

The Northwestern Lutheran

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65 N Ridge
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The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers; let Him not forsake us, nor forsake us. 1 Kings 8: 57.

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ASCENSION

Ascend, dear Lord!
Thy earthly toil is done,—
Thy pain and anguish o'er;
Fought is the fight, the victory is won,
Thy grave's once fast-sealed door
Is open. Thou hast burst its prison
Since Thou from death to Life hast risen.

Ascend, dear Lord!

Ascend, dear Lord!
Redemption is complete,—
For Thou hast paid the price!
Death, Sin, and Hell lie vanquished at Thy feet;
O Lamb, Thy sacrifice
Grants us a blood-bought, free salvation;
Saves us from Satan's domination.

Ascend, dear Lord!

Ascend, dear Lord!
And send Thy Spirit blest,
Thy Comforter on high;
Let His sweet comfort strengthen the oppressed
With solace from the sky!
Thou Who hast died for our transgression,
Grant us Thy promised intercession.

Ascend, dear Lord!

Ascend, dear Lord!
Accept Thy blood-bought crown!
Return to that blest land
From whence Thy love hath caused Thee to come down.
Reign at Thy Father's hand!
Exalted Savior, naught can sever
Thee from the right to rule forever!

Ascend, dear Lord!

Ascend, dear Lord!
Thou Lamb for sinners slain,
Thou blest High Priest, ascend!
O King of Kings, in righteousness e'er reign,
Thy kingdom hath no end!
Thy ransomed host on earth rejoices,
While angels lift in song their voices:—
Ascend, dear Lord!

Ascend, dear Lord!
Thy Word and Sacrament,—
The precious Means of Grace;
Shall lead Thy Church, till earth's last hour is spent,
And she beholds Thy face!
Grant her Thy unction, heav'nly Teacher,
To preach Thy Truth to every creature.

Ascend, dear Lord!

Ascend, dear Lord!
Thy Church shall follow on,
Where Thou, dear Lord, hast led,
Where Thou in triumph, risen Christ, hast gone,
To Thee, her Bridegroom, wed,
She too, shall reign in light supernal,
And praises Thy boundless love eternal.

Ascend, dear Lord!

Ascend, dear Lord!
Ten thousand harps are strung
In Salem's palace-hall!
The glorious song of victory is sung,
The Father's love doth call
Thee to His bosom,—Lamb victorious;
Earth, echo back the angels chorus:—

Ascend, dear Lord!

For Ascension Day, 1919.

ANNA HOPPE,
Milwaukee, Wis.

COMMENTS

Making Virtue Odious It is the practice of the American clergyman to act as the guardian of public morals. He conceives it his mission to pass upon the character and the time for public amusements and popular entertainments. He is not always consistent and sometimes forgets to carry on his campaigns on a certain question, perhaps being too busy with some other question. But before long he will make up his deficiency by organizing a crusade against the thing which displeases him.

In our country there has been, heretofore, great reluctance to criticize ministers for their meddling in affairs that did not concern them. If referred to at all, they were grouped with the professional reformers—"longhaired men and shorthaired women."

Something has happened that has brought about a change. Newspapers are turning directly to such minister-reformers and are begging them to attend to such affairs that come more strictly under their care. We believe it was the success of the prohibition movement which aroused the public writers to examine more closely the irresponsible activities of clergymen. Now that prohibition has triumphed even such who favored it are finding a fly in the ointment. They perceive that there were forces at work that were very little concerned with any moral issue but used the campaign as a vehicle for selfish plans. They see now what a great army of workers was gained by enlisting the

ministers who thought they were working out a great moral reformation.

Having won the prohibition campaign, the forces of reform are turning to other fields for conquest. Boxing, Sunday baseball, Sunday movies, all of them may be found in the list of available campaign issues. The net result would be a condition in which the people would be enjoined by law to possess a certain number of negative virtues, catalogued for them by ministers whose ideas on vices and virtues are by no means universal. Just where morality would be the gainer is hard to perceive; even when we use the word in its widest sense of civic decency.

