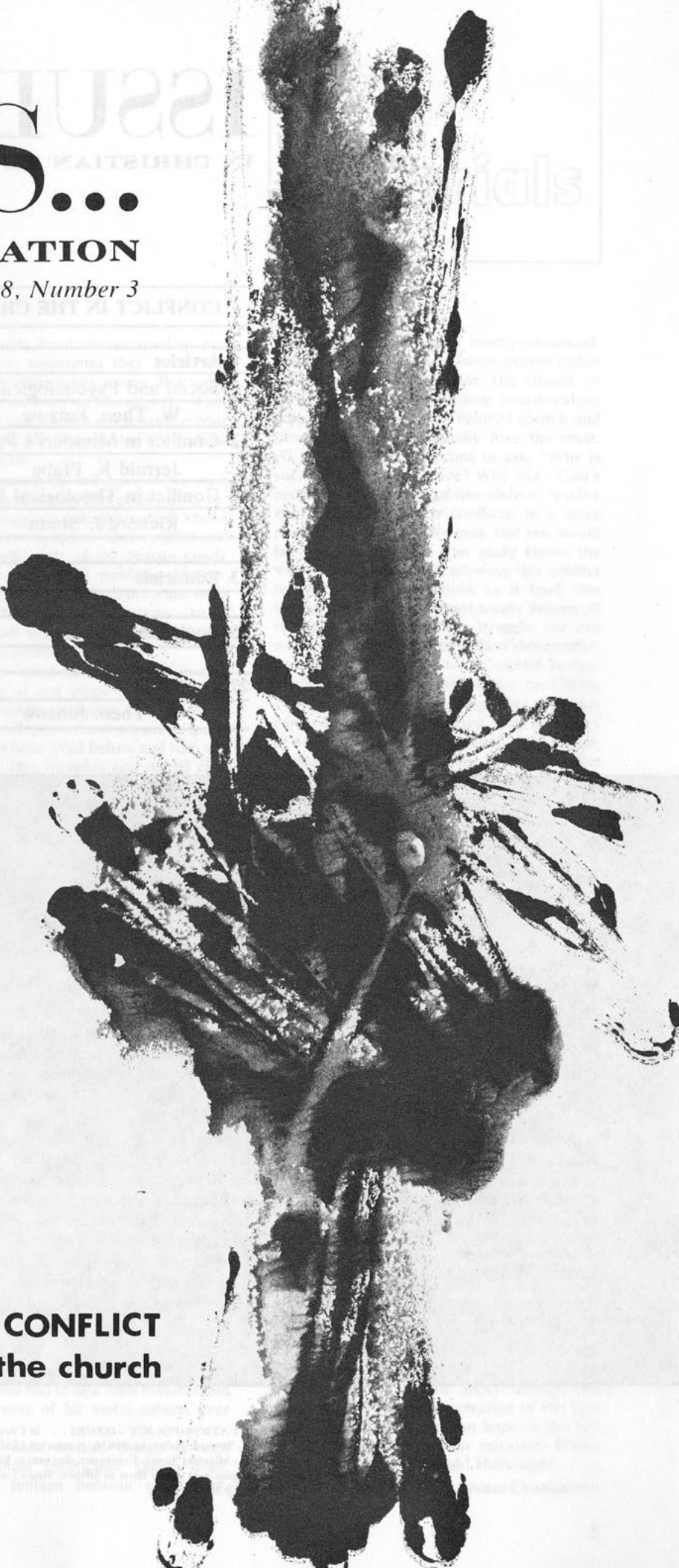


ISSUES...

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

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**CONFLICT
in the church**

CONFLICT IN THE CHURCH

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Editor's Notes

Conflict in the church comes and goes. Disagreement over the location of a new building, the order of worship, salaries, doctrine, activities of the church staff, or just about anything can be expected with greater or lesser frequency and persistence. Pastors, teachers, directors of Christian education, and other ministers of the Word are expected to exert positive leadership when conflict occurs. Authors of the articles for this ISSUES have prepared materials concerning conflict which can add to our understanding of conflict and how to cope with it whenever and wherever it occurs in the church.

THE EDITOR

About the Authors

Contributors to this ISSUES are members of the Concordia-Seward faculty.

BEWARE OF DOOMSDAY CRIERS

Nothing demonstrates the arrogance of the present age better than our tendency to see our current crisis as the worst that men have ever experienced. A recent opinion poll shows that more than a third of Americans believe that they have lived through the best period of our nation's history and that things can only get worse in the future. Apparently they have reached the conclusion that our contemporary difficulties are so insurmountable that our society has been permanently set on the road of human declension.

Without entering into a discussion of the correctness of the arguments of those who claim that conditions will get worse, we may point out some dangers that result if such a position is taken without careful study. First of all, if we do not fully comprehend the complexity of our current problems, we may be tempted to seek easy solutions which promise immediate relief or permanent panacea. Such false solutions may only compound our difficulties and confuse us when they fail. This is the case with the temporary alleviation of the energy shortages of only a few months ago. The conclusions many have drawn from the current slackening of racial strife may be a further example. In other cases, we desperately grasp for quick diplomatic solutions to obtain a full generation of peace and hope or for a purge of a faculty or staff to give us doctrinal harmony. Unless these actions confront the heart of each issue, they aggravate the problem and offer little real hope for the future.

A second danger in viewing our present situation in the light of near despair may be seen in the nostalgia craze. In books and on the television and cinema screens an age-that-never-was is being created for mass consumption. Often full of enviable fun and purity, it bears little relationship to the actual past. Whether we yearn for the good life of the fifties, forties, thirties or twenties, we come to the conclusion that people then had it better than we do, even if it is blatantly not true. Fantasy of this kind provides little assurance.

A third pitfall seems to be the opposite of the second, but it also grows out of our desire to escape our supposedly disastrous present. This danger arises as we look to the future. Few human enterprises are more admirable than those which try to anticipate what will happen and to plan for it sensibly. But if our concern for the future is composed only of an extension of our desperation about the present, we are once again seeking false

solutions. People have always tried to predict the future; sometimes they have been correct and at other times wrong. But today there exists a loud cry to abandon the study of the present and the past and to contemplate only the future, for "future shock" is about to electrocute us.

What alternative do we have if we wish to avoid the desperation that comes from believing that things can only get worse? Above all, we need to recognize that conflict and crisis are simply part of the human condition. The nature of man's problems changes, but no age has been immune to them and none will be. To believe that our actions can or should wipe out age-old human difficulties is to give way to pride.

Instead, we need to develop a mature understanding of our place in history. We ought to recognize common characteristics we share with all men—those around us today and those who have lived before and who will live after us. This includes our shared conflicts and crises. At the same time, we should appreciate the uniqueness of our place in human history, not only our peculiar difficulties, but also the special opportunities that are ours. With that in mind, we may sensibly and calmly—but with determination—deal with physical and spiritual needs, standing firm against evil and supporting what is right in times of change and danger.

CHARLES PIEHL

WHY CONFLICT?

"And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was pleasant to the eyes and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat. And the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked" (Gen. 3:6-7). And so it was that sin entered into the Garden of Eden and into the world of man. This very situation precipitated the first conflict in what was otherwise the perfect world of God. When the serpent appeared to the woman with his words of temptation, his message conflicted with the admonition of the Lord God. Eve, therefore, was the first person to be involved in a situation of conflict; she succumbed, and mankind has had to deal with innumerable conflicts, because of his sinful nature, ever since.

Every individual human being, as well as every human institution, suffers pain, anxiety, and tension because of conflict.

The antagonism becomes most pronounced, however, when such opposition occurs within the ranks of God's people. His church on earth. And it becomes most heartbreaking when it affects our own beloved church and those whom we personally love the most. At this point we are prone to ask, "Why is such turmoil taking place? Why can't God's people, the members of our church, resolve their differences, their conflicts, in a more peaceable manner?" We pray that this would be possible, and yet, who really knows the will of the Almighty in allowing this conflict to reach such proportions as it has? Our human minds surely cannot totally fathom all of the ramifications of the struggle, nor can we be made totally aware of how this conflict, painful as it may be to us mortal beings, might be bringing souls closer to Christ.

From the human perspective, conflict can, of course, be assessed from a variety of angles: historical, theological, sociological, personal, and others. The present conflict in our church is being viewed in such terms, and perhaps with some degree of merit. Such studies may be of value in helping to pinpoint the underlying problems causing the divisiveness in our church at this time. Once the causes have been pinpointed and the differences articulated, then what?

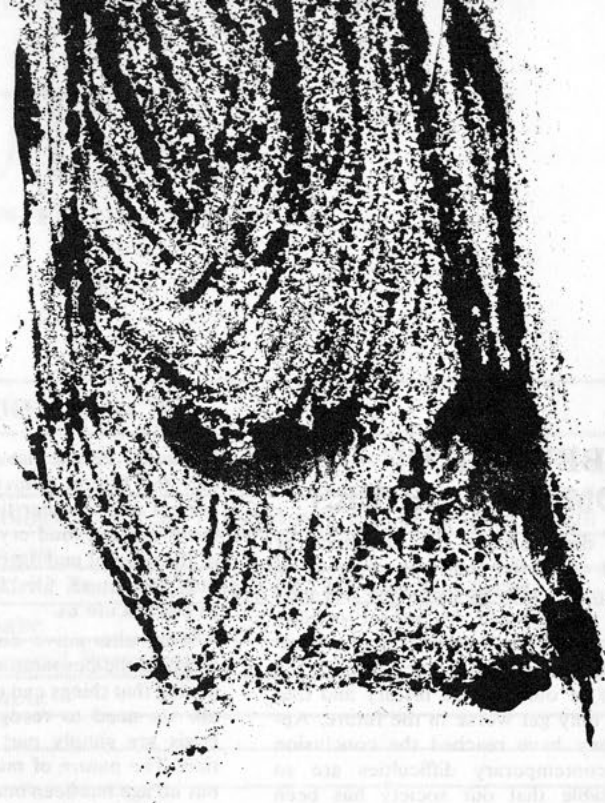
At this point, if man is to resolve his human differences, it becomes necessary for him to communicate, to put aside his prideful nature, and, God willing, to be ready to work for some type of human solution. This further requires an atmosphere of love and toleration, not one of fear and obstinance. When dealing with church matters, the problem does become more complex than when dealing with worldly matters, for over and above all, one does not wish to compromise when dealing with the Holy Scriptures. And yet, is it not possible to deal with them, to deal with one another, and to deal with any and all problems involved in a Christian manner, finally arriving at some type of satisfying conclusion, one in which we compromise human issues and preserve the inerrant Word of God?

In the midst of strife and controversy, and in the midst of all of man's entanglements, hope does exist. Mankind, as long as his race endures, will continue to engender conflict, but thanks be to God, all conflict between God and man has been resolved by the atonement brought about through the suffering, death, and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ. In this lies our hope; in this lies our peace; in this lies our salvation. Praise His holy name! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

DORIS CLATANOFF



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THE NEED FOR DIVERSITY

In the midst of serious conflict it is often easier to determine the causes of a problem than to offer a solution to it. It would be presumptuous to assume that this statement does either, but one obvious cause must be faced before reconciliation can occur in our church. The differences that exist among us are that cause. While few believe that removal of all differences is possible, many continue a widespread search for them. As long as there is such a search, there will be no difficulty in finding them. And once located, it is easy to conclude that these differences are wrong. Reconciliation can come only when the attitude of 1 Corinthians 12—where the body is described as made up of differences, not likenesses—permeates our church. Unity is possible when the different parts are accepted as necessary.

Differences do exist. Christians—LCMS Lutherans—come in all sizes, colors, abilities, and convictions. As members of this body we must accept the different members whether we agree with them or not. Each serves an important function in the body, and no one part has the authority to determine membership in that body. That right belongs to the Head, Jesus Christ, and all who claim allegiance to that Head have membership because God has chosen them to be part of His body. Such an attitude makes outreach possible. Differences are not deviations; they do not exist to be removed. They exist to make us think, talk, understand, respect, and to make us function because of differences, not in spite of them. Until we accept

differences, until we admire them, rejoice in them, thank God for them, there will be no real union and certainly no mission to the world.

