-up "higher purposes." And it is also true that Jesus died for *all* men regardless of their national and political background.

What Niemöller does not say — and he should have said it — is that the Church of Jesus Christ does not exist in a vacuum or in complete isolation from the world. Rather, it is *in* the world and must do its *job* in the world, among people. Niemöller fails to say that, if overpowered by Communism, the Church will find it exceedingly difficult to do her job in an organized way, for all her efforts, as is the case now in countries dominated by Communism, will be seriously impeded and restricted. We sincerely believe that the Church of Jesus Christ exists, for instance, in the Eastern Zone of Germany. A year ago, some of us stood deeply humbled by the reports of Lutheran pastors from this zone who described how they were carrying on their work of saving and preserving souls for Christ. Yet we also learned that it is next to impossible for these pastors to give youth adequate Christian instruction, to establish and maintain Christian theological schools, to print Bibles and theological literature, to carry on organized mission work at home and abroad, and to meet in Christian fellowship without

being spied upon by someone in their own midst. All this Niemöller failed to say. No wonder that he was misunderstood by the press and by others of his countrymen and that he became suspect of championing Communistic views.

On the other hand, it was, in many ways, good that Niemöller said what he did say. The danger of becoming victimized by oversimplified slogans, as has happened often enough in history, is precariously near. It would not take much to make most Americans believe that World War III, if and when it breaks out, is wholly, or above all, a conflict between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, between Christ and Belial, between Christianity and paganism. From this preserve us, dear heavenly Father!

P. M. B.

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND VERSUS THE VATICAN

According to recent newspaper reports, relations between the Church of England and the Vatican were strained over the projected new Roman Catholic dogma that the Virgin Mary went to heaven in body as well as in spirit. It will be remembered that the Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* announced early in August that Pope Pius XII had called a secret consistory for October 30 to make belief in Mary's bodily ascension a dogma of the Church. This means that 423,000,000 Roman Catholics in the world must accept that dogma as an article of faith or expose themselves to the charge of heresy. The pronouncement is to be made November 1.*

On the heels of the announcement in the *L'Osservatore Romano*, Dr. Geoffrey Fisher, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Dr. Cyril F. Garbett, Archbishop of York, issued a formal statement to the effect:

We profoundly regret that the Roman Catholic Church has chosen by this act to increase dogmatic differences in Christendom and has thereby gravely injured the growth of understanding between Christians based on a common possession of the fundamental truths of the Gospel. . . . The Church of England refuses to regard as requisite for a saving faith any doctrines or opinions which are not plainly contained in the Scriptures.

About the same time, a leading English newspaper commented that for 400 years the Church of England has held that the bodily ascension of Mary is not founded on Scripture and that, therefore, many English churchmen will consider that the new dogma blights hopes of more friendly relations between Canterbury and Rome.

Every true Protestant whose faith is grounded in Scripture rejoices

* The dogma was discussed in the March, 1950, issue of this journal.

at the forthright statement made by leaders of the Church of England and also draws the conclusion that the rift between Catholicism and Protestantism will be widened and that all attempts made in recent years by both Catholic and Protestant theologians to arrive at mutual understanding with respect to Christian dogma, have been next to purposeless.

It grieves one, however, to note that in the Church of England there are those who are troubling Christian consciences just as much as the Vatican. Whereas the Pope, by declaring the bodily assumption of Mary a dogma, will give error the status of divine truth, some liberal theologians in the Church of England are detracting from Scripture and relativizing practically all Scriptural truth. Here is Dr. J. C. Wright, member of the staff of St. Augustine's College, Canterbury, one of the chief missionary colleges of the Church of England, who said in a churchmen's conference in which the dogma controversy was aired: "Few Christian scholars have any confidence that what is called the Virgin birth was historical fact, and there are a number of possible and permissible theories of what is called the resurrection, the ascension, and the judgment." How is it possible, one asks, for a scholar like Dr. Wright and others who share his views to hold key positions in the Church of England? If views like these are propounded in the professorial chair, in the pulpit, and in theological books and journals, is it any wonder that spiritual life in the Church of England is at a low ebb? Is it any wonder that at a matin service which we attended at St. Paul's Cathedral two years ago, the audience numbered eight people? Little is gained when a church protests against the rise and establishment of a doctrine not founded on Scripture but tolerates in its midst the proclamation of false and pernicious teachings which destroy faith and lead people into skepticism and agnosticism.

