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Review of "Bad Boll" Conferences

By PAUL M. BRETSCHER

"**B**UILDING Theological Bridges" is the appropriate subtitle of the sainted Professor Fred. E. Mayer's *The Story of Bad Boll*. In this booklet, which is a lasting memorial to Dr. Mayer's synthetic and sympathetic mind, the author summarized the three theological conferences conducted by our Synod at Bad Boll, Württemberg, Germany, in the summer of 1948. The readiness of officials of our Synod to "build theological bridges" connecting our Church with European Lutheran Churches was so favorably received by the participants in the first Bad Boll venture that in the opinion of our officials these conferences needed to be continued.

Accordingly further Bad Boll conferences were held on European soil every summer since 1948. But in course of time meetings were held also in London, Cambridge, and other suitable centers in England; in Paris and Alsace (France); in Bad Harzburg, Neuendettelsau, and Berlin (Germany); and in Göteborg (Sweden). Throughout these years the primary objective of our Church was to acquaint European Lutherans not in fellowship with our Synod with the doctrine and practice of our Synod and to gather firsthand information regarding the character of present-day Lutheranism in Europe. Since the summer of 1950 our Church had conferences also with brethren of European Lutheran groups who are in fellowship with our Synod. These are the Lutheran Free Churches of France, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, and Germany. The meetings were held in Uelzen and Oberursel. This past summer the Bad Boll commission carried on theological discussions also with a group of Scandinavian Lutheran theologians who met in Göteborg, Sweden.

It is not the purpose of this article to submit a detailed critique of the Bad Boll conferences. As indicated above, Dr. Mayer published a report of the 1948 conferences. Professor Martin H. Franzmann performed a similar task for the conferences held in 1949. The title of his booklet is *Bad Boll 1949*. A German review of both 1948 and 1949 Bad Boll conferences by *Rektor* Martin Hein was translated into English by Dr. J. T. Mueller and appeared under the title *An Evaluation of Bad Boll 1948 and 1949*. Reports on the several European conferences were published from time to time in this journal, in the *Lutheran Witness*, and in *Der Lutheraner*. A comprehensive and exhaustive study of all conferences held by our Synod in Europe from

1948 to this past summer is an urgent *desideratum*. Nevertheless, since pastors of our Synod have repeatedly inquired regarding the nature, purpose, and results of the Bad Boll conferences, some essential information is herewith supplied. I shall limit my remarks to the following considerations: programs; attendance; background of European Lutheranism; differences in doctrine and practice; results.

I

THE BAD BOLL PROGRAMS

The committee which drew up the program for the 1948 "Bad Boll" conferences consisted of Dr. Lawrence Meyer, Dr. Martin Graebner, Dr. P. H. Petersen, *Rektor* Martin Hein, Bishop Dr. Hans Meiser, Bishop Theoph. Wurm, Bishop J. Bender, Dr. Eugen Gerstenmaier, and Dr. Karl J. Arndt. For further details regarding the planning of the first Bad Boll conferences the reader is referred to Dr. Mayer's *The Story of Bad Boll*. The programs for subsequent conferences in Europe were prepared by a committee acting under the direction of Dr. J. W. Behnken and Dr. Herm. Harms and consisting chiefly of members of the seminary faculty in St. Louis. The programs were sent to the headquarters of *Landesbischof* Dr. Hans Meiser in Munich, Germany, for scrutiny and eventual approval. Upon receipt of the program from Germany the synodical committee took note of reactions expressed by Dr. Meiser's office. It was then adopted and information to this effect relayed to Dr. Meiser's executive secretary. Thereupon Dr. Behnken appointed essayists from our Synod to prepare papers on the subthemes assigned to the Missouri Synod commissioners. European essayists were appointed by Dr. Meiser and his staff. In passing, we must pay tribute to Dr. Lawrence Meyer for his skillful handling of countless details in arranging for time and place of the conferences as well as for valued help rendered the synodical committee which drafted the programs. A note of appreciation is due also to Rev. Hagen Katterfeld, the executive secretary of Dr. Meiser, for his personal interest in the programs and for his constant concern that they come to grips with significant theological issues in current Lutheranism. Rev. Katterfeld also carried on most of the vast correspondence necessitated by the size and scope of the Bad Boll conferences. At the sessions Rev. Katterfeld could rely on the efficient help of Rev. Karl Richter of Lübeck. The themes and subthemes for each of the "Bad Boll" conferences follow:

