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## Theological Observer. - Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches

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## THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

### A GERMAN APPRAISAL OF H. RICHARD NIEBUHR'S CONTRIBUTION TO AMERICAN THEOLOGY

It is quite natural that the section of German Protestantism which was most deeply influenced by dialectical theology would manifest a keen interest in American Neo-orthodox theologians, particularly in Paul Tillich (a native of Germany) and the Niebuhr brothers. In *Verkündigung und Forschung, Theologischer Jahresbericht*, 51/52 (pp. 101—114) Hans-Heinrich Wolf discusses H. Richard Niebuhr's contribution to American theology and church life on the basis of Niebuhr's basic publications, *The Social Forces of Denominationalism* (1929); *The Kingdom of God in America* (1937); *The Meaning of Revelation* (1941, 1946), and on the basis of various articles in religious journals and his contributions to symposia. In the first section of the article the German author summarizes the impact of Niebuhr's critical evaluation of American Protestantism. In his first noteworthy study (1929) Niebuhr tried to analyze the causes of American denominationalism and described the story of American Protestantism as the history of never-ending schisms and condemned the churches for their failure to overcome the contradictions in human society and for actually increasing and deepening them. According to Niebuhr, the churches are too definitely tied to capitalism and nationalism. Unfortunately, Niebuhr's strictures are not without basis. Too many churchmen held — and some still do — that capitalism is the only social and economic structure which can serve as man's savior from his deep distress. They believed — and some still do — that man's greatest activity must be put into the production of tangible goods and that the standard of all true values is the economic level, which is frequently reflected in the design and architecture of our public and private buildings. Alongside of capitalism, nationalism had become for many the source of man's true life and existence. Both "isms" have, as Niebuhr claims, crept into the Church to such an extent that the Church lost the meaning of sin, the necessity of regeneration, the hope for a life after death. This world had become so charming and challenging that many saw the Church's function solely in its effort to help secular society to reach the highest form of development and, as Niebuhr analyzed the situation, believed that the salvation of society is possible only through the social sciences and psychological studies and that the worship of God is no



more than man's inspiration for a redemption which he himself must and can execute. Niebuhr had predicted the utter helplessness of such a *Weltanschauung* and urged the Church to return to the Word of God and to discard psychology and sociology. The Church must undertake a radical cleansing and radically rethink its real essence and function. As the German critic points out, Niebuhr attacked a concept of a religion which, according to William James, is the sum total of the emotions, actions, and experiences which confront the individual in his solitude and bring him, if he is at all conscious of such experience, into the presence of some greater power which he may call God. Niebuhr's attack on American Liberalism is, in the opinion of our German author, primarily an attack on the psychology of religion, and conversely the current opposition to Neo-orthodoxy stems particularly from such people as would like to retain the priceless pearl of the psychology of religion. An analysis of Niebuhr's *Werdegang* indicates that the historic genesis of American Neo-orthodoxy is radically different from the dialectical theology of Barth and Brunner. It comes close to Tillich's "belief-full realism."

Instead of breaking completely with the social gospel, Niebuhr—according to his German critic—advises the American Church in his book *The Kingdom of God in America* to return to original Protestantism. Niebuhr conceives the Kingdom of God primarily as the exercise of God's absolute sovereignty. This concept is predicated on Niebuhr's conviction that in Jesus Christ the invisible Kingdom is revealed, that in Him an entirely new epoch has begun among mankind, characterized in modern times by the revivalism under such men as Jonathan Edwards and Charles G. Finney. Of course, liberal theology did away completely with this Calvinistic concept of the Kingdom of God. Liberal theology had practically equated God and man, which of course, eliminated every phase of judgment, every real idea of man's redemption, and especially the concept of sin. The Neo-orthodox theologians have found liberal theology's jugular vein: the optimistic belief in man's inherent goodness. Liberal theology had reduced sin to mere personal tensions, inhibitions, and psychoses, or psychological maladjustment, and pictured the Kingdom of God as the reign of a god without wrath over a man without sin in a realm without a judgment through the mediation of a Christ without a cross. It is against this liberal viewpoint that Niebuhr proclaims "the Kingdom of God" as the sovereign power of God under the dominion of Christ.

