

1-1-1955

Evanston in Retrospect

William Arndt

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm>



Part of the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Arndt, William (1955) "Evanston in Retrospect," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 26, Article 2.
Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol26/iss1/2>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Print Publications at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Concordia Theological Monthly by an authorized editor of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.

Evanston in Retrospect

By WILLIAM F. ARNDT

LAST summer our sainted colleague, Dr. F. E. Mayer, in the last article that he wrote for this journal, sketched the issues which according to the program developed by the leaders of the World Council of Churches would confront its delegates, consultants, and accredited visitors in August. (see the July number of the *CTM*, pp. 516—533). The general theme of the convention was to be "Christ—the Hope of the World." Six subthemes had been selected: 1. "Our oneness in Christ and our disunity as churches"; 2. "Evangelism: the church's neglected vocation"; 3. "Social problems: the responsible society in a world perspective"; 4. "Questions in the struggle for world community"; 5. "The church amid racial and ethical tensions"; 6. "The laity—the Christian in his vocation." Now the convention has been held, and appraisals are in order. We ask: What has been accomplished? How did the theme and the subthemes fare? Were the discussions worthwhile? Did Biblical truths win victories?

The meeting was, of course, an amazing spectacle. Even observers who ordinarily pay little or no attention at all to religion or religious demonstrations could not help being impressed. The WCC, when it assembled in Evanston, consisted of 161 churches, two were added during the meeting, so that the total now is 163. Not all these bodies were represented; 132 actually participated. The official delegates numbered 1,242. The *Christian Century* submits these figures: 502 voting delegates, 145 consultants invited by the Central Committee, 96 consultants invited by the Youth Department, 499 accredited visitors, 31 fraternal delegates, and 25 observers. The 163 churches represent a membership of at least 170,000,000.

It was by no means a brief meeting, for it lasted more than two weeks, 17 days to be exact. The external appointments were in many ways admirable. Northwestern University at Evanston put its facilities at the disposal of the gathering; its new field house

of a capacity to seat 11,000 people, was utilized for the plenary sessions, and for the smaller meetings, too, adequate space was provided. All the pomp and splendor which ecclesiastical and academic sartorial art has been able to devise were in full evidence, especially when the procession of delegates and official visitors swept along in the opening service and at the pageant in Soldier Field and bishops and archbishops, deans and doctors, displayed the colorful vestments pertaining to their rank and country.

In endeavoring to draw up a report on what was accomplished at Evanston we shall not dwell extensively on any indifference to divisive doctrinal issues. We do not criticize the component churches for holding conferences and carrying on discussions pertaining to the field of religion. What we criticize is that the teachings of the Holy Scriptures on which the churches disagree are not always treated with sufficient seriousness, but in some instances are considered nonconsequential. In our appraisal we shall try to remain as objective as possible and confine ourselves to the areas for which the planning committees sought consideration.

The theme of the convention, *Christ—the Hope of the World*, was discussed in the first plenary session in two eloquent addresses, taking the hearers into the field of eschatology. The first one was delivered by Prof. Edmund Schlink of Heidelberg, Germany, and was a straightforward, excellent discourse based on what the Holy Scriptures say about the last times, including a striking paragraph on the meaning of Christ for mankind. A few sections ought to be quoted. "Jesus Christ is the Hope of the world not because He guarantees the preservation of the world, but because He liberates us from all the binding ties of the world. Christ is the Hope of the world because He calls man out of this world." "Hoping means not sleeping, but waiting with utmost alertness." "The first act of hope is the preaching of the Gospel to the whole world." "The command of God and the Redeemer requires of us the greatest speed; we do not know how much time we have left." "We must not forget that peace on earth is not peace with God." The other speaker was Prof. Robert L. Calhoun of Yale University. His discourse did not have the positive ring of Dr. Schlink's remarks. It did not deny the truths stressed by the latter, in fact it contained sentences like this one: "Christ is our Hope because in