Total conformity is a danger in any living organism. Absolute agreement and stagnation smell the same. If the goal is to end all difference, the resultant church will be a crippled mutation, incapable of functioning normally or effectively. Overemphasis on tradition and habit tends to bring about this malformation. The greatest enemies to faith are not diversity, or change, or doubt, or reason; rather they are narrowness, insistence on conformity, refusal to think or question, automatic rejection of change, and blind adherence to the status quo. For a church to meet the changing needs of mission, the comfortable pattern of tradition may have to give way. The use of the German language, the old hymnal, and the outdated educational materials have been laid aside, perhaps reluctantly, for the sake of mission. Change can confidently occur within a body that accepts and uses its differences effectively. Our differences are functional, not organic; Jesus Christ holds us together.

Early in its history our church chose "concordia" as a representation of its unity. "Concordia" — "harmony" — a blending of different notes into a pleasing sound. It did not choose the absolute unison of Gregorian chants. A discordant church waits now to be returned to that forgotten harmony that results when the body with all its different parts resounds in the work it was called to do.

ROBERT BADEN

SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FORCES PRESENT IN CONFLICT IN THE CHURCH

By W. Theo. Janzow

IT IS SOMETIMES ASSUMED THAT CONFLICT IN THE church is to be explained exclusively in theological terms. This is not the case. The church, in addition to its divine origins and spiritual functions, is a human organization. It responds to and sometimes becomes the victim of human and social forces. What are these forces? What light do they shed, if any, on conflict in religious organizations? This is the burden of this article. In the following paragraphs I will attempt to sketch some of the social and psychological factors that are often behind and in the turmoil and the strife when conflict wracks a religious body.

Religious Membership and Conflict

In order to understand the forces that are at work in generating conflict in the church, it is necessary to start by first examining the forces that bring people together into their religious groups. When speaking of this as a Christian, one will of course begin theologically; that is, one will begin with God. Each individual will say that God brought him into the church. The Christian, to the extent that he uses Lutheran terminology, will verbalize this by beginning with his conversion to the true faith. He will say, "The Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith." But he will not stop there. He will immediately tie in his own personal faith with an identical faith held by other people. Again, using Lutheran terms, this would be expressed as follows: "Even as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith." In other words, individuals never stand alone in their faith. They always seek to express their faith in a fellowship with others. Once that fellowship has been established, its origin, its meaning, and the validity of its continued existence is found in God. This is the appropriate and necessary foundation for any adequate analysis or explanation of why people belong to Christian churches.

Given this theological base, one should recognize that social and psychological factors also play a part in religious affiliation. The church has two sides, its divine side and its human side. Unless one takes a look at both, one is not likely to grasp the fuller dimensions of either

its solidarity or its fragility. Much of what happens in the church toward either pulling it together or tearing it apart can be understood better if one adds to the theological dimensions certain insights that are provided by studies in the psychology of the individual and the sociology of groups.

Starting with psychology, we learn that man is a reinforcement-needing creature. He cannot walk alone on this earth. He cannot be an extreme isolate. He may pride himself on his independence, but he constantly needs to be reinforced by other people.

Man needs reinforcement both on the physical and the emotional level. It isn't only the mother's breast that he needs in order to survive. He also needs her love. Empirical evidence to support this has been found in the study of marasma, a disease found in infants who have never experienced human love and among whom the incidence of early death is significantly higher.

Nor are man's reinforcement needs limited to infancy. They are wants that influence his behavior throughout his life. Thus it is neither chance nor choice that makes man a lifelong social creature. It is necessity and survival.

Take man's need for physical nurturance and biological survival. Without other people man is a goner, even as an adult. Cases like that of Hiroo Onoda, the Japanese soldier who survived 28 years of solitary existence on the Philippine island of Lubang are exceptions. To say that this could be done by all three billion inhabitants on earth is nonsensical.

Not quite so obvious but equally important, adult man's survival needs also include psychological and spiritual reinforcement from fellow human beings if he is to survive, that is, with any semblance of reaching his greater positive potentials. To accomplish this, man has to have other people support his ego. He needs to find other people who agree with his value system. He has to seek out fellow humans who perceive existence and reality and right and wrong and the ultimate explanation of things in much the same way that he does. Human beings are so constituted that people who seriously disagree with them seem a little crazy, particularly when the disagreement deals with issues that they perceive as being fundamental to an acceptable definition of the world and of existence.

No human being can stand having everybody that he knows appear crazy. He has to find some people who think as he does, who believe as he does, who explain reality and experience as he does, who have the same standards of morality that he does, who understand God in much the same way that he does, in other words, that reinforce him in his conviction that the way he sees things is a good way, or the best way, or even the only proper and acceptable way.

People who don't get enough or the proper proportions of this kind of reinforcement, or people who get caught in the trap of contradictory reinforcements, that is, having some people who are important to them reinforce them in one way and other people who are important to them reinforce them in opposite ways—people in these situations often become sick. We say they are emotionally disturbed, or that they are suffering from nervous breakdown, or even, in the most serious cases, that they have become mentally ill.

In other words, when everybody around an individual begins to appear crazy in the sense described above, it is quite likely that he himself will be considered so by his fellowmen.

To avoid this, humans constantly seek out like-minded people. Henry Franklin Giddings years ago called this phenomenon man's "consciousness of kind." Man, he held, gravitates toward people who reinforce his way of perceiving and evaluating the realities and the proprieties of human existence. And having found such people, he bands together with them. Together, they form clubs, societies, and political parties. But most important of all, they form churches.

Churches, in addition to theological reasons, are important because this is where people find other people who agree with what their minds and their hearts tell them about life, death, and eternity; about where we came from, what we are doing here, and where we are going. Churches, humanly speaking, come into being because man, psychologically, is a reinforcement-needing creature, and his profoundest reinforcement needs are in the area of religion.

Moving on to the sociologist's point of view, we find that he sees the church in a different light. His emphasis is less on individual need and more on group function. He sees the church as a grouping of people around common religious ideas, meanings, values, goals, and behaviors. This, he explains, is not unique to religious groups. It is characteristic of all human groups. They become established around common definitions, purposes, and practices.

In the case of religious groups, the common values are primarily of a religious nature. They deal chiefly with questions about the ultimate meanings of life, about morality and ethics, and about the kind of religious behaviors and practices that seem appropriate to the proper expression of "the faith." Secondly, they can also

deal with polity (how people feel the church should be organized or run), with membership (what class, nationality, or race constitute the preferred membership of the religious group), and with ecclesiastical style (formal or informal, highbrow or lowbrow).

The point is that people hold membership in or identify with a particular religious group when they find that many if not all of the principles and patterns which they themselves hold dear in religious matters are represented in the thinking and behavior of the other people in that group.

All of this, of course, tells us something about what is likely to happen when people find the reinforcement of their own religious views lessening in their own religious group. They will become uncomfortable. They will see the decreasing consensus as an individual (psychological) and group (sociological) threat.

People's first impulse in this kind of development is to close their eyes to the situation. Human beings like to shut out unpleasant trends as long as possible. But if consensus continues to wane and diversity increases, people eventually have to face the fact that the psychological bolstering which they seek from their religious organization is growing weaker.

When consensus falters, people begin to wonder. How can one be sure of one's religious values if reinforcement from one's group is only partial? Isn't it possible that eventually most people in one's group will stop reinforcing many of the values which have served as the basis for group membership? These are disturbing thoughts. Because many people would rather fight than give up the comfort that comes from consensus reinforcement, the psychological and sociological factors we have considered are the seeds of conflict.

Religious Structure and Conflict

The forces that generate conflict in the church can also be better understood when they are viewed in the light of the structure of religious organizations. All groups, once they have been established, develop structure. That is, they define the roles and statuses of the people in the group. A hierarchy, even if only of the most primitive form, takes shape. Leaders are distinguished from followers. Different tasks and privileges are assigned to different people. Power and influence is differentially distributed.

In religious groups this process results in selecting church officers and leaders and setting them apart in some way from the rank and file. Thus, elders and deacons are appointed and differentiated from non-office holders. Clergy (either trained or untrained) are identified and distinguished from the laity. Regional and national leaders are seen as distinct from the parish clergy.

Leaders in any group play a vital role. Their role is always twofold: task performance and group main-

tenance. As already stated, groups develop around purposes. The achievement of purposes requires activity. People have to do things, even if nothing else than express their allegiance to the purposes for which the organization exists. Leaders are chosen because it is felt that they have evidenced either special commitment to the group's purposes, or special skills in promoting the group's goals, or both. Group members expect them to exert influence toward getting the tasks for which the organization exists performed. In religious groups these tasks usually include proclaiming and applying the group's distinctive theology, ritual, polity, and practice as well as teaching this body of knowledge, attitude, and skills to new members, especially to children and youth.

However, performing the task is not enough. Groups having been established quickly develop strong survival instincts. They want to survive for their own sake. People develop emotional attachments to the groups to which they belong. They expect leaders to build the strength and solidarity of the group. Leaders are not allowed to be indifferent to growing tensions or developing deviations because these threaten the survival of the group. So leaders have to spend much of their energy in sheer group maintenance functions. They have to sense and express group feelings, moods, and relationships. They must be warm, friendly, and responsive to group members. They are expected to facilitate the participation of members and make them feel they are wanted and respected by the group. They must develop and initiate procedures for working out group problems. They are expected to reconcile differences and tensions in the group in a way that will build the morale and cohesion of the group and not let the group become demoralized and fragmented.

All of this applies to leaders in any group. But when one applies it to religious leaders, something else is added. Religious leaders are expected to use more than human leadership ability. They are also expected to use divine sanctions and justifications in their leadership activity. They can invoke the name of God. They can use the Bible. They can, in effect, say: Follow my leadership because what I am doing has the approval of none other than God Himself.

This factor in religious leadership has both integrative and disruptive potentials for the group. As long as the members agree with a leader's ideology and methodology they will accept his behavior as God-sanctioned. This is integrative and facilitative. It makes for a stronger bond and explains why religious leaders often have longer tenures than leaders in other organizations.

On the other hand, if ever a significant portion of a religious group's membership comes to disagree with a leader's ideology and methodology, it will tend to challenge his divine legitimacy. Whether he in fact is serving as God's spokesman will be called into question.

A situation develops where both of the disagreeing segments in the organization are convinced that their own position, their own way of expressing the truths which the organization is meant to espouse, their own way of conducting the organization's task is the God-favored one. Yet only one of these segments may be represented and reinforced in the leadership. If one group comes to feel that the leader does not reinforce their way of seeing things, it will tend to conclude that (1) the leader can hardly be God-sanctioned, and (2) he ought to be replaced by someone who more clearly represents what they perceive to be the mind and way of God.

When conflict comes to a religious organization, the leader occupies a key position. He has the potential for either minimizing or maximizing the conflict situation.

A leader who emphasizes the task performance part of his job is more often found fanning the flames of conflict than keeping the fires burning low. This is because a task-emphasizing leader tends to have strong opinions, use power tactics freely, fill as many positions as possible with people of his own persuasion, and perhaps even take sides with one or the other of the opposing groups. He puts task completion ahead of solidarity building in his organization.

Conversely, a leader who gives priority emphasis to group maintenance is likely to stress the group's unifying factors and to play down its disagreements. He will try to stay above the strife rather than get into the thick of it. He will take a mediating stand and help the opposing forces appreciate each other's strengths and overlook each other's weaknesses. The power of his office will be used more to reward than to punish. He will attempt to co-opt divergent strains into the power structure. Rather than ostracize or isolate one or the other side of a polarization situation, he will try to integrate the various strains into a cooperating whole, helping them to blend and mix through a process of mutual give and take.

Actually, when a leader goes to the extreme in either direction, he is likely to accentuate the conflict. On the other hand, balanced leadership can do much to mitigate a conflict situation. Leaders who gain a reputation for outstanding statesmanship or churchmanship are the ones who with exceptional integrity, skill, and balance are able to strike a just and equitable balance between the two essential leader roles—task performance and group maintenance.