According to our German interpreter, the anti-social-gospel orienta-



tion of Niebuhr has made him a leader in the new American movement which attempts to give real meaning to revelation. According to Niebuhr, revelation confronts us under three aspects: the connection of the relative with the absolute in history; the contacts between scientific or objective history and religious history; the problem of natural theology and historic faith. Niebuhr believes that we can share in revelation only if we use the medium of history. As the German critic points out, this makes Niebuhr's concept of revelation extremely vague. In fact, it seems to us that there is not too much difference between Niebuhr's and Bultmann's approach to the concept of revelation, especially revelation in the Scriptures. Bultmann speaks of the fact behind the "*mythos*" or the kernel behind the shell. Niebuhr speaks of the external and the internal history, and it appears to us that his external history is merely the medium in which the internal history exists and comes to activity. The heart and the most internal part of God's revelation is said to be the event of Jesus Christ, in whom God's righteousness, power, and wisdom is revealed. This revelation revolves about three facts: (1) In revealing the history of the past, this very past becomes our own past; (2) the meditation of our own destroyed past engenders new life, and we learn to see the life of our fellow men and the history of the Church as a confession of sin; (3) revelation at the same time has a character of appropriation, that is, the Christians recognize the social, economic, spiritual injustices and inequalities in the various social strata of the past as their own past and thus make the guilt of it their own present guilt. Membership in the Church can be established only when we realize that Jesus Christ is conscious of our past and its sins and that in Christ we become guilty of them and share with others. In this way man makes a face-about and in his confrontation with Christ goes through a "permanent revolutionary encounter."

Unfortunately, only too many German theologians judge American theology solely on the basis of a few leading theologians, and not on the basis of a real cross section of theology in the local parish. After all is said and done, Neo-orthodoxy, be it the American brand or the European kind, is primarily "arrested liberalism," and the theology of the Niebuhr Brothers and Tillich in America or of Barth and Brunner in Europe—and now in Japan—is philosophy far more than theology. It is therefore all the more important that Lutheranism make its message effective in those circles of German theology where the great vacuum brought about through the complete destruction of the optimistic theology of Liberalism has thus far not been filled with the message of the Cross.

F. E. M.



### THE CHURCH AND SOCIAL RIGHTEOUSNESS

The theological, ecclesiological, social, and political situation of the past two decades has made the question of the Church and its relation to social justice, especially Luther's doctrine of the "two realms," very relevant for German theologians. Fritz Heidler, executive secretary of the *Maennerarbeit* in the Eastern Churches of the EKD, discusses this topic in *Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung*, March 1, 1953. The author points out that the Church is concerned with man's relation to God, that is, it deals with a vertical situation. Social righteousness describes a horizontal relation of man to man; the Church is concerned with eternal life, the State with the secular and temporal life; in the Church the Word of God and the love of Christ reign supreme, in the secular realm authority and coercion are the motivating force; in the Church the Holy Spirit and faith govern, in the world reason takes over.

Both areas deal with justice and righteousness. However, the Church deals with the *justified man*, and it is the office of the Church to proclaim the righteousness which avails before God. The secular State deals with *just conditions*. The State proclaims the righteousness of life and establishes such human interrelations as guarantee social justice. Both are true and genuine righteousnesses, and as Luther says, both are divine things. Nevertheless, they are as completely different from each other as heaven and earth are separate. The Lutheran Church — including our own Synod — has frequently maintained that since each operates in an entirely different area, the Church has nothing to do with social justice. However, it is becoming increasingly evident that such a tight compartmentalization is not the answer to the problem of the "two realms" and that the shibboleth of "absolute separation of Church and State" is no way out from the tremendous obligations of this question.