But there is an inevitable result. By pouncing upon every amusement that might under certain circumstances lend itself to abuse, "virtue" itself, that is the standard of decency by which public acts are judged, is bound to become odious to those who find their attempts at harmless amusements thwarted. The respect for laws that must appear arbitrary is undermined. The minister and his church are viewed with distrust.

All these considerations are entirely beyond the sphere marked out for religious work; they are matters of concern to those who look to the material and political welfare of the whole nation. It is strange that it was never before viewed in that light. If henceforth there is to be enlightened criticism of non-religious activities of churches and churchmen, the Lutheran church, for one, will be grateful.

H. K. M.

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Another Unwritten Law?

The daily papers not only reflect public opinion, they help to make and mold it. This is accomplished in part by merely relating the story of the day's happenings; with a greater degree of intention this aim is followed by the manner in which a thing is related, and it is here that omission and detail, suggestion and emphasis play their subtle part; in the "editorial" of the paper, finally, the relator generally gives his views with the intent of teaching others. Harm may be wrought in all three instances: for, some things were best hushed up, others gain in harmfulness by the manner in which they are held up to the public, to present the former in the latter manner and make it serve as a text to preach wrong doctrines would seem to be the height of editorial wrong-doing. We print the following from a daily paper as an illustration:

"Lucius Bangston, fourteen years old, is told by his father that, in the morning, he will be beaten for some boyish offense. The boy had been beaten before, by a father who probably told himself that he was doing his duty.

"The boy got up in the night and shot his father dead to avoid the beating. Not a pleasant story.

"The fair comment is "like father, like son." Was any man ever struck by his son that had not struck first?

"The father who strikes his son sets the example and may thank himself when the son strikes back. If gorillas can raise their young to be successful, competent gorillas without blows, human beings should do it. The father says: "Because you have offended me, I'll beat you in the morning." The son answers: "I fear your beating. I'll kill you in the night." What will the jury say?"

Given the right material on the jury and time enough to mold it with such opinions as are quoted above and we think you could fairly expect the jury to say: "acquitted." A new unwritten law or self-defense could be made to serve as a reason.

Of course, we have, as yet, not all arrived at that stage where we think we have answered all requirements when we have raised our young to be "successful, competent gorillas," but, even so, must we not condemn in the sharpest terms such opinions as are voiced above? Without entering on the question of the efficacy and advisability of corporal punishment we must say there is a grave danger to the home and, by the same token, to the state if the child in one case, and the citizen in the other, are to determine the authority of those above them and when dissatisfied are permitted to destroy them. Whatever the jury may decree in the case in question, God has long given his judgment: "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it." Thus says the law that is written and no "unwritten" law will change it. "Honor thy father and thy mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth."

G.

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"Liberty Church"

Secretary Lane of the Interior Department is planning co-operative community settlements for the returning soldiers and sailors, and 26 states have already through their legislatures endorsed the plan. Tracts of land have been found in nearly every state, so that the soldier will not have to go far away from home to avail himself of this opportunity to secure land and build himself a home. The conditions offered are very liberal, and many co-operative and social features will be introduced in these communities. Expert advisors and overseers will be with the men and guide them to employ the most scientific methods of agriculture, stock raising, etc. But there is one arrangement planned in these communities which we cannot approve. In a clip sheet sent out by the Federal Council of Churches we read:

"In this new scheme of things the Church is to play an important part. In the co-operative farm villages

there will be little place for rival church organizations. The Government plans to reserve a location in each community center for church purposes. This will afford an excellent opportunity for the Protestant Churches to establish congregations which will carry out the same practical spirit of religious co-operation which has made the "Liberty Church" in the war production communities such a helpful feature of the life of these centers."