1948: *The Augsburg Confession* (subthemes: character and purpose of the Augsburg Confession; some of the chief articles of the Augsburg

burg Confession, such as justification, means of grace, the church, the holy ministry, the Lord's Supper, and relation of the church to the state);

- 1949: *The Way of Salvation According to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions* (subthemes: original sin and guilt; reconciliation and justification; the church and churches; the Sacraments; the two kingdoms; Neo-Thomism; the nature and purpose of the Confessions; ecumenicity; the state; Christian education; the church and the social order);
- 1950: *The Church's Commission and Authority* (subthemes: the Christian man; priesthood of all believers; the nature of faith; the preaching ministry; trials and tribulations of the church; the Christian hope);
- 1951: *The Church Under the Word of the Living Christ* (subthemes: God's revelation of Himself in nature and in the history of Israel; Christ and the Scriptures; Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King; Scripture's self-attestation to be the Word of God; the living Word of Scripture; the living Christ in the church of our day);
- 1952: *The Proclamation of God's Wrath and God's Grace* (subthemes: God's wrath as revealed in the O. T. and N. T.; cause and nature of God's wrath according to the Confessions and in Luther's theology; the proclamation of God's wrath in American and European pulpits; God's grace as revealed in the O. T. and N. T.; God's grace as the cause of man's justification and sanctification; God's grace offered in the means of grace; God's grace and faith; God's grace and eternal glory);
- 1953: *Christ and the Church* (subthemes: the incarnate Word; Christ's revelation of God in His own person and in the Scriptures; Christ as the Propitiation for sin; Christ as the Author of the Apostolic office, of the ministry of the church, and of the means of grace; Christ as Judge and Consummator of the universe);
- 1954: *"It Is Written"* (subthemes: the origin and character, content and purpose, claim, power, understanding, and use of Scripture).

A number of Bad Boll essays were translated into English and published in this journal. (Cf. XX (1949), 881 ff.; XXI (1950), 81 ff., 241 ff., 641 ff., 881 ff.; XXIII (1952), 1 ff., 241 ff., 481 ff., 721 ff., 895 ff.; XXIV (1953), 112 ff., 881 ff.) Others are scheduled to appear in forthcoming issues.

II

ATTENDANCE

About 1,800 members of the Lutheran clergy in Europe attended one or more Bad Boll conferences. In some conferences there was a sprinkling of laymen. The vast majority of the participants were members of European Lutheran churches not in fellowship with our Synod. In most conferences there were present also pastors of the Union (*unierte Kirche*), who themselves, however, were Lutherans. Bishops present at one or more sessions were Bishop Dr. Hans Meiser, head of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany, Bishop Hanns Lilje of Hanover, Bishop J. Bender of Baden, Bishop Theoph. Wurm of Württemberg and his successor Bishop Hauck, Archbishop Teodor Grünbergs of the Latvian Church, Bishop Halfmann of Schleswig-Holstein, Bishop Erdmann of Braunschweig, Bishop Mitzenheimer of Thuringia, and Bishop Bente of Schwerin. Other titular heads who attended were professors, *Superintendenten, Prälaten, Pröpste, Dekane, Kirchenräte, Oberkirchenräte*. At the conferences in Berlin Vice-President Walter Zimmermann and *Oberkirchenrat* Dr. Johannes Neumann of the *Lutherisches Kirchenamt*, Berlin, played a prominent part. The conferences in England were attended chiefly by exiled Lutherans from Estonia, Latvia, and Poland. In some conferences on German soil there were present also Lutherans from Austria and Italy. The conference in Göteborg was attended by Lutherans from Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. In France we met Lutherans from the Lutheran Synod of Paris and from other Lutheran bodies of France.

