

Pastor and People
Letters to a Young Preacher

by
Theodore Graebner (1932)

For a ten-year period, from 1920 to 1930, Theodore Graebner received questions from young pastors “in the field,” that is, in local congregations. These men wanted to receive counsel and guidance on a particular matter. Dr. Graebner replied with the practical application of Scripture, and in doing so, did not offer anything novel. Doctrinally his letters represent the stand of our Lutheran Confessions and the practice of the Church.

In 1932 Concordia Publishing House published 112 of these letters in a book titled, *Pastor and People – Letters to a Young Preacher*. The letters were selected since they were deemed to be of benefit to pastors and clergy alike. Hopefully the same will take place with the bulletin inserts in this series.

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A Deadlock on Baptism.

In our town we have an X Synod church and a Missouri Synod church. The husband is a member of the one church, and his wife is a member of the other church. They have one child. The father demands that his daughter should be baptized in his church; the mother demands that the daughter be baptized in her church. The two pastors of the churches do not agree; one claims that the father is right in his demand; the other maintains that the mother is right in her demand. Which of the two is right?

You do not say whether the husband or the wife is your party. Whichever it is, let him or her try to persuade her or him to permit the child to be baptized by you. If the other party does not yield, advise your party to yield rather than permit the child to go unbaptized any longer.

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Community Christmas.

Is it unionistic practise for one of our Lutheran churches to take part in a community Christmas-tree program together with the other churches of that city? One pastor informs me that only the old-time Christmas chorals, such as "Silent Night," are to be sung at the occasion. He adds that no prayer is to be spoken, with the exception of the Lord's Prayer if requested. The press announcement reads: "All the church of the town, Lutheran, Catholic, Methodist, Christian, Baptist, and Presbyterian, are participating."

Participation in any community Christmas service should be avoided by our pastors and congregations. Either the festival is stripped of religious significance, and then the celebration is surely an abomination to our Lord, - it is the kind in which Herod and the Jewish elders could have joined, - or it is a religious celebration with hymns, prayers, etc., and participation then is certainly unionistic. The offense which is given consists in a false appearance of spiritual union. Unless we accept the principle that joint prayer and worship are conditioned upon unity of religious belief, we have no longer a compass to steer by. We have then lost every claim upon our membership except that of "loyalty" or tradition, - a very poor claim, as the Lutheran Church found out in 1820, when it was about dead. The thing must work utter confusion in the minds of the common people whose minds are logical enough to ask the question, If on Christmas night, then why not on Christmas Day or any Sunday?

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A Grudge of Long Standing.

A man in my congregation, twenty years ago, was fined \$50 in a local court. He holds this to have been an injustice. Ever since that time he has not bid the official who fined him good day on the street. This is not hearsay, but he told me this himself. He did not fight the case, but paid the fine, and so the case did not go to court. My question is: How am I to deal with him regarding the Lord's Supper? Am I temporarily to suspend him until he has gone and become reconciled with this official?

I do not think that the action of your member is defensible on Christian grounds. Those words of Scripture that command us to love all men, to be at peace with all men, certainly condemn such an attitude as he is taking. The object of our ministry is to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." The attitude pictured in your letter is as far as possible removed from that which Christ showed towards His enemies. The man must be dealt with according to Matt. 18. In a case as indurated as this some time must be allowed for admonitions to take effect. But in the end the man must cease his enmity against the public official and must give evidence of this. Is all that we read in the Sermon on the Mount and in Rom. 12 on love towards our enemies to be set aside as non-essential in the Christian life as soon as we have a concrete case of an unchristian grudge as a result of an injustice, whether fancied or real?

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An Invitation from the Ministerial Alliance.

The Ministerial Alliance of our city is requesting twelve pastors of different denominations to present the distinctive doctrines of their particular denomination in a series of mid-week service conducted in the local Methodist church. A devotional period, singing, Scripture-lesson, and prayer, would open these services, and then would follow the presentation of doctrine by a pastor.

I have been requested to present our doctrines. In answer to this proposition I said that I should be violating one of our principles if, in order to present our teachings, I were to do this in a service of this nature. Then the offer was at once made to turn the entire service of that evening over to me and to permit me to conduct a strictly Lutheran service, including our liturgy. My congregation would in that case be present.

Now, would I be guilty of practise which is not consistent with our Lutheran principles by accepting this offer? If so, how, in your opinion, would that serve have to be arranged in order that I might avail myself of the opportunity to confess our doctrines?

