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Christmas Greetings

Through this courtesy copy of *The Springfielder*, the twenty-two faculty members and 416 students of Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, extend their warm greetings of this blessed season.

May the peace with God through Christ of which the angels sang be yours through the coming year.

CHORUS APPEARS IN NEW VESTMENTS

Through an "Adopt a Chorister Plan", suggested by alumnus Pastor Walther Eissfeldt, Buckley, Illinois, the sixty-three members of our seminary chorus were able to appear in new tailor-made vestments at their annual Christmas Concerts in Decatur, Lincoln and Springfield.

The chorus wishes to express its gratitude to the many congregations of all sections of the United States and Canada for their gifts for the cassocks and surplices for the chorus.

WANTED: A NURSE

We sincerely hope that the alumni and friends of our seminary can help us in our search for a nurse who is to work full time in our seminary hospital.

We are looking for a registered nurse who would like to serve her Lord in the Church managing our seminary hospital.

If you know of anyone who would be interested in this position, please write the seminary in care of the Dean of Students.

"The greatest wonder ever on earth is, that the Son of God died the shameful death of the cross."

—Luther.

CURVE OF CONFIDENCE

It rose more than ever, in 1957

This statistical curve reflects the confidence that Synodical Conference Lutherans have placed in the Aid Association for Lutherans with its Lutheran life insurance representatives, its capable Lutheran business management, and its demonstrated ability to provide life insurance at a low net cost.

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BACKGROUND FOR DECISION

When Socrates claimed that no one really sins in a matter of which he has real knowledge, he expressed an opinion not in harmony with the doctrine of sin. There is a lot of truth, however, in this that a man who has been shown the evil consequences of his act ought to be able to turn from the wrong way. Information on a matter is always necessary for a prudent decision. Of course, it is rather difficult to tell a man: Look here, you are ignorant of the facts and for that reason you are about to make a bad decision. It was more diplomatic of Socrates to lead his partners in dialogue to the right conclusion by the dialectic method, by questions and answers. At times, however, it is better, even at the risk of seeming impolite and undiplomatic to say to some people: If you knew more of the facts, if you had a better picture of the situation, you would be able to act more judiciously.

It seems to some of us that in the debate as to the relation of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod to the Lutheran World Federation more information on the member churches and their background would help us see the confessional duty better. It cannot be our intention to characterize each church belonging to the LWF individually, but we are certain that most of the pastors and still more of the laymen of our church who are being asked to take sides in the question have very little knowledge of who and what the "member churches" of the LWF are. It has repeatedly been said clearly and distinctly that a church is not Lutheran because it has adopted the name Lutheran. What must be considered even more seriously is that by subscribing to the Augsburg Confession or even to the whole Book of Concord a church does not prove it is Lutheran. What most interested bystanders over here do not know or see is that for many so-called Lutherans the subscription to the Augsburg Confession means little more than that the church acknowledges that it has come by way of the historic confession of 1530 and that it is willing to make it a part of its tradition. The concept of subscribing to something *because* it is the expression of the truth of Scripture has either been abandoned long ago,

or is unknown. The same thing happens to the concept of "fellowship", as pulpit and altar-fellowship. The good people of the European churches simply do not share our concept of Lutheran or Christian Fellowship. For that reason they simply cannot comprehend why Missouri is so hesitant about joining church federations or unions. The Lutheran "Landeskirchen" of Germany that are members of the LWF consent to and practice altar and pulpit fellowship with heterodox churches and sects and see no confessional inconsistency in it.

Again we ought to know that doctrinal discipline in the way we see it necessary in our Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod is almost unknown in the majority of the member churches of the LWF. Certainly, if a Lutheran pastor would declare the Roman pope the head of the church he could be made to resign, at least to retire (with full pension, as was the case recently.) But any adherent to Bultmann's heresy for instance may preach, teach, administer the Lord's Supper usually without protests from any church officials. Yes, there have been debates and protests, but they usually are more on the academic level.

If that sounds too crass a statement, just examine carefully the very recent joint statement on the Lord's Supper, issued after ten years of deliberation by a commission of the Lutheran, Reformed and Union theologians within the EKD, the Evangelical Church of Germany ("only" a federation, it is claimed). A man like Dr. Sommerlath refused to sign this document. Dr. P. Brunner criticizes it and calls to attention the fact that it would be wrong to establish fellowship among all these churches by reason of these joint theses. Actually, altar-fellowship is freely practised between evangelicals and reformed. The Arnoldshain Theses are so formulated that virtually anyone but a good Catholic could sign them. The real decisive issues have been carefully avoided or circumscribed. It would take only one free and open discussion of the doctrine of Holy Scriptures and the Sacraments to open the eyes of well-meaning Lutherans of our church, we mean a free and open discussion with and among the theologians of the

various churches of Germany, such as we experienced during the Bad Boll sessions. The doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod was often characterized by modern theologians as strictly antediluvian, outdated, kept in cold storage, naive, near-sighted, etc. To take the story of Genesis as history will classify the one doing so as being way beneath scientific theology. Are these isolated cases among churchmen? No, not at all. And the very fact that with these men others more conservative can live in peace and harmony is part of the background of the LWF picture. There are bright spots in the dark picture of Lutheranism in Germany. There are serious and conscientious pastors trying to feed their flock with the Water and Bread of Life, but they are constantly faced with intolerable situations.

Is it even thinkable that Missouri Synod should establish a bond of fellowship with these churches? Let the individual pastor and layman not be misled by the well-sounding slogans speaking of Lutheran unity and cooperation, but let every one examine for himself the churches that ask us to be their partners in activities that certainly are not just external cooperation. The LWF does work together and does so not just in doctrinally indifferent fields but in the very work of confessing, teaching, preaching. It can only do so by conceding to every member-church that though it have subscribed to the Lutheran Confessions it may believe, teach and confess as it pleases. Recently it has even been claimed that one church that did not subscribe to the Augsburg Confession became (by inference) Lutheran by joining the LWF (which in turn has a confessional paragraph requiring each member to subscribe).

The appeal to every conscientious Lutheran must be that he join no group, society with religious aims, or federation of churches unless he is assured of the confessional character of the members of such groups. No utilitarian or pragmatic dialectic should succeed in befogging the minds of Christians in regard to their duty of love toward all men, and that includes the testimony against false teachers and teaching by word and deed.

Prof. M. J. Naumann