We can readily understand how from a financial point of view one church in such a community would be the right and reasonable arrangement. But how will such a scheme harmonize with our religious liberty? Is the Protestant Church to be made the official State Church of the United States? Supposing half of these soldiers in this new community were Catholics, should they be forced to join a non-descript community church? Or if the Catholics should happen to be in the majority, would it be right to compel the Protestants to join this church in order that there should be only one church in the settlement? Would this kind of church have a right to be called a "Liberty Church?" We think not; in reality it would be a return to the early colonial days when efforts were made to force people to attend the one church and accept the one religion which the founders of the colony believed to be the only right one. In order to prevent religious persecutions the first amendment was added to the Constitution, and this reads: "Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibit the free exercise thereof." Accordingly we demand that the Government keeps hands off all arrangements for establishing so-called "Liberty Churches" or interfere with the freedom of religion and conscience. The real Liberty Church is the church which is established by the free choice of the individuals without the interference of the state. This talk that the war has brought all together into one church and that all denominational differences are or will be overlooked, is simply rank nonsense—the world, the flesh, Dr. Fosdick, and others to the contrary notwithstanding.—Lutheran Church Herald.

We have every reason to maintain a careful guard against just such schemes as this one. The war necessitated an extreme centralization of power in the hands of the Federal Government—and every citizen submitted readily to the demands and restrictions of the authorities. But many have felt that government control was being extended over a field where it is entirely out of place, the field of religion. A writer in the Christian Standard says approvingly: "The letters our officials at Washington have sent out to the editors of religious journals clearly show that the administration has regarded the church in the United States as its right arm in the great conflict." Such abuses should be speedily abated and not perpetuated. One important feature of the so-called reconstruction

work in which everybody is now interested should be the rebuilding of the dividing wall between Church and State.

J. B.

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Indignities Against Religion in Russia According to an Associated Press correspondence, there are many instances of outrages against the prevailing religion by the revolutionary elements of the New Russia. A few are mentioned: There was "conducted in a church with all ceremonial a mock marriage between an aged priest and a mare. The choir was forced, under threats of death, to sing the Psalms and Canticles of the liturgy." A parody on the funeral service is officially published for use over the body of a dog. In another church a bayonet was thrust through an ikon of Christ in such a way that a hole was bored at the mouth; then a cigarette was put there and unspeakable words scribbled on the image. These horrible and inexcusable practices must have the shadow of an excuse; they are too studied to be mere wantonness. The explanation is not difficult to find: the church is the chief sufferer under the new order that confiscates public properties for the public and general use. From being the richest and most powerful factor in the affairs of the state, the church has suddenly been relegated to the rearmost rank. It is evident that many churchmen sought ways and cast about for means to regain their lost power and wealth. Every movement against the ruling powers had the open or secret support of the church officials. The outrages committed by the bolsheviki were, possibly, more retaliatory than anything else.

H. K. M.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Have you ever become alive and awake to the claims of the First Commandment? Has it come home to you with a pain of discovery that behind and above all your other sins and faults, by which you have broken the commandments, there towers this stupendous accusation that you really have other gods beside the One who says, "I am God, and there is none else," "I am the Lord: that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another," "I am the Lord, *thy God?*" Alas for the asking! How much is the present generation, not excluding ourselves, given to disregarding the solemn demands which the chief of all the commandments makes upon each and every individual. Not to speak of the Atheist who asserts that there is no God, nor of the Agnostic who professes that he cannot tell whether there is a God or not, nor of the Materialist who boasts that he does not need a God, there is an appalling indifference toward the all-important claims set forth in this commandment. Multitudes, who would resent the imputation of serving false gods as slanderous, do nevertheless spend existence in utter

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forgetfulness of what is charged to them here. People act practically as if the lifelong disregard of the grave and momentous forbiddance of this fundamental precept of the Lord were no sin, scarcely even a fault. Is there not something extremely saddening about this blank in men's attitude toward the One in whom they live and move and have their being? Of all the delinquencies toward God this must be the most culpable, to have other gods beside Him, and the state of heart which can year after year ignore the gravity of such offence with complacency must be of all states the most deplorable and fatal for a man to abide in.

There is, therefore, needs of ever giving prayerful attention to God's teaching in the First Commandment.