Church Growth and Conflict

Let us examine the effect of growth, first on organizations in general and then on religious organizations. The word "organization" is itself a clue. Groups with any amount of persistence over time organize themselves. They become organizations. At the beginning the degree of organization is usually minimal and informal. The leader is often self-appointed and handles

not only task motivation and solidarity building, but business and other functions of the group as well. But when the organization grows larger, a single individual can no longer perform all the group functionary tasks. Division of labor, to use Durkheim's term, must take place.¹ Different roles must be assigned. Different individuals must be appointed.

When a group becomes so large that individual members no longer know all the other members personally, it starts taking on impersonal and bureaucratic qualities that affect both the psychology and the sociology of group life.

Psychologically, individual members begin to think of other members less as persons and more as things. John Doe, living 500 miles away, whom a member has never met, is no longer a real person with emotional needs, problems, and feelings. Instead he is a name on a list, a member on the rolls, someone who may be included in a category of people who missed 50 percent of the meetings or in a tabulation of people who voted in favor of or against a certain resolution. Elmer Smith has a residence and office five states away. Since he is an officer of the organization, many members have seen his picture but they have never shaken his hand. They don't know his wife or children. They have not had the opportunity to develop a personal interest or attachment. To them, he is merely an officeholder, that is, a neuter object. Their lives are filled with neuter objects—household appliances, cars, computers. Their relation to these objects is purely impersonal. When, by virtue of size, officers and other members of the organization are no longer personally known to their fellow members, they become impersonal objects too and are viewed, in a sense, as things rather than as people. The psychological impact of this shift is enormous.

Sociologically, the larger a group is, the more complex it becomes in its organizational structure. The classic Weberian conceptualization of this process suggests that large-scale organizations tend to have the following attributes:²

- Human relationships more formal than informal;
- Organization chiefly along rational lines;
- Activities chiefly functional;
- Officeholders elected or appointed;
- Hierarchical status structure developed;
- Obligations and privileges defined;
- Formal policies and rules drawn up;
- Authority attached to position instead of person;
- More or less complicated organizational rituals developed;
- Relationships determined by prescription rather than choice.

Such bureaucratic developments are designed to facilitate progress toward organizational objectives, to maximize procedural efficiency and to minimize interpersonal strain. Without them large-scale organizations

would bog down under their own weight. Little would be accomplished. Lack of movement toward group goals would evoke a crescendo of dissatisfaction and confusion.

By the same token, efficiently organized large-scale groups have within them the seeds of other and in some ways more deadly kinds of strain and conflict. Efficient implementation of the group's organizational structure requires the building of widespread sentiments of loyalty to organizational objectives. But the line between loyalty to objectives and loyalty to the organization for its own sake is difficult to distinguish. This leads to the classic means-end inversion. Members easily and unconsciously transfer loyalty from purposes to methods, from principles to procedures. When this happens, means, procedures, rules become goals in themselves. Discipline becomes an end in itself. Members, particularly officials, promote order for order's sake. Policies, rules, and even requisitional procedures are emotionally defended not for their quality but for their existence. Officials, administrators, and functionaries become "bureaucratic virtuosos," that is, people whose status and power grows out of their knowledge of the rules and their skill at detecting offenders and reprimanding them for the slightest deviation rather than out of the strength of their ideas and the quality of their performance.

As a result, large-scale organizations which are highly organized for efficiency may nevertheless generate serious intraorganizational conflict. This is because two opposing forces are at work. On the one hand, loyalty to means and fixation with established bureaucratic procedures promote organizational staidness and rigidity. On the other hand, efforts to fit the goals meaningfully to changing conditions and new circumstances call for organizational flexibility, adjustment, and accommodation. The two accents tend to clash. People line up in favor of one or the other emphasis. Conflict becomes imminent. The potential for open strife is greatest at that point in the developing struggle where each group by virtue of numerical or psychological strength, sees itself as the ultimate victor.

To apply these principles to the church one must start with the premise that religious organizations, too, change as they increase in size. Church organizations, as they become older and bigger, develop bureaucratic machinery and mechanisms that approximate those of any other large-scale complex organization.

The classic description of this process comes from the social philosopher Ernst Troeltsch and the social scientist Max Weber, both of 19th-century vintage. More recent elaborations of their skeletal themes have been provided by H. Richard Niebuhr, J. Milton Yinger, and others.³ In essence, what these theorists propose is that when religious organizations are young, small, and unstable, they tend to be local, isolated, and undifferentiated; their leadership is personal and charismatic; their unique ideology is considered flawless, complete

and unchangeable; their goals are given more attention than their means; their concern for survival leads them to invest their energies inwardly; they build social and psychological walls of separation around their religious organization to prevent it from being unduly threatened and diluted by the outside world; and they put more emphasis on fellowship than on power, prestige, or structure.

However, when religious organizations have matured and established themselves, and particularly when their larger size testifies to their viability and success, then they become more heterogeneous; professional leaders emerge; formal documents and symbols are developed to become fixed articulations of the church's ideology and mission; status hierarchies, job differentiations, and regulative systems take shape; concern for wider influence gradually supplants anxiety about survival; walls of separation are lowered as confidence grows and the need to influence the larger society is increasingly accented; and emphasis on power, prestige, and structure tends to nudge personal concern and fellowship from its earlier pedestal position.

In elaborating this process further, Yinger uses the expression, "the dilemma of the churches." He says that a small, young church, its future still precarious, has to build high walls of isolation in order not to be swallowed up. The ecclesiastical emphasis at that stage in its existence is "be separate, avoid them." But the church grows. Its institutional foundations become stronger. It is successful. Its future is no longer in doubt. It doesn't worry whether outside influences will destroy it. It begins to yearn for more contact. An increasing number of voices challenge the church to exert its influence beyond its own borders. To do this, it has to lower the wall, Yinger says. There has to be more contact. A growing number of voices cry, "Reach out, mingle, influence." This is an appealing cry. With survival no longer a serious concern, it is a challenge that tends to be accepted. But in the process of reaching out and mingling, some of the old emphases are lost; some of the separatistic words are more softly spoken. In order to establish any kind of meaningful relationship with the world it wants to influence, the church has to permit the world, in a sense, to come into the church, that is, it has to accommodate and be influenced by the world. The point that Yinger makes is that the church has to choose. If it wants to preserve its pristine ideology, it has to remain isolated. If it wants to make a serious impact on the world, it must let itself be changed. This is its dilemma.

This process, however, is never absolute. The one never completely overtakes the other. The organization always continues to incorporate within itself some of both. In a sense, what it is trying to do is have its cake and eat it too. It wants the solidarity and unanimity that smallness, homogeneity, and exclusivity provided; but it also wants the influence and power that largeness,

heterogeneity, and interaction with the outside world make desirable and possible.

Yet the two forces are basically incompatible. The one requires a closed system; the other requires openness. The one says influence must be forfeited for purity; the other says early formulations must be modernized and updated for influence's sake. Members of the organization have to make a choice. Inevitably, some will prefer the first emphasis, others the second. The likely effect is conflict between the opposing groups.

Ways of Dealing with Church Conflict

There are a number of ways in which church members can respond to and deal with the situations outlined above as they attempt to hold on to what is dear to them. For one, they can leave their religious organization. They can say: This church no longer meets my needs (meaning, reinforcement by group consensus), so I must leave and look for reinforcement elsewhere.

This may seem like an easy solution. But it isn't, for two reasons: (1) To find another group that thinks and believes just as a given person does isn't easy. (2) People develop roots in "their own" religious organization. They develop a sense of ownership. They have, if their membership has been meaningful at all, invested time, energy, and money in "their own" religious organization. For a man to leave "his" church as soon as he finds that it no longer unanimously reinforces his conception of what is true and right would be like a husband leaving his wife, children, home, and property as soon as someone in the family no longer agrees with him on some significant point. For most people, the overall psychological loss in this approach is too costly.

Another way of handling developing religious diversity and disagreement is to fight it, that is, fight the new ideas, ways, and interpretations, and attempt to excise them from the organization. This approach seeks to recapture the earlier, reinforcing unanimity by stamping out the "noxious weed" of diversity.

"Stamping out" diversity can be pursued in a number of ways: (1) It can be sought by trying to win back the divergents through moral persuasion (appeals to conscience) or logical arguments (appeals to the truth in historical documents). The problem with this approach is that both sides in a religious conflict tend to find both conscience and historical documents on their side. (2) It can be sought by trying effectively to quiet the divergents (removing them from all positions of influence and relegating them to a kind of ecclesiastical Siberia so that if and when they continue to shout their upsetting ideas, no one hears). The problem with this one is that, first, democratically oriented people are uncomfortable with its dictator-like sound and appearance and, second, voices crying from the wilderness sometimes carry the farthest distance. (3) It can be sought by expelling all the divergents. The problem here is also twofold: one,

the very process of expulsion can evoke sympathies which will increase, rather than decrease, the number of divergents; two, if the fighting groups have relatively matching strengths, then who expels whom, since both claim to represent the pristine philosophies and priorities.

A third way of handling the decrease of psychological reinforcement when ideological consensus is no longer present is to find a new reinforcement reference group, not outside the present fellowship, but within it. This is the famous "*ecclesiola in ecclesia*" approach. The individual locates those within the larger group organization who think as he does; he gives these individuals a separate identity in his thinking, whether or not a formal structure is developed; and, above all, he develops a feeling of mental and spiritual kinship with this inner group that exceeds the kinship that he feels for the larger group. In other words, he is back in a reinforcement-giving consensus-group situation, but it represents only part of the larger religious organization to which he formally belongs.

This third approach has both strengths and weaknesses as regards the conflict question. Its strengths are that (1) it satisfies the individual's psychological need for consensus reinforcement in a situation where the larger group is no longer able to supply it, and (2) it provides internal instrumentalities that, if rationally, carefully, and appreciatively used, can help the larger group adjust to its developing diversity.

Its chief weakness is that it has within it the seeds of institutionalizing the conflict situation and building it into the very structure of the organization. This is true particularly if the goals of the "*ecclesiola in ecclesia*" are articulated in negative terms, that is, if the emphasis is on polemics (destroying the other side) rather than on apologetics (confessing and upholding one's own position). Conflict thus built into the structure can grow into a cancer that eventually eats up the entire organization.

Still another way of handling a newly developed diversity situation is for the people who hold different positions to realign themselves into new and separate groups in which each one's point of view will again be the consensus position. This is the schism or split approach. For some this is an appealing approach because it appears so simple and clean-cut. Yet it has inherent difficulties. It tends to underestimate the complexity of the network of forces and factors, including family, relatives, traditional loyalties, financial considerations, property ramifications, and the like that make it extremely difficult for most people to sever long-standing ties, even when the organization is beset with serious disagreements and distress.

Finally, a fifth approach to growing diversity in a religious organization is to broaden the tolerance parameters. This decreases tension by adjusting the level of its consensus expectations. All organizations allow some

deviation. The question is: How much and at what levels?

This approach, however, also has its problems. It is not easy to move the ideological tolerance boundaries of any organization. In religious organizations it is particularly hard. Previous boundaries have not only been sanctioned; they have become sanctified. Not only true revelation, but also tradition has been buttressed by divine imperatives. The voice of the fathers has, for many, become the voice of God.

Furthermore, there typically is a widespread fear that moving the tolerance boundaries will open the floodgates to total license. And, indeed, the possibility is there. Having tasted the wine of broadened parameters and the allowance of greater latitude, some in the organization may become intoxicated with their newfound freedom and seek to eliminate parameters of any kind.

Nevertheless, for a religious organization that has become large, heterogeneous, and complex, this approach has psychological and sociological possibilities. If the organization has the mind to do it, the setting of new tolerance parameters is within the realm of possibility. Such parameters can maintain the general philosophical thrust of the organization while at the same time making allowance for a somewhat broader range of allowable diversity. By doing this, the consensus reinforcement needs of the members can still be met, albeit at a slightly broadened level. At the same time, tension and conflict potentials can be diminished, thus bringing unity and solidarity forces back into ascendancy.

Conclusion

Clearly, social and psychological forces do play a part in church conflict. Knowing about them does not guarantee solutions. But it does provide insights and suggest alternatives. The more people are aware of the intricate interplay of theological, social, and psychological factors in their ecclesiastical struggles, the less they will tend to oversimplify either causes or solutions. Furthermore, with knowledge comes understanding, and with understanding can come both patience and persistence in the working through of conflict situations in a constructive way.

