

# Observations On Ecumenicity

By E. Arnold Sitz

Anyone cognizant of what is going on in the Church today will have heard of the “Ecumenical Movement.” Its waves have broken with terrific repercussions within the pale of the Lutheran Church, not only washing up on Lutheran shores in the world in general, but racing through Lutheran circles in America quite particularly. In European realms this must be looked upon as a natural phenomenon; for outside of the tiny Lutheran free churches European Lutheranism has had no solid anchorage in doctrine and practice for many decades. But in America, where by the grace of God the Lutheran Church has shown itself conservatively Lutheran above not a few other wings of that communion, the hold that the ecumenical movement is gaining on our denomination argues that Lutheranism in this country needs instruction both on the meaning of ecumenicity, as well as on the history of the Church’s movements throughout the centuries.

We have an illustration of this within our own Synod. Compared to the mighty flood of the ecumenical movement breaking through levee and dike in every denomination of the Christian Church throughout the world, the Boy Scout question remains but a contributing stream. Yet touch upon that topic and the discussion becomes a roar of sound; with a number it seems to be the hinge upon which our orthodoxy turns. Speak, however, on what gathers way as the most dangerous and potentially the most sweeping movement within the Church today, and the mighty roar fades to a murmur, or to a giggle covering the unfamiliarity with the new term ‘ecumenicity.’

It may be said, “This is nothing other than the old issue of unionism.” That, and much more. Even the term ‘syncretism’ does not uncover adequately all the fissures in the foundation of the Lutheran Church through which the silty waters of disintegration are seeping into the basement, causing the superstructure of the Lutheran Church to run cracks in every direction, weakening the whole building. And so, as always, the gravest danger to the Church stems from within the Church itself. No wonder then that Scripture declares, “Judgment must begin at the house of God.”

Just lately a book has appeared by the former editor of *The Christian Century*, Charles Clayton Morrison. It is being received with acclaim. It deals with this very thing, the Ecumenical Movement. Fulsome reviews praise his counsel to the many branches of the Protestant Church to forget their divisive doctrines and practices and to draw together in a solid phalanx against the evils threatening both political institutions and the Church. In plain words, he advocates setting aside God’s Word and its supreme authority in favor of great numbers standing together shoulder to shoulder, not recognizing that his plan of battle means certain and abject defeat. God cannot go along with a strategy that leaves Him out as commander-in-chief. And what further folly to take out of the hands of an army its only weapon, in this case the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God! Morrison’s advice sounds like sending into deadly combat a nondescript, undisciplined multitude, armed with sticks and stones, scythe and pitchfork, with no plan of battle and no leader, against the best disciplined and most modernly armed and directed army in the world. The outcome would be certain: Satan and his cohorts would carry away the victory; in whose army one of the best-trained corps is that of the Pope, the Anti-Christ yea, the Pope, who is finding in our camp aid and comfort in the Romanish high church party. For these brethren fail to evaluate the calling of the Lutheran Church in America to remain definitely Lutheran in simplicity of ritual, of doctrine, of practice, and of dress—adding cassock and cope, surplice and cincture to scores of other accoutrements belonging as definitely to the Roman Catholic habit.

Now “ecumenical” means “world-wide,” or universal. The term was applied to the first general councils of the Church. They were thought of as representing the whole church, a worldwide church council. (The term has also been pilfered by that ecclesiastical burglar, the Pope; for he calls himself the “Ecumenical Bishop,” that is, the bishop whose jurisdiction is world-wide.) In those early centuries of the Church, when all traced their origins to the same source, when Jesus Christ, the Head, was still a near historical Personage, when all felt themselves members of the same body, when the generation of centrifugal forces toward division and denominationalism was hardly in its inception and unrecognized by its contemporaries, it was natural to apply

the term 'ecumenical' not only to the representative church assembled in general council, but to the visible church as a whole.