I can see no reason for refusing that service in the series arranged by the Ministerial Alliance; in fact, I can see more than one good reason why you should make use of this opportunity to speak to the people about Lutheran fundamentals. It will give you a reason also to explain why

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our church-body is neither modernist nor fundamentalist, since it accepts the Bible alone and believes that agreement in all its teachings, not only in the fundamentals, is necessary for church-fellowship. It will give you a chance to testify to the clearness of Holy Scripture, the deity of Christ, the atonement, and justification by faith.

Your condition must be that you also read the prayers, Scriptures, etc. I find that one has no trouble if one declares that "this is the rule of our Church."

I would not insist on the Lutheran liturgy, but leave that to the church in which you are receiving this courtesy. If they have conceded the point, you may do so, but it is not an essential of confession.

If anything should happen during the service that would look to you like a violation of the agreement, do not interrupt the service or refuse to go on, but carry it through and in a letter to the Ministerial Alliance make your complaint of such violation, stating again our doctrine of church-fellowship. That would certainly be better than giving public offense by an insistence on details which the audience will not comprehend. The Lord wants you to preach the Gospel to every creature, and I believe that even when conditions are not absolutely ideal from our Lutheran standpoint, we should speak out and give the Gospel a chance; and let us not be apologetic about it or introduce our remarks with labored explanations about our principle of church-fellowship. You cannot make that plain in a few sentences, and the people are there to hear the Lutheran doctrine of salvation. Give it to them straight.

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A Soldiers' Memorial Service.

A Soldiers' Memorial Service has been arranged to which all the churches and all the clergy of the city are invited. This puts me and our little mission into a predicament. To join in a union service in one of the local churches is contrary to our principles. On the other hand, to remain away from the memorial service would throw a bad light on us and during this time of war would cause others to doubt my people's patriotism. Now, in case this service should be conducted in the city park, would it be acting contrary to Lutheran principles if I accepted the invitation to preach in case I had the order of service all to myself?

When such things as a public memorial service are brewing, it is best for us to go right to the head of the procession and lead them on. We are at a disadvantage if we make our declaration of principles only as a last resort. It is best to wait on the authorities as soon as such public demonstrations are proposed, offer our help as citizens, and keep it on the civic plane throughout. If the thing must be religious after all, a statement of principles would be in order. If you have shown the proper interest in the first place, you will have little trouble in taking over the entire service. I see no reason why in that event you should not conduct this memorial program in the city park.

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The Lord's Prayer and the Lodge Prayers.

Continually I meet with the objection: "But the Lord's Prayer itself does not use the name of Christ!" when I refer to the Christless religion of the lodge, particularly to the omission of the name of our Lord from the prayers. What is a man to answer? As a matter of fact the name of Jesus does not appear in the Lord's Prayer.

To begin with, the attitude of our Church is not by any means that every prayer must conclude with some such phrase as, "We ask it for Jesus' sake." Praying in the name of Christ does not mean mentioning His name in prayer, but to put our trust and confidence for an answer in that work of redemption which He who bears this name has accomplished. Hence, even if the name of Jesus is used, that by no means in itself proves that the prayer is a Christian one. In the case of the lodge this becomes a very important consideration, since the lodge, especially Freemasonry, teaches with all possible emphasis that we are saved by our works, by a life "by the level and on the square." Christ is excluded from the way of salvation, hence any reference to Him in a Masonic prayer simply makes it a blasphemous misuse of His name.

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When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we say: "Our Father who art in heaven." Our Father – whose Father? Certainly not the Father of those who believe that they can enter heaven "by the pass of a blameless life." The very word "Father" implies faith in Jesus as the Son of God and Redeemer of the world, Matt. 11,27. Every Christian who utters that prayer utters it "in the name of Jesus Christ," relying solely upon His merits, who by His Gospel has brought him into communion with the Father, through the adoption of sons.

It follows that only Christians can pray the Lord's Prayer as it was understood in the mind of Christ, who taught it only to His disciples, even as He addressed only His followers when He told them to pray "in His name."

The charge against lodge-worship is not that it omits reference to Christ, but that it omits such reference by design. Masonry includes Jews, Parsees, and Mohammedans; hence, to avoid the offence which the name of Jesus would give, He is excluded from the basic ritual. This is a denial of Jesus Christ and will, by His own testimony, result in His disowning those on Judgment Day who have so denied Him. Hence the Christless worship of the lodge is a damnable sin, and those guilty of it have no place in the Christian congregation.