P. M. B.

CATHOLIC OPINION ON THE KOREAN WAR

In its issue of August 5, *America*, Catholic weekly, editorializes on the Korean war as follows:

This war is a defense against the avowed enemies of God. No one hates war more than Christ's Vicar, Pope Pius XII. No one has raised his voice so often or so solemnly in repeated pleas for peace. Yet in his 1948 Christmas message, our present Holy Father declared:

"One thing, however, is certain: the commandment of peace is a matter of divine law. Its purpose is the protection of the goods of humanity, inasmuch as they are the gifts of the Creator. Among these goods some are of such importance for society that it is perfectly lawful to defend them against unjust aggression. *Their defense*

is even an obligation for the nations as a whole, who have a duty not to abandon a nation that is attacked" (italics in original).

American troops in Korea are therefore fighting for justice — God's justice. . . . It ought to be a great consolation to all Catholic parents to realize that *this is the first war we have ever fought in which the criteria of a just war as laid down by the Vicar of Christ are so clearly fulfilled that not even the most delicate conscience should have any doubts* (italics in original).

The author of the above asserts that "this war is a defense against the avowed enemies of God." Is it? Are we not fighting the Korean war because northern Koreans, even though armed with weapons provided by communistic Russia, have invaded southern Korea, the westernmost bastion of our military arm? Perhaps the time will come, perhaps soon, when we shall fight the Russians "because they are the avowed enemies of God," perhaps World War III will be fought to determine whether Jehovah is God or the Baal of Sovietism (the Marxist-Lenin-Stalin philosophy). But certainly, the present war is not such a war, is not a religious crusade.

But perhaps *America* is merely sending up a trial balloon to determine whether Catholics and Protestants can be counted upon to accept the Roman ideology that it's either the Pope or Stalin, either Roman Catholic Christianity or Russian paganism. In any case, Protestants need to be on their guard and think soberly and pray fervently in the present conflict of ideas and ideals.

P. M. B.

BAPTIST RESOLUTIONS ON INTERFAITH MARRIAGES

At its convention in Boston, May 21 to 26, the American Baptist Convention (formerly known as the Northern Baptist Convention) adopted a set of resolutions on interfaith marriages which are similar to those adopted by our Synod in Milwaukee. For the sake of the record, however, we are submitting them to our readers.

WHEREAS, The Roman Catholic Church has published a directive to its priests, church members, and the general public implying that non-Catholic weddings lack the authenticity furnished by Catholic ceremonies through instituting disparaging restrictions and exemptions; and

WHEREAS, The publication of these discriminations affect so many young people who unite in marriage in the freedom of our American customs and indicates to them that non-Catholic marriages are of an inferior and less religious nature; therefore

Be it resolved, That the Northern Baptist Convention repudiate the Roman Catholic claim to authoritarianism in marriage and declare it an invasion of the principles of religious and social freedom; and

Be it further *resolved*, That Baptist pastors be urged to inform their young people of the menace to their freedom of the imposed authoritarianism of the Roman Catholic Church, not merely in the performance of marriage, but also in the dictated rules regarding the raising of offspring of mixed marriages in the Roman Catholic Church; that young people contemplating an interfaith marriage be instructed by their pastors regarding their civil and religious rights under our Baptist standards of religious liberty.

P. M. B.

CATHOLIC OPPOSITION TO INTERFAITH MARRIAGES

Rev. Emmet P. O'Connell, S. J., has done both Catholic and Protestants a great service by publishing in *America* (June 24) his findings on interfaith marriages. Rev. O'Connell, founder (1934) of the course on marriage at the University of Detroit, quotes in his article "Non-Catholics Oppose Mixed Marriages" from recent Protestant pamphlets and books and from sentiments expressed by non-Catholic students who were enrolled in his marriage course. All the evidence presented by him points overwhelmingly in the direction that marriages between Catholics and Protestants are, especially from the spiritual point of view, a most precarious venture. From Rev. O'Connell's article, we are submitting only the concluding remarks:

Ordinarily, in treating of the subject of mixed marriages, only Catholic opposition to such unions is stressed. The above survey of non-Catholic attitudes should help to confirm the objective value of our arguments against Catholic-Protestant unions and to convince our Catholic young people of the truth of the comment which was recently made by a young Protestant university student: that "at their best, mixed marriages begin with two strikes against them."