The following Lutheran professors teaching at European universities and seminaries read essays at the conferences: Professors Adolf Köberle and Helmuth Thielecke (Tübingen); Professors Peter Brunner, Edmund Schlink, H. *Freiberr* von Campenhausen (Heidelberg); Professors Werner Elert, Wilhelm Maurer, Walter Künneth, and Gerhard Schmidt (Erlangen); Professor *emer.* Heinrich Hermelink (Marburg); Professor Walter Dress (Berlin); Professors Ernst Kinder, Robert Stupperich, Karl H. Rengstorf (Münster); Professors Gerhard Gloege and Lic. Schott (Jena); Professor Theo. Süß (Paris); Professors Hugo Odeberg and Lauri Haikola (Lund); Professor Harald Riesenfeld (Upsala); *Rektor* Carl Fr. Wislöff and Professor Leiv Aalen (Oslo); Professors Gustav Merz, Eduard Ellwein, Martin Wittenberg, Wilfried Joest (*Augustana Hochschule*, Neuendettelsau); Professors Helmuth Frey and H. Girsensohn (Bethel/Bielefeld); Professor Martin Schmidt (*Kirchliche Hochschule*, Berlin); Professor Helmuth Echternach (*Kirchliche Hochschule*, Hamburg); *Rektor* H. Kirsten and

Professors Richard Laabs, William Oesch, and — until his resignation a few months ago — Martin Kiunke (*Theologische Hochschule, Oberursel*); and Professor Ernst Gerstenmaier (*Prediger-Seminar, Friedberg*). Other Scandinavian professors who read essays were: Dr. Björne Hareida, Dr. I. P. Seierstad, and Dr. V. Lindstroem.

European essayists from other areas of church work were: Dr. Wilh. Andersen, Dr. Hans Asmussen, Rev. Lic. v. Boltensstern, Dr. Armin-Ernst Buchrucker, Rev. C. Cordes, Lic. Dr. Geppert, Dr. Eugen Gerstenmaier (essayist in 1948; at that time chairman of the *Ev. Hilfswerk*; in political life now), Dr. Walther Günther, Rev. Georg Hoffmann, Rev. Friedrich Wilhelm Hopf, Rev. Erwin Horowitz, Rev. Kurt Hünerbein, Rev. Lic. Schulze-Kadelbach, Rev. Eberhard Koepsell, Dr. August Kimme, Dr. H. H. Kramm, Dr. Wolfram v. Krause, Dr. Herbert Krimm, Dr. Helmut Lamparter, Dr. Walter C. E. Nagel, Dr. Odo Osterloh, Dr. Johannes Pfeiffer, Rev. W. Rüger, Rev. Waldemar Schilberg, Dr. F. K. Schumann, Dr. Wilhelm Schwinn, Rev. Lic. Srocka, Rev. Heinrich Stallmann, *Studiendirektor* Dr. Voigt, Dr. Ernst W. Wendebourg, Rev. Heinrich Willkomm, Prälat Issler of Stuttgart, and Dr. Vilmos Vajta, executive secretary of the Theological Commission of the Lutheran World Federation. Many of these essayists have made significant literary contributions to recent European theological literature.

Representatives of our Synod at the Bad Boll conferences were Drs. John W. Behnken and Lawrence Meyer, who gave the chief impetus to these conferences and who in the 1948 conferences set the pattern for all subsequent Bad Boll meetings; Dr. Herm. Harms, who attended nearly every conference since the summer of 1949, read an essay in 1952, presided over most sessions, never lost sight of the primary objective of these conferences, and pointed up the theological significance of each day's subtheme in his masterful sermons; Drs. Arnold Grumm, Herm. A. Mayer, Paul Koenig, and Pastors Elfred L. Roschke and Alfred W. Trinklein, who in well-prepared and sprightly delivered lectures acquainted European Lutherans with the origin, organization, and work of our Synod and with parish activities in our congregations. Essayists from our two seminaries were President Walter Baepler and Professors Martin J. Naumann and Fred Kramer (Springfield); President Alfred O. Fuerbringer and Professors Paul M. Bretscher, Martin H. Franzmann, J. T. Mueller, Walter R. Roehrs, Alfred von Rohr Sauer, Lewis W. Spitz, and the sainted Theo. A. Graebner and Fred. E. Mayer (St. Louis). In 1949 Dr. Arnold C. Mueller of the staff of the Board for Parish Education and Dr. Adolf Haentz-

schel of Valparaiso University also represented our Church at Bad Boll. At the conferences in England, Rev. E. George Pearce read several essays. Guest essayists at several sessions were Professors Walter E. Buszin of St. Louis and Theo. Hoelty-Nickel of Valparaiso University, who submitted papers in the area of hymnology and liturgics.