NOTES

¹ The French sociologist, Emil Durkheim, wrote the classic work on this subject. It was titled *The Division of Labor in Society*. A translation by George Simpson was published by The Free Press, New York, in 1933.

² Max Weber was a brilliant German sociologist who wrote extensively about the bureaucratic structuring of large-scale organizations. His ideas on this subject are found in his *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, which was published by Oxford University Press, New York, in 1947.

³ Niebuhr's ideas on this subject were developed in his *Social Sources of Denominationalism*, published by the World Publishing Co. in 1957. For additional insights into Yinger's theory the reader is referred to his *Religion in the Struggle for Power*, published by Russel and Russel, Inc., in 1961.

CONFLICT IN MISSOURI'S PAST— THE ANALYSIS OF THEODORE GRAEBNER

"THEREFORE WHOEVER DESIRES TO SEE THE CHRISTIAN Church existing in quiet peace, entirely without crosses, without heresy, and without factions, will never see it thus, or else he must view the false church of the devil as the real church."¹ These words of Martin Luther have proven true for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Those who seek a past "golden age" of tranquillity in the Synod will search in vain. These reminders are pertinent: controversy with J. K. W. Loehe over the nature of the church and ministry in the 1850s; attacks on C. F. W. Walther's views on usury in the 1860s; discord over predestination in the 1870s and after; debates over life insurance at the turn of the century; the transition from German to English, especially during World War I; differences of judgment on treatment of lodge members; and heated controversies over fellowship with other Christians reveal the almost continual conflict which the Missouri Synod has experienced.

This study presents a personal interpretation by one synodical leader of the sources and consequences of struggle within the denomination. An examination of this sort can provide one means for analyzing present conflict and for furthering discussion of the church in conflict. This *is not* written in support of any current position. The reader should refrain from reading it as such. The author hopes that it will serve as a tool leading toward reconciliation.

This essay focuses on one era of conflict—the period from the late 1930s until 1950, when the issues of prayer fellowship and altar and pulpit fellowship with the American Lutheran Church (ALC) became divisive forces in the Missouri Synod and produced not only considerable discussion but much acrimony. That struggle will be analyzed through the writings of Theodore Graebner, one of the influential churchmen of the Synod at that time.² Graebner was personally involved in the conflict and ultimately became the target of bitter attack because he endorsed fellowship with the American Lutheran Church and refused to condemn prayer fellowship with other Christians.

Career of Theodore Graebner

Theodore Graebner had a long and productive career in the Missouri Synod. An 1897 graduate of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, where his father A. L. Graebner taught, Theodore Graebner held several teaching and pastoral positions before he accepted a call to Concordia Seminary in 1913 as professor and editor. He taught there until his death in 1950. During those years at the seminary he edited a number of publications, including *Der Lutheraner* (1913–1917) and the *Lutheran Witness* (1914–1949), the official publications of the Missouri Synod. He served on several synodical committees, including the Commission on Fraternal Organizations (1926–1950). Although a lackluster lecturer and preacher, he was a prolific writer with witty and stimulating style. His *Lutheran Witness* editorials, signed simply "G.," became well-known in many Lutheran households. He contributed numerous articles to the *Walther League Messenger*, the *Cresset*, *Concordia Theological Monthly*, and other journals. He published books on a variety of subjects; two of the most widely read were *God and the Cosmos*, an anti-evolution treatise, and *The Borderland of Right and Wrong*.

Graebner's career had a dual thrust. As professor and editor he was a leading proponent and defender of the Synod's theological position. He championed Missouri's stance against liberalism, unionism, the social gospel, evolution, and lodges. But later in his life he became an increasingly outspoken critic of certain conditions and attitudes within the Missouri Synod. His role as critic is the focus of this study.

Conflict over ALC Fellowship

During the first half of the twentieth century the question of prayer and church fellowship was probably the most enduring and divisive problem the Synod confronted. During World War I the Missouri Synod began a long, tortuous, often faltering, investigation of possible fellowship with other Lutherans. Representatives of the Missouri Synod met with those of the Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo Synods and, later, with The American



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Lutheran Church after those three synods merged in 1930. In 1925 an intersynodical committee submitted the Chicago Theses as an attempt to resolve disagreements which had separated the synods. Although there was support for adoption of these theses, the Missouri Synod rejected them as a basis for union in 1929. In 1932 it adopted *A Brief Statement* as its position on issues which had kept it apart from the ALC. This document became the basis for subsequent discussions between representatives of the two churches. Talks resumed in 1935. The ALC accepted *A Brief Statement* as correct, but supplemented it with a *Declaration*. In 1938 the Missouri Synod adopted *A Brief Statement* and the *Declaration* as the basis for future fellowship.³

Missourians who favored fellowship were encouraged by the 1938 actions, believing that an announcement of fellowship would soon be forthcoming. But this was not to happen. Vocal opposition within the Synod grew. The Wisconsin Synod and Evangelical Lutheran Synod, members with the Missouri and Slovak Synods in the Synodical Conference, strongly objected to the proposed fellowship arrangement. Missouri Synod president John Behnken shied away from fellowship and mentioned it less and less in the 1940s. In 1947 the Missouri Synod rescinded the 1938 resolutions and declared itself not ready for fellowship with the ALC.⁴ Frustration grew among pro-fellowship groups; many of them believed that immediate action was necessary. Their frustrations resulted in "A Statement," drawn up and adopted in Chicago in 1945 and signed by 44 leading Missouri clergy and laymen. Theodore Graebner was among the signers. This document called for broader evangelical practice in the Synod, a revised definition of prayer fellowship, and greater willingness to reach agreement with other Lutherans.⁵ Hostile reaction to "A Statement" was almost immediate and grew in intensity until 1950, clearly revealing a substantial cleavage within the Missouri Synod.⁶

Although the central issues in the 1960s and 1970s have shifted more to the authority of Scripture and exegetical methodology, it is possible to discern con-

tinuity between contemporary disputes and those which dominated earlier decades. On the surface, conditions in the 1960s and 1970s appear to be similar to conditions in the 1940s. An "unofficial" press emerged. The *Confessional Lutheran* began publication in 1940. In the midforties Paul E. Kretzmann, formerly of the St. Louis faculty, began to disseminate a mimeographed newsletter which attacked Theodore Graebner and other members of the *Lutheran Witness* editorial staff.⁷ Charges were made against members of the St. Louis faculty, including Graebner, for their position on church fellowship. There were demands for investigation of the faculty.⁸ The electoral college of Concordia Seminary in 1947 made an abortive attempt to retire Graebner "forcibly," despite the Seminary Board of Control's recommendation to retain him.⁹ Some members of Synod, including President Behnken, feared a possible split in the denomination.¹⁰

Already in the 1940s Graebner contended that power in the Synod had become overly centralized in its bureaucracy and presidency:

It is absolutely necessary to have our laity informed as to the condition of our democratic institutions. They should know that we are living under the most autocratic form of government possessed by any Protestant body. No Presbyterian Moderator can appoint floor committees. . . . And the new *Handbook* is suggesting a Board of Directors which will exercise control over every board in Synod.¹¹

The use of political action in the Synod did not originate in the late 1960s. Before the 1947 synodical convention Graebner proposed a plan for concerted action on the part of those interested in extending Missouri's contacts with other Lutherans. He maintained that many members of the Presidium and Board of Directors should be voted out of office. To that end he helped draw up an informal slate of "acceptable" candidates for those positions in 1947.¹² Clearly, the Missouri Synod was neither at peace nor of one mind on significant issues.

Causes of Conflict

But what were the causes, as Graebner saw them, of conflict and polarization? From Graebner's numerous critical attacks on the Synod two related themes emerged: *legalism* and *traditionalism*. These terms, used almost interchangeably, he defined as the substitution of human authority and man-made formulas for the Word of God. Legalism and traditionalism placed human authority above the Word, thus confining the Lutheran heritage through man-made traditions. He faulted many Missourians for failing to recognize and evaluate the threat of these tendencies to the life and spirit of the Synod.¹³

Surveying the history of the Missouri Synod, Graebner identified numerous manifestations of legalism. First, the practice of exalting human principles over doctrine, a practice which occurred on many levels in the Synod, reflected legalism. Blanket condemnations of such matters as theater going, pageants—especially

those in which the figure of Luther appeared, holding bazaars in churches, and life insurance fell into this category. Another example was President Friedrich Pfothenhauer's ruling that women missionaries could not present reports to groups which included men.¹⁴ Graebner also argued that some Lutherans had gone beyond Scripture in demanding absolute separation of church and state, applying that principle to forbid participation in baccalaureate services and the military chaplaincy.¹⁵ Various principles and practices of separation from other Christians, he maintained, also went beyond the bounds of Scripture. These included the belief that prayer fellowship could be exercised only among those who were in full doctrinal agreement, refusal of Missouri Synod missionaries in India to pray with Reformed missionaries who befriended and assisted them, and denying to New Guinea converts who had transferred from the ALC the privilege of communing with their former ALC brethren.¹⁶ He questioned the homiletic principle that every sermon had to contain enough Gospel to convert a person who attends church only once, chiding, "What a premium this places upon going to a Lutheran church only once in one's life!"¹⁷ In sum, Graebner declared:

When [human] principles usurp the place of doctrine, they have a way of spreading over into territory which is not covered by the texts on which the principle is founded. We would get rid of most of our Synodical troubles if we strictly drew the line of action where the texts of Scripture directly apply.¹⁸

A second manifestation of legalism was the insistence on uniformity. By this Graebner referred to the demand for agreement in all things, including the exegesis of Scripture texts. Commenting on the desire for a single interpretation of Rom. 16:17-18, Graebner proclaimed, "The fact that by demanding such measures the opponents of Lutheran union are really establishing the papal system in our midst, the official exegesis against which Luther protested at Worms, has escaped these people."¹⁹

A third indicator of legalism was the rigidity with which men viewed others. Graebner believed that this rigidity led many Missourians to conclude, "Once an errorist, always an errorist." Some Missourians, for example, refused to admit that the Ohio Synod had changed its view on the doctrine of election or that the Iowa Synod had altered its previous position on open questions. Nor would some acknowledge that changes had occurred in some fraternal organizations and Boy Scouts, changes which meant that earlier objections to these groups were no longer valid. The general trend toward a more confessional theology in Lutheranism after World War I was ignored, Graebner believed, because of this unbending mind set. Finally, this inflexible attitude manifested itself by assuming that changes which occurred in the Missouri Synod were *never* signs of becoming more evangelical, but were evidences of weakness and liberalism.²⁰

Graebner saw yet another evidence of the leaven of legalism when some transformed the New Testament into a code of laws. He said:

It is quite evident that there is a theology which claims orthodoxy but which makes of the New Testament a new code of laws. And these laws, being given by divine inspiration, are inflexible and valid not only *semper* but *ad semper*. Operating within this code, synodical resolutions settle problems of exegesis and pastoral theology. . . . Not only must agreement with the past be uninterrupted and hidebound, it must be maintained in phrasing and terminology and he who so much as quotes the historical record of failure to achieve infallibility may well shrink from courting publicity for his information lest his orthodoxy become suspect.²¹

Finally, the slanderous, vicious statements made about individuals in the Synod, the sweeping condemnations of these people, and the refusal to meet to discuss differences demonstrated the impact of legalism. Graebner deplored the use of labels: "By constantly reiterating the phrase 'liberal,' 'liberalism,' the critics endeavor to create a position in which people will say that where there is so much smoke there must be some fire." He noted that he had been denounced for creating an opening for liberalism by stating that not one of 30 commentaries he consulted viewed Rom. 16:17-18 as pertaining to erring Christian brethren. An abuse of 1 Tim. 5:20, which urges public rebuke of sin, permitted venomous charges against those who printed anything controversial, Graebner contended.²²

Conditions Supportive of Legalism and Traditionalism

What were the sources of legalism and traditionalism in the Missouri Synod? Why were these forces so pervasive? Graebner cited a number of contributing factors. He argued that the most significant cause was poor theological training in the Synod's seminaries from 1900 until 1920. Small, overworked faculties could not provide the quality education needed. Academic standards were low, examinations were infrequent, failure was rare. Many students graduated from the seminary with only a smattering of theology and with poorly developed exegetical and theological skills. Graebner maintained:

A person weak in theological background has no other refuge than legalism and traditionalism. Both will help him avoid exegetical labor for which he is not fitted. Without adequate theological training a clergy will become the victim of propaganda, especially when such propaganda stresses orthodoxy and conservatism.²³

A second factor contributing to legalism was the overzealous polemics which many Missouri theologians had employed against opponents. And Graebner admitted that he shared the blame for this:

I can view with some composure and without righteous indignation the attacks which have been coming my way during the last six or eight years because I felt that through my former attitudes in the editorial pages of *Lehre und Wehre* [*sic*] and an occasional *Lutheran Witness* [*sic*] article I have done much to create a hyperorthodox attitude towards those of the same confession and I must expect the sponsors for the same kind of orthodoxism

to vent their spleen against my person. They don't realize that our polemics of thirty years ago, even if to a large extent unfair and indiscriminate, has had its influence upon the thinking of those whom we attacked and that through a new conservative leadership they have joined our ranks as witnesses for old-time orthodox Lutheranism.²⁴

Third, the influence of the Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods contributed to a traditionalistic outlook. Wisconsin Synod professors and editors, Graebner argued, supplied the theology for attacks on fellowship resolutions after 1935. And ". . . the virulence of vocabulary and the use of insinuation was added to the weapons of traditionalism largely by the example of the Norwegian Synod."²⁵

The "burden of infallibility" which the Synod bore also helped to create legalism. By this phrase Graebner referred to the inability and refusal of the Synod to admit past error, though in reality it had departed from earlier positions. Thus, no open admissions of erroneous judgments on issues such as chaplaincy, reports from women missionaries, life insurance, and prayer fellowship had come from the Synod. It lived with "an unwritten law, that we never admit having made mistakes in our statement of policy."²⁶

Closely related to the "burden of infallibility" was the reverence and misuse of tradition in the Synod, the pronounced tendency to place a high premium on citations from the fathers of the denomination. "Depart from Stoeckhardt and you have departed from orthodoxy," Graebner chided sarcastically. For years, he contended, no discussion of doctrine was conducted without quoting Luther, Walther, Pieper, the first 30 volumes of *Lehre und Wehre*, and synodical essays. Eckhardt's *Reallexikon*, a multivolumed compilation of statements of the fathers, was "the sheet anchor of every man who finds himself criticized for his doctrinal position." Graebner asserted:

I challenge anyone to look into the literature of any church but our own to find anything parallel to this situation. . . . We are hardly aware of the fact that in all the wide world no one proceeds in such a manner to make good a claim of soundness or correctness.

While the Synod proclaimed Scripture as ultimate authority, it used church fathers to establish orthodoxy and to settle disputes.²⁷

Finally, Graebner postulated that legalism was a danger inherent in a conservative church. Conservative churches had one escape from problems:

Be strict! Say "No!" Make no change! Permit no innovations! Don't consider, don't think, the easy thing is to make a "simple rule" and abide by it. In other words, out of inadequate scholarship flows immediately *legalism* [Graebner's emphasis], the use of formulas instead of finding direction for a given case in the Word of God.²⁸

The Results of Legalism and Traditionalism

Graebner saw grave, if not deadly, consequences of the legalistic-traditionalistic framework. One result

was the rise of a rigid, un-Lutheran theology. He stated:

And so it is possible for our Church Union [*sic*] movement to become imperilled by a theology which is a fantastic, muscle-bound, arteriosclerotic mechanized caricature of Lutheran dogmatics, a theology which has no faith in the power of the Word, no confidence in fellowmen, and no trust in the brethren.²⁹

The Synod, he feared, was giving only lip service to *Sola Scriptura* while "actually operating with synodical resolutions." Legalism could destroy the principle of freedom in Lutheran theology. Thus in reaction to those who demanded an official exegesis of Rom. 16:17-18, Graebner declared: "Those making these demands must learn that they have forgotten the ABC of the Lutheran position which rejects all official exegesis and declares itself not even bound by the exegesis in the Book of Concord [*sic*]." ³⁰

Not only had its theology become rigid, but the Missouri Synod had developed a pronounced distrust of other Lutherans. It anticipated evil and falsehood from those outside the Synod as well as from those within who held opposing positions. Graebner was convinced that Missourians who rejected the Union Resolutions of 1938 did not trust the American Lutheran Church when it claimed doctrinal agreement with Missouri. These Missourians believed that the ALC deliberately worded documents to disguise error and that it was trying to infiltrate that error into the Missouri Synod. Graebner insisted, "Only if you regard the American Lutheran Church . . . committeemen as fundamentally dishonest can you adopt the methods by which their assertions of love for the truth have been discounted." Clearly the principle of love had been "shamelessly disregarded." ³¹

Sectarianism was another consequence of legalism. Graebner demonstrated how sectarianism revealed itself during union discussions with the ALC: when some Missourians compared the ALC to judaizers; when they said that Missouri was being deceived by the social gospel; and when they likened the situation to spreading cancer. These Missourians demanded that each statement in fellowship documents be so comprehensive as to exclude each error specifically. Graebner contended that these people were searching for excuses for separatism. Synodical attitudes, he asserted, often revealed an arrogant self-sufficiency which provoked divisiveness:

It is to be feared that some of those who are loudest in their protests against what they call a liberal attitude on the part of some of us, are precisely the ones who sin against Rom. 16:17, who are guilty of procedures and techniques which must divide the body of our church.³²

Because of these attitudes, he maintained, "Heresy hunting has developed into a profession." ³³

Resulting from the sectarian tendency, Graebner feared, was a weakened testimony from the Missouri Synod to Lutheranism in general. After World War II he became increasingly conscious of the beneficial contributions which the Missouri Synod could bring to

American and world Lutheranism. This potentiality could be lost, he warned, thus "depriving ourselves of our last opportunity to become a voice which will receive attention here and abroad in the interest of confessional Lutheranism." ³⁴

Finally, Graebner worried that the legalistic-traditionalistic syndrome ultimately would produce doctrinal indifference, even liberalism and radicalism in the Synod. The ideal seedbed for doctrinal indifference, he proposed, was the tendency to divide a denomination on questions which really were not essential to unity in Christ. Graebner argued:

The more of these yokes we hang upon the brethren, the more we shall produce a reaction of liberalism and radicalism. I am as much against the 105% Missourian as I am against the 95% Missourian. There must be utter freedom of expression and action, (all governed by the principle of love,) wherever the Word of God has not spoken the decisive word!³⁵

Graebner's Remedy and Responses

What solutions were there to the synodical dilemma as Graebner perceived it? His personal actions provided some clues. One step was self-examination and the willingness to admit past errors, an action which Graebner took, though perhaps too infrequently. Furthermore, Graebner spoke forthrightly, too caustically at times, about forces which endangered the Missouri Synod. He refused to surrender to criticism and pressure, even from high synodical officials.

Ultimately, Graebner believed, "There is only one remedy for the conditions here described: Biblical scholarship." ³⁶ He explained:

Sound Biblical scholarship, as it is now [1946] being fostered at our two Seminaries [*sic*] and as it characterizes a large and growing number of our conferences, will restore to us not only the freedom of judgment which characterized our fathers who were bound by nothing but by the Scriptures, but will reintegrate our evangelical practice both in congregational life *where, thank God, it never has been lost* [emphasis Graebner's], and, what is just as important for our work in the larger field, in our relations to other Lutherans and other Christians.³⁷

Thus Theodore Graebner examined and evaluated conflict within his Missouri Synod. A man who served that church for decades, continually defending its confessional theology, teaching its future pastors, nurturing its entire membership, in time became a critic of the "traditionalism" of that body. Deeply grieved by much of what he saw around him, he frequently sparked controversy late in his life and was subjected to countless attacks from fellow Missourians who alleged that he was betraying the historic position. His analysis of conflict within the church did not satisfy many people then; it may not satisfy some now. But Missourians should seriously examine the views of one of their leading churchmen for the insights he offers and consider his plea for a renewed study of God's Word as the key to the solution of the issues which trouble and divide them.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Martin Luther, "The Three Symbols or Creeds of the Christian Faith," trans. by Robert R. Heitner, *Luther's Works*, XXXIV, ed. by Lewis Spitz (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), p. 215.

² O. P. Kretzmann, "By the Way," *Walther League Messenger*, January, 1951, p. 4; and Ralph L. Moellering, "The Missouri Synod and Social Problems, A Theological and Sociological Analysis of the Reaction to Industrial Tensions, War, and Race Relations from 1917 to 1941" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1964), p. 465, present judgments on the influence and importance of Theodore Graebner.

³ For detailed background on fellowship discussions with the ALC, see Carl S. Meyer, "The Historical Background of 'A Brief Statement,'" *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XXI (July-September, 1961), 403-428, 466-482, 526-542; Charles F. Bunzel, "The Missouri Synod and the Chicago (Intersynodical) Theses" (unpublished S. T. M. thesis, Concordia Seminary, 1964); John H. Tietjen, *Which Way to Lutheran Unity? A History of Efforts to Unite the Lutherans of America* (St. Louis: CPH, 1966), pp. 112-116, 129-130; Jack Treon Robinson, "The Spirit of Triumphalism in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod: The Role of 'A Statement' of 1945 in the Missouri Synod" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 1972), pp. 152-171, *passim*.

⁴ Tietjen, *Which Way to Lutheran Unity?* pp. 130-135; Robinson, "Spirit of Triumphalism," pp. 171-198.

⁵ Robinson, "Spirit of Triumphalism," pp. 200-238; *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly*, XLIII (November 1970) is devoted to the Chicago "Statement" and offers recollections by several signers of "A Statement." It includes the full text of "A Statement" on pp. 150-152; "A Statement" is also printed in Carl S. Meyer, ed., *Moving Frontiers: Readings in the History of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* (St. Louis: CPH, 1964), pp. 422-424.

⁶ Robinson, "Spirit of Triumphalism," pp. 254-317, provides a detailed and perceptive analysis of hostile responses to "A Statement."

⁷ Theodore Graebner Papers, Concordia Historical Institute, Saint Louis, Box 116, contain many of Kretzmann's newsletters. [Hereafter Graebner's papers will be cited as TG, followed by a number to indicate the box in which the item is located.]

⁸ Carl S. Meyer, *Log Cabin to Luther Tower: Concordia Seminary During One Hundred and Twenty-Five Years Toward a More Excellent Ministry* (St. Louis: CPH, 1965), p. 248; Missouri Synod, *Reports and Memorials*, 1950, pp. 452-518.

⁹ Theodore Graebner, "Information Pertinent to 'A Penitent Jubilee'" (mimeographed paper, March 30, 1947), TG, 116. Box 116 of Graebner's papers contains considerable correspondence pertinent to the attempt to retire him. [Hereafter Graebner's name will be included only in the first citation of each of his works used in this essay.]

¹⁰ Robinson, "Spirit of Triumphalism," p. 271; Martin F. Kretzmann, "A Brief Review and Criticism of the 'Chicago Statement'" (mimeographed paper, no date), TG, 116. At the bottom of this statement, Kretzmann typed an addendum to Graebner: "Dear Doctor: As a signer of the 'Statement' you have helped start something which will lead either to the defection or the disruption of our Synod, unless you manfully acknowledge your error."

¹¹ Letter, Theodore Graebner to E. J. Gallmeyer, April 14, 1947, TG, 118; "Information Pertinent."

¹² Letters, Theodore Graebner to E. J. Gallmeyer, March 24, 1947, TG, 116, and to Adolf F. Meyer, April 3, 1947, TG, 118; Notes of meeting of Richard Caemmerer, Theodore Graebner, Paul Bretscher, W. G. Polack, William Arndt, Karl Kretzmann and O. P. Kretzmann, Forest Park Hotel, February 3, 1947, TG, 118.

¹³ Theodore Graebner, untitled essay on *Speaking the Truth in Love: Essays Related to A Statement, Chicago, 1945* (Chicago: The Willow Press, n. d.) pp. 11-12; Theodore Graebner, "The Cloak of the Cleric," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly*, XLIV (February 1971), 5-6 [originally written in 1950].