Today, after more than fifteen centuries, the picture shows radical change. We see the outward organized church split up into hundreds of denominations, a mass of splinters. Difference and disagreement in doctrine and practice, in church government and polity, as well as in form and ritual have caused the cleavage. This phenomenon is loudly deplored as being the chief scandal and offense in the Church, particularly of the Protestant sector. The cry swells to a roar that this offense must be removed, this disease healed, these divisions joined. All denominations must get together. Only so can the grave dangers of our day be met—It is just here lurks the idea that the kingdom of God must be set up here on earth. It must be external, visible, organized, spiritual-political, large in numbers; in short, plain contrivance. The simplest solution is offered by the Pope, who for a millenium and a half has taught a visible kingdom of God on earth, identifying it with the Roman Catholic Church. He broadcasts: Let all the dear denominations come in under his benevolent pinions and the perfection devoutly to be wished will have been consummated—and Protestantism consumed in the process.

But what would now be required to restore the ecumenicity of the early Church calls for nothing less than a complete reversal of the centrifugal forces of the intervening centuries into a centripetal movement, converging all denominations into one harmonious whole. Yet for solid fusion a cordial return to the truth of God, to the tenets of the Gospel, to definite doctrine, and to true faith must precede. Excluded must be any external, political plant.

A few weeks ago I heard the celebrated E. Stanley Jones—a man whom some Lutheran journals carelessly laud as a great Christian and a great missionary, as they also erroneously speak thus of Schweitzer—deliver a speech to one of the Tucson Kiwanis clubs. He offered his thoughts on the healing of the world's ills. As an exemplary modernistic Methodist he adheres to the belief that the world is getting better and better, a hope that two devastating world wars have not succeeded in blasting. The process of getting better will eventually head up in the coming of the kingdom of God on earth in visible form. Jones said, "I see the best elements in democracy and the best in Communism combined together in a higher and better form. This new thing will be the kingdom of God." God was never mentioned as an agent in the matter; men must bring it about. Negotiations among men and nations must accomplish it. It was painted as something that must spring up from the ground under the cultivating hand of man; not a word that such would have to come down from God in heaven.

No ecumenical movement will ever be successful that proves to be nothing above the effort of men. To succeed it must needs come from above, the work of the Holy Spirit.

But the Holy Spirit is not an externalist. He is a spirit. His work is in the domain of the spiritual, even when He binds Himself to the use of the external means of grace, the Word of God and the Sacraments. For, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink," that is, anything external, as Jones would have it to be, "but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." He it is that must lead into all truth. Christ puts the same truth succinctly when He says: "Without Me ye can do nothing." For the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

These men who want to bring about a successful ecumenical movement and so establish the kingdom of heaven here on earth are largely the same men who fostered the Inter-Church World Movement after the First World War. They have conveniently forgotten the miserable failure of that ballyhooed venture, the grandfather to the present Ecumenical Movement. Just so will this present-day endeavor careen toward collapse. It is the grandchild of bankrupt church leaders and of churches who follow these blind leaders of the blind toward the ditch. But meanwhile Christendom is blunted and damaged as it sails in the shallowing waters of the Ecumenical Sea.

When we look at the thousand and one denominations, the myriad items of disagreement, the continuing corruption of sin, the stiff-necked opinions obtaining, the still-splintering and daily increasing new disagreements, how can any man in his right mind hope for success in the Herculean task of getting them all to return to the fundamental basis of God's Word, to agreement in the teachings of Scripture, and to steadfast adherence to such concord in accord with the principle of Holy Writ, "How can two walk together except they

be agreed?" And what is more fundamental than God's truth? And what more necessary to ecumenicity than inner agreement on the Gospel?