It is prohibitive in form, and as such we shall first consider it. The sin which is forbidden here is idolatry in all its forms. Idolatry is very common in the speech of men, but few realize that, as just intimated, the depths of all human woe is contained in it. As all life has its source in the one true God, and all truth, all true religion and faith, all justice and righteousness, all salvation of man, all hope, all lasting happiness, all glory flows from this only source; so all death, all perversion of truth, all false religion, all injustice, all unbelief, all spiritual darkness, all hopelessness of man is actually due to idolatry. Idolatry lost Paradise to the race. It opened a world of misery and delusion to every one that enters therein.

Why this? Because the idolater dethrones God, deposes Him, not, it is true, from the seat of authority in heaven, but from His throne in man's heart, setting up therein a God of his own invention, whom he serves and worships; and when God is thus dethroned life's essence and happiness is destroyed.

Speaking of idolatry Luther in his "Large Catechism" says: "Idolatry consists not merely in erecting an image and worshipping it, but rather in the heart, which is intent on something else, and seeks help and consolation from creatures, saints or devils,

and neither accepts God, nor looks to him for good to such an extent as to believe that He is willing to help; neither believes that whatever good it experiences comes from God."

"Besides, there is also a false divine service and extreme idolatry, which we have hitherto practiced, and is still prevalent in the world, upon which also all ecclesiastical (papal) orders are founded, and which alone concerns the conscience, that seeks in its own works help, consolation and salvation, presumes to wrest heaven from God, and reckons how many institutions it has founded, how often it has fasted, attended Mass, etc. Upon such things it depends, and of them boasts, as though unwilling to receive anything from God gratuitously, but desires itself to earn them or merit them superabundantly as though he were in our service and debt, and we his lord. What is this but reducing God to an idol, and elevating and regarding ourselves as God?"

Most people imagine that we are living in a country and in times far removed from idolatry or idolatrous worship. When they hear of idols, they can conceive of nothing but graven images which are being worshipped by heathen people in barbarous countries. But while there is that gross idolatry which does not require our immediate attention, unless it be the invocation of saints, Mariolatry, the worshipping of holy relics, the adoration of the consecrated host, etc., as practised in the Church of Rome, which comes perilously near to gross idolatry, there is a well-nigh endless variety of secret or fine idolatry which does.

We may classify the latter into idolatry of the mind and idolatry of the senses. The first consists in false notions of God, or those ideas and systems devised by the human intellect that rob God of His authority, inasmuch as they are looked upon as the ruling forces in determining the world's progress and happiness. There is above all perverted reason which is put in place of God and regarded as the highest authority in all matters pertaining to life. What is much of our learning in every department today but an exaltation of the human mind above the authority of God in His word? What is the modern evolution theory, which rules God out of the universe, and makes all things, including man, the result of chance? What is science, falsely so called, which knows nothing above nature, recognizing no supreme Ruler who governs and upholds the universe, save the forces of nature as the cause and sustaining principle of all things, but idolatry? What is the exaltation of human achievement, human inventions, human progress? What are world powers, world parliaments, world movements in their attempts to create a new order of things, to place mankind on a higher plane, to produce the highest ideals of justice and humanity among all peoples without the aid of the Gospel? What is the Federation of Churches in its endeavors to bring about one universal church

of God, disregarding all differences in creeds, setting aside the fundamental truths of Christianity—what are all these but false gods before which multitudes fall in awed admiration and to whose devoted service they place their all? Ah, those that have eyes to see, eyes enlightened through the light of the divine Word will not fail to apprehend this monster sin of idolatry in our times. These are the gods virtually set up for our worship today.

Nor must it be overlooked that it is of practical concern to plain Christian people to take cognizance of them. They come into our homes in the form of books, of magazines, and the daily press. They are gods which are set up before the immature minds of our young people in textbooks used in public schools and institutes of higher education. To know these things and to advance them is considered a mark of high culture, while those who will not join in the admiration of the achievement of modern science and of world-progress as infallible and supreme, are looked upon as people who impede the world's progress and its cause for the uplift of mankind.