Lodge prayer is sinful, whether the name of Christ is mentioned or not. It is sinful when the name of Christ is omitted because it is omitted in order to maintain the lodge principle; no repentance and no faith in Christ is required in the lodge way of salvation, hence He is barred from the ritual. On the other hand, lodge prayer would be sinful also if or wherever Christ's name is mentioned, since such use of His name would be blasphemy. Of such praying Christ speaks Matt. 7,21.

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The Intolerance of the Gospel.

When they call you “strict, strait-laced, legalistic,” and when they charge you with being “nursed on orthodoxy” which stands for “separatism and aloofness,” it is fitting, of course, that you proceed with a rigorous self-examination whether to any extent, be it large or small, you are giving reason and cause for these accusations. Even if defensible on doctrinal grounds, your attitude towards non-Missourians may be such as to give the impression of pharisaic aloofness. How to avoid such an impression is, of course, another question, since it is the common charge leveled against all who are practising according to strict Lutheran principles. Still our manner should not be repulsive, high-hatted, or self-righteous even in appearance towards others who bear the Lutheran name – or towards any Protestant, Catholic, Jew, agnostic, for that matter.

It was Dr. William M. Taylor who, fifty years ago, said in his series of addresses called *Paul the Missionary* that intolerance is in a certain sense necessary in the interests of religious freedom. He explains this thought as follows: “Paul’s letters to the Galatians and to the Romans were written for the preservation of liberty; for in one of them he says: ‘Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free’; and yet, for the very purpose of maintaining that liberty, he hurled his anathemas at the

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Judaizers’ heads. Let us not forget that the Gospel has its intolerance as well as its toleration. There must be no toleration of treason to the Cross; for the toleration of such treason is always treachery. I say not indeed that all such errors should be put down by force, - God forbid! – but I do say that they should be denounced by every loyal servant of the Lord and that the Church should absolve itself from all complicity with the errorists. And though there are many who would cry out against such a course as bigoted, I would rather, even in the interests of freedom itself, have – if you choose to call it so – the bigotry of Paul than the indifference of him who counts nothing essential and who is everything by turns and nothing long.” Next I was surprised to read this reference to Martin Luther: “Luther was no foe of freedom, but indeed its greatest modern pioneer; and in the proportion in which, like him, we are intolerant of everything that compromises the honor of Christ or the doctrine of His Cross, we shall conserve and widen the liberty which he did so much to secure. So let us raise anew the shout of Paul, making it our motto, not for the moment of our brief enthusiasm merely, but for all our lives: “God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.”

I can only add that in the same degree as we remain humble, we shall be preserved in this truly Christlike intolerance. When we begin to glorify the Lutheran Church as an organization instead of glorifying Christ by taking upon ourselves the reproach of the Gospel, we have become fit material for the unionistic church politician to work upon.

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Trouble of a Member with a Former Pastor.

If one of my members sins against her former pastor, what is that former pastor to do? Tell her about it, or should he tell me about it? What is the practise of our Missouri Synod in such a matter? I hold that according to Matt. 18, 15-17 this former pastor would first have to tell it to the sinning party.

I assume that your member has sinned against her former pastor and that the latter has reported it to you and requests some kind of action. I would say that, if it was a private matter, it would be his duty to speak to the member first. Whether the stages of Matt. 18 can be applied under the circumstances – the former pastor is probably a thousand miles to the west or east – I do not know. What Jesus here prescribes is primarily for congregational practise. I would say that, being at such a distance, if his private admonition does not result in any change, he should turn the case over to you. As for Scriptural proof, the law of love and the fact that we are brethren in Christ is sufficient.

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The “Should” and “Must” in Gospel Admonition.

You are concerned about the use of the auxiliaries “should” and “shall” in sermons containing Gospel admonition. As you will observe, when rereading my *Expository Preacher*, I, p. 84, it is not the use of the auxiliaries that the young preacher must be warned against, - in the sentences recommended as examples of a better form you notice that I have used “should,” - but its use in such a manner that the hearer receives the impression that Christianity were a set of laws and that, if these are obeyed by him, then he is a Christian, but if he does not live up to them fully, he is not a Christian. The danger is very real. I have occasion continually to correct students’ sermons in this respect. Certainly, “we must,” “we ought,” “we should,” “we must not,” etc., are all permissible; but whenever a student says “you must,” “a Christian should,” he manages to give the sentence a *Beigeschmack* of Law, which is not proper in a sermon that is intended to help the hearer, *i.e.*, the Christian hearer, to sanctify his life. Certainly, calling men to holiness is Gospel admonition, not Law. The Law is preached to reveal sin, to cause repentance through knowledge of sin, not to help people lead Christian lives; - that is possible only through the Gospel, *i.e.*, Gospel admonition, as in the many examples I quote from the epistles in the foregoing pages of my book. If you are imbued with the spirit of