¹⁴ Theodore Graebner, "The Burden of Infallibility," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly*, XXXVIII (July 1965), pp. 91-94 [originally mimeographed, November 1948]; Theodore Graebner, "When Principles Usurp the Place of Doctrine" (typewritten manuscript, February 25, 1937), TG, 118, p. 5; Theodore Graebner, "Sep-

aristic Tendencies in Our Church" (typewritten manuscript, January 4, 1926), TG, 118, p. 4.

¹⁵ Theodore Graebner, "Memorandum on Baccalaureate Services" (dittoed essay), TG, 118; "Burden of Infallibility," p. 92.

¹⁶ Theodore Graebner, "For a Penitent Jubilee," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly*, XLV (February 1972), 14-15 [originally presented May 21, 1946, and mimeographed December 10, 1948, TG, 118].

¹⁷ "When Principles Usurp," p. 14.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁹ "Penitent Jubilee," p. 8.

²⁰ "Burden of Infallibility," pp. 89-91; "Penitent Jubilee," pp. 5-6, 14; Leigh D. Jordahl, "The Theology of Franz Pieper: A Resource for Fundamentalistic Thought Modes Among American Lutherans," *Lutheran Quarterly*, XXIII (May 1971), 118-137, presents an interpretation that Pieper's theology influenced the idea that change is equated with heresy.

²¹ "Burden of Infallibility," p. 94.

²² "Cloak of the Cleric," pp. 7-9.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7, 9-10; "Penitent Jubilee," pp. 4-5.

²⁴ Letter, Theodore Graebner to Alfred Doerfler, July 11, 1947, TG, 116.

²⁵ "Cloak of the Cleric," p. 10.

²⁶ "Penitent Jubilee," p. 14; "Burden of Infallibility," pp. 91-92.

²⁷ "Burden of Infallibility," pp. 88-89; untitled essay in *Speaking the Truth in Love*, p. 15; Robinson, "Spirit of Triumphalism," pp. 28-36, agrees with Graebner's analysis and provides a detailed description of this tendency. The *Homiletisches Reallexikon nebst Index Rerum* was a seven-volume work produced by the Rev. E. Eckhardt of Blair, Nebraska, from 1907 to 1917. Eckhardt gathered and indexed opinions of Missouri Synod fathers, omitting discordant materials, from official minutes, church papers and journals, and other sources.

²⁸ "Penitent Jubilee," p. 4.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 23; "When Principles Usurp," p. 5.

³⁰ "Information Pertinent"; "Cloak of the Cleric," p. 5.

³¹ Theodore Graebner, "Lutheran Union: A Plea for Sanity and Charity," *American Lutheran*, XXII (December 1939), 7-9.

³² "Penitent Jubilee," pp. 7-8; Theodore Graebner, "Not a Sect—Yet," *American Lutheran*, XXXIII (January 1940), 7-9.

³³ "Penitent Jubilee," p. 18.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-16; "Information Pertinent."

³⁵ "When Principles Usurp," pp. 2, 15.

³⁶ "Burden of Infallibility," p. 94.

³⁷ "Penitent Jubilee," p. 5. While a more detailed description of what Graebner meant by "Biblical scholarship" would have been helpful, Graebner did not provide this information.



CONFLICT IN THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

By Richard J. Shuta

PEACE OR PAIN, EASE OR HARDSHIP, SECURITY OR danger, quiet or conflict—which of these does the Christian choose? Are they really options and opposites for those who are a part of the “called-out” (*ekklesia*) assembly called the church?¹ As one looks through a concordance of the New Testament, an amazing principle stands out; there are plenty of terms which indicate that membership in the kingdom of Christ involves struggle, battle, conflict: “argue” (Acts 9:29; 19:9; 24:12), “avoid” (Rom. 16:17; 1 Tim. 2:23), “fight” (1 Tim. 6:12), “resist” (James 4:7), “strive” (Phil. 3:14), “rebuke” (1 Tim. 5:20), “soldier” (2 Tim. 2:3), “suffer” (Rom. 8:17; 1 Peter 5:10), “tribulation” (John 16:33), “withstand” (Eph. 6:13), “wrestle” (Eph. 6:12). Such words are uncomfortable since they remind us of the high cost of discipleship, a fact that Jesus often had to bring to the attention of those who followed Him (Luke 14:25-33).²

Generally those in the church have preferred words that speak of peace and reconciliation. Indeed a tension-reducing, conflict-avoiding concept of reconciliation appears to dominate the American Christian community. Too many American Christians are equating reconciliation with conciliatory or pacifying behavior. To them “terminate conflict” are the main words to proclaim.³ However, there are some theologians who are saying that reconciliation may not be as central to the New Testament as recent theology has asserted; for them reconciliation must pass through revolution.⁴

Because Christians experience a great deal of frustration in their lives, it is natural that they should desperately seek the absence of conflict. It is indeed hard to understand how experiencing or, worse yet, initiating conflict will move people toward mutual concern and reconciliation. Thus even Christians find themselves asking: Is conflict necessary? Is it necessary in the

church? Is it possible to understand conflict as a constructive experience?

Conflict as a Theological Category

That conflict can be creative has been shown by a man like Saul Alinsky. He made a career out of enabling people to deal with conflict constructively, especially as it pertained to social injustices.⁵ His approach was to introduce conflict in order to accomplish the political goals of moving our democratic society to be democratic for all its people. Mr. Alinsky's overall concern was to move people from inaction, apathy, and resignation to a focus on specific issues. Once people take hold of specific issues, it is believed they will have the power to do something about them. They can compel “negotiation” (in the Latin sense of *negotior*—“to do business”) because both parties know the have-not group has a hold on a serious problem that neither party may ignore. And from negotiation they can, hopefully, move toward resolution and reconciliation.⁶

But is conflict more than a political category, is it also a theological category? Conflict is a profoundly important theological category. It is a “means” category connecting the final categories of either chaos (judgment) or reconciliation (salvation).⁷

While reconciliation is God's desire for his creation (cf. Eph. 2 and 4), reconciliation neither avoids nor absolutizes conflict.⁸ Reconciliation comes through conflict. God's act in Christ arouses opposition even as it seeks reconciliation (John 3:17-21; 1 Peter 2:7-8).

When the Gospel of John states, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (1:14), it means just that. Jesus did not continuously reconcile Himself to everyone He met. If, for example, Jesus had reconciled Himself to Satan during the wilderness temptation (Matt. 4) or to the legalism of the Pharisees (Matt. 23) or to the crowds that wanted Him as a political Messiah (John 6:15 ff.), He would have destroyed God's goal of reconciliation. For then the goal would have become the means, but the means that God had planned was the way of conflict, the way of the suffering Messiah, the way of the cross.⁹

Likewise the apostles, if they were only concerned about peace, would have gone along with the syncretistic spirit of their age.¹⁰ But they remembered that Jesus said, “No one comes unto the Father but by Me” (John 14:6), and thus they entered into conflict both with religious leaders and the all-powerful state as they defended His exclusive position.¹¹

God has reconciled the world only through Jesus Christ. This Jesus entered fully into the conflicts of humanity. His life of perfect obedience both in means and in goal, amidst many temptations, has created the bond of sonship between the holy God and sinners. The reconciliation Jesus brings is a matter of mutual recognition that a conflict is ended (2 Cor. 5:19-20). Recon-

ciliation is important, but it occurs only as a resolution of conflict with sin. Reconciliation is the goal of life, but it cannot avoid the means to the goal, the conflict of the Cross (1 Cor. 1:18).¹²

The Christian in Conflict

The Conflict Within

Not only did Christ and the apostles engage in conflict, but because of the nature of the Christian life this side of eternity, the Christian is in conflict; he is in conflict with the enemy *within* (cf. Rom. 7). The Christian until the moment of death must fight against that old nature within him which seeks to prevent the power of Christ from shining through him as he deals with others around him (cf. Col. 3:5 ff.). But such conflict within the Christian serves God's goal of reconciliation. Such conflict reminds the Christian to beware of the sin of pride; the Christian still has a lot of growing up to do in Christ (Phil. 2:12). Whenever the Christian is tempted to categorize people as either “good guys” or “bad guys,” the sin-struggle within him reminds him that in God's sight there is no such simple division. It also reminds the Christian of the power of sin even to infect his good goals (Gal. 6:1-4). Most important of all, the conflict within drives the Christian to his only source of strength and victory—the mercy God offers in Jesus Christ alone (John 15:5; Rom. 8:38-39).¹³

The Conflict Without

The accent in the New Testament is upon the church's separation (*diastasis*) from the spirit of its age. Emile Cailliet has pointed out that Christianity in its inception presented a radical challenge to the society of its day, since it set out to demythologize the naturalism and humanism that were all pervasive.¹⁴ Today the church must demythologize the idols of our age: humanism, subjectivism, relativism, scientism.¹⁵ Our age, to use Herbert Marcuse's description, is the age of the “one-dimensional man.” Our culture lives for the security of the here and now and shrugs its shoulders at thoughts of the hereafter. Little does it realize its own demon possession.¹⁶

In a world on the way to God's new creation at the second coming of Christ, there is no future in defending the status quo. It is a superficial Christianity which adapts, chauvinizes, and joins its culture. Pierre Berton has soundly castigated churches which sanction and congratulate a smug or even a lethal society.¹⁷ Far from ever lending uncritical allegiance and endorsement to the self-interest of any nation or ideology, Christians are called to expose and protest the idolatry of nations and the worship of ideology.¹⁸ Those who have accepted the lordship of Jesus Christ can render to Caesar *only* that which is Caesar's, but to God they must give that true fear, love, and trust which belongs only to Him.

Such conflict of the Christian with his culture has been

of very great importance to both church and culture since it has maintained the distinction between Christ and Caesar, between revelation and reason, between God's will and man's will that has led to reformation both in the church and in the world.¹⁹

The Church in Conflict

The Source of the Conflict

That there would be conflict between Christians and persons outside of the church over a range of issues is understandable. But the existence of controversy within the church to many Christians is not understandable. It is threatening. It is looked upon as weakness and as failure of Christians to live up to the expectations of the Gospel. What is the source of such conflict?

Sometimes it is a clash of personalities such as occurred at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:12) and at Philippi (Phil. 4:2). Whenever there is a clash among Christians over personalities, the New Testament soundly condemns it (1 Cor. 1:12-13). There is, however, a conflict that the New Testament does expect between members of the institutional church. It is the clash between those who teach "unsound words" and those who desire the proclamation of the full and pure prophetic and apostolic message (Jude 3; 2 Tim. 4:2-4).

Both Christ (Matt. 7:15) and the apostles warned that there would come those who would change the spirit-inspired proclamation of the church (Acts 20:29; 2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 4:1). These false teachers would be concerned more about manipulating people for self-glory than they would be about exalting Christ (Acts 20:30; Titus 1:11; 1 Tim. 6:15). Their errors would cover a wide range of doctrines. Some would be watering down the exclusive role that faith in Jesus Christ has in man's salvation (as at Galatia and Colossae); others would deny the unique personality of Jesus Christ as the God-man (cf. 1 John 4:2). False teachers also would be those who do not strengthen the holiness of Christian living (Col. 3:5; 1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Peter 2:2) or who do not teach correctly concerning the events at the end of the world (cf. 2 Thess., and 2 Peter). Thus any teaching less than or more than the prophetic and apostolic message is to be fought against as a threat to the church.

Historically the Missouri Synod has always emphasized this strong New Testament concern for a pure and full proclamation of the prophetic and apostolic message. Will Herberg has pointed out, however, that concern for doctrinal truth is not a characteristic of American Christianity. He characterizes American religion as non-theological and nonliturgical but possessing a strong social activism. He has also said that Americans tend to believe that ethical behavior and a good life rather than adherence to a specific creed are what earns one a share in the heavenly kingdom.²⁰ There is also that general philosophical climate which no longer holds to

a concept of truth in the sense of the antithesis between "right and wrong."²¹

Yet in spite of the antidoctrinal philosophical and cultural climate on the American scene, the church is called to conflict not only against the nonchurch (paganism) but against the false church (apostasy) as well.