Jesus Christ, died and risen, He [that is, God] gives us promise of strength to endure the stress of earthly burdens, and of life with Him beyond all earthly bounds." But it endeavored to defend what is commonly called activism, the type of religious life and work which is characterized by the course of Martha rather than that of Mary, which finds its glory in "doing things," rather than in learning patiently what God has told us to perform. Besides, so he asserted, there is frontier evangelism with its simple, non-dogmatic message and the Ritschlian theology, which many Americans studied in Germany, that have led to a more ethical view of religious work, to the social gospel; "a major part of our academic protestant theology itself came to be concerned less with the structures of Biblical and doctrinal truths and more with the task of redressing injustice in the industrial and political scene." He indeed warned his hearers to be aware of the existence of dangers: "We tend to confuse the will of God with our way of life and to suppose that our version of the Gospel of hope is the only one that is meaningful and true. It is perilously easy for us to identify God's promises with the peculiarly American way of life; to suppose that the kingdom of God is at least in principle, our republican form of government, the economic system we call free enterprise, the social and cultural heritages we cherish." But on the whole this writer has the impression that the spirit of compromise dictated parts of the address.

After this start the convention settled down to give attention in various sections to the six areas indicated. Six reports, based on what an advisory commission of thirty-three theologians had elaborated, were submitted to the convention. The latter, in a special statement, says that the report (that is, the product of the thirty-three) exhibits a substantial ecumenical consensus. That on some points there is disagreement of the assembly with the report is frankly stated. The report was forwarded to the churches for "their study, prayer, and encouragement." Various committees of the convention, referred to here as sections, studied the report and brought in their findings.

1. The report of Section I, entitled that of Faith and Order, concerned itself with "Our oneness in Christ and our disunity as

churches." Many beautiful sentences occur in the long statement of this section which evoke our hearty approval. We should have welcomed a fuller presentation of the distinction between the *Una Sancta*, the invisible church, which is a great reality, and outward Christendom, which, of course, sad to say, is divided into numerous competing and warring bodies. What one misses especially is the definite, unequivocal recognition of the Scripture truth that at times separation and division are unavoidable, in keeping with the directive of God Himself. This truth is indeed hinted at several times, for instance in the paragraph: "We must speak the truth in love with one another and practice that love toward those with whom we disagree (Eph. 4:15, 25). Sometimes this involves us in judgments which fellow Christians cannot recognize as being made in love. At other times we are so conscious of both the sin and the cultural conditioning with which all our judgments are infected that we are tempted to be more tolerant than truth allows." How different the words of St. Paul: "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," Gal. 5:9; "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ," Col. 2:8. When the report says: "Our divided witness is a necessarily defective witness, and indeed a scandal in the face of the non-Christian world," it draws attention to a condition which is deplorable beyond words and brings bitter tears to the eyes of missionaries. The remedy is pointed out in these words: "We must all listen together in the midst of our disunity to our one Lord speaking to us through Holy Scripture," a directive for which we are grateful. But the emphasis on *sola scriptura* should have been more pervasive.

2. In the report of the Section dealing with Evangelism ("the evangelizing church"), No. II, one again finds many precious statements.

"To evangelize is to participate in His life and in His ministry to the world. This ministry is the ministry of the risen and ascended Christ: Christ as He is today. It is the ministry of Christ's life on earth by which God is revealed as the Father. It is the ministry of His death on the cross by which the sin of the world is taken away. It is the ministry of His resurrection by which the powers of death and evil have been decisively defeated. It is the ministry

of the heavenly Intercessor, who does not will that any should perish. It is the ministry of the coming Christ, by whose mercy and judgment the world is governed even now." "They [that is, the Christians] are called by Him to be witnesses of His Gospel." The report points out that the church is in the world, "both partaking of the Gospel and seeking to communicate it." "This witness is weakened by our divisions." "Therefore will the church deal with these divisions with holy impatience and particularly strive for unity." "Evangelism has the basic concern to bring people to Christ, not merely as their example, but as their Savior and Lord; by doing this it strives to make them regenerate in all the aspects of life, likewise to make them members of Christian congregations." Now, to evangelize one must in the first place be "possessed by the transforming power of Jesus Christ." Of course, one must get in touch with the world, the people about us. Then one must speak the word in keeping with the nature of the class which is being addressed. What is meant, e. g., is that the intellectual must not be spoken to as if he lacked culture, the worker not as if he did not have his special problems. Works of mercy and love must show that not merely our lips, but our hearts are aglow with compassion. All this must be accompanied by translation and distribution of the Bible, and our language must be replete with the concepts of our sacred volume.