Pastor Heidler therefore continues his article to point out that Church and State are closely tied together by a bond from below and from above. The bond from below consists in this, that the Christian can never operate in an area outside the secular realm. He is always a member of both realms. The spiritual and secular are united also by a bond from above, for the same God who created the many orders to govern the secular realm has sent His Son Jesus Christ into the world. God is the Lord of both realms. But God uses a different mode in each realm: the Church is the "realm of the Word," and here man sees God's open face in Christ; but in the ordinances of the world God covers His face behind the mask of political, economic, and social institutions.

If the spiritual and the secular are so bound together, then Pfarrer Heidler's question is in order: What word must be spoken to the



question of social justice? He answers that though God is the Lord of both realms, He reveals Himself only in the Word spoken to and by the Church, and therefore only the Church can declare the Word and will of God concerning social righteousness. At first glance this seems to be a complete mingling of the two realms. But Heidler has in mind the extent of the Church's "social message," both in its breadth and its limitations. Keeping our eyes fixed on the members of the Church, we see that the extent of the social message is very wide; but in view of the fact that the two realms are entirely different, there is a definite limit to the word which the Church speaks. Franz Lau summarizes both the extent and the limitations of the Church's message by stating that Luther mightily supports the politicians ("greift den Politikern kraeftig ins Maul") and gives them tremendous scope, but he does not interfere with the manner of government ("pfuscht ihnen nicht ins Handwerk") and thereby limits their message. Walter Kuenneth states that according to Luther there is a personal responsibility of the Christian in politics, but not an actual Christianization of the political activity. However, it must constantly be kept in mind that German theologians — and also Heidler — are confronted by a culture different from the American with its principle of separation of Church and State. Nevertheless Heidler's observations have meaning for American Lutheranism's message concerning social righteousness. He lists several facets: 1. Before the Fall there was perfect harmony between God and man and among men; the Fall brought disorder into all social relations; if social justice is to be re-established, then man himself must first of all be changed, which can be accomplished solely by his acceptance of the righteousness of Christ Jesus. 2. Heidler maintains that since Christ has died for all men, therefore the individual must be respected in Christ and be granted social justice; and, according to his conclusions, it becomes the duty of the Church to work for such conditions as will allow men of every race or social class to enjoy an existence worthy of man. This point shows the tremendous impact which the experiences of the last two decades have had on German theological thinking in the social realm and how much the U.N. statement on human rights means to them. 3. He states further that politics and economics are not self-sufficient or autonomous; for justice, including also economic justice, stems from God. This means that the economic structure is for man's sake and not man for economy's sake, and all social organizations must constantly keep in mind that neither humanitarianism nor the Church can tolerate such inhumanity of man to man as divides society into two antipodal classes,



a luxury class and a slavery class. However, Heidler does not advocate the removal of all social lines, but the recognition of those principles which give man the right to work and to earn a livelihood and enable him to lead a life in accord with the divinely constituted justice and his own human dignity. Pfarrer Heidler holds that while it is not the business of the Church to change unjust political and economical situations, it is very definitely the duty and function of the Church to quicken the consciences of its members as to their responsibility in all social questions and to arouse the consciences to exercise love and mercy and providential care. American Lutheran theology must earnestly examine itself whether it has kept in mind the *extent* of its social message. But lest the pendulum swing into the opposite direction, it must also keep in mind the *limitations* of the word which the Church speaks in politics and economics. Heidler places the limits especially in the area of the form which social righteousness demands. That is a matter for economic and political specialists. It is, for example, not the theologian's business to determine whether socialism or capitalism is the better social, political, or economic structure. The involvement of a large section of American Protestantism in this non-theological problem is one reason why we American Lutherans are filled with a genuine fear of the social gospel and why large sections of our American people have become alienated from the Church. The form of our social structure is not a matter of faith—as some extreme American Calvinists maintain—but of judgment. The Christian answers this problem in obedience to his God-given and sanctified reason.