Concerns About the Conflict

But why the hesitancy of many Christians to engage in this necessary conflict? Some reasons for their hesitancy may be:

1) *A misunderstanding of the words of Matthew 7:1 "Judge not . . ."* This commandment should not be looked upon as an absolute command which forbids judging of any kind since the 15th verse of the same chapter calls us to beware of false prophets, which means that we have to do some judging to determine who the false prophets are (cf. also 1 Cor. 5:12). Matthew 7:1 is simply the negative way of stating what Luke 6:36 states positively: "Be merciful even as your Father is merciful."

2) *An awareness of the ever-present danger of being schismatic.* Ephesians 4:3 calls us to be "eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The Corinthians were condemned for their disunity, and Christ had prayed for the unity of believers (John 17:21); therefore, causing divisions in the church may fall under the apostolic condemnation. However, the sin of schism is not caused by just any separatism but it is "denominational separation of religious groups from existing churches on non-Scriptural grounds, such as ecclesiastical customs, forms, usages and the like."²² The same chapter in which Christ prays for the unity of His followers (John 17), He also speaks of truth (cf. verse 17). Thus there is to be among Christians a concern for both unity and truth, and where there is truth, there is unity (*ubi veritas, ibi unitas*). To recognize error in an attempt to overcome and heal it is not to cause disunity or to be divisive any more than the proper diagnosis of a disease is to be confused with its cause.

3) *A fear of disciplining the wrong individual.* Discipline is not for one who sins and repents (cf. 2 Cor. 2:7-8) but for one who sins deliberately and continues without repentance (2 Thess. 3:14). It is also important to take note of the fact that the discipline in matters of faith is not for one who is troubled with doubts. Jude 22 says clearly that we should show mercy on those who have doubts.

4) *A concern that doctrinal discipline may fall into a dangerous legalism.* Indeed, the church must be on guard against legalism, a spirit that the Pharisees exhibited and a threat to the church that Paul strongly condemned. However, legalism does not consist in rules as such nor in discipline as such. "The books of the New Testament contain many rules of behavior.

Legalism is rather the imposition of wrong rules and particularly more rules than a situation warrants, so that in a maze of minutiae people lose their ability to distinguish the more important from the less important, the principle from its application."²³

5) *A concern for dealing with the problem in such a way that the law of Christian love is not violated.* This too is a valid concern. Petty revenge ever lurks in the wings of the human heart, anxious to assert itself in the guise of righteous indignation or contending for the faith. A look at the history of the church in its dealing with schismatics, heretics, and other religions provides sad evidence of this.²⁴ Is it any wonder that the 19th-century atheist Nietzsche said "Beware lest when you fight a monster you become a monster?"

Faithfulness and Love in the Conflict

The Christian who loves his Lord also loves all that his Lord has spoken through the prophets and apostles. At the same time the Christian hears from his Lord, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15), he also hears Jesus saying, "You are My disciples if you have love toward one another." (John 13:35)

In the church as in the home the Christian finds it difficult to maintain the correct balance between firm discipline and loving acceptance. Nevertheless, the Christian must attempt to keep the organizational church from being turned into either a camp of professional unifiers who want unity no matter how much delinquency in doctrine or life must be overlooked or into a camp of professional purifiers who give themselves over too quickly and wholly to separation of all the wheat from the tares now.²⁵

The church will continue to face a twofold threat: (1) from an unholy unity that begins by failing in faithfulness to God's revelation and quickly descends into un-Biblical compromise with error, which ends in the sins of defilement of faith and life, and (2) from an unholy separation that begins in the neglect of love, descends quickly into an unlawful judgmental role, and ends in the terrible sin of schism. The church must avoid becoming either a group of purifiers who are weak on love, or a group of unifiers who are weak in faithfulness to the Word of God.

The imbalance will not come from an overemphasis. It is impossible to have too much love or too much faithfulness.²⁶ However, it is very possible to have unfaithfulness masquerading as love. When a church compromises the prophetic and apostolic message through sentimentality or fear of what its culture might say or for some other reason is unwilling to exercise church discipline over the unrepentant, the overtly moral delinquent (1 Cor. 5) or those guilty of teaching heresy—that church is unfaithful to God even though it may speak much of love. It is clear from Scripture

that there is to be a "holy hatred," a hating of that which God hates (Amos 5:15; Ps. 45:7). There can be no true love of virtue that does not involve its opposite, the hatred of sin and wickedness.

Likewise, it is just as possible to have unlove masquerading as faithfulness. Paul did have to exhort the Colossian Christians to put away "anger, wrath, malice, slander . . ." (3:8). Unlove masquerades as faithfulness when a church creates a schism by disciplining a person without ascertaining whether he is actually the holder of the position of which he is being charged. It is guilty of unlove when it disciplines from the wrong motive. The primary purpose of discipline is to restore the person who has sinned (1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:19-20; 2 Thess. 3:14-15); it is not designed for destruction nor as a vent for hate or fear. Finally, a church is masquerading love when it disciplines in the wrong way, that is, when it does not seek first to restore an individual on a personal, private level (Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1, 2; Rom. 15:1) or when it disciplines in ways other than through the official responsible action of those designated by the church to do so (1 Tim. 5:20; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15).

There may come a time, however, when false teachers with their teachings are such a threat to the unity of the church that they will have to be publicly reprimanded. The apostles at times felt compelled to name exactly who the false teachers were (cf. 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 1:15; 2:17-18; 4:14-15). Fighting for the faith is not done in a vacuum, nor against disembodied and nameless spirits. Therefore, there may be occasions when those authorized to do so must not only specify the false doctrine, but the one who is teaching it as well.

The true Biblical purity of doctrine includes also purity of life, which above all else is solidarity in love with the rest of God's family. Therefore, Christians, as they engage in conflict with those who differ with them, must speak with compassion (Titus 3:2; Gal. 6:1; 2 Tim. 2:24-25); they must speak first through example, then by precept. Their kindness towards their opponent will then arouse a sense of fellowship even as the Word of God will arouse the sense of conviction.

Thus to those who emphasize the unity of the church one must speak the balancing word that stresses faithfulness to the purity and fullness of the Scriptures (Matt. 28:20). To those who stress faithfulness to the Scriptures one must also speak the balancing word which stresses that truth is truth to be spoken in love (Eph. 4:15, 31). Christianity allows no cleavage between doctrine and life.

It is wise for churches engaged in doctrinal conflict always to return to the study of the Sacred Scriptures and there learn to balance both firm words of condemnation on false doctrine with a sensitive compassion for those who have fallen into it. Such a balance will demonstrate to others that the church is fighting, not for some abstract thought-system as a Socrates or a Plato might,



"A neighbor helping neighbor sort of thing..."

The FISH program of Redmond, Oregon, "tries to fill the needs social agencies don't," says Mrs. J. E. Reed. "And we help everyone — not just the needy."

Mrs. Reed answers the phone as the calls come in:

"We have a little boy here who's lost."

"I need someone to drive me to the doctor."

"We had car trouble and the repairs took all our money. Can you help us get back on the road with some food?"

"I try to match each call with one of our 150 volunteers," Mrs. Reed says. "We don't say 'we can't do that.' We try as best we can."

Mrs. Reed has arthritis and has been confined to a wheelchair for several years. Why is she involved in FISH? "For selfish reasons! When I was first unable to

walk, I became very ingrown . . . this got me out of my shell."

The FISH program in Redmond began with several churches (the name comes from the ancient symbol of Christianity). Now it's more of a community project.

Lutheran Brotherhood's Portland Area Branch Number 8039 helps support the FISH program — and other community projects — by doing things like providing funds for an intravenous infusion pump for newborn babies at Portland's Emanuel Hospital. But we couldn't do it without the aid provided by branch members like Mrs. Reed.

Lutheran Brotherhood salutes Mrs. Reed and the FISH program she's involved with. Because "neighbor helping neighbor" is really what brotherhood is all about.

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but for the eternal happiness of every individual sinner. Exposé of fallacies and mental gymnastics did not suffice for Jesus; commitment and discipleship were His goals.²⁷ This also is the only valid reason for doctrinal conflict in Christ's church.

Conclusion

The time of doctrinal conflict in the church is the time of the church's testing (Zech. 13:9; 1 Cor. 3:13; 1 Thess. 2:4) as well as the time for growth among God's people. When the truth of God is proclaimed and defended in love, the harvest of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) continue. Love, for instance, is not a ready-made easily purchased product; indeed, we cannot understand love except as we see it striving in behalf of all its enemies. Peace also accepts strife as part of its responsibility. Patience likewise has meaning only in relation to the conflicts, distortions, and misrepresentations of life. Goodness, another fruit of the Spirit, is not innocence but a quality of life that has wrestled with some of the forms of evil, indeed, the very principle of evil itself. Gentleness is not weak but strong; it has been forged out of the temptation to be aggressive, to use compulsion as a way of achieving one's own will. And self-control trembles in its conflict with self-will.²⁸

To those who lack courage during this time of the Spirit's harvest goes the reminder, "The Lord did not give us the spirit of timidity, but the spirit of power, love, and self-control" (2 Tim. 1:7). And to those who fear the powers of the world to destroy the community of God's people Jesus declares, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." (Luke 12:32)

NOTES

¹ This article hopes to show how conflict need not always be destructive.

² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1957); see also Martin Franzmann's *Follow Me: Discipleship According to St. Matthew* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961).

³ Dieter T. Hessel, *Reconciliation and Conflict*. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), p. 8-9.

⁴ J. Christiaan Beker, "Biblical Theology Today," in *New Theology No. 6*, Martin E. Marty and Dean G. Peerman, editors (London: The Macmillan Company, 1969), p. 31.

⁵ Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals* (New York: Random House, 1971), p. 127.

⁶ Paul A. Mickey and Robert L. Wilson, *Conflict and Resolution* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1973), pp. 30-31. This is a very practical book for parish workers for it helps to remove the various types of conflict one experiences from the sphere of an attack on one's person.

⁷ Paul A. Mickey and Robert L. Wilson, op. cit., p. 21.

⁸ Dieter T. Hessel, op. cit., p. 9.

⁹ See Leonhard Goppelt's *Jesus, Paul and Judaism* (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1964), especially pp. 59-65.

¹⁰ A classic study on the history of the church's conflict with syncretism is W. A. Vissert's *No Other Name* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963). He defines syncretism as that view "which holds that there is no unique revelation in history, that there are many

different ways to reach the divine reality, that all formulations of religious truth or experience are by their very nature inadequate expressions of that truth and that it is necessary to harmonize as much as possible all religious ideas and experiences so as to create one universal religion for mankind." P. 11.

¹¹ See Hanns Lilje, *The Last Book of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957), pp. 108-109; pp. 80-82.

¹² Paul A. Mickey and Robert L. Wilson, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

¹³ A practical illustrated study of Romans, suitable for high school students, is Fritz Ritenour's *How To Be a Christian Without Being Religious* (Glendale, Calif.: Gospel Light Publications, 1967).

¹⁴ Emile Cailliet, *Journey into Light* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1968). See also Ronald H. Bainton, *Early Christianity* (New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1960).

¹⁵ Since these are the major cultural currents which challenge the message from the pulpit, it is well that Christian leaders know both the assets and the weaknesses of these movements. Helpful books are: Michael Green, *Runaway World* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1972); Francis A. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1968); Chad Walsh, *Campus Gods on Trial* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966).

¹⁶ Nikolai Berdyaev in *Slavery and Freedom* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944) points out: "A demoniacal character attaches to everything relative which is transformed into the absolute, to everything finite which is transformed into the infinite, to everything profane which is transformed into the sacred, to everything human which is transformed into the divine. . . . Man possesses the capacity for turning love for God and for the highest ideal, into the most terrible slavery." Pp. 249-250.

¹⁷ Pierre Berton, *The Comfortable Pew* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1965).

¹⁸ William Stringfellow, "The Case Against Christendom and the Case Against Pierre Berton," in *The Restless Church*, edited by William Kilbourn (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott, 1966), p. 13.

¹⁹ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1951), p. 66.

²⁰ Will Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* (New York: Anchor Books, 1960), pp. 83 ff.

²¹ Francis Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1968), pp. 40-57. See also Donald Bloesch, *The Ground of Certainty* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971).