Let every Christian, so the report admonishes us, first of all look to his own inner life; and let the laity, too, participate in the evangelizing endeavor. The children must be instructed, chaplaincies fostered, parishes formed and strengthened, workers and others addressed in their places of activity, means of mass communication like the press, the movies, radio, and television be utilized, casual contacts be employed for acquainting people with Christ, and the training of the ministry be made as realistic as possible.

In dealing with non-Christian faiths, we must not overlook that the renaissance which some of them manifest is due to the desire to change unfavorable living conditions but underneath it all is the wish of man to be master of his own destiny, while the Christian religion rests not on what man does himself, but what God has done and is doing for man. To help a non-Christian,

we must place ourselves alongside of him as a poor sinner for whom Christ died. As we try to evangelize, let us remain aware that we are responsible to God for the special form of presentation and argumentation in which we set forth His truth. The transforming power of the Gospel in the lives of the disciples must always accompany the proclamation.

In surveying these points we find little room for criticism. The function of the Law and the Gospel might have been differentiated. Perhaps there should have been more emphasis on the Gospel itself as the power of God which, regardless of the character of the human agents spreading it, produces its divine fruit. That the lives of those who profess Christianity are of the highest significance in removing obstacles and smoothing the way when the Gospel is preached to outsiders has to be granted, of course, at once.

3. A report dealing with delicate topics is that of Section III, the one that has the caption "The responsible society in a world perspective." The term "responsible society" is intended to designate Christians as members of the social groups with which they are somehow united, aware of their being God's children, responding to His love in Christ. Nobody can object to what is said of the necessity of fostering proper views concerning the family and sections of people who are in constant touch with each other like workers in a factory, and the Christian congregation. But when a Christian's role as citizen of the state is discussed, questions arise in the reader. The report dwells on what *Christians* should work for in the state. Perhaps the term "Christians" was chosen advisedly rather than "the church" or "the churches." Was the thinking underlying this terminology to the effect that "churches" must not directly become political factors while the individual Christians should by all means assert themselves in the political life of their nations? We believe this was the case, and we express our gratification.

When it is asserted that Christians should work for the recognition and embodying of the following principles: "1. Every person should be protected against arbitrary arrest or other interference with elementary human rights; 2. every person should have the right to express his religious, moral and political convictions; 3. channels of political action must be developed by which the people can

without recourse to violence change their governments; 4. forms of association within society which have their own foundations and principles [churches, families, universities] should be respected and not controlled in their inner life by the state" — the only justification for such a pronouncement by a religious assembly can be that the Bible inculcates fairness, justice, and brotherly love, and believing, devout readers of the Scriptures will readily see that these social virtues demand acceptance of, and adherence to, the four principles mentioned. If that can be granted, then the church has the right and the duty, as occasions require it, to tell its members that they must endeavor to make these principles effective. We are not ready to say that here the report has gone beyond the sphere of what we find in the Holy Scriptures with respect to ethical-social teachings.

When the report, continuing, describes more specifically the state as "guardian of social justice" and points out that it must, "if necessary be ready to accept responsibilities to counteract depression or inflation and to relieve the impact of unemployment, industrial injury, low wages, and unfavorable working conditions, sickness and old age," and when, furthermore, in addition to other matters the functions of organizations of employers and employees are briefly sketched, we believe that what is presented remains within the framework of what is either expressly stated in the Holy Scriptures or can be properly deduced from its teachings.