Indeed, the advocates of the Ecumenical Movement recognize that this is impossible. So they frankly set out to circumvent this necessity, to ignore it, to compromise it. Some—and they are many, especially the modernists and the liberals—cry: "Let us forget our differences and unite." In plain words, let us ignore the Word of God, abandon its doctrines, sacrifice any convictions we may have, and let us join on the least common denominator. The least common denominator doctrinally speaking would then be, "God; liberty; immortality." That eventually includes Jew, Mohammedan, Free Mason, Rosicrucian, Mormon, Jehovah's Witness, Zulu, Hottentot, gambler and harlot, and the devil himself, all of whom believe in God, liberty, and immortality. "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." The fact remains, therefore, that these people do not understand the terms "ecumenical" and "ecumenicity" in their application to the spiritual realm of the Church; and they have radically shallowed them out.

Within the Lutheran Church in America, yes, apparently also within the conservative Synodical Conference, the conviction that substantial agreement in doctrine and practice cannot be reached has received imprint in the dictum, "It is not necessary to agree in all non-fundamental doctrines." The Ecumenical Movement has thus thrust its foot into our door. The Ecumenical Movement is the hen that lays the egg of unionism; and when the chick hatches out, the chick's feathers in turn dry out in the pattern of the Ecumenical Movement.

Another shibboleth that forms itself into a betraying shibboleth is called "fellowship." True, some fellowshipping marks itself as being genuine, when practiced privately by real children of God even across denominational lines. I John 1:1–4. We shall discuss this more fully below. But the general brand of "fellowship" smells. It roots in a soil of "love" impoverished and destitute; for toward God it shows little or no respect for His Word; and toward men it is indifferent as to whether his fellow-minister be off the doctrinal beam and be leading his people to destruction, or at least into dangerous ways. Witness many Ministerial Alliances. The one in Tucson is presided over by a rabbi! Like the proverbial cat and the bowl of hot porridge this brand of "fellowship" walks around or away from the Word of God, from the teaching of Scripture, from discussion of fundamentals, from doctrinal difference, from meeting the issues. It finds fellowship in ignoring truth, in jovial backslapping, in being a 'good fellow', in avoiding any unpleasant encounters on doctrine and practice, in denouncing in righteous indignation gambling, drinking, and juvenile delinquency, and in bringing pressure on the authorities to control corruption, eradicate racing, and abolish bingo. But this type of hollow fellowship can never master the task of directing the stream of a truly ecumenical movement.

Within the pale of the Lutheran Church in America the current of the Ecumenical Movement is running strong. It had its beginnings in the mergers of the second decade of this century. It deposited the Opgjoer, the Chicago Theses, the Minneapolis Theses, the Pittsburgh Agreement, and other documents on the way. Then for a while it seemed to subside, diked off from the Synodical Conference largely by the Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod. But in recent years it has crevassed this levee, first seeping, then beginning to pour into the Synodical Conference. The chief crevasses through which brackish waters are flowing are four in number: the English District of the Missouri Synod; the chaplaincy; the high church party; and, sad to say, Concordia Seminary at St. Louis. Significantly all four of these directions have been united in the person of a professor recently called to that seminary.

This same professor has the distinction of having been corrected in a Romanistic conception of the Lord's Supper by an American Lutheran Church theologian. It is also indicative of a trend that this same man delivered the baccalaureate sermon at the University of Arizona in the spring of 1951; in which service the minister of the First Congregational Church of Tucson pronounced the benediction. When warned before the event against joining in this unionistic service—a Synodical Conference pastor called by telephone—the warning was turned off by the remark that the baccalaureate was but "a secular service."

The Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods, however, bear no little responsibility for the breaks in the levee by reason of hesitant, timid, negative, and belated attempts to stem the current and rip-rap the breaks. We have shied away from the polemical when sharp polemics seemed called for. Have we not kept kid gloves on when

we were being shoved around, ignored, given the run-around, even vilified? And have we rightly emphasized the positive side; e.g., again and again endorsing the Brief Statement? Would that much earlier we had found the note struck by the Floor Committee in the August sessions of our Synod!