German Lutheranism has been faced by the serious problem—it may confront us sooner or later in the U. S. A.—whether the Church must at all times advocate and support the existing social and political structure or can in any way sanction an economic, social, or political revolution. In reply Pfarrer Heidler points out that Luther criticized the economic conditions of his time most severely, but never advocated the overthrow of these political systems. Nevertheless Luther seems to advocate a change when human life requires it and the law of love demands it (*W.A.* 43, 653; 30, I, 141). Heidler comes to the conclusion that if the specialists in the political-economic society conclude that the social justice demanded by the Word of God can be accomplished by a complete overthrow of the present economic conditions, then the Church has no solid reason to deny such a revolution. However, the Church must insist that in all such changes man's humanity to man must be recognized.

In the final analysis it remains the individual Christian's responsibility



to make the decision in such cases, and even in his economic decisions he stands before his God and must account for them in the light of his faith. However, the possibility of various conclusions reached by the separate members of the Church dare never lead to a destruction and collapse of society. No matter how differently we may think concerning secular affairs, the unity in Christ must supersede everything else, for through the forgiveness of sins in Jesus we belong intimately together. The guidelines suggested in this article deserve careful consideration and hold true to a large extent in America as well as in the European situation.

F. E. M.

#### BULTMANN'S THEOLOGY

In a review of Karl Barth's *Rudolf Bultmann* (*Deutsches Pfarrblatt*, 3/1/53) Lic. Flemming of Berlin-Steglitz complains that the discussion concerning Bultmann continues, though Bultmann is now in retirement. He thinks that too much honor has been given to Bultmann, since in reality his theology is nothing but a renaissance of the old rationalism and liberalism, which the majority of Germans consider passé, *ein überwundener Standpunkt*. As proof of Bultmann's liberalism the reviewer calls attention to the fact that Bultmann has republished A. Harnack's *The Essence of Christianity*, one of the most radical publications during the heyday of German rationalism fifty years ago. Like Harnack, Bultmann denies basic facts of the Biblical revelations, such as the miracles of the New Testament, the New Testament doctrine of the Holy Spirit, Christ's resurrection, His descent into hell, and His ascension, as well as His glorious second coming. Bultmann views the classical doctrine of the atonement as unethical and impossible. These are Barth's judgments of Bultmann's theology. But, as Flemming points out, while Barth lists some deficiencies in Bultmann's theology and the difficulty to get behind the real meaning of the Marburg professor, Barth fails to mention the real danger in Bultmann's theology, namely, his denial of the basic soteriological truths. Barth and Bultmann have more in common than may appear at first, certainly more than their mystifying style and argumentation; "dunkel ist der Rede Sinn" applies to Bultmann as much as to Barth. We agree with the English theologian Baillie that Bultmann is only another face of Barth. The pathetic fact is, as Flemming points out, that in their attempt to learn the theological handsprings of dialecticalism many embryonic theologians have broken their back. The reviewer warns against every attempt to judge theology by any philosophical standards, and in this connection relates the anecdote of A. Schlatter, whom the



*Kultus-Minister* considered for an important ecclesiastical position (we assume the theological professorship at Tuebingen). "It is true, is it not, Professor, that you stand on the Bible?" "Oh, no, my Excellency, I stand *under* the Bible," was Schlatter's answer.

F. E. M.

#### JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES AND THE USE OF THE DIVINE NAME

In 1950 Jehovah's Witnesses published the *New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures*. They claim that this translation is free from all the misleading errors contained in previous translations and therefore meets God's requirements that as mankind stands at the portals of the "new world" (2 Pet. 3:13), it must also have a "new world" translation, in which no uninspired human traditions dare darken and nullify the divine Word. The rather extensive preface of this new translation lists and discusses the alleged errors and satanic lies which, according to the Witnesses, previous translations introduced into the Christian Church, particularly the doctrine of the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, the personality of the Holy Spirit, and the immortality of the soul. In some detail the preface also advances textual criticism, philological apparatus, and grammatical arguments in support of the distinctive teachings of this group.

Jehovah's Witnesses insist that the name Jehovah must be used exclusively to denote the Supreme Deity and that the use of any other name is sacrilege. Of course, the Witnesses overlook the fact that the Hebrew alphabet originally had no signs for vowels; that the most common name for God is the tetragrammaton JHVH; that the Jews never pronounced this name, but always substituted *Adonai*; that the modern form Jehovah is a construction of the four consonants in JHVH and the vowels of *Adonai*; that God ascribes many other names to Himself, such as *Elohim*, *Kadosh*.