The report recognizes the new emphasis on state initiative and international organizations in the development of economic life, briefly adverts to the questions confronting us when we speak of capitalism and socialism, and wisely says touching types of economy: "There is no one pattern that is universally valid." What must be the church's role? The report says: "The church is concerned with economic life because of God's concern for human beings who work to produce goods and services, who use them and for whom business exists." In listing various special considerations general truths are expressed with which few people will disagree, e. g.: "The churches must never fail to recognize that the worker should have a status in society which accords with his responsibilities and his human dignity."

In a lengthy section treating of the "Communist — non-Communist tension" perhaps this paragraph will best indicate the trend of the remarks: "It will be the task of the churches to point to the dangers inherent in the present situation: on the one hand the temptation to succumb to anti-Communist hysteria and the danger of a self-righteous assurance concerning the political and social status of the West; on the other hand the temptation to accept the false promises of Communism and to overlook its threat to any responsible society." A number of questions are included addressed to the Christian people on either side of the Communist barrier, respectively, questions which on the whole are pertinent and worth pondering. Among those that are submitted to Christians in non-Communist countries the following is significant, "Does secularism in the non-Communist world differ from the materialism in the Communist world?" Considerations of space forbid that we quote more.

A section on the problems in the economically undeveloped regions in Asia, Africa, and parts of South America concludes the report of Section III, dealing with the fostering of political institutions, land reform, and rural developments, industrial development, population, independence, and responsibilities of interdependence. Regarding this section as well as the whole report one continually asks: Where is it written? The point was adverted to briefly above. Has the church the right and the duty to enter the arena of political, economic, and sociological discussions? That the Bible is not entirely silent on these topics everybody has to admit.

It is, however, clear, too, that the Scriptures for many an area in this field merely enunciate general truths, leaving it to the disciples of Jesus Christ to make the application. The theology of Geneva has always favored aggressive, vigorous, definite action on the part of the church with respect to the questions here involved while that of Wittenberg has been more inclined to content itself with the reiteration of the Bible principles, feeling convinced that what is chiefly needed is regeneration of the human heart and that after this has through God's grace been accomplished the general Bible principles pertaining to the ethical-social field will not only be accepted in theory, but be responded to in appropriate actions,

and that it is not proper for the church to invade the domain of the legislator and statesman. The report in question breathes more the spirit of Reformed than of Lutheran thinking. There lurks the danger in all these matters of drifting into a channel which the WCC itself calls one of the afflictions of our era, that of secularism, of laying more stress on temporal than on spiritual blessings.

4. The report of Section IV has the heading "International Affairs." A short introduction describes the tense, troubled, perilous world situation. The chief ideas expressed in the body of the report are the following: People universally desire peace, but this cannot be easily attained. "The development of nuclear weapons makes this an age of fear. True peace cannot rest on fear." The church must bring the transforming power of Jesus Christ upon the scene. In spite of attempts frequently made to justify war by pointing to noble objectives, it cannot be denied that the violence and destruction of war are inherently evil. In keeping with the United Nations charter, governments should be urged "to limit military actions to the necessities of international security." Christians relying on God must ceaselessly work to create an international climate favorable to friendly relations between nations. Lasting peace can be attained only if nations become Christian. The principle of "co-existence" does not mean that one approves of totalitarian tyranny, but coexistence requires that among other things "a vigorous effort be made on both sides to end social and other injustices which might lead to civil, and hence international war." Furthermore, there must be readiness to submit questions of dispute to international arbitration. Nationalism must not be permitted to become an end in itself. The United Nations system of trusteeship, having replaced the old colonialism, moves in the right direction. Nations must be granted the right of self-determination. Though the United Nations has made significant progress, it has not yet brought about world disarmament. Its charter has to be revised. Regional groupings of nations, though a possible source of friction and disturbance, can be approved if they are purely defensive and meet other necessary conditions. A consideration of human rights must lead to the denunciation of totalitarianism, which "opposes the freedom of man and of institutions and denies those God-given rights which are His will for all men." To produce an international ethos,

acceptance of certain general considerations must be urged, considerations which are listed in the report and among which we find, e. g., the view that all nations are subject to moral law and should strive to abide by the accepted principles of international law. The members of the church must "rise above the limitations of nationalism to a truly ecumenical outlook."