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these passages, you need no formulation of any theory. (That is the reason I called my book, in its first edition, *Inductive Homiletics*.) Do not worry your head about definitions. Learn from the Scriptures and imitate the apostles. You cannot possibly go wrong. When you preach the Law, your preach to the flesh of the Christian, which is wholly evil and must hear the sentence of condemnation. Then you preach the Gospel, which works spiritual life, repentance, faith. Then you preach Gospel admonition, like in the texts quoted from Paul. I have purposely refrained from giving any direction how this is to be done. I have quoted the passages, printed them out, and now, if you study them, and the passages similar to these in the New Testament epistles and in Acts, you cannot possibly fail. ...

Do not despair of your ability on this or any other point of sermon-making. You cannot acquire all the art of preaching in a few years. The principles are simple enough, so simple that five years hence you will not understand how you ever could discover any difficulty in applying them; but the way to learn is simply to follow out the suggestions which we have from the Holy Spirit Himself. As for losing courage, there is no reason whatever. We all had to pass through those stages. You know that our Christian theology is as much a matter of life as of teaching; both together make the theologian and pastor. I believe that you will receive all that you pray for.

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Ready To Resign.

I can well understand your frame of mind. You are convinced that, "if you had known what treatment one has to expect from leaders in the congregation, you would never have entered the ministry." But while such moods are natural, they must not control your conduct. And as for leaving the ministry, that thought should be put away as a temptation (*Anfechtung*) of the devil.

What you are getting now is an intensified preparation for future work in the ministry. This is a schooling through which every minister must go. We have all had such periods. And in spite of that we must not lose faith in our people. They often mean well when they seem to oppose us for personal reasons or none at all.

Just greet these people in the most friendly manner. You can do that without dissembling because you are naturally friendly and affable. So do not act contrary to your nature, as if you were bitter or vengeful. A smile, a strong handshake, will go a far way.

Make sure that you are doing what the Lord wants; that you are not leaving people whose guide and shepherd He wants you to be regardless of the conditions which prevail. It is never a safe thing to do things in a depressed mood. Low spirits are not normal with a Christian; he may feel that way, but it is not a normal feeling for those who have the promise of the Spirit,

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whose work it is to give us joy and happiness. Act according to those moods in which you can say that the flesh has a minimum and the spirit a maximum of influence. You will not go wrong then. I certainly do not blame you for feeling all ambition oozing out of you, for feeling tired of a situation which shows no prospect of mending. But it is a great thing to do your duty in spite of setbacks. Not only is it the worldly-wise thing to keep a cheerful countenance towards your people even after they have refused your reasonable request, but it is the Christian thing to do. You will win out if you do all things with a smile. A bright look and cheerful countenance will be a wonderful asset in your profession as a preacher.

I do not blame you for being low in spirits and for having no great incentive to sermon-making. Nevertheless your call is just as valid as when you first received it, and you should give your people the best sermons of which you are capable. You are not so sure that you will move away from M., as I have said before. There is a saying: *Die Suppe wird nicht so heiss gegessen, wie sie gekocht wird.* You may find the people in a conciliatory mood. This should be your own attitude anyway. If you must look for another call, you must give them no cause for claiming that you forced the issue. Please do not forget one thing: Ask yourself in all seriousness what shortcomings you have had that may have contributed to the result. Only after a real searching of your own heart will you be in a frame of mind which seeks only the good of the Church. Harbor no resentment, however much cause you might find for that. Don't resign. It may be that you are already over the worst. And you have some good friends at M. Above all, you have a Savior, who forgives you your mistakes and who will uphold you in every trial. Is it not wonderful to know that?

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The Lodge and Christianity.

... If Christianity demands of its adherents that they worship the true God alone and that they profess no religion which denies, by direct implication, that Jesus is the only Savior and that man cannot save himself by good conduct, then it must demand that those who regard themselves as followers of Jesus Christ separate themselves from those who hold contrary religious views. The simple fact that in the lodge men of all religions worship together is sufficient to establish its non-Christian character.

