

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY

Ministry and Life in the Seven Churches

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Book Review

VOL. XXXV

March 1964

No. 3

BRIEF STUDIES

TWO NEW IDENTIFICATIONS OF PATRISTIC REFERENCES IN THE BOOK OF CONCORD

The Lutheran Symbols identify most of the patristic references in sufficient detail to enable the reader to find them in any good edition of the father in question. In a limited number of cases, however, the circumstances under which some of the Lutheran particular creeds were drafted precluded precise identification and/or verification of all the patristic references prior to the submission of the document. In the course of time most of these have been identified and the references are incorporated in the marginal apparatus and the index of citations of the standard critical edition of the Book of Concord, that of Hans Lietzmann (editor), *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche herausgegeben im Gedenkjahr der Augsbургischen Konfession 1930*, 4th edition by Ernst Wolf (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1959). A few references, however, remain incompletely identified even in this work. In the fall of 1963 two of the graduate students participating in the seminar course S-831, "The Book of Concord and the Latin Fathers," of the School for Graduate Studies of Concordia Seminary, succeeded in identifying two more of these elusive passages, one with a high degree of probability and the other certainly.

I

Paragraph 33 of Article XXIV of the Latin version of the Augsburg Confession reads:

Est igitur ad hoc facienda missa, ut ibi porrigatur sacramentum his quibus opus est consolatione, sicut Ambrosius ait: Quia semper pecco, semper debeo accipere medicinam.¹ (Hence the mass is to be celebrated so that

¹ *Bekennnisschriften*, p. 94.

the sacrament may be given to those who need its consolation, as St. Ambrose says: "Because I am constantly sinning, I ought constantly to be taking the remedy [against sin].")

(The German version diverges at this point.) In a footnote to this passage Heinrich Bornkamm observes: "Freely quoted after Pseudo-Ambrose,² *De sacramentis* V 4, 25. M[igne,] S[eries] L[atina] 16, 471 f." The passage thus referred to reads:

Qui vulnus habet, medicinam requirit. Vulcanus est, quia sub peccato sumus: medicina est coeleste et venerabile sacramentum.³ (A person who has a wound needs medicine. Our wound consists in this that we are under [the yoke of] sin; the medicine is the heavenly and adorable Sacrament [of the Altar].

A better reference, all but certainly the one that Philip Melancthon had in mind when he wrote the Apology, is to be found in *De sacramentis* IV 6, 28, here quoted in full:

Ergo quotienscumque accipis, quid tibi dixit apostolus? Quotienscumque accipimus, mortem domini adnuntiamus. Si mortem, adnuntiamus remissionem peccatorum. Si, quotienscumque effunditur sanguis, in remissionem peccatorum funditur, debeo illum semper accipere, ut semper mihi peccata dimittat. Qui semper pecco, semper debeo habere medicinam.⁴ (Italics ours.) (But what has the apostle said to you, as often as you receive? As often as we receive, we declare the death of the Lord. If [we declare His] death, we receive the remission of sins. If [His]

² The current trend in patristic scholarship is to concede the Ambrosian authorship of *De sacramentis* (for example, Altaner, Botte, Conolly, Faller, Frank, Ghedini, Srawley).

³ See also C[orpus] S[criptorum] E[cclesiasticorum] L[atinarum], 73, 69,74—70,76.

⁴ CSEL, 73, 57,12—58,18. The textual variants are not material. See also MSL, 16, 464 B.

blood is shed for the remission of sins as often as it is poured out [in the Sacrament of the Altar], I ought constantly to be receiving it so that it may take away my sins. I who am constantly sinning ought constantly to have the remedy [against sin.]

The variations between this patristic text and the words of the Apology are very slight: *Qui* for *Quia* (with no real change in sense), and *habere* for *accipere* (easily accounted for by the threefold occurrence of a form of *accipere* in the immediately preceding context).

II

Paragraph 173 of Article IV of the Apology reads:

Et Hieronymus contra Pelagianos: Tunc ergo iusti sumus, quando nos peccatores fatemur, et iustitia nostra non ex proprio merito, sed ex Dei consistit misericordia.⁵ (And St. Jerome [asserts] against the Pelagians: "Thus we are righteous precisely when we call ourselves sinners, and our righteousness stands not on our own merit but on the mercy of God.")

Bornkamm adds the footnote: "Dial[ogus] adv[ersus] Pelagianos I, 5. MSL 23, 500 f. (not verbatim)." The parenthetic addition "(not verbatim)" is an understatement; there is almost no resemblance between the words of the Apology and the passage in question. On the other hand, the first part of *Dialogus adversus Pelagianos* I, 13 reads:

C(ritobulus Haereticus). Quid ergo respondebis ad illud exemplum quod ponit evangelista Joannes: "Scimus quod omnis qui natus est ex Deo, non peccat; sed generatio Dei conservat eum, et malignus non tangit eum. Scimus quoniam ex Deo sumus, et mundus totus in maligno positus est"? (I Joan. v, 18.19). *A(tticus Catholicus)*. Par pari referam, et parvam evangelistae epistolam secundum sensum tuum docebo sibi esse contrariam. Si enim omnis qui natus est ex Deo, peccatum non facit: quoniam semen ejus manet in eo, et non potest peccare, quia ex

Deo natus est, qua consequentia idem in eodem locum loquitur: "Si dixerimus quoniam peccatum non habemus, ipsi nos seducimus, et veritas in nobis non est" (I Joan. i, 8)? Ignoras rationem, haesitas atque turbaris. Audi eundem evangelistam: "Si confiteamur peccata nostra, fidelis et justus est ut dimitta[t] nobis peccata nostra et mundet nos ab omni iniquitate" (ibid., 9). *Tunc ergo iusti sumus, quando nos peccatores fatemur et iustitia nostra non ex proprio merito sed ex Dei consistit misericordia* [italics ours], dicente sancta Scriptura: "Justus accusator sui est in principio sermonis" (Prov. xviii, 17) et in alio loco: "Dic tu peccata tua, ut iustificeris" (Isa. xliiii, 26, *secundum* LXX). "Conclisit enim Deus omnia sub peccato, ut omnibus misereatur" (Rom. xi, 32). Et haec hominis summa est iustitia, quidquid potuerit habere virtutis, non suum putare esse, sed Domini qui largitus est.⁶ (C. But what will you reply to the assertion of St. John the Evangelist: "We know that everyone who is begotten out of God does not sin; but God's begetting preserves him and the Evil One does not touch him. We know that we are from God and the whole world is put under the Evil One"? A. I shall give you tit for tat, and I shall teach you that according to your construction the Evangelist's little letter is self-contradictory. For if every one who is begotten out of God does not sin because His seed remains in him, and he cannot sin because he is begotten out of God, is it consistent for the same writer to say in the same place: "If we say that we do not have any sin, we are misleading ourselves and the truth is not in us"? You don't know the reason! You hesitate and are upset! Listen to the same Evangelist: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous, so that He takes away our sins and cleanses us from all iniquity." Thus we are righteous precisely when we call ourselves sinners, and our righteousness stands not on our own merit but on the mercy of God, as the Sacred Scriptures say: "The righteous man is his own accuser when he begins to speak," and in another place: "Tell your sins so that you may be justified."

⁵ *Bekennnisschriften*, p. 195.

⁶ MSL, 23, 527 C—D.

"God has shut up everything under sin, that He might have mercy on all." And this is a human being's highest righteousness, that he regards whatever he may have in the way of virtue not as his own but the Lord's who has given it [to him].)

There can be no doubt that this is the passage that Melanchthon had in mind.

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