Essayists who represented the National Lutheran Council at the conferences in Bad Boll in 1949 were: Dr. Conrad Bergendoff, Dr. Julius Bodensieck, Dr. T. A. Kantonen, Dr. Herman A. Preus, and Professor R. R. Syre.

III

THE BACKGROUND OF EUROPEAN LUTHERANISM

European Lutheranism has a history of more than four hundred years. It originated on German soil and spread rapidly from there to the Scandinavian countries. But Lutheranism, true to the claim of its founder, never regarded itself a denominational sect. It rather confessed to be the true successor of the church of the early centuries before the bishop of Rome became recognized as the supreme head of the church. This is most significant. It explains in part at least why European Lutherans are extremely historically minded. For them the coming of Paul to Europe in the first half of the first century is of greatest importance. Therefore their profound interest in early Christianity and its environment, such as languages, philosophies, religions, and other facets of culture. Therefore their interest also in the further growth and development of the church. It was Werner Elert, a Lutheran, who recently published a noteworthy volume on the Eucharist and church fellowship in the early church (*Abendmahl und Kirchengemeinschaft in der alten Kirche hauptsächlich des Ostens*, 1954). Therefore the interest of European Lutherans also in the patristic period, in the conversion of the Germanic tribes, in the pre-Reformation period, and, above all, in the age of the Reformation. To publish since 1883 the *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* of Luther's works (Weimar edition), which now numbers 93 volumes, with 13 more volumes to follow, and to produce the many volumes of the *Verein für Reformationsgeschichte* besides many other related source materials, is overwhelming evidence of the interest of European scholars—most of whom are at least nominally Lutheran—in the Reformation. But for them also the post-Reformation period is important: the age of orthodoxy, pietism, the *Aufklärung*, 19th-century liberalism, the resurgence of Biblical theology since World War I, the ecumenical movement, and the place of Lutheranism in the Christian world of thought. Indeed, Lutheran scholars are interested also in philological research as their

great contributions to the study of the sacred languages testify. But, by and large, Lutheran theologians in Europe think above all historically, and they are accustomed to apply the most rigid historical method to the investigation of the past. This concern for the past explains also their profound interest in the origin of doctrinal controversies, in creeds and dogmas, and in the rise, development, and meaning of liturgy. Professor Mayer aptly observes in his *The Story of Bad Boll*: "The German theologians usually employ the problematic, philological, and dogmatico-historical method. . . . The American theological method can be said to be more Scripture-oriented and more definitely integrated with the actual church life" (p. 53).

There are other factors inherent in European Lutheranism which may not be overlooked. One may not disregard for instance the training and education of Lutheran pastors in Europe. In Germany there are *Kirchliche Hochschulen*, *Theologische Hochschulen*, and *Predigerseminare* which attempt to relate the theological training offered as closely and directly as possible to the needs of the Lutheran parish. But many students preparing for the Lutheran ministry will, and, in countries like Sweden, must, get their ministerial training in state-controlled universities, which stress the scientific rather than the practical aspect of theological training and which, as history shows, often tolerate a great latitude of theological views. Add to this the lure of such celebrated universities founded centuries ago as Heidelberg (1386), Tübingen (1477), Marburg (1527), and Erlangen (1743), and one begins to understand why these schools still attract the student in search of the best theological training available and why graduates of these schools throughout their lives reflect the impressions made on them by brilliant, but often very un-Lutheran, minds.