I do not agree with the argument which charges every lodge with being "idolatrous." That accusation holds good regarding the Masons, Odd-Fellows, Knights of Pythias, Eastern Star, and a number of others. These are plainly deistic, involving the worship of a Supreme Being which is not the God of the Bible, but "the God who reveals Himself to all men in nature." Explicitly the name of Christ is excluded from all prayers and from the Scripture quoted. With this is joined the notion that natural man can acknowledge God as his Father. In these lodges a figment of the human brain called Great Spirit or Architect of the Universe is worshiped. But in most lodges there is

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not what one can designate as idolatrous worship, but a unionistic or syncretistic worship of God. God is worshiped, but not in a manner in which He desires. In fact, these people worship Him in a manner which He has distinctly forbidden when He told us to worship Him in spirit and in truth. In dealing with members of such orders, we draw their attention to the fact that they are praying jointly with those who belong to no church, have no knowledge of the Gospel, do not repent over sin, and do not use the means of grace, - with these and with Jews and outspoken agnostics. Such worship is an insult to God, and Christians can have no part in it. With this line of argument you can reach the conscience of Christians enmeshed in these minor lodges and prove to them the inconsistency of their conduct. To participate in religious ceremonies with those who either do not worship the true God at all or worship Him in a manner He has forbidden and to expect salvation as the reward of a virtuous life, these things do not agree with elementary Christianity. ...

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Burial of Unbelievers.

To officiate at the funeral of one who has despised the Word of God during his lifetime is wrong unless we can say that the deceased had earnestly repented. Otherwise, to give such a one the honor of a Christian burial cannot fail to impress unbelievers with the notion that, after all, our relation to the Church does not matter much; all who have tried their best, have been sincere, etc., will “go to the same place.” This will be the necessary result if the funeral sermon makes the impression that the deceased has probably gone to heaven. To preach the Law, *i.e.*, to quote the deceased as an example of those who despise grace and are lost, would be perfectly permissible, of course; but who wants such a funeral sermon? Now, the former kind of sermon will confirm people in unbelief; the other kind they do not want. There are other reasons why a faithful preacher will not officiate at the burial of an unbeliever, but these will suffice.

The case which you mention in your letter has no reference to one who has openly despised the Word of God. In such a case we give the deceased the benefit of the doubt and preach a sermon which says little about his life or death, except that we express the hope that he was saved. The sermon would be along more general Gospel lines.

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Officiating at the Funeral of a Worldling.

[“But Jesus said to him, ‘Follow Me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead’” – Matt. 8:22.]

Matt. 8,22 has been, and still frequently is, quoted to prove that it is contrary to Scripture for a pastor to officiate at the funeral of one whom we cannot regard as one who died in the Lord. Now, I fully uphold the principle that such an act of a pastor would be inconsistent. As a faithful pastor he preaches that Jesus is the only Way to life, and by officiating at a funeral of an unbeliever, by giving him a Christian burial, he would repudiate his former testimony. But that is not the issue. Can Matt. 8,22 be rightfully quoted to prove our position?

The text referred to in your letter cannot be quoted in proof for the position that it is unscriptural for a Christian pastor to officiate at the funeral of worldlings. Surely the pastor who lends himself to such a purpose prostitutes his holy office. But the text Matt. 8,22 does not bear on this question at all. The disciple did not ask for permission to officiate at the funeral of his father. He simply asks Jesus to suffer him first to go and bury his father, *i.e.*, to bring his body to its last resting-place. Jesus tells him, “Follow Me, and let the dead bury their dead.” Don’t let earthly duties keep you from following Me. These earthly duties can be performed even by those who are spiritually dead, but obedience to the call “Follow Me” cannot be postponed to some convenient time in the future.

Pastor and People
Letters to a Young Preacher
by
Theodore Graebner (1932)

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Will Strictness Kill Our Church?

That the Church will never succeed unless it gives up its narrowness and becomes more liberal is the assertion made by one out of five of the unchurched. Of course, I have no intention of modifying our doctrine to suit these so-called "prospects." But what shall one reply to those who tell us that our strictness is not in harmony with the age and country we are living in?