False gods are also the deities which are worshipped by certain religious organizations and secret societies. The Unitarians, Universalists, Christian Scientists, and others, teach the worship of a god who is not the God of the Bible, not God who has revealed Himself as Father, Son and Holy Ghost, but they have substituted for the Holy Trinity either an absolute singleness of person in the Godhead, or an impersonal God, the so-called absolute Principle. Their god is the product of their own imagination, and their worship is not worship of the true God, not even of the Father, as Christ says, John 5, 23: "He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent him." Their worship is idolatry. And no less do many of the secret societies of the day stand charged with idolatry. Most of them require a mere belief in a supreme being, and this satisfies most people. But who is the god worshipped in the lodges? They speak of the "Supreme Being," the "Universal Father," the "Great Architect," the "Grand Master," etc, who is not the true God, revealed in the Gospel of Christ, for they repudiate both Christ and His work of Redemption; hence their god is an idol.

As to the other class of idolatry, the idolatry of the senses or heart, we again find so many kinds and varieties that time would fail us to mention and describe them all. The idols of the heart or senses are creature possessions, the comforts and pleasures of the heart, on which men set their affections. As Luther has well said, "that whereon you set your heart, and wherein you put your trust, is your god." It comprises a wrong attitude of our heart toward God. If your heart is out of tune with God, if you set your heart upon someone or something else, and find your

comfort and pleasure in something or someone else, beside the one true God, that is idolatry.

Thus some love men as they should love God alone. If parents bestow upon their children, or children upon their parents greater love than they bestow upon God, they make these their gods. Such a one "is not worthy of me," says the Lord. Others love money more than God. A covetous man is one who wants to have more, and covetousness is idolatry says Scripture. "You cannot serve God and mammon." Mammon is the name of the false god of riches, and it is used here to designate wealth as such. They, therefore, who make the accumulation of riches their highest ambition in life, are idolators. No less is the fear of poverty, by which men are led to the hoarding of money, a form of idolatry, because it displaces the fear of God. Another god that is occupying the hearts of a great many people is pleasure, amusement, fashion. People are pleasure-mad, fashion-mad. They live only for pleasure, for fashion. To gratify their desire for these things some of them even restrict themselves in their use of the necessaries of life. It is belly-worship. Their "god is their belly," their own flesh. This they would please. And in the service of their flesh they disregard what pleases God; they "mind earthly things." Honor, furthermore, becomes a false god when truth and justice are sacrificed for it. Fortune becomes a false god when confidence in it displaces dependence on God. The fear of an enemy who hates, ridicules, or persecutes us because we do the will of God, is idolatry when it surpasses the fear of God. But enough has been said to indicate what idolatry is.

Considering, therefore, that the world is steeped in idolatry, it has great need of drawing near again to Sinai and listening to the voice thundering down from its summit: "I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt have no other gods besides me." But let us not forget, we too need to take the first commandment very seriously to heart. We must plead guilty of having transgressed this commandment a thousandfold. We stand condemned before God by this, the very first commandment.

Must we, then, despair? God forbid! Though we must despair of obtaining salvation by our own efforts to live up to this greatest of all commandments, yet there is One and One only who is free from the heinous sin of idolatry, who has served and worshipped the one true God in our stead, even unto death—Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. To Him we look with the eyes of faith, and find rescue from the grave, but just accusations of the First Commandment.

J. J.

People are slow to believe it, but when right religion is trampled and despised every insolence and disorder comes. If men will put the rule of Heaven out, they necessarily put the confusion of Hell in.—Seiss.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ENDANGERED

I. Church Activities as Sources of Danger

In the turmoil of conflicting tendencies and efforts which mark the period of reconstruction in our country it would be foolish to close our eyes to the fact that the enemies of Christian faith are filled with determination to crush it out, once for all times, making skillful use of certain prejudices carefully instilled and fostered in the minds of many citizens. The adoption of the prohibition amendment, not by the people of the country, but by legislatures, has disclosed possibilities which the forces of darkness will not be slow to exploit in their unending fight against the Christian Church. Piercing the mask of cant and pretense the clear-eyed observer will soon perceive that the attack now developing will, if successful, culminate in the repeal or at least the invalidation of the first amendment of the constitution, the supreme article of the bill of rights, at least inasmuch as it refers to *religious freedom*.