The same issue of *America* contains, however, also an editorial on Rev. O'Connell's article titled "A Great Sacrament." In this editorial the writer seeks to defend the position of the Catholic Church by briefly developing four reasons why the Catholic Church is opposed to interfaith marriages. One of these reasons we are here reproducing because it expresses in telling, unmistakable words that the Catholic Church regards itself exclusively as the *Una Sancta*. The paragraph reads:

... It is an inevitable assertion of the essential Catholic belief that the Son of God founded a definite, visible society to continue His work of redeeming the world, that that society is the Catholic Church, governed by the Pope, the successor of St. Peter, to whom Christ gave the primacy in teaching and ruling His one Church. The Catholic insistence, therefore, that promises be made by the Protestant partner before permission for the marriage is granted may seem to the non-

Catholic intolerably arrogant. It will have to be conceded, however, that it is consistent. Anything less would manifest an indifference in fulfilling the mission entrusted by Christ to the Catholic Church alone.

P. M. B.

RECENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS

The *Biblical Archeologist*, published by the American Schools of Oriental Research, features in its May issue two significant articles, "Bricks Without Straw?" by Charles F. Nims, and the "Discoveries at Megiddo, 1935—39," by G. Ernest Wright. The author of the first article comes to the conclusion:

The evidence of both ancient and modern methods in the manufacture of mud brick in Egypt indicates that while brick are occasionally made without straw, this practice is far from common. The mixture of straw or grass in with the mud seems essential for a strong and durable brick. The Exodus story [Exodus 5] states that the straw from the threshing floor was no longer delivered to the Hebrews and that they had to gather such stubble as they could find to take its place, while the quota of bricks to be delivered remained the same. Thus the oft-repeated phrase, "bricks without straw," does not represent the actual situation, but rests on a gross misunderstanding of the Scripture and an ignorance of actual practice.

The article by Professor Wright is a most interesting account of the various strata uncovered at Megiddo by recent archaeological investigations.

In the same issue of the *Biblical Archeologist*, Professor Wright summarizes recent findings at the site of Jericho. He writes:

From the news releases the excavation [at Bulul Abu el-Alayiq, a group of mounds commonly identified as New Testament Jericho] was evidently an extraordinary success, because the ruins dug into turned out to be those of the winter palace and one of the favorite resorts of Herod the Great, king of Judaea by grant of the Roman senate (37—4 B.C.). In 34 B.C. he was compelled by Marc Antony to cede Jericho to Queen Cleopatra, but after Octavian's defeat of Antony and Cleopatra in 31 B.C. the city was returned to him. The buildings uncovered include a massive defensive tower, approximately twenty meters square, a residential complex grouped about the tower, and a series of vaulted rooms at the base of the tell excavated, leading up the slopes from the Wadi Qelt. The tower is a unique piece of Palestinian military engineering and is being left open as a public monument.

P. M. B.

AN AMERICAN CONTRIBUTION APPRECIATED BY GERMAN THEOLOGIAN

Commenting on the Rev. H. J. Boettcher's *Instructor's Manual for Luther's Small Catechism*, Dr. A. E. Buchrucker, who holds a pastorate in the Wuppertal, has high words of praise in the *Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung* (Muenchen, April 15, 1950) not only regarding Dr. Boettcher's handbook, but also regarding the extent to which the Missouri Synod has become an inspiration to Christian educators both in America and in Germany. Dr. Buchrucker calls Dr. Boettcher's *Manual* "one of the most excellent works in Lutheran catechetics." The review extends over almost a page, giving a very accurate outline of the scheme underlying this instructor's manual. Admiration is expressed particularly for the manner in which Dr. Boettcher seeks to co-ordinate the material of the Catechism with other branches of human knowledge, with social science, physics, music, the arts, and mathematics. We translate the closing paragraph of Dr. Buchrucker's review:

"Boettcher's book is indeed a comprehensive, extremely valuable and practical aid, setting forth the manner in which everything may be placed into the service of catechetics, yes, into the service of God's kingdom. In this volume we cannot fail to note how closely and necessarily related are the Church and its publicity or public relations program. Also in its pedagogical program her task must be to step outside of her own walls and approach modern man, the modern child. The impressions which catechumens receive concerning the Christian congregation and its pastor will largely determine their later attitude towards the church. It would be worth while to have Boettcher's excellent treatise translated into German."