There are other major factors which one must bear in mind in an attempt to understand European Lutheranism. There is the influence of Karl Barth, who, though he has unquestionably made Biblical theology respectable once more and who may well become known as the most brilliant and influential theologian of the twentieth century, is not truly a Lutheran theologian. There are also the inroads on theology by philosophic thought, especially Kantianism, Hegelianism, and, in recent times, existentialism. Terms such as *aktuell*, *Ereignis*, "the Church *im Werden*," "the Church *in actu*," "the Word of God *in actu*," were employed by German theologians in the early Bad Boll conferences with such frequency that one gained the impression that all Lutheran theologians in Europe had become existentialists and that they were through with a theology centered in historical facts. Nor

may one overlook the rising strength of the Evangelical Church of Germany (EKiD) organized in 1948, which, according to its constitution, is a federation, but which has not been able to silence the charges of those who maintain that EKiD is functioning as a church. There is, furthermore, the growth of the Union (*unierte Kirche*), which aims to level out all confessional consciousness. There are the memories of Barmen (1934), when Evangelicals of all shades drew up a confession declaring the sovereignty of Jesus Christ over every form of state, also Hitler's, a confession which resulted in demotions, expulsions, arrests, imprisonment, and, in some cases, even in death for defenders of Christian truth. There are also the fears felt by all Evangelical Christians, including Lutherans, resulting from the growing prestige and power of the Roman Catholic Church in Western Germany. There are, furthermore, the combined efforts of Roman Catholics and Protestants in the Adenauer government to resist the subtle and sinister infiltration of Communism.

There is a final consideration which the American interpreter of European Lutheranism must constantly bear in mind. This has to do with the operation of the church. European churches, except Lutheran Free Churches, can hardly conceive of the possibility of a church carrying out its functions without financial assistance from the state. They cannot understand how it is possible, as it is in our country, for a church to educate and salary its clergy, provide Christian education for the youth of the church, engage in extensive mission activities without state aid. Whereas since World War I, Germany has granted no preferential status to any one form of the Christian faith, the government nevertheless still levies and gathers taxes in the various states of Germany and remits the earmarked amounts to the headquarters of the regional churches to be disbursed for salaries of pastors and executive officials of the church. In Scandinavian countries, where Lutheranism is the recognized religion of the state, the government regards the clergy (bishops, pastors, and other executives) as state officials and pays their salaries just as it pays the salaries of its judges and other public officers. The effect of this arrangement has been that in many instances pastors are quite unaware of their spiritual responsibilities as shepherds of the flock of Jesus Christ and perform the duties of their calling in an utterly perfunctory manner. Add to this that European Lutheran congregations number up to 10,000, 20,000, 50,000, and even 100,000 souls served by an inadequate staff of pastors, and that these pastors can hardly be expected to do more than baptize, confirm, preach to, and marry the living, and bury the dead,

it is understandable why pastors complain that they have too little time left to look after the sheep which have strayed away from the pastures of the divine Word. This is at least one of the chief reasons, too, why church attendance in Europe is most often lamentably poor. When a German pastor told us in a group session that he could not complain about church attendance since he preached Sunday after Sunday to 1,400 people and we inquired how large his parish was, he replied with considerable embarrassment, "30,000 souls."

IV

DIFFERENCES IN DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE

For Luther the Holy Scriptures were the inspired and infallible Word of God. The Confessions share Luther's position. It is true that Luther here and there voiced concerns about some O. T. and N. T. books and also noted what appeared to him to be inaccuracies in the sacred record. European students of Luther and the Confessions—and this became very apparent at the Bad Boll conferences—quite generally draw the inference that Luther allowed himself a large measure of freedom in his dealings with Holy Scripture, that he was most sensitive to its "human" side, and that, after all, Scripture was for him at least as human as divine. But this interpretation of Luther's attitude toward Scripture is unwarranted, as anyone can determine who has the patience to examine scores and scores of passages in which Luther speaks of Scripture, books of Scripture, and words in Scripture. He did rank James beneath Paul's Epistles because in his opinion it did not exhibit Christ with that clarity and fullness as do Paul's Epistles or John's Gospel and because he discovered in James a conflict with Paul's doctrine of justification by grace without the deeds of the Law. But it did not occur to Luther to regard James and other Biblical books apocryphal and to expurgate them from the canon of Scripture. Sometimes Luther made bold comments on certain words and phrases of Scripture. But, again, it did not occur to him to delete or deny to them divine origin. For him every word of Scripture was the Word of God even though the interpreter might have difficulty in ascertaining how this could be. He placed himself under the Word as its disciple, and not above the Word as its judge. Likewise the authors of the Lutheran Confessions regarded Holy Scriptures as the inspired and infallible record of God's revelation.