The constitution of the United States as originally adopted contains no reference to religion excepting the provision that "no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States" (Art. VI, 3). This was not an oversight, but is in itself evidence of the fact that the constitutional convention held religion to be a matter in which civil government has no call to interfere. But a number of the states which ratified the constitution demanded the addition of a "bill of rights," defining certain inalienable privileges which were to be guaranteed forever to all citizens of the Union. Acting upon this suggestion, Congress proposed the first ten amendments which were duly ratified by the states and thus embodied in the fundamental law of the nation. The first words of this "bill of rights" declare that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

This was not in itself, nor is it to-day, a universal prohibition of interference with religion. Any right denied to the federal government is not thereby denied to the state governments. In point of fact, some of the states continued for many years after the ratification of the federal constitution, to exercise a distinct religious control over their citizens. At present, however, the state constitutions without exception contain definitions of religious liberty which are substantially the same in scope as that written in the federal constitution.

We cannot value this distinctive feature of our American citizenship too highly. Of all the forms in which tyranny ever was exercised in the world, the assumed right to control religious conviction and its expression in practice is the most vicious and intolerable. Whether it presumes to dictate that the citizen must observe certain religious practices, or to forbid adherence to any specified religion, the result is the same. A person so controlled has no real freedom, no matter how easily the yoke of

the tyrant may lie upon his neck otherwise. If democracy means anything at all it must primarily mean that the citizen enjoys perfect freedom from all interference, governmental or otherwise, with his religious affairs. For this reason the Lutheran Church of the United States ever since its establishment in our country, including the much maligned German Lutherans, was the most loyal admirer and supporter of our form of government. While freely exercising that other right of American citizenship to criticize political movements and to express dissatisfaction with prevailing social conditions, Lutheran pastors and teachers without exception trained their hearers and pupils in true patriotism by impressing upon them the truth that there is no other country on the face of the earth where a Christian is so free to live his religious life as in the United States. Into the general prayers for every Sunday as used among us to this day, our fathers wrote a special supplication asking God to preserve this liberty, and on Thanksgiving Day religious freedom rarely fails to be mentioned as the greatest of all blessings which Americans enjoy.

Our appreciation of religious freedom as a very precious gift of God is greatly enhanced by a study of the circumstances under which it became established. Surveying the religious forces then at work in the various states we soon arrive at the conclusion that those church bodies which had actually exercised great political influence in the colonies, were least of all predisposed to favor religious freedom. In Virginia, the Church of England had become the established church and had used its power to persecute and oppress all dissenters. In the New England colonies, Rhode Island alone excepted, the English dissenters had complete control of the political machinery and improved their opportunity by endeavoring to suppress, with brute force, whatever smacked of Quakerism and of the Baptist heresy. Similarly the Dutch settlements of New York wrote some bloody pages of American history by using forcible coercion against those who dissented in faith from the ruling majority. In all these strong colonies public opinion on any political question was practically dictated by the clergy and the other church officials; those who stood under this leadership could hardly be expected to see that such a state of affairs is altogether incompatible with political freedom, and much less could they recognize that a clean separation between Church and state is the fundamental requirement for a true democracy. Clearer vision in this matter must have prevailed in Pennsylvania, the great Quaker colony, under whose tolerant control even then many strong *Lutheran* settlements were flourishing. But it strikes us almost as an anomaly that the Roman Catholic colony of Maryland voiced the sentiment that freedom of religion should be established, with great force and insistence. Of all the Reformed denominations then represented in the colonies, only the Baptists, who were nowhere in control, but were galled by persecution, made themselves heard as being in favor of an amendment

which would secure them and others freedom of religious development.