This closing suggestion, read in the light of the guides for catechetical instruction which have since the close of hostilities poured from German presses, their authors among the most noted German theologians, is indeed high praise.

THEODORE GRAEBNER

ITEMS FROM "RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE"

The Evangelical Lutheran Church added 41,674 new members to its roster in 1949, bringing its total baptized membership to 813,837. Confirmed membership reached 576,621 in 1949, an increase of 26,551 over the previous year. This Lutheran body has established its first parochial schools in California. Two more E. L. C. congregations on the West Coast will open similar schools this fall. One pastor of the E. L. C. has said that the volume of inquiries from other parts of the nation indicate that the movement in favor of parochial schools is developing throughout his denomination. Reasons for the establishment of parochial schools seem to be the belief that public schools "have gone overboard for progressive education"; that parents feel religion is a legitimate part of the daily school program; and that the public schools in California are overcrowded.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church also voted tighter church control over its twelve educational institutions at its biennial convention in Minneapolis. However, it voted to refer the following four highly controversial recommendations to church councils for study and reconsideration at the 1952 convention: 1. Bring Augustana College, Sioux Falls, S. Dak., and Concordia College, Moorhead, Minn., under direct ownership of the church. 2. Bar laymen from the presidency of any of the E. L. C. colleges. 3. Require that appointments to head Christianity departments at E. L. C. colleges be made with the advice and consent of the church's board of education. 4. Prohibit E. L. C. colleges from undertaking building programs without the approval of the church's board of education and board of trustees.

The Lutheran Daughters of the Reformation, a young women's auxiliary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, has adopted a unique plan to provide their church with missionaries. Under the plan the young women, many of whom are still in school without a regular income, are able to have personal representatives on a mission field for one or more days each year. Members of the organization are enrolled in the Missionary-for-a-Day plan, as it is called, by contributing five dollars to support one missionary for a day. These five-dollar contributions are sent in at Pentecost each year. When enough members are enrolled, the foreign mission board of the church calls a missionary to be sent out under sponsorship of the Lutheran Daughters of the Reformation. The plan, inaugurated in 1946, has been received with such enthusiasm that already five missionaries are being supported by the group. Two are serving in Japan, and three were commissioned

for service in Madagascar. The idea has spread outside of the organization. Pastors as well as members of other women's groups have enrolled in the Missionary-for-a-Day plan. At present the Lutheran Daughters of the Reformation has 19,000 members.

Twelve leading theologians and scholars recently made plans for the first major revision in thirty-eight years of the Schaff-Herzog *Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*. The revision plans call for the addition of two volumes to the thirteen volumes of the encyclopedia published in 1912. Dr. Lefferts A. Loetscher, associate professor of church history, Princeton Theological Seminary, is editor in chief. He, together with men drawn from seven theological seminaries, is expected to appoint an additional 500 scholars from all parts of the world to assist in the work. Fields to be covered by the two additional volumes, the first of which is scheduled for publication next year, include Comparative Religion, Systematic Theology, Ecclesiastical Terminology, Practical Theology, Old and New Testament, Medieval Church and Protestant Reformation, Ancient Church, Contemporary Biographies, and Post-Reformation Church History.

The annual meeting of the Christian Reformed Church congregations recently deferred the question of allowing women to vote at its meetings. The synod decided to wait and see how the Reformed churches in the Netherlands will handle this question which they are also discussing.

Dr. F. Ernest Johnson, professor at Teachers College, Columbia University, in addressing the eighth triennial session of the synod of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, warned the delegates that as a result of recent U. S. Supreme Court decisions, "the traditional doctrine of separation between Church and State is in the process of becoming a doctrine of separation between the State and all religion whatsoever," and added that this is an eventuality which "Protestants can never accept." He insisted that, instead of being isolated from the public schools, "religion should be studied as it is encountered." By this he meant that "churches and other forms of organized religion might properly be studied in the civics and problems-of-democracy courses, since churches are social institutions." He said the Bible might be interpreted in literature classes, religious institutions in history classes, and the social aspects of the Church in classes on social problems.