There are, God be praised, many Lutherans in Europe who believe Holy Scripture to be the inspired and infallible Word of God. They are to be found not only in the Lutheran Free Churches. We discovered

them also in the regional churches of Germany and in the Scandinavian countries. Dr. Hugo Odeberg, distinguished professor of New Testament interpretation at the University of Lund, made the statement in the final session in Göteborg: "Es gibt im Neuen Testament eine eindringliche Lehre von der Verbalinspiration." Nevertheless, one must record that most European Lutherans so stress the "human" side of Scripture that its "divine" character is practically set aside. From their point of view, Scripture suffers from the imperfections of every historical document. Whatever in Scripture does not deal directly with the way of salvation, has little or no relevance for the Christian faith. Since Scripture is a thoroughly human document, it compels us to assume that there are in it conflicting reports, lapses of memory, contradictions, and interpretations of the origin and nature of the cosmos which are false and must be discredited. Much of what appears to be a record of historical fact is myth, legend, the imagination of a fertile mind, allegory, the opinion of an author who was himself subject to all the crosscurrents of the social forces of his day. Therefore Genesis 1 to 3, or even Genesis 1 to 11, and books like Jonah and Job, though they teach important spiritual truths, are unhistorical. They must be divested of their mythological and allegorical dress and their messages stated in terms intelligible to the mind and language of our generation.

What is the attitude of European Lutherans to the Lutheran Confessions? That there has been in Europe a revival of confessional consciousness in these past decades is very evident. God be praised for it. In fact, it must be noted that Lutheran participants in the conferences cited the Latin phrasing of significant passages in the Confessions with an alacrity which overwhelmed the Missouri Synod delegates. One must also recognize the magnificent services which scholars like Edmund Schlink and Friedrich Brundstad rendered in their analyses of the theology of the Lutheran Confessions. It must also be recorded that for at least several decades world Lutheranism is laid under heavy obligation to the editor and publisher of *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche* (first ed., 1930; second 1952).

There are Lutherans in Europe who subscribe to all Lutheran Confessions and who take them most seriously. There are others who at their ordination were pledged on the entire Book of Concord but who do not take it seriously. There are still other Lutherans in Europe who subscribe to all the Confessions except the Formula of Concord. There are yet others who subscribe only to the Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism. For some the Augsburg Confession is

primarily a legal and political document. For them its chief value lies, so we were informed, in the fact that it established the right of Lutheranism to exist alongside Roman Catholicism. There are, finally, Lutherans in Europe who pay hardly more than lip service to the Confessions and who are more interested in Luther and his theology. That there are historical factors involved in these differing attitudes toward the Confessions is undeniable. But this is not the place to discuss them.

In the light of false attitudes of many European Lutherans to Holy Scripture and the Confessions as sketched above, in the light also of historical factors discussed above, it should not be surprising to members of our Church that our Bad Boll commissioners discovered in Europe points of view with respect to doctrine and practice which our Church does not share and which our commissioners were compelled to disapprove of and reject on Scriptural and confessional grounds. Before cataloguing these differences, we must note in fairness to the Lutherans with whom we met that though most of them did not accept our position on Verbal Inspiration with its decided accent on the divine side of Scripture, they nevertheless asserted time and again that they were guided in all matters of doctrine and practice by the sole authority of Scripture. This insistence appears, indeed, like a glaring inconsistency. Yet it must be recorded. Furthermore, in all conferences which this writer attended European participants were united in recognizing Jesus Christ as the Savior of mankind and confessing Him Lord in terms of Luther's explanation of the Second Article. In fact, the supreme honor paid Jesus Christ since Barmen, especially in Germany, has caused conservative European Lutherans to charge many Lutherans in the regional churches with a *Christusmanie*. This writer hesitates to support this charge. It rather seems that the current emphasis on Jesus Christ as the incarnate *Logos*, the Redeemer of the world, and the sovereign Lord of all creation is the reaction to the days now fortunately past when Germans were determined to peel off from the Christ of faith the "historical Jesus," but discovered that this venture necessarily led to a denial of the heart of the Christian faith. There is, furthermore, in European Lutheranism a loyal adherence to the Reformation emphases *sola gratia, sola fide, propter Christum*, and even to *sola Scriptura* in the limited sense, however, that Scripture alone is the authority in all matters pertaining to doctrine and practice, and that neither pope, nor councils, nor tradition, nor any form of enthusiasm can dethrone this authority or be granted equal status. Finally, except for a few individuals who propounded chiliastic views, European Lutherans hold fast to the eschatological hope as the Lu-