This is a fragmentary and imperfect summary of what the report contains. But surveying what has been submitted one has to say that here we are dealing more with a semiphilosophical and sociological essay than with a statement setting forth Bible teachings. This writer has no reason to disagree with the views uttered, considered by themselves, but he is amazed to see a world assembly gathered for a consideration of religious truths pose as a congress of statesmen pronouncing on questions which lie beyond the sphere of theologians. Here the spirit of John Calvin celebrated a veritable triumph. If the rejoinder is made that mankind has arrived at a terrifying crisis and that when a house is on fire not only the official firemen, but everybody who can joins in fighting the flames, we reply that there is, of course, some truth in this remark, but we maintain that the distinction between statesmen, representing the government, and theologians, whose platform is Jesus Christ, the crucified Savior, and "Thus saith the Lord," must not be ignored or set aside.

5. The report of Section V dealing with "intergroup relations" in the judgment of the *Christian Century* "rises to heights of impressive eloquence and has a chance to become a document of historic importance in church history."

Everybody realizes at once that it has something to say on the subject which has become a burning issue these days, the race question. A paragraph that well indicates the tenor of the report reads: "Their calling requires Christians to witness to the kingship of Christ and the unity of mankind, and to strive through social and political action to secure for all men justice, freedom, and peace, as a foretaste of the kingdom into which the faithful shall be gathered." It points an accusing finger at many of the churches composing the WCC and says that while they are against separation on paper, separations actually do exist in their midst. The reason for such an attitude is declared to be separation from God

and a "feeble grasp of the truth of the Gospel." "Separation from God" here evidently should be understood in a relative and not an absolute sense. If suffering should result for Christians when they in this area seek to follow the right path, "that is part of the price." It is the task of the churches "to challenge the conscience of society; if there is no tension between the church and society, then either the society is regenerate or the church is conformed."

When laws are made that "are unjust to any human being or make Christian fellowship impossible," the church must protest. Some of its members may even feel bound to disobey such laws, and there are instances where the Christian feels he must obey God rather than man. "The church of Christ cannot approve of any law which discriminates on grounds of race." "Intermarriage is neither justified nor condemned in the Bible." When the report says that the church "cannot approve any law against racial or ethnic intermarriage," it veers far to the side. The motives of the legislators here would play an important role. On the children of couples where father and mother belong to different races the report states: "There is no evidence that the children of such a marriage are inherently inferior, and any treatment of them as such should be condemned."

In summary, while the general objectives of the report are laudable, it seems to us that in it there are some vulnerable spots.

6. The report of Section VI on the laity is long, but whoever reads and studies it is not wasting his time. The heading is "The Christian and His Vocation." That the laity has a ministry, that it, too, should be engaged in spreading the saving truths is the first thought stressed. Next the subject "Christian faith and daily work" is considered. That every type of useful work, not only that of academic or highly skilled individuals, possesses true dignity; that we must beware of making an idol out of work; that the quality of the work we do should attest that we in this area, too, wish to serve the Lord, are interesting, helpful viewpoints submitted. In speaking of the Christian understanding of work the report faces the fact that work often "has become a drudgery which has led to futility and despair." There, so it is asserted, the Christian hope enters assuring the toiling believer that this

world will be consummated in the kingdom of Christ and that his labor is not in vain in the Lord. He must know that all honest work is service rendered to society. The Christians furthermore, having themselves been regenerated, are to be witnesses wherever they are placed that God is not only the Creator, but also the Redeemer of the world. Care should be bestowed that the work expected of employees is not ruthless drudgery or harmful to society and to the workers' self-respect. In the discussions where groups of employers and groups of employees have to make decisions the Christian must make his voice heard.

There is, according to the report, a difficulty here. It arises from the fact "that the churches are still working only with an ethic of individual responsibility and have not yet thought out the ethics of group responsibility." In other words, there is an area here which consecrated Christian thinking has not yet fully explored. The possibilities of rendering the Christian witness in the fellowship which is created by the association of workers must not be overlooked. Again, unemployment is not only a problem for economists, but for all Christian people. But it must not be forgotten that "regarded solely from the standpoint of this world, the work which men are doing is of transient worth; even man's most enduring achievements must one day pass away."