But the insistence on using only the name Jehovah for God is not merely an idiosyncrasy of Jehovah's Witnesses. It is the basic theological consideration for their unqualified denial of the Trinity and, concomitantly, the denial of the deity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. No matter how beautifully Jehovah's Witnesses on their visit to the homes of our parishioners may speak of Christ, the fact is that Jehovah's Witnesses are outspoken Arians and Unitarians. Arianism is, strictly speaking, a type of Pelagianism, inasmuch as it stems from the theory that man does not need a divine-human Savior. There is therefore only one effective way to silence the Arians, and that is the approach of Athanasius. On the basis of soteriology he maintained the doctrine of the Trinity and of the deity of Christ *contra mundum*.



Nevertheless it will be necessary to show the completely unscientific method employed in the *New World Translation* in order to silence their unchristian pronouncements. The Witnesses charge that there is no ground for the translation of JHVH with *kyrios* and/or *theos* in the LXX, and they make bold to assert that someone deliberately tampered with the Septuagint and introduced the Greek words in order to mislead people. To prove this completely untenable position they have included in the preface to the *New World Translation* a photostatic copy of an instance in which the version of the LXX prepared by Aquila in 128 A.D. used the tetragrammaton JHVH. But the absurdity of building the preposterous claims of their theology on this obscure point is evident when one keeps in mind that the version of Aquila was prepared several centuries after the completion of the LXX; that Aquila used archaic Hebrew letters for the one instance of JHVH; that there are almost 7,000 instances in which JHVH occurs; and that Aquila uses the Hebrew tetragrammaton only once, otherwise the terms *kyrios* and *theos*. Is it scholarship to charge deliberate tampering with the Scriptures on such flimsy grounds? Jehovah's Witnesses insist that likewise the New Testament must be corrected to eliminate the Greek names *kyrios* and *theos* as the divine name and substitute *Jehovah* as the distinctive name of God. The Preface to the *New World Translation* claims that Matthew originally wrote his Gospel in Aramaic and, of course, used the name JHVH. In order to find support for the doctrine of the Trinity and deity of Christ later writers, however, so the Witnesses charge, tampered with Matthew's text when they translated it into Greek and discarded the distinctive name Jehovah and substituted the words *kyrios* and *theos*.

In *Theology Today* Bruce M. Metzger of Princeton Theological Seminary has an excellent article entitled "Jehovah's Witnesses and Jesus Christ." (This article may be obtained in pamphlet form from The Theological Book Agency, Princeton, N. J., for 15 cents.) Dr. Metzger shows that while Jehovah's Witnesses claim to be Bible students and to operate solely with the Bible, they are of all modern sects the least oriented in the Scriptures. He points out that they ignore even their own *The New World Translation*, which, clearly teaches the deity of Christ (John 20:28; Acts 7:59; Gal. 1:1; John 10:30). The author further lists a few of the many erroneous translations, particularly the usual argument that the "missing article" in John 1:1 indicates that Jesus is "a god," in contrast with "the God," which shows that the translators either purposely overlooked or were ignorant of some of the basic rules of Greek grammar. Dr. Metzger



reminds us that in the translation of Col. 1:15-17 the word "other" has been inserted four times without any warrant, and this rendition makes it appear as though the sacred writers placed Jesus on a par with other created things. The author also shows very conclusively that on the basis of textual criticism, philology, grammar, hermeneutics, the *New World Translation* completely distorts the Scriptures in its attempt to deny the deity of Christ.

F. E. M.

#### THE TWOFOLD GANDHI

In the *Sunday School Times* (February 21, 1953) Dr. Ernest Gordon, in a review article on a recent book bearing the above title, offers some interesting information on Gandhi's person and work. The book is published by the A. R. Mowbray & Co., Ltd., 28 Margaret St., London W. 1, and costs 8/6. Its author, the Rev. W. H. G. Holmes, was long a member of the Oxford Mission in Calcutta and knew Gandhi well. So also he knew India well from a lifetime of service there.