Along the banks of the resurgent flood we have seen the pilots of the—shall we say—Lutheran ecumenical expedition permit the Brief Statement to be beached alongside of the ALC Declaration. A little further on a side-wheeler called “The Affirmation” lies on the rocks. Still further on the “Common Confession I” has struck a bar, and “Common Confession II” is laboring with might and main to haul it off into safer waters. Is it not wasted effort, seeing that “Common Confession I” already has a hole stove in it? But the expedition seemingly neither learns from repeated experience, nor turns back, but continues navigating the turbulent stream. As one man the whole Synodical Conference, but especially the Missouri Synod, seeing it is its very own vessel, should re-launch the Brief Statement, for it remains an admittedly safe and worthy craft.

How strongly the current of the Ecumenical Movement flows in the Lutheran Church was made apparent in a widely acclaimed sermon of President-emeritus Dr. P. O. Bersell of the Augustana Synod. It was delivered at the recent Augustana Synod sessions in Chicago and reported in that body’s *Lutheran Companion*. The sermon was titled, “The Ecumenical Witness.” Dr. Bersell declared, “The Augustana Church is actively interested in, and an enthusiastic supporter of, the ecumenical movement.” She is interested because “Jesus Christ desires it and prayed earnestly for the unity of His Church; because the challenge of the world demands a united testimony; and because we recognize that no one Church is sufficient for the worldwide task of the Christian Church.” Every one of the three pillars Dr. Bersell sets up to support the edifice of the ecumenical movement crumbles when subjected to the test of Holy Writ. 1. It is not true that Jesus Christ desired the Ecumenical Movement, the cooperation of all denominations looking toward organizational union. Bersell’s statement harbors a false conception of the Church as being visible, as consisting of the conglomerate of denominations. We still believe with Scripture and Luther that the Church is invisible. We still confess, “I believe the holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints.” It is still written, “The foundation of God standeth sure”—that is the Church—“having this seal, ‘The Lord knowest them that are his’” (ASV). And Luther cries, “For God be praised, a child of seven years knows what the Church is, namely the holy believers and the sheep that hear the voice of their Shepherd.” Not denominations, not churches, but true individual believers, and only they, make the Church of God. Diligent search of the Scriptures coupled with earnest reading in the Book of Concord should keep one from a mistaken conception of the Church, leading the Lutheran Church into dangerous paths.

But let us return to Christ’s high priestly prayer. When Jesus prayed for unity He asked that the individual disciples making up the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints—nothing more, and nothing less—should be at one, as He and the Father are one. Dr. Bersell errs grievously and externalizes grossly in attempting to blanket the visible Lutheran Church, Baptist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Orthodox, Methodist Churches under this petition of our Lord. For Jesus had never a single church organization of whatever direction in mind.

2. And what is “the challenge of the world?” (This workhorse of the Augustana word-stable “Challenge” has been ridden into sway-backed fatigue. Everything seems to become for Augustana a ‘challenge’. Every volume of the *Lutheran Companion* must contain the sword several hundred times.) If Dr. Bersell means sin and corruption, the judgment and the wrath of God upon the world, then what is demanded is not an ecumenical movement such as he advocated, but the preaching of the Word of God, the whole counsel of God anchored in “thus saith the Lord.” For it is “Not by might or by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord.” For the Gospel—and it only—is the power of God unto salvation. “With might of ours can naught be done; soon were our loss effected.” Or don’t we any more believe that God in His almighty power is well able to handle any situation? And don’t we believe that God’s power is laid hold of by faith, and by faith alone, and not by numbers?

3. Equally erroneous does the third proposition prove “that no one Church is sufficient for the worldwide task of the Christian Church.” The only Church that remains a true and faithful witness to Christ is the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints; and it will be successful and sufficient in a world-wide task, for her sufficiency is of the All-Sufficient, even Christ, “Who is God blessed forever.” For God “has put all