Let me take for granted that our Church on account of its strictness is not suited for this present age. In that case it would behoove us to remember that it is not our business at all to save the Church or to build the Church. That is the Lord's business. Preacher and people have only one business – to be witnesses for Jesus Christ. One thing is required of them, that the love their Lord and Master and be obedient to His will. Then, by their testimony to His teachings, God wants to build and preserve the Church. It is not their business at all to consider whether these teachings are popular or whether those who hold them will be regarded as bigots, fanatics, as narrow and pharisaical. They are to trust the good Lord that He has made no mistake in commissioning them to preach exactly what He taught His evangelists and apostles, the divinely ordained teachers until the Day of Judgment, to set forth in the Scriptures. If we are going to listen to this fleshly complaining about "strictness" and "narrowness," where do you suppose this thing will end? Do you know that the world generally believes that there is no difference at all between the teachings of the Pope and those of the Church of the Reformation? They call even these differences which touch nearly every single doctrine that Jesus taught "hair-splitting."

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Genesis 1 and The Geological Periods.

You inquired November 8 regarding the possibility of retaining a person in our congregations who "persists in accepting the modern theory of evolution only in so far as the genesis 1 account is concerned." You continue: "Does such a person forfeit his Christianity?" This assumes that we deny the Christianity of every one whom we cannot accept into our congregation. Certainly, none of us in Concordia Seminary teach what you call the "dauernde-Handlung theory of the creation." We believe in creation through a divine fiat; by His word the world and all living things were called into existence. We could not hold out the hand of brotherhood to one who denies this, the very heart of the doctrine of creation. Yet to declare absolutely that no one can have justifying faith unless he accepts every doctrine of Christianity would be farther than the Lutheran dogmaticians and the fathers of our Synod have ever gone.

Regarding high-school teachers who have, as you say, espoused that "period stuff," I can fully agree with the attitude of those who are "up in arms and insist that these brethren come clean or get out of Synod." However, the invitation to leave the Missouri Synod is being brandished at the present time with considerable freedom, and I do not believe that with such threats brethren can be won back who have been straying into strange pastures. Can we not argue questions of theology in our Synod without at the very outset pressing the six-shooter to the breast of our opponent? That attitude is a most efficient breeder of strife and division. I think we all need the warning of Gal. 6,1.

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May Women Attend Church with Uncovered Heads?

The reference to women attending divine service without a head-covering, 1 Cor. 11, lays down a rule for the congregation in the apostolic time only, since in that age decent women appeared in public with their headscovered. It lays down no rule for our age, but establishes the general principle that decency and a proper regard of social form should prevail in the house of worship. You will find the matter fully discussed in any commentary on First Corinthians.

Resigning from the Congregation.

Is there such a thing as resigning from a Christian congregation as one resigns from any other society?

1. Yes. But if one resigns from the congregation, one resigns from the Lutheran church. If the Church is the body of Christ, none of its members can separate and say that he is still united with Christ, Eph. 5,23; Rom. 12,5.

2. To refuse to attend the Lord's Supper and to support the church is the same thing as resigning from the church if it is clear that admonition is refused.

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Life Insurance.

Why has our Synod changed its position on life insurance? It used to be considered sinful to take out these policies. To-day, while some still regard it as contrary to the Law of God, they do not exercise church discipline, and many would list life insurance among the adiaphora. As a matter of fact, insurance is very generally carried by our people. If we make concessions on this point, must we not also weaken on the lodge question and other principles of our church practise? The fathers of our Synod rejected life insurance, and their reasons are valid to-day. How can we defend the associations which under the Lutheran name write policies exactly like those of the mutual or stock companies?

The Missouri Synod has changed its stand on life insurance. But that is chiefly because life insurance has changed. The policies of a generation ago generally partook of the form of a gamble. If the insured lived beyond a certain date, his policy expired, and all that he had paid in was lost. He - rather his heirs - could gain only if he died a certain term had expired. But in recent years a great many new forms of life insurance have been brought forward, and many of these do not, in the manner described, partake of the nature of a gamble with human life. Concerning these I do not know of any expression of opinion in our church-papers or in our synodical reports. As for societies within the Synodical Conference, there are two, possibly more such, but they are built on the mutual plan and in effect combine the features of a Sterbekassa and a savings account. They would, however, classify as life insurance, but not of the type against which we had written twenty or thirty years ago. This type then did not exist in its present form, and I do not regard these policies as objectionable. There is, however, no synodical resolution of any kind on the subject. Hence I cannot subscribe to the statement that, while the Missouri Synod once rejected life insurance, it was on grounds that are still valid. So far as I know, - and Eckhardt's Real-lexikon bears out my statement - we have never treated life insurance as a wrong for which members must be disciplined, and, if necessary, excommunicated.

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