Missionary Holmes "believes the earlier Gandhi to have been a humble humanitarian, a friend of the oppressed and poor, in grateful sympathy with the Samaritan and educational ministries of Christian missions and not unfriendly to the British government." He writes: "This is the Gandhi who has received such high praise from American theological liberals. The later Gandhi was very different."

The following are statements quoted from Dr. Holmes' book: "The early Gandhi was a critic of Hinduism. He visited the Temple of the Master of the World at Benares and was revolted at the dirt, the stones slippery with Ganges water, the tip-conscious priests, the masses of stinking, stale flowers. 'I searched here for God and failed to find Him.' The blood shed at Kalighat in animal sacrifices also awakened his disgust. The great gatherings of Hindu pilgrims at the sacred river confluence of Allahabad disillusioned him by their superstition, dirt, and hypocrisy."

Of the later Gandhi Dr. Holmes writes: "In the second phase of his life, that of revolutionary politician, he became the uncritical defender and eulogist of everything Hindu. The British government, undoubtedly in his day one of the very best, if not the best in the world, and with which he had co-operated for twenty-nine years, became suddenly 'satanic.' He denounced the government as 'bleeding India.' Yet a few months before he had stated: 'The sum total of the British government is for the benefit of India.' With his unreasonable change of attitude toward the government came also a different orientation



toward Christianity. Earlier, friendly to missions, he now became the wholehearted enemy of Christian evangelism. Especially did he resent the evangelizing of the Untouchables, for this threatened the unity and strength of the Hindu political block. The word *fakir* is of Hindu origin. It has its applicability to the idolized Mr. Gandhi's reforms. Gandhi had asked Mr. Mott: 'Would you preach the Gospel to a cow? Well, some of the Untouchables are worse than cows in understanding.'

"Fourteen eminent Indian Christians, nearly all laymen, issued a manifesto in opposition to Gandhian ideas: 'Men and women, individually and in family or village groups, will continue to seek the fellowship of the Christian Church. That is the real movement of the Spirit of God, and no power on earth can stop that tide. The Church will cling to its right to receive such to itself from whatever religious groups they may come.' Gandhi's creed was announced as based on the Hindu scriptures and included the teaching of reincarnation. He affirmed cow reverence and 'did not disbelieve in idol worship.' But deification of the cow was as useless to the cows of India as temple entry to the outcastes. Nowhere in the world are they so neglected, abused, starved, meanly kept, and the world has not yet learned that Gandhi ever instituted any reform, any society to prevent cruelty to cows and to the animal world in general. Gandhi's programs of civil disobedience were invariably followed by disorder, conflicts between Hindus and Moslems, looting, wide bloodshed, even burnings alive. His eccentric notions could never be put into operation in Christendom, to say nothing of India. His ministry has been one of destruction and chaos."

J. T. MUELLER

#### THE DOCTRINAL PROBLEM FACING THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Under the heading, *Rueckblick auf Indien*, Bishop Hanns Lilje, in the *Informationsblatt* (February 28, 1953), reviews the results of the meeting of the Central Committee of the W. C. C. in Lucknow, India, and adds to his review a discussion of general problems facing the World Council of Churches. It may be of special interest to our readers what he writes on the proposed theme of the convention of the W. C. C. at Evanston in 1954: "Jesus Christ . . . the Hope of the World." We read, in part:

"The existing differences between the churches and confessions, which to this day could not be bridged over by any process of organization, have become prominent also in the Christological discussions of the Church. This impression is yet increased when we recall the differences regarding the Christian hope which appeared in the dis-



cussions at Lund. Amazing as it is, this shows, rightly considered, that there are still Christian theologians who understand this hope in a strictly New Testament eschatological sense and who without this otherworldly hope do not care to speak of a Christian in this world and for this world. Others again recognize in this Christian hope, in the last analysis, only an intra-historical reality (*eine innergeschichtliche Realitaet*). We must become clear on what that means. In the ecumenical organization of churches there are still persons who understand the Day of the Lord Jesus Christ as the goal of history in an altogether different sense than we do according to our conception of it in agreement with Biblical and Reformational theology.