theran Church has always confessed it on the basis of Scripture and the Confessions. Professor Edmund Schlink's address at the assembly of the World Council of Churches in Evanston, August 15, on the theme "Christ the Hope of the world," was, so we should like at least to believe, approved by most European Lutherans though some may have not agreed with Schlink's thesis on the church's obligation with respect to current social and political problems. What, then, are differences in doctrine and practice which the Missouri Synod commissioners discovered at the Bad Boll conferences? In this report we must limit ourselves to a discussion of what we believe to be the most significant differences.

It was the general impression of the synodical commissioners that, in general, European Lutherans disregard and ignore the stress which Luther, the Confessions, Walther, and many other faithful Lutherans laid on the importance of making a careful distinction between Law and Gospel. This impression was definitely re-enforced by sermons which some of us heard in Lutheran regional churches. In many sermons we missed the emphasis on personal sin and guilt and the call to repentance. We also missed a clear and unabridged proclamation of God's grace in Christ. We gained the impression that perhaps Barth's inversion of Law and Gospel to Gospel and Law has had a terrifying effect on European Lutheran theology. Could this development be one of the reasons that church attendance in many localities in Europe is desperately poor? For if the Christian conscience is not aroused by the preaching of God's stern demands and the threat of His wrath and punishment, and if the sinner does not sincerely plead for mercy, how can the proclamation of forgiveness become truly meaningful to him?

We noted also a strong and, at times, excessive emphasis on the *viva vox evangelii* and some outspoken opposition to our presentation that the Spirit of God can and does encounter the sinner who is engaged in reading and studying the sacred record. The suggestion that a Japanese who reads and ponders the New Testament but has never heard the Gospel preached can come to a recognition of his sin and God's grace seemed to most European participants preposterous. When we countered that they ought to urge upon the *Württembergische Bibelanstalt* in Stuttgart, which prints and distributes Bibles, New Testaments, and devotional literature, not to distribute these among people who have never heard the Gospel, they seemed perplexed.

There has been a great deal of discussion in European theology

regarding the so-called "third use of the Law" (cf., Article VI of the Formula of Concord). In general, so it appeared, Lutherans in Germany question, or even reject, this use of the Law and insist on finding support for their position in Paul and in Luther (cf., Wilfried Joest, *Gesetz und Freiheit*; also Werner Elert, *Das christliche Ethos*).

On the practical level, Lutherans in Europe, though granting with us the Scriptural and Lutheran doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers, seem to find it most difficult to make it function. One cannot escape the impression that Lutheran churches in Germany are very largely churches of the clergy. This is true in the strictest sense of the Roman Catholic Church in Europe. Though we hazard no inference, yet it seemed strange to us that the priest who preached in the magnificent St. Eustachius Cathedral in Paris on August 8 of this year himself took up the collection. Professor James H. Nichols correctly observes in his *Primer for Protestants* (p. 58f.): "The Lutheran Church also became, like the Roman Catholic Church, and despite its first prophet, a church of the clergy. The temptations of clerical authority made themselves felt among Lutheran clergy and superintendents."

Most European participants in the conferences seemed in agreement with our doctrinal principles on close communion and church discipline. But in view of denominational pressures it seems difficult for many Lutheran pastors and congregations to convert these principles into practice. It happens that children are baptized in the Lutheran faith, confirmed in the Reformed faith, and married by a pastor of the Union (*unierte Kirche*). Surely, this is no reason why a Lutheran congregation should be indifferent to close communion and church discipline. Yet one can appreciate the problems that would arise if these congregations were suddenly minded to enforce these principles. We advised the pastors to preach Law and Gospel and patiently to educate their parishioners to understand the Scriptural basis of these principles, but also to persist in their efforts to achieve also these goals of a Lutheran congregation in faithful obedience to Scripture and to the Confessions.