things under Christ's feet and made Him head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him Who fills all in all" (ASV). Don't we Lutherans believe that Christ is Almighty God, that He rules all things, and that all men and nations are in His hand? Is He not eternal worlds more than the whole nominal church taken together? All the multitudes of the many denominations that call themselves Christian combined are as a puff of smoke compared to Jesus Christ. Where is our faith? What then is the shout that all denominations must stand shoulder to shoulder but an empty cry? Numbers count for nothing and are a delusion; what is needed is the leadership of Jesus Christ, obedience to His Word, and a cordial reliance upon Him in faith. Being His witnesses—that is our calling—means reflecting His Word, abiding in it, letting His Words abide in us. That is all that is needed to further true unity in the Spirit. But that unity will always, always be confined to that tiny group to which Jesus comfortingly says, "Fear not, *little flock*; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." How grotesque to attempt to identify this little flock with the National Council of Christian Churches USA., or the World Council of Churches, or to try to round it up by an artificial Ecumenical Movement of denominations! For it is only believing Christians, as Dr. Bersell also well knows, who are "fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner-stone.... in Whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (ASV). Foolish therefore to attempt to build the Church out of organizations, synods, denominations, seeing God has set aside for Himself and sanctified the material: individual souls.

And how can a theologian of Dr Bersell's caliber maintain in the face of plain evidence to the contrary that "the World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which accept Jesus Christ as God and Savior?" It is not enough to cite its constitution or the World Council's saying so. Dr. Bersell knows as well as any other informed person that Methodist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Congregationalist-Christian, and Baptist communions here in America, to say nothing of European communions of every description, including the Lutheran, are shot through with modernists. Worse, how can he insist that our dividedness is "superficial?" Can the denying of the deity of Christ, of the resurrection, of regeneration in Baptism, of the Real Presence in Holy Communion, of the verbal inspiration of Holy Scripture, and a host of other teachings of Holy Writ be termed 'superficial'?

Dr. Bersell is lauded for having had the courage to say, "Any church that believes it has a monopoly of the saving truth and in isolation refuses all fellowship with other Christian Churches is sorely afflicted with spiritual myopia and hardening of the arteries and is to be pitied." True, no church has a monopoly of the truth, as the Roman Catholic Church and the self-styled Church of Christ claim for themselves. Nor does any Lutheran church or synod claim any such thing for itself. But is it myopia and sclerosis to abide by the Word of God that commands us "to mark them that cause divisions and occasions of stumbling contrary to the doctrine that ye have learned and *turn away from them*"? (ASV). Is it not rather spiritual blindness to disregard this command of God?

Our fathers had little trouble in obeying this injunction, for they not only read just the 17th verse of Romans 16, but also were set apart by German or Scandinavian tongue from false fellowshiping. We modern Americanized Lutherans are no longer cloaked off by a foreign tongue; moreover, we have also learned—and that is well—not to read isolated 'proof-texts', but to read them in their context. It is the 18th verse that has not only disturbed, but routed many in their right understanding of the 17th verse when they run across the characterization of those who rupture the unity of the spirit as being "such" who "serve their own belly." We start back in horror when we think of applying that to teachers in other denominations to say nothing of such who call themselves Lutherans. But in doing so we but display our own ignorance. For while "belly" to us moderns means all the gross appetites, rightly located by the common man as being "below the belt," to the Greek—and to the Hebrew as well, witness his "bowels of mercies," his bowels "yearning," bowels being "troubled," and the like more—the *koilia* was the seat not only of the emotions of fear, joy, love, happiness, not only of the virtues of pity, mercy, and of yearning (all of which he felt in the region of his solar plexus), but also of stirring thought, of high thought, the fruit of intellect and reason, yea, even the flood faith. John 7:38; II Cor. 6:12; Phil. 1:8; 2:1; Philem. 7. (It would be well for some competent linguist among us to delineate the compass

of the terms in Hebrew and Greek usage.) Indeed, we nowadays also speak of the heart as being the source of that which is best, even in thought. But the *koilia* of the Greek is “the mind of the flesh” as well. Eph. 2:3; Col. 1:21. Now all false doctrine derives from men’s minds, from their thoughts, is the product of man’s thinking, and of the mind of the flesh. So then they that cause divisions contrary to the doctrine of the Word serve their own thoughts, the inventions of their own minds, whose seat is the *koilia* to the Greek understanding (heart to ours), which *koilia* we with some grossness and with great propensity for misunderstanding have rendered “belly,” the Revised Standard Version no better with “appetites.” Better might have been the rendering here of “flesh,” or “body” in the sense of flesh as in I Cor. 9:27, from which derive all evil things, including the ‘high’ thoughts and ‘deep things’ of false teaching.