"It is without doubt that this fundamental difference in understanding the Christian hope must largely also result in a different conception of the Church and the Gospel. It is, and will ever remain, a difficult problem how Christians can be joined together who think so differently regarding Baptism as do the Baptists and Lutherans, or whose views vary so greatly on the Ministry as do, on the one hand, the Anglicans and High Church advocates, and, on the other, the Reformed churches or even the Congregationalists. There is no sense in deceiving oneself how weighty still are the differences between the churches. It is above all most senseless, constantly to warn against an undoubtedly existing 'confessionalism' that is too narrow and unsympathetic (*verstaendnislos*) and to overlook at the same time the fact that the most essential marks of distinction in the Church bear a theological character in the strict sense of the word." J. T. MUELLER

#### CHURCH ORDER: ITS MEANING AND IMPLICATIONS

In *Theology Today* (January, 1953) Dr. John A. Mackay presents a "study in the Epistle to the Ephesians" from the viewpoint that it is an "ecumenical letter." We shall not concern ourselves with the thesis itself. The keynote of Ephesians is indeed true ecumenicity of faith and profession (4:3-6), but that very unity of faith does not permit any toleration of error (4:13-15), which some advocates of the modern ecumenical movement seem inclined to favor.

Our interest in the article rather attaches to two paragraphs in which truth and error lie so close together that the reader may easily become confused. Dr. Mackay writes:

"The secret of Christian thought and life consists in the constant maintenance of closeness to Jesus Christ. It is not enough to keep close to the Bible, even though apart from the Bible we can know nothing about Christ. Christ is the core of the Bible's message and the



clue of the Bible's meaning. The Bible fulfills its God-given function when it leads its reader to Christ and builds him up in the faith, and knowledge, and experience of Christ. The moment, however, that the Bible is made a substitute for Christ it becomes an idol. The living Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, is greater even than the Bible. To make the Bible, apart from Jesus Christ, the object of faith is not only idolatry; it can lead people to deny the reality of Christ while paying lip tribute to him.

"So, too, whenever the Church, instead of Christ, the Church's Head, becomes the supreme object of devotion, an equal act of idolatry takes place. Thus Christ, and all that he stood for and all that he is, are denied. It is strange, but it is true, that men may become devoted to the Bible and to the Church without being truly Christian. On the other hand, no one whose faith and life are truly Christo-centric, who has a passionate love for and devotion to Jesus Christ, as witnessed to by Holy Scripture, and as constituting the Head of his Body, the Church, can ever deny Christ or his truth. Loving him, they love, for his sake, all fellow Christians in the center of whose faith and life they find the same crucified and living Lord."

The second paragraph suggests that the writer had in mind principally the error of Romanism, with which he came into contact in his early ministry in Latin America, where Rome often places the Church above Christ and thus denies Him. With regard to the point made in the first paragraph the Pharisees might be quoted as examples of errorists who idolized the Bible by substituting it for Christ. Properly speaking, however, the fault in both cases should not be sought in too great reverence for, and obedience to, the Bible, but rather in the perversion of Scripture. The Pharisees did not make an idol of the Bible, but rather of their misinterpretation of the Bible, their false Messianic hope, and their anti-Scriptural tradition. So also the Romanists, properly speaking, do not really idolize the Church, but the anti-christian errors their Church stands for. Because of their erroneous doctrines they reject both Christ and the Bible, the divine written Word. We dare not place Christ and the Bible into opposition with each other. The two rather belong together. Where the Bible is truly believed, there also Christ is truly believed; and where Christ is truly believed, there also the Bible is truly believed. In his closing sentence Dr. Mackay writes: "Loving him, they love, for his sake, all fellow Christians in the center of whose faith and life they find the same crucified and living Lord." That is true, especially from the viewpoint of the spiritual fellowship of all believers established through faith in Christ.



