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Editorial

"BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS"

THE GOSPEL that God has committed to his Church is a word of peace. What I mean is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, no longer holding men's misdeeds against them, and that he has entrusted us with the message of reconciliation. We come therefore as Christ's ambassadors. It is as if God were appealing to you through us: in Christ's name, we implore you, be reconciled to God! (2 Cor. 5: 19f. NEB).

Through the fellowship and the preaching of the Church, God's love recalls all mankind from unbelief and despair and hatred to faith and hope and peace.

Because God is God, the worst thing that can happen to man is to be separated from him, and the good news of faith is first and foremost the announcement that out of sinners, doomed to die, God has raised up heirs of eternal life. But to stop here would be to misrepresent the Gospel. No man is reconciled to God in total solitude. God made us to serve him in fellowship, and we fall short of his full purpose for our lives as long as our human fellowship is broken. As the New Testament presents the Gospel, the reconciliation of man with God and the reconciliation of man with man are coinherent. On the one hand, for men to find Christ is to find peace among themselves. On the other hand, the sinner cannot ask for reconciliation with God unless he is willing to accept reconciliation with his fellows. We must either accept total reconciliation or reject all reconciliation.

To say this is not to pretend that the reconciliation of man with man is easy. Bitterness and hostility and fear are desperately hard to uproot from men's hearts, and even when they tire of war and strife it is not always Christ's peace that they seek. Indeed, the Christian may even have to fight and divide and break down the false peace of the flesh if God's true peace is to prevail. But the Christian goal remains reconciliation and peace, and our struggle against illusory unities must be a step towards authentic unity, not a veil for hatred and destructiveness.

There is some reason to ask whether our Canadian churches are fully committed to—or indeed, really aware of—the Christian task of reconciliation among men. In at least two critical areas of our life, we seem strangely quiescent and lethargic.

For one thing, we talk a great deal about recovering the Church's full unity in the sacred things of her life—faith, worship, pastoral care—but we seem unable to get beyond talk. Of course, there is no point in pretending that the obstacles are not large and solid, or that there is no danger of our devising specious unities at the expense of our Christian integrity. But the

sad fact is that, by and large, we remain content with surly suspicion and carnal competition, barely masked by a talkative and superficial amiability. Can we bring ourselves to risk the pain of a real fight for Christian unity—to face the issues with a courage and a candour that come from the sincere desire to speak truth in love? In other words, do we really want—however long and rough the path may turn out to be—to be reconciled with each other? If the honest answer is “No,” have we really heard the message of reconciliation?

Again, we say in words that the reconciliation of the nations may be the condition of our very survival—but what do we do about it? No one can doubt that the problem of reconciling the great powers of the earth is almost incredibly complex. But do we really want reconciliation? Certainly the basic moral issue seems clear enough. Any nation that willingly contributes to the tensions of the “cold war” is toying with the dual sin of mass murder and mass suicide. No doubt, if we accept the strategy of deterrence, we earnestly hope that a universal fear of the physical consequences of such a sin will save us all from ever having to commit it. But can Christians seriously think that a fruitless hostility, inhibited only by sheer animal fear, is the reconciling Saviour’s will for his world? If we cannot think so, why are we not doing more to mobilize the Christian public opinion of this country in the service of peace? It is humiliating, to say the least, to find that Jews, Unitarians, and secular humanists seem to be doing more than most Christians to alert our society to its desperate moral and physical danger. However complex the problem may be, and however blind and inert the governments and peoples of the world may appear to be in the face of it, surely the servants of the Prince of Peace should be leading a fight for reconciliation rather than hiding behind threats of annihilation.

As believers in the one Lord Jesus Christ, we claim the glorious title of “children of God.” Are we too timid or lazy or indifferent to vindicate that claim by fulfilling the demand of the Gospel?

E.R.F.

Annual Meeting

THE ANNUAL MEETING of the *Canadian Journal of Theology* will be held at Wycliffe College, Toronto, on Thursday, May 17, 1962, at 3 p.m. All subscribers and friends are welcome.

NORMAN E. WAGNER
Secretary