The Baptist General Conference of America, meeting in Worcester, Mass., issued a call for the establishment of interdenominational Prot-

estant elementary and high schools throughout the United States. The Rev. J. Leonard Carroll of Chicago, secretary of the denomination's Bible School and Young People's Work, said such a step is necessary because Christianity cannot be taught in public schools.

When the Christian Businessmen's Committee, Inc., operator of Hospitality House, Minneapolis, appealed to the supreme court of the State from a tax department ruling, the Minnesota Supreme Court handed down this decision: "When a building is owned by a charitable institution and one substantial part thereof is occupied for the purpose for which it was organized, and other substantial part is used for rental to the public, the rental portion should be prorated for tax purposes." Ronald V. Powers, deputy commissioner of taxes, said that under the new interpretation of the law any substantial portions of property formerly considered to be wholly tax exempt may be subject to taxation when any substantial portion of that property is used commercially.

James E. Ely, sixty-year-old landowner of Garden City, Kans., has deeded farm lands valued at \$250,000 to the Wheaton, Ill., World Colportage Association, headed by the Rev. Raymond Edman, president of Wheaton College. Mr. Ely, a former student at Moody Bible Institute, has written a number of faith booklets and sent millions of copies to missionaries in many lands.

A two-volume history of the Ecumenical Movement is in preparation by the World Council of Churches. The first volume will deal with four centuries of ecumenical movements, from the Reformation to the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910, and the second volume with the modern Ecumenical Movement from 1910 to the Amsterdam Assembly in 1948. Five churchmen from America are among the sixteen authors who will contribute chapters to the two volumes. They are Professor Georg Florovsky of St. Vladimir's Orthodox Academy, New York; Dr. Donald Yoder of Franklin and Marshall College; Professor Kenneth Scott Latourette of Yale Divinity School; Professor John McNeill of Union Theological Seminary, New York; and Dr. H. Paul Douglass of the Federal Council of Churches. The World Council of Churches hopes to publish the history in 1952 in preparation for the second general assembly of the World Council in 1953.

Formation of the National Alliance of Lutheran Churches in France was announced in Paris at a meeting of the general synod of the Lutheran Evangelical Church. The Alliance, officials said, brings together

the Alsace-Lorraine Augsburg Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church, which cannot unite completely because of the difference of regimes. In Alsace-Lorraine the Church and State are not separated as they are in the rest of France.

The Rev. Richard Solberg, assistant professor of history at Augustana College, Sioux Falls, S. Dak., reported to the delegates of the biennial convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Minneapolis that one fifth of the Lutherans of the world—seventeen million of them—are living under Communist rule in Eastern Germany. He added that only about one tenth of the East Germans are Communists.

Reports received in London from Poland state that all mention of God has been removed from the Boy Scout oath in Communist-dominated Poland and the phrase "love for the Soviet" substituted instead. The change was made after the recent breach between the Polish Boy Scout movement and the World Scouts Organization, which came after Polish Scout leaders had visited Moscow. Meanwhile new Scout laws have been issued in Poland which bear little resemblance to the original laws. The Polish Scout now swears to vote for building a socialist state and to promote friendship with Russia. He is no longer a "brother to all," but only a "brother to the working people."

King Abdullah of Jordan has approved his cabinet's decision to exempt the Lutheran World Federation from all registration fees connected with transferring property of the Lutheran German Mission in old Jerusalem to the Federation. This information was contained in a telegram sent from Jerusalem to Lutheran World Federation headquarters in Geneva and signed by Dr. Sylvester C. Michelfelder, the Federation's executive secretary, and Dr. Edwin Moll, Lutheran representative in Palestine.

The Sacred Congregation of the Council in Rome has issued a decree to the effect that priests in Communist-dominated countries who accept canonical appointments without proper ecclesiastical authority will incur automatic excommunication. Also incurring *ipso facto* excommunication, the decree said, are persons who "plot against legitimate ecclesiastical authorities" or who "attempt by any means whatever to undermine the authority of church dignitaries." In addition, excommunication will fall upon "those who directly or indirectly participate in such crimes."

ALEX C. W. GUEBERT