An ‘ecumenical movement’ is in every respect a misnomer. Organizations, synods, denominations cannot bring such a movement to consummation. For, like the kingdom of God and like faith, ecumenicity is something within you, exceedingly personal. It can be practiced only within the pale of the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints. It can be exercised and brought into play only on the plane of man to man, child of God to child of God. True, a Lutheran synod on the level of a mutual confession with another Lutheran body may declare their relationship to reflect complete agreement, a step toward the ecumenical; but in fact it mirrors but the love that hopes that all its pastors and all its congregations are united in “one body, and one Spirit, even as ye were also called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, Who is over all, and through all, and in all” (ASV). It is plain that these words of God can apply in the ultimate only to the true children of God, to the individual believing Christians.

Ecumenicity therefore, contrary to what seems to be the general impression, is not a prerogative or an exercise of privilege belonging to any group, any religious organization or aggregate of religious organizations, synod, church, or denomination. These have but the right—let us also say the duty—of a Confession of faith, recognizing an identical, or even a similar, confession on the part of others—and declaring on that basis doctrinal, and, it may be, organizational, or a degree of organizational unity, as was the case with the Synodical Conference in 1872. But synodical confessions of faith are not to be confused with faith itself. They are statements of the mouth, mayhap reduced to print, and may reflect the faith within. But faith itself is a matter of the heart: it proves to be the genuine article, and it alone can exhibit the true ecumenical spirit and witness. Ecumenicity rests in faith, is of faith, and rejoices in faith. So then the *ideal* in ecumenicity remains the true fellowship of children of God within the Communion of Saints. A little flock indeed; but taken together throughout the ages a mighty and magnificent host, extending into the height of heaven, into the depth of the grave, stretching into the width of the world and the length of time, truly ecumenical. Eph. 3:18.

As there is neither male nor female, slave nor free, Scythian, Greek, nor barbarian in the Holy Christian Church, so there remain no organizational lines, no synodical lines in the Communion of Saints, but only faith, i.e., faith in the individual heart. And as denominational lines disappear in the invisible and true Church, so denominational lines prove no bar to ecumenicity, to the *personal* recognition of Christian to Christian as a brother in Christ.

This recognition, in the nature of things, cannot be absolute, since none can look into another’s heart. Recognition therefore remains a matter of judgment based upon the other man’s confession of faith and manner of life; in short, it roots in the love that credits the other’s word and way as being genuinely Christian. True believers will be found wherever the light of God’s Word still shines; and this even where the light has become dim. We know this from the promise of the Word, such as is found in Is. 55:10, 11; John 5:24; John 6:37–40, 47; and the statement of the Apostle I John 5:1. Moreover, with believing Christians the fellowship of faith is an established objective fact. God has established it. Eph. 2:19–22; 4:1–7. Faith is the bond of this fellowship.

True, we may not recognize it in many individuals, though it be there. It may be that his faith is obscured by so much intellectual rubbish, or marred by fanatical excrescences. It may be also because I myself am hindered from seeing it by reason of what the German so strikingly terms wearing ‘*Scheuklappen*’.

As we have seen, much of the delusion of the ecumenical movement grows out of a false conception of the Church. Every externalization of the concept of the Church becomes fruitful ground for mistaken views of ecumenicity, as also for false conceptions of almost every phase of Christian doctrine and life. We Lutherans

above all should remember Luther's dictum, "Wherever God's Word is heard, and Baptism and the Lord's Supper administered, there is the Church. It is neither bound to place, nor to outward organization, but is found in persons, in believers, who are thereby found in the Church." This defines the true ecumenicity of faith.

