

# Christianity and Crisis

*A Bi-Weekly Journal of Christian Opinion*

Volume II, No. 5

April 6, 1942

\$1.50 per year; 10 cents per copy

## The Churches Speak

QUITE exceptional anticipation surrounded the recent National Study Conference on "The Churches and a Just and Durable Peace," and now awaits the publication of its findings. Could the representatives of American Protestantism, until three months ago ranged in bitterly embattled camps, unite on any significant proposals for post-war reordering?

The Conference was notable in its personnel. Its membership has been described as "the most distinguished in a quarter-century of American church assemblies." Despite the difficulties which mid-week dates presented for lay attendance, a considerable number of foremost Christian laymen were present. If their views counted for less than their expert competence warranted, it was partly due to their numerical inferiority, partly to the fact that the layman has not yet learned to make his voice heard above the inveterate volubility of the clergy.

In areas bristling with controversy, wide differences of Christian judgment were to be expected. But apart from a single incident (described in the next following editorial), the nearly four hundred delegates pressed steadily forward to a remarkably broad consensus on most vital matters. Proponents of platitudes and panaceas were, as always, present and vocal; but they won little response from a body which was clearly intent upon hewing to the main line. It was the considered opinion among those most familiar with such meetings that the Delaware assembly advanced farther and to more significant conclusions than any of them had dared to hope.

Already the message of the conference is being likened to the Malvern Report or the more recent declaration on "Social Justice and Economic Reconstruction" of the British churches. Neither analogy is apt. The Malvern statement came almost wholly from a single pen, that of the new Archbishop of Canterbury. The document on "Social Justice and Economic Reconstruction" is the product of months of careful drafting by a small group of the ablest

minds among the British churches. In contrast the Delaware Report was thrown together by four commissions of roughly one hundred members each in four two-hour sessions, with editing committees working feverishly at odd moments and late hours. Inevitably, the marks of scissors and paste are upon it; no special training in textual criticism is required to detect the splicings. Likewise inevitably its different parts are of varying weight and worth. Indeed there is some danger that the most important declarations will be lost amidst a mass of useful but secondary material.

Happily, the section with most immediate and vital relevance (The Political Bases of a Just and Durable Peace), drafted under the chairmanship of President Dodds of Princeton, is at once the briefest and the ablest of the four parts. Readers of the message will do well to give it major attention. It lays down six principles:—

1. Full and responsible participation by the United States.
2. The importance of "emergency measures" in the interval between Armistice and Peace.
3. Definition of the essential functions of government, and of the division of those functions between national and international authorities.
4. Specification of the powers now exercised by national governments which must henceforth be delegated to international government.
5. Recognition that international authorities may be of two kinds—those charged with specific duties such as the International Labor Organization, and a comprehensive world government of delegated powers.
6. Administration of colonial territories under international authority.

The heart of its recommendations is embodied in this sentence: "The ultimate requirement is a duly constituted world government of delegated powers: an international legislative body, an international

court with adequate jurisdiction, international administrative bodies with necessary powers, and adequate international police forces and provision for world-wide economic sanctions." Within its jurisdiction must be lodged "the power of final judgment in controversies between nations, the maintenance and use of armed forces except for preservation of domestic order, and the regulation of international trade and population movements among nations." While the need for a variety of interim bodies with specific responsibilities is recognized, "such bodies must be adapted to the service of world order and government, and must not become a substitute therefor."

One self-imposed limitation seriously impaired the realism and effectiveness of the Delaware deliberations. The meeting had been called and planned before December 7th. In that setting, it was recognized that any discussion of America's relation to the conflict would precipitate endless controversy and might vitiate constructive accomplishment. Therefore it was agreed that all consideration of the War itself should be eliminated. This regulation, adopted before America's involvement, was reaffirmed and enforced. Any reference whatsoever to the bearing of the War's outcome, or even of measures taken during it, upon the making of peace was ruled out of order. Thus the conference was compelled to fly in the face of the most fundamental axiom, universally accepted by all competent students of the problem—namely, that the war and the peace to follow are organically related to each other, and that the character of the peace is being determined even now by the nature of the measures being taken for its prosecution. In this fashion, the mists of illusion in which great numbers of American churchmen have delighted while civilization was being destroyed continued to overshadow the Delaware Conference and condemn its conclusions to a measure of unreality and inadequacy.

H. P. V. D.

### Is The Church at War?

A SINGLE incident somewhat marred the otherwise orderly and amicable progress of the Delaware Conference in its difficult achievement of significant agreements. It was the dogged insistence by one delegate that a declaration of his own phrasing should be written into the Conference findings. That declaration was: "The Christian church is not at war." After prolonged debate in one of the sections, he finally succeeded by a very narrow margin in having his sentence, slightly modified, included in the sectional report. Since its inclusion would

have violated the self-denying ordinance under which the Conference had agreed to proceed, that there should be no controversial references to the war, the statement was eliminated by the Steering Committee. Efforts to reintroduce it from the floor in plenary session were ruled out of order, and there was no appeal from this ruling.

This was the appropriate and, indeed, inevitable disposition of the matter, but it was unfortunate that the issue had to be settled on a technical point of order. It was even more unfortunate that most of the objections voiced in discussion were on grounds of expediency—that the publication of such a declaration would have conveyed a very false impression of the mind of the Conference, which was obviously true. It would have furthered clear thinking throughout the church if the proposal had been squarely faced on its own merits and rejected. The charge against it is at least threefold. The statement "The Christian church is not at war" is ambiguous. It is either untrue or meaningless.

Any negative declaration implies an affirmative of which it is the refutation. To say "The Christian church is not at war" implies that there are those who are proclaiming that "The Christian church is at war." We know of no one guilty of such an absurd affirmation. To imply that there are such persons is to set the whole discussion in false perspective. Such a slogan, in headlines throughout the secular and religious press as would certainly have happened, would have conveyed to the general public an utterly false impression both of the facts and of the attitudes of American Christians.

Secondly, the statement "The Christian church is not at war" is meaningless when not misleading. If it intends to say that "The Christian church has not declared war" or "The Christian church is not waging war," it is a truism; it has been many centuries since the Christian churches engaged in military operations. Therefore, again, its affirmation could only confuse and mislead men's thought. If it means that the Christian church is not involved in the conflict, it is untrue. However one may define the church, the church has no existence apart from its members. Where they are involved in great corporate conflict, so is the church. Even the "Communion of Saints" cannot escape involvement in all the trials and struggles of its earthly members. Moreover, the church as companies of Christians dwelling within national communities which are at war is only too obviously involved in the conflict. The great truth which this perverse ambiguity so gravely obscures is clearly set forth in the Delaware declaration: "The church is a spiritual entity, one and indivisible, which as such