Tho it seems to be plain that the antagonism existing between the two greater Reformed factions, the Dissenters of New England and the Anglicans of Virginia, would finally have forced a compromise under which neither could obtain the backing of the federal government against the other, it is doubtful whether such a compromise would have spelled religious liberty for *everybody*, had it not been for the powerful influence of certain men who were at heart estranged from the Christian Church and would never have submitted to the political dominance of any Christian sect. This important factor in the development and final formulation of the great thought is rarely appreciated at its full value. Every American knows that Franklin, Jefferson, and Madison were among the leaders of political thought in those agitated years. Like many other cultured Americans of the time, these men had come under the influence of the French Encyclopedists, who were at best Deists, but always ranged desperately near to pure atheism, who also had reduced religion to sentiments of morality and exhibited a great dislike for ministers of the various churches. They claimed to be "freethinkers" in religion and were generally classed under this name by the people. The French influence therefore explains, not only why men like Franklin and Jefferson were imbued with the democratic ideas embodied in the Declaration of Independence, but also why they were rather more than mere endorsers of that compromise between the northern and the southern church people to permit no interference of the government of the young republic with the religion of the citizens. They saw clearly that the freedom of thought which they desired, would necessarily disappear if any church or religion were to be granted a dominating position by law. The freethinkers therefore favored the struggle of the Baptists; holding the balance of power and influence they became instrumental in the hands of divine Providence to determine the outcome that a guarantee of religious freedom was written into the federal constitution, tho the church organizations then in control of Virginia and New England had never admitted its desirability within their own spheres of influence. In fact it was not till 1820 that Connecticut, and not till 1833 that Massachusetts removed all restrictions to the free exercise of religion within their borders.

This brief and rather sketchy review of the movement leading to the adoption of the first amendment is nevertheless sufficient to indicate from what direction serious peril to religious liberty might develop subsequently. Intelligent Protestants usually are aware that the tenets of the Roman church in regard to the rights of conscience have remained unchanged since the days when the Papacy was the dominant power in the Christian world. Hence they all agreed that it behooves real lovers of American institutions to keep a watchful eye upon the political machinations of the Roman hierarchy in our country, lest

some day we find them in complete control of the government. That this would immediately mean a partial or even a total destruction of religious liberty, including the liberty now enjoyed by the atheist and the freethinker, is a foregone conclusion. The church which condemns as heretical all claims of men to the right of thinking their own thoughts on religious questions, and has ever persecuted, with fire and sword, all dissenters wherever it had the power so to do, would give short shrift to all those Americans who reject the claims of the Papacy, if ever the power were in its hands. The leopard cannot change his spots.

But this is not the only leopard which will bear most careful watching. As stated above, the Baptists were the only representatives of Reformed Protestantism in the colonies who favored the idea of religious freedom and worked energetically to realize it. It should also be recorded to their credit that they exhibited the same indomitable spirit when confronted with certain attempts of government officials to dictate to the churches in religious matters during the late period of general forgetfulness of fundamental principles. But even the Baptists are not consistent. While they may decry any governmental interference in church affairs, they are not careful to shun that other reprehensible tendency which is a common characteristic of Reformed sects, both in theory and in practice, to claim the right for the church to interfere in governmental affairs. As in the days of old New England, clergymen of all Reformed denominations take it upon themselves to dictate principles of procedure to the legislatures and even to prescribe the details which are to be incorporated in the law, and they do this not in their capacity as private citizens, but as those who speak in the name of the Church. Their church members consider this so much the duty of their ministers that they are willing to forego the preaching of the old-fashioned Gospel of Salvation if only the pulpit orator endeavors to give them the proper viewpoint from which to consider political and social problems.