²² J. T. Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1934), p. 560.

²³ Robert H. Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), p. 265.

²⁴ For example: Augustine advocated the forced conversion of the heretical Donatists, saying, "The Church may not only invite but compel men to embrace what is good." Later Thomas Aquinas advocated the killing of sinners. Using Exodus 22:18 he came up with the principle that the excision of one member for the good of the whole body is praiseworthy.—Quoted in George W. Forell, *The Proclamation of the Gospel in a Pluralistic World* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), pp. 133-134.

²⁵ Based on J. Robertson McQuilkin's "Whatever Happened to Church Discipline," in *Christianity Today*, March 29, 1974 (Vol. XVIII, No. 13), pp. 8-12.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

²⁷ Robert W. Smith, "Should the Christian Argue?" *Christianity Today*, Feb. 15, 1974 (Vol. XVIII, No. 10), pp. 14-18.

²⁸ Reul L. Howe, *The Miracle of Dialogue* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1963), p. 106.

THE REVOLUTION IN RELIGION, edited by Victor B. Ficker and Herbert S. Graves. Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1973.

The role of the church is to play in society is a matter of concern to religious leaders today. Sharp differences of opinion among church leaders regarding the role of the church in society is a source of conflict within the church. The issues of war, racism, abortion, evangelism, and extremism have been selected by the editors for discussion in this book because they are current controversial issues within the church that carry some degree of permanent relevance.

The book includes seven units. Each unit contains several articles selected to represent various perspectives of a controversial issue.

The first unit sets the stage. The three articles within Unit I address themselves to the idea that a new day of spiritual awareness is upon us. The next five units discuss the specific issues related to that awareness. The final unit takes a look at some of the alternatives for the church in the future.

Unit II presents the issue of the morality/immorality of war. The opening article is written by Daniel Berrigan, an activist priest. Berrigan explains that by his actions he hoped to focus the attention of the country on the immorality of war. Another approach is taken by Stephen Rose in a second article in which he calls upon the Christian community to divest itself of corporate holdings dedicated to the manufacture of instruments of war.

In the unit on racism, Unit III, another priest, James Groppi, states, "The Church has the moral responsibility to become involved in whatever way necessary to bring about social change." An account of the attempts to integrate the First Baptist Church of Birmingham, Alabama, are included. These attempts result in a minister's resignation and a church split because there were both racial prejudice and an unwillingness to resolve the differences created by the issue.

The new fundamentalist movement is described by Ernest Sandeen in Unit V. He stresses that its basic appeal comes from its unchanging position in a changing world. Not only is fundamentalism alive today, but it is also a very well and thriving movement.

The unit written on the issue of abortion includes the statement prepared by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. This statement holds that nontherapeutic abortion is wrong for theological, legal, and medical reasons. The unit closes with an article by Charles Bayer, an abortion counselor, who maintains that the issue is loaded

with many gray areas but that the final decision regarding abortion is "fundamentally . . . one to be made by the prospective mother."

This well-edited book is worth the modest price. The selections included in the book are representative of the various stances taken within the church on controversial issues today, and they can assist the reader in objectively determining a course for conflict resolution.

DONALD GNEWUCH

ALIVE WITH THE SPIRIT, by Martin H. Franzmann. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1974.

This collection of 29 devotions highlights the Spirit's action in the life of the church. Beginning with the Pentecost event, Dr. Franzmann works through powerful New Testament texts which portray how the Spirit teaches us "to cease fighting for the false freedom of our fevered dreams and to pray instead for true freedom." While making clear that the Spirit is God at work, Dr. Franzmann stresses that the coming of the Spirit is "as real, as down-to-earth, and as irreversible as the coming of Christ." There is nothing ethereal, flimsy, or will-of-the-wisp about the Spirit. The Spirit is "a present inspiring power" who helps us in our weakness.

Dr. Franzmann demonstrates his gift in rightly dividing the Word of Truth. When addressing Law to our human tragedy, he cuts through to the depth of one's being, not dealing with sins but sin, not toying with "little white lies," but exposing that dark, enslaving power which stalks one's life. When holding forth the Spirit's promise of new life in Christ, he preaches the Gospel as power, as God breathing new life in us and making us sons who know the value of life and who possess in Christ the will to put to death anything that threatens that life. Life in the Spirit is "not a charismatic 'high' but the full waking, responsible life of a man—man as God created him to be and has always wanted him to be: His fully obedient son." Here is the pastoral exegete at his best, not expounding a Biblical text as an ivory-tower discipline, but setting forth the revelation of God as a source of power for one's life in Jesus Christ.

Pastors and teachers, here is a devotional gem, a fresh, colorful witness of what it means to be "alive with the Spirit." These devotions will stimulate new insight into the role of the Spirit. Try this for a vivid portrayal of our Christian struggle:

While this earth stands and this age runs, our Yes to the Spirit will be an embattled No to the flesh. None of us walks according to the Spirit in an uninterrupted line of triumphal progress; we all lurch and stagger under the tug and intoxication of the flesh, and we pray, "Forgive us our trespasses," daily as the Son has taught us. But thanks be to God, we walk . . . as the Son once walked in Galilee, with an eye for the lilies of the field and the birds of the air and a heart for all men. (P. 14)

The teacher will find stimulating ideas for an edifying classroom worship series on the Spirit at work in us today. A DCE may well use these devotions for a young adult study group. In a time when many grow weary in ministry and wonder about its worth, Dr. Franzmann's book is one more example of how Jesus fulfilled that promise, "I will send the Counselor to you . . . who will guide you into all the truth."

HARVEY D. LANGE

CONSCIENCE AND ACTION: Social Statements of The American Lutheran Church, 1961-1970, edited by Carl F. Ruess. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing Company, 1971.

"Lutheran churches are alleged to have little or no interest in social questions. For The American Lutheran Church, at least, that allegation is false. From the initial meeting of its new Church Council in 1961, down to the present, this church body has evidenced a lively and growing interest in social questions. Its conscience has been pricked by the evils, injustices, and inequities it sees in society. It has sought courses of action appropriate both for itself as a corporate body and for its members active in the structures of society."

The foregoing is the opening paragraph of the interesting, informative, and easy-to-read book that attempts to record the feelings and actions of that church body and to compile its formal statements and resolutions relating to social actions during the 1961-1970 period. While the ALC sees as its chief task the proclamation of the good news of God's kingdom and the exemplification of the life style of that kingdom on earth, it feels that Scripture itself and the Augsburg Confession provide strong directives to God's people to become involved in deeds of love and in the promotion of justice.

Hence, after intensive study, the Commission on Research and Social Action, the Church Council, and the General Convention

have offered guidelines to the members of the church body on such problems as church-state relations, war and draft, conscientious objection, abortion, racism, fear and loneliness, tax reform, marriage and divorce, open housing, hunger, pollution, television programming, and other major concerns.

Of particular interest in these days of Title programs and possible tax credits is chapter 3 on church-state relations. The ALC sees these two entities as mutually affecting one another and complementing one another as they both serve genuine needs of human beings. Each has a function that can best be carried out by it, and it should not usurp functions of the other but should exercise a friendly and flexible cooperation in such areas as education, welfare services, and ministries to institutions and the Armed Forces. And rather than establishing blanket endorsements or blanket condemnations of particular forms of cooperation, this church sees the need to weigh the merits of specific cases. Tax exemptions for church property, religion in public schools, funding for church institutions and conditions for accepting federal aid, revision of income tax laws, and even home rule for the District of Columbia are all issues to which the ALC devoted intensive study and for which it provides information upon which its members can base decisions as occasions arise.

The entire book provides much food for thought, as it "shows how one church body has sought to deal with social questions in a manner consistent with its mission." And it surely could be, as the jacket states, "a valuable resource for discussion groups and an aid for both individual and corporate decision-making."

LEAH SERCK

CONFLICT AND SOCIAL CHANGE, by Marcus Borg. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1971.

The intent of the author in writing this book was to help contemporary Christians to understand and to cope with social change. The book is used to advance the thesis that we are presently living in a time of crisis. It is a time of conflict and change within the church and the world. The author attributes the rapid change and the corresponding conflict to unprecedented advances in technology, to the rise of revolutionary social ideals and movements, and to the toppling of traditional barriers of the past, including religious as well as cultural barriers.

Change results in conflict, according to the author, because of man's narrowness of

thought and his unwillingness to accommodate himself to change which is inevitable and highly desirable in the society of men. In resisting change, man is motivated by complacency with the past and by fear of what change might do to his status as a being. To defend himself against change man has established powerful political and social institutions.

Two case studies are cited to demonstrate that man's resistance to change is often founded on fear of losing what one has obtained but what is not rightfully his own. The first of these is the case of God's people at the time of Amos. The author seeks to show that the message of Amos generated conflict because it demonstrated that much of the activity of the organized church was really of little consequence. The second case study is that of the activities of Martin Luther King in Montgomery, Alabama. It is used to illustrate strategies of bringing about social change. Included are the individualistic approach, the consensus approach, and the coercive or conflict approach. History, according to the author, indicates that the truly significant changes of the past have most often been born in conflict rather than in appeals to the rational nature of man. This is to be expected since man is not basically a rational being but is more often motivated by emotion.

Since change is inevitable, what should be the response of the church? The author advocates a threefold response. The first response of the church must be to celebrate change. This places the church in a relationship of acceptance rather than resistance to the changes which do occur. The second response of the church is that of reflection and analysis of the meaning of change. The church assumes the responsibility of assisting the Christian, the individual Christian, to interpret the meaning of change for his personal life of sanctification. The third response of the church is that of action. Each body of Christians must determine for its group what appropriate action might be. At the same time it continues its responses of celebration and reflection.

The author writes in an interesting style and offers food for thought to anyone disturbed by the contemporary rate of change within the church as well as without. Your reviewer was, however, disturbed by the absence of a question with which he has grappled frequently, namely, "Are there within our society and within the church some things which take on the character of permanence—things which do not, which cannot, which must not be allowed to change?" The author does not speak to that question.

LEE ROY HOLTZEN

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I live in a world of shapeless shadows. The people I consort with most are people I never see. They are ghosts from some other world. They come to me through intermediaries.

No, I am not a medium. I do not believe in ouija boards, astrologers, fortune-tellers, or any of that ilk.

The people I am talking about are allegedly alive and kicking. They are all around me somewhere. But they are invisible to me. I can't see them; I can't hear them; I can't call their names.

It's not that they don't have a name. They do. What confuses me is that the name for all of them is the same. That name is "Somebody."

There must be a lot of them around. Because they are quoted so frequently in conversations. I am constantly hearing people say: "Somebody told me this" or "somebody said that" or "somebody suggested we take the following steps" or "somebody was critical of the decision that was made."

Maybe I'm mistaken. Maybe "somebody" is just one person. Granted that is true, then he (or she) must truly be a remarkable individual. For one, he would be omnipresent. Because I haven't been anywhere yet where people didn't know him and hadn't heard him talk. More than that, he would have to be omniscient. That is, an individual who has all the answers. Because I've never dealt with a problem yet that "somebody" didn't have the answer to. Furthermore, he leaves the impression of being an unusually negative individual, because about 90 percent of the quotes that are ascribed to him are critical.

"Somebody" is invariably better informed than I. He is also wiser, kinder, fairer, more efficient, and more eloquent.

Whenever I report what happened at some event, "somebody" always is able to add some interesting or dramatic detail that I left out. Whenever I make a decision, "somebody" invariably comes up with a better way it could have been done. When I show generosity, "somebody" has already topped my action with even greater largess and liberality. When I adjudicate a problem, "somebody" always knows a way it could have been handled so that better justice would have been accomplished. No matter how efficiently I administer, "somebody" would have saved more money or achieved more success if he had had the chance to try. And when I try to persuade people to a course of action, "somebody" turns up afterward to explain that his eloquence would have been more equal to the task.

I must say, I have tremendous admiration for this "somebody" and not a little bit of envy. I only wish that just once he (or she) would step out of the shapeless shadows where he seems destined to have to make his home, come up to me and say: "Here I am, this is the way I look, and my real name is — — —."

LAST WORDS

W. TH. JANZOW

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