But that very fellowship of faith allows no denial of any divine truth of Scripture. Love in Christ rather prompts Christians to witness the whole truth of the divine Word, since to love Christ in His entirety means also to love the Word of God in its entirety. Here the words of St. Paul apply: "But speaking the truth in love, [we] may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ" (Eph. 4:15).

J. T. MUELLER

#### THE LUTHERAN LITERATURE SOCIETY OF JAPAN

The *Information Service of the Lutheran World Federation* (February 21, 1953), offers a gratifying report on the work of the Lutheran Literature Society of Japan, which was started one and a half years ago. It represents ten Lutheran Missions in Japan, eight of which were begun after the Second World War. The first work of the Society was the publication of Luther's Small Catechism in the more commonly spoken language of the people. This has appeared in an edition of 30,000 copies. Besides the Small Catechism, the Society has published a "Study Guide on Galatians" in 3,000 copies; two tracts on Easter in 25,000 copies; a tract for sick people in 20,000 copies; and a periodical, with a monthly subscription of over 10,000 copies.

Under preparation are the following projects: a Bible history, a church history, a devotional book, a brief explanation of the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer by Luther, the Large Catechism of Luther, six assorted tracts, church record books, and baptismal certificates. To these may be added a "Church of Finland Catechism" and a book on "Prayer" by Dr. Hallesby. Lack of full-time workers has greatly impeded the work of the Society in spreading the much-needed mission publications.

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#### BRIEF ITEMS FROM "RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE"

The Pentagon has announced that clergymen may now volunteer for one year of active duty as chaplains, instead of the previous 17 to 24 months. It was disclosed that the Army has 200 chaplain vacancies unfilled at the present time and that another 200 will occur before the end of 1953.

Chaplain (Colonel) John F. Gaertner (Mo. Synod) of Port Arthur, Tex., has been awarded the Legion of Merit with a citation that praised his "untiring dedication to improvement of personal morals" of the troops under his care and his leadership in providing food, shelter, and care for thousands of children in the Seoul area made homeless by war (Chaplain Gaertner initiated fund-raising campaigns among American



troops to care for homeless orphans in Korea). The citation praised his "tenacious devotion" and said that "his achievements reflect great credit upon himself and the military service."

The Norwegian Parliament passed a Church Reform Act which had been under study since 1945, but only after its most important provision had been cut out: establishment of a Church Council vested with supreme authority in spiritual and internal church matters. This Church Council was to have comprised the Church's eight bishops, four other clergymen, and 21 laymen. The Labor Party, which is in control of Parliament, had introduced the Church Reform Act in June, 1951, and strongly urged its passage ever since; the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs, Lars Moen, also a member of the Labor Party, had introduced the Church Council plan; yet it was defeated because the Party believed it would make the Church independent of the State, that the present relationship between the two was satisfactory, and that there was no strong demand from the Norwegian people for a change.

The Church Council of the Prussian Union Church, meeting in Berlin (March 27), adopted a sternly worded statement saying that all hope of further compromise with Communist leaders has been abandoned as a result of an "anti-Church campaign in full swing in East Germany." "The hour of confession and fight has come," it said; "negotiations with the State on the rights of the Church are no longer possible in the present state of affairs." The Council's "fighting statement" was adopted after a review of a series of repressive measures, including a proscription of Bible-reading hours in private homes, recently instituted in the Soviet Zone; abrupt haltings of major religious meetings by Communist authorities; cutting the allowed number of copies of the *Potsdamer Kirche* (the Evangelical weekly in Potsdam) to one half the previous amount; continued attacks upon, and hampering of, the "*Junge Gemeinde*—an Organization of Criminals"; that most of the 46 Evangelical clergymen who have "disappeared" have been arrested or jailed and were prominent Protestant youth leaders.—Showing again a prime object of Communist endeavor: hindering the Christian training of youth.

Dr. Oswald C. J. Hoffmann, Director of Public Relations of our Synod, was elected president of the National Religious Publicity Council at its annual meeting in New York. THEO. HOYER