Finally, the question is asked: How can the ministry of the laity become effective? The church does not have to *enter* the sphere of daily work, it "*is* already in this sphere in the presence of its laity." But much can be done. These representatives should be given support — a thing which the churches have not always borne in mind. The church should encourage its members when they enter the social and political arena, because the opportunities for witness bearing are thus increased. Furthermore, the tendency to choose the leaders of the church from the white-collar groups may estrange especially young industrial workers. The idea must be combated that "the degree of consecration expected by God from the laity is lower than that expected from the clergy." To attain the desired goal, let the churches teach their members, especially the new converts, faith, prayer, worship, Bible reading. Those of the laity who possess special gifts of spiritual understanding and devotion must be encouraged to use them; "theology is not for the

clergy only." The clergy must acquaint themselves more directly with present-day working conditions, "in order that they may help their laity and follow them with their prayers." The aim, furthermore, must be to have a Christian atmosphere prevail in the individual homes. It is wise to provide opportunities for laymen to meet for joint discussion of common concerns. In this area, too, it must not be overlooked that Christ died for the whole world and that He is its Hope, and Christians at their daily work must show themselves His true disciples.

Looking back upon the truths here submitted in barest outline, one must admit that they are highly relevant, especially for our day and age.

This concludes our survey of the reaction of the Evanston assembly to the recommendations that were laid before it. It should be mentioned that the reports of the examining committees were not *adopted* by the assembly as its definite proclamation of Christian doctrine, they were "received" for transmission to the churches; but, generally speaking, they probably represent the thinking of a majority of the delegates and consultants gathered in Evanston.

A word on how one reviewing committee did its work might be welcome. During the convention fifteen separate groups of selected delegates and consultants met to consider the report of the Advisory Committee on the Main Issue. They met four times, two hours each time. These group meetings were small enough so that an exchange of opinions could take place, and approval and disapproval could be freely voiced. Next the 15 chairmen and secretaries of these groups met to work out, on the basis of the views expressed, a statement pertaining to the report of the Thirty-three which might be submitted to the whole assembly for adoption. Bishop Hanns Lilje had to present the statement to the plenary meeting. He found that the delegates were not altogether docile. The wording of the statement met with so much opposition that the document was twice recommitted. In its present form, that is, the form in which it finally was adopted, it definitely acknowledges that "sharp differences in theological viewpoint" were expressed among the delegates. The report is mildly criticised in the statement: "Our major criticism of the report relates not so much to its substance, but to its mode of expression; not to what is said, but

to what is not said. We find that the note of joyous affirmation and radiant expectancy which should mark a statement of the Christian hope does not sufficiently illuminate the report. We find certain important omissions: the present work of the Holy Spirit in the church and the world; specific reference to 'signs of hope'; adequate treatment of the theme of creation and cosmic redemption." Precisely what is meant by these last terms it is hard to say. The statement continues: "We are not agreed on the relationship between the Christian's hope here and now and his ultimate hope." This thought is developed somewhat in detail. After these criticisms and the admission that disagreements exist, the Christian hope, as centered in Christ and His redemption and witnessed to by the work of the Holy Spirit and the fruits of the Gospel, is affirmed in eloquent, moving words. The preceding remarks, of course, warn us that this testimony was not accepted in the same sense by all who voted for it.

Three resolutions were adopted by the assembly which should receive special mention. The first one is a brief but vigorous blast for religious liberty which in a number of places is assailed by "religious repression and persecution." The second treats of international affairs and advocates the prohibition of weapons of mass destruction and calls for the "certain assurance that no country will engage in or support aggressive or subversive acts in other countries." The third condemns segregation in all its forms and declares that it is "contrary to the Gospel and is incompatible with the Christian doctrine of man and with the nature of the church of Christ." While we are altogether in sympathy with the general tenor of this last resolution, we doubt that such a sweeping judgment including condemnation of all restrictions which the government in this area may find wise and useful is justified.