This is so seriously true and has been going on so long that the American mind never senses the incongruity of the practice or its inherent perils. It was not only an urgent need of assistance which caused certain government committees to call upon the churches *as such* to perform war work. The insidious habit of the Reformed churches to meddle with all manner of things that are not the business of the Church has caused the impression to prevail that such services may rightfully be demanded of the Church on the part of the government. Among the leading men of the nation no voice was raised against this interference with religious convictions and the right of every church body to determine freely the scope of its business as a church. In fact, the veiled threats suggested by the official communications were a distinct attempt at unlawful coercion. It was characteristic that the Reformed denominations failed to perceive this coercive element, but rather grasped with avidity the

chance so offered of helping to run this country, and that so much the more as they knew that their willingness would be credited to them as an exhibition of true loyalty. The Lutheran Church, at least in part, recognized the peril of the situation so created, which seemed to develop a dangerous precedent with far-reaching consequences. For if officials were justified in this case to make such demands upon the churches according to their personal judgment, just where is the limit to this alleged privilege? But in the superheated atmosphere of war days it was plain that refusal to comply with such demands, tho based upon the constitutional guarantee, would have been resented most violently, to the jeopardy of the real work of the Church to which Lutherans had before those days sedulously confined themselves. With a keen sense of being coerced most unjustifiably they submitted under duress and, lending the machinery of their church corporations to the government, rendered whatever aid they could give with good conscience.

This policy of the Lutheran churches has been variously criticized as having been unwise, because open to misconstruction by unthinking people who might bespeak it as an endorsement of the precedent implied in the action of the federal commissions. However that may be, there certainly is ample reason, now that an era of calmer judgment may be supposed to have arrived, to sound the signal of recall for all the churches, urging them to stand sincerely and squarely upon the American principle enunciated in the first amendment of the federal constitution, and to conform their own actions to it. Unless they exert whatever influence they may hav to reform public opinion on this point, religious freedom will soon be a thing of the past.

—J. SCHALLER.

(To be continued.)

PRELIMINARY REPORT OF THE TREASURER

Cash receipts from the different Districts from July 1st, 1917-May 1st, 1919.

Wisconsin Synod, Cash on hand July 1st, 1917	\$ 7,211.26
Pacific Northwest District.....	1,978.56
Nebraska District	11,312.20
Michigan District	28,699.18
Minnesota District	131,162.38
North Wisconsin District	74,470.96
West Wisconsin District	93,904.42
South East Wisconsin District	75,611.61

Total \$424,350.57

Sundry Disbursements—July 1st, 1917-April 1st, 1919.

Theological Seminary	\$27,738.19
Northwestern College	72,494.65
Dr. Martin Luther College....	36,791.13
Michigan Lutheran Seminary..	14,604.50

Home for Aged	9,248.42
Indian Mission	16,822.74
Home Mission	56,975.06
Pensions	14,943.94
Army and Navy Chaplains	55,820.43

W. H. GRAEBNER, Treas.

ITEMS OF INTEREST CONCERNING OUR JOINT SYNOD

The fifteenth biennial convention of our Joint Synod will be held at New Ulm, Minnesota, August 20 to 27, 1919. Particulars concerning opening, registration, etc., will be announced later. The district secretaries are reminded of the constitutional requirement to send in names of their delegates to secretary of the Joint Synod before June 20, 1919.

New Method of Electing Officers

The various boards and commissions of our Joint Synod are reminded of the new manner of nominating officials by a primary election. In accordance with the stipulations of this new method all boards and commissions have the privilege of nominating candidates for the vacancies occurring in their board or commission. All nominations should be in the hands of the secretary by June 15th so that they may be published in a uniform manner in our synodical publications.

A. C. HAASE, Secretary.

Assignment of Calls

The committee on assignment of calls will meet on Tuesday, June 10th, 2:00 P. M., in the seminary at Wauwatosa, Wis.

G. E. BERGEMANN, Pres.

Notice

All reports and all other documents to be submitted to the synod at its meeting in August must reach me by June 26th.

G. E. BERGEMANN, Pres.

Official Notice

To the members of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan and other states: Pursuant to the provisions of the revised charter of the Northwestern College at Watertown, Wisconsin, it is herewith brought to public notice that the question of a reduction of the number of trustees of said college will be brought up at the sessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, and other states, at its regular biennial meeting to be held August 20th to 27th, 1919, at New Ulm, Minn.

THE N. W. COLLEGE BOARD,

Chr. Sauer, Sec'y.

Juneau, Wis., May 8th, 1919.