Most Lutheran churches in Europe have manifested a genuine interest in the ecumenical movement. That is one reason why they joined the Lutheran World Federation in 1947 and the World Council of Churches in 1948. No one will question that this action has helped in a measure to consolidate Lutheran thought and that it compelled research into, and further clarification of, the Lutheran faith. It has, however, not resulted in the unity of faith in the sense in which our

fathers conceived of it in terms of Article VII of the Augsburg Confession. To what extent the Theological Commission of the Lutheran World Federation will succeed to bring about this unity, remains to be seen.

V

RESULTS

We noted above that a total of about 1,800 European Lutherans attended the "Bad Boll" conferences in the summers 1948 to 1954. They represented a wide geographical area. Many participants took extensive notes during the sessions and upon return to their parishes addressed pastoral conferences and parish groups on their experiences at the conference, wrote about the conference in their local paper or in official organs of their church body, and also frequently expressed their impressions to officials of our Church and to commissioners of our Church who were present at the conference. To publish all the communications which have come to the desk of Dr. Behnken, Dr. Harms, Dr. Lawrence Meyer, and other Bad Boll commissioners would necessitate a sizable volume. Though most communications were in the nature of "Thank you" letters, some critically analyzed the program of the conference. That many participants did not agree with all statements made by our commissioners was to be expected. That occasionally violent objection was raised regarding the rightness of our position was also to be expected. The miracle of God's grace was the singular agreement in more areas of theological thought than some of us had anticipated. Another miracle of divine grace is the undeniable evidence that the seed sown in the early Bad Boll conferences fell on fruitful soil. Pastors who were present at one of the first conferences and again participated in a later conference were happy to inform us that they had in the course of time been led by the Spirit of God to come to full terms with our views on doctrine and practice.

In any case, it must be said with thanks to the Lord of the Church that our Synod accomplished what it set out to do when it planned and arranged these conferences. It did acquaint European Lutheranism with the doctrine and practice of our Church, and it may be certain that the doctrine and practice of our Church is now understood in many areas of Western Europe and in Eastern Germany. European Lutherans have learned through these close contacts with our Synod that our Church is concerned only about rightly interpreting the Scriptures and about preserving the precious theological heritage bequeathed to Lutheranism in the Lutheran Confessions. It is true also that members of our Church who had the privilege to attend the Bad Boll confer-

ences became acquainted firsthand with the doctrine and practice of European Lutheranism. But they had other rich experiences. They learned to know authors and publishers of important Lutheran literature. They had occasion to observe the relation of Lutheran groups in Europe to one another. They became acquainted with schools of theological thought, with significant features of ministerial training, with the ministry of mercy as this is carried on by Lutheran churches in Europe, with the status of Christian education, with types of church organization, and with recent theological and historical developments. Perhaps there is a grain of truth in the observation which we recently heard: "Some synodical leaders of this generation know as much or even more about European Lutheranism than did the fathers and founders of our Synod." Finally, the conferences in Europe succeeded not only to keep but also to strengthen the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace between our Synod and the Lutheran Free Churches in Europe. It means much to them, as it does to us, to know that we all are standing "fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel" (Phil. 1:27).

We who are privileged to teach at our seminaries have discovered that in Europe the scientific study of theology is sometimes totally divorced from its functional significance. We have become persuaded, on the one hand, that our seminaries must attempt to provide the best theological training and education possible, must adequately equip our students with the tools indispensable for Biblical research, and must introduce them to the rich legacy of Christian thought which has accumulated since the days of the Apostles. But we are also persuaded that our seminaries must aim to equip students with the skills which they will need for successful work in diversified areas of the Gospel ministry, to fill their hearts with an undying love of Christ and His church and with the zest and zeal to bring the Gospel of the crucified and resurrected Christ to the uttermost parts of the earth. It will be a sad day for our Church when its seminaries fail consciously and courageously to pursue both objectives.

In conclusion, it is this writer's firm belief that it will be to the detriment of European Lutheranism if it disregards and ignores the theology of our Church. This is not an idle boast. This is a statement of faith. We entertain the hope that this will not happen. We believe that the Bad Boll conferences have left an abiding impression on European Lutheranism, an impression which will in the course of time express itself in a rededication to, and a reaffirmation of, all the principles of confessional Lutheranism.

St. Louis, Mo.