We finally have to look at the document called *The Message* which was adopted on the last day of the meeting. It begins in truly ecumenical style: "To all our fellow Christians and to our fellow men everywhere we send greetings in the name of Jesus Christ." The document is brief, and its staccato sentences resemble vigorous hammer blows falling on one's mind. The subject is the Christian hope, having its basis in Christ, "true God and true man, who died for us and who rose and has overcome the powers of sin

and death." The doctrines expressed are chiefly those of the Ecumenical Creeds. A strong plea is made that the divisions in Christendom be overcome and that in the world peace and justice be cultivated. The final sentence after the sufficiency of Christ has been confessed reads: "Therefore we say to you, Rejoice in hope." All the documents which have been referred to above (except the report of the Thirty-three) were printed in the *Christian Century* for September 22.

When Prof. Helmut Thielicke of Tuebingen read the final pronouncement, he, as he tells us in *Christ und Welt* (for September 23), was amazed. He is opposed, says he, to such statements addressed to the world and to the church which are couched in general terms and as a result are not read. He finds that the message does not contain an honest statement of the doctrinal differences between the various groups that conferred with one another. The criticism is justified. The message, though replete with beautiful phraseology which every Christian heart gladly re-echoes, does not lay its finger on the diseased spots that require healing—those which have to be labeled disloyalty to the majestic teachings of the Scriptures.

On the meaning of the theme of the convention "Christ—the Hope of the World" the gathering, as has been intimated before, was basically divided. When Dr. Schlink had delivered his Bible-based address, one American liberal is reported to have asked in disgust whether this was the kind of theology he had come 2,000 miles to hear when all enlightened religious leaders had discarded such drivel 40 years ago (cf. *United Evangelical Action* for October 1). The spirit of indifference toward Biblical truths was fostered for instance by Bishop Berggrav of Norway, who stated that denominational Communion services were divisive.

The "sole dissenting voice" (an expression used by Editor Dr. Ryden of the *Lutheran Companion*) was that of Archbishop Michael of the Orthodox Patriarchate for North and South America. He told the convention when the problem of unity was under discussion that the church to which he belongs, the Greek Orthodox Church, would have to continue in its insistence that it alone "has preserved the faith that was once delivered to the saints."

The convention listened to him and without much ado proceeded along its course.

"Addresses at Evanston were notable and often brilliant," writes President Franklin Clark Fry of the ULCA (cf. *The Lutheran* of October 6), who himself as co-chairman of the Steering Committee took a very prominent part in the proceedings and who was elected chairman of the Central Committee of 90 persons which will be in charge during the next five years. What was achieved? The *Christian Century*, though by no means withholding praise and admiration, voices the opinion: "Evanston will not be remembered for having carried forward the cause of Christian unity." Of course, that has to be its position, for it criticizes what it calls the demand for "prior theological agreement." However, it correctly says that if anything is to be accomplished the question of the Scriptures themselves will have to be the theme of the deliberations; as it is, while the speakers at these assemblies all appeal to the Bible, everyone has his own idea as to its authority and the principles of its interpretation, and one does not understand the other.

Something good was undoubtedly achieved at Evanston. Many strong testimonies in support of Bible truth, for instance, testimonies acknowledging Jesus as Savior who bore our sins, were uttered, and we can be sure that this witness was not rendered in vain. What to this writer seems to have afflicted the convention was the indifference of some members to Bible doctrines and the endeavor of some of the leaders to present a united front through statements which evaded basic doctrinal issues and that gave him the impression of an effort at welding those that accept the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures and those that deny it, the believers in the virgin birth of our blessed Savior and the opponents of it, those who profess belief in the substitutionary atonement of the Son of God and those who regard it as mythology, into one harmonious whole. It is thus with mixed feelings that we close our review of the Evanston meeting, asking God, as we turn to our accustomed tasks, to keep all of us faithful to the formal and the material principles of the Reformation, the divine authority of the Scriptures and the grand doctrine of justification by grace through faith.

St. Louis, Mo.