We conclude with the observation that the Holy Spirit is the absolute requisite for that which is truly ecumenical. The Holy Spirit on Pentecost was given to *each* of them; it is expressly so stated. There exists no promise of the Holy Ghost to an ecumenical council, to a denomination, to a synod as such. The Holy Spirit comes as a personal gift of God to a person. An error prolific of further error to trust that denominations, religious groups, synods are capable of acting always in the Holy Spirit, or to believe it, proclaim it, or even to insinuate it. That is Roman Catholicism pure and simple. In the Roman Catholic Church it is declared that its councils cannot err; its Pope is infallible. That explains why its decrees always drop the fiery napalm bombs of anathema. No document in all the world calls down so many curses as the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent. For, as Sohm rightly points out, "*Die Kirche hat gesprochen, und an die Kirche und an ihre Lehre glauben, das heisst ein Katholik sein ... weil die Lehre von der Unfehlbarkeit der Kirche die Grundlehre des Katholizismus ist.*" But this very false direction has appeared inside the Lutheran fence in recent years. "*Und hat die Synode in der Furcht Gottes beschlossen*"—ergo in the Holy Spirit, and precarious for him who dares to question, to disagree, to fault.

To recapitulate: When men in the Lutheran Churches of America are lauded as such who are, or were, "ecumenically-minded", and we see in Lutheran print, to say nothing of the Reformed press, continual mention and praise of the Ecumenical Movement, it behooves us to acquaint ourselves with its make-up, to discern its fallacy, to speak out against it, to warn of its dangers, to inform our people. It stands alongside of the high church movement as one of the most powerful agents in preparing our people for a return to Roman Catholicism and for the temporary triumph of the Anti-Christ before the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who will slay him with the breath of His mouth. For, as was said before, the ecumenical movement substitutes an external organization for inner conviction of faith, as the high churchman learns to commute genuine contrition of the heart into an easy genuflection.

The so-called "Ecumenical Movement" is neither ecumenical, nor does it prove a true movement. No true agreement in doctrinal or confessional direction marks it, nor is it a unit or united in the faith. Neither is it a true movement, that is, growing spontaneously out of a living faith that is life itself. Far from being spontaneous, a virus has been injected into the Protestant Church by its leaders, including, sad to say, many Lutheran leaders. It has brought about a feverish activity in the body of Christendom, involving travel all over the world for these leaders to attend endless conferences, planning sessions, conventions, joint worship, interdenominational communion celebrations where convictions range from the Real Presence to the extreme of vanity of vanities—in short, a superinduced, contrived movement, cultured in a false motive of get-together, joining, numbers; and reflecting the effect of the bane of the modern world, particularly since England introduced it in the First World War—propaganda. And propaganda, as is also the case with much of the yen for publicity in the churches of today, is not only "reckless with the truth," as an old prospector once said, but is inherently deceitful and lying. And such is the Ecumenical Movement: a great fraud and deceit.

The anti-dote? Back to the Bible; back to the promises of Christ; back to faith in God; back to the Lutheran Confessions and Luther; back to singing the grand Lutheran chorales; back to a sturdy trust in the word of Christ concerning the Church: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." In short, be Lutheran! For the confessional church has always proved the strong church. Would that the Lutheran Church of whatever synod in America were to realize that its God-given call in America is to remain definitely LUTHERAN! Lutheran in preaching the Word, Lutheran in administration of the sacraments, Lutheran in simplicity of ritual and organization, Lutheran in every phase of confession. For only as staunch Lutherans shall we be able to keep true course in the pagan civilization surrounding us, help to dam the leaping growth and influence of the Roman Catholic Church in our land, stem the tide of Reformed influence in the Protestant Church, —and not drift away on the stream of the Ecumenical Movement into the shallows of indifferentism to wreck on the shoals of ultimate unbelief.