

THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY.

VOL. VIII.

JANUARY, 1928.

No. 1.

Foreword.

Another year of grace has dawned. In preparing for another round of service, the THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY is well aware that its course, including, as it does, unflinching opposition to unionism and doctrinal indifference in general, will not be more popular in the future than it has been in the past. A generation which has produced the Lausanne Conference and is developing much enthusiasm in praising it will not be kindly disposed toward severe critics of this gathering. But evidently a religious journal must have higher ideals than those indicated by the word popularity. It is a truism that the public is best served when it is given, not what it likes, but what it needs. Can it be adequately told in a few words to what extent the Christian world to-day needs the admonition to extricate itself from the net of unionism? Those who have eyes to see cannot fail to notice that the appalling ignorance in religious matters which we observe in the youth of our land and which has often been commented upon by editors and educators, is largely due to these efforts at bringing into alliance various church-bodies whose doctrines are not in agreement, the result being a wide-spread disregard of doctrinal distinctions and differences and, finally, of Christian doctrine in general. The Romanists with more or less merriment dwell on what they call the collapse of Protestantism, finding their justification for this bold term in the inability of the average young Protestant to give an intelligent account of the religion which he professes to hold. It is to be feared that there is a result of all this doctrinal indifference born of unionism which is more lamentable and dreadful than anything hitherto alluded to — the substitution of trust in one's own good deeds for faith in Jesus Christ. Where doctrinal matters are relegated to the background, study of what is essential in the Scriptures easily ceases; and where this sad state of affairs obtains, Christ and His salvation are readily dropped from view. May God grant His grace to the readers and editors of the THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY that they, without becoming bigoted or fanatical, may remain firm in their opposition to all endeavors which tend to bring about a communion of light with darkness!

The Lutherans at Lausanne.

(Continued.)

The Church's Common Confession of Faith.

(Report of Section IV. Received by the full conference, *nem. con.*, August 19, 1927.)

"We members of the Conference on Faith and Order, coming from all parts of the world in the interest of Christian unity, have with deep gratitude to God found ourselves united in common prayer, in God, our heavenly Father, and His Son Jesus Christ, our Savior, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Notwithstanding the differences in doctrine among us, we are united in the Christian faith which is contained in the Holy Scriptures and is witnessed to, and safeguarded in, the ecumenical creed called the Nicene and in the Apostles' Creed, which faith has been continuously confirmed in the spiritual experience of the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"We believe that the Holy Spirit, in leading the Church into all truth, may enable it, while firmly adhering to the witness of these creeds (our common heritage from the ancient Church), to express the truths of revelation in such other forms as new problems may from time to time demand.

"Finally, we desire to leave on record our solemn and unanimous testimony that no external and written standards can suffice without an inward and personal experience of union with God in Christ.

NOTES.

"1) It must be noted that the Orthodox Eastern Church can accept the Nicene Creed only in its uninterpolated form, without the *Filioque* clause; and that, although the Apostle's Creed has no place in the formularies of this Church, it is in accordance with its teaching.

"2. It must be noted also that some of the churches represented in this conference conjoin tradition with the Scriptures, some are explicit in subordinating creeds to the Scriptures, some attach a primary importance to their particular confessions, and some make no use of creeds.

"3. It is understood that the use of these creeds will be determined by the competent authority in each Church, and that the several churches will continue to make use of such special confessions as they possess."

Dr. Ainslie's comment is as follows: This report "brought to the front the credal controversy. The majority of the communions represented hold to the Nicene and Apostles' Creed; others, such as Baptists, Congregationalists, and Disciples, recognize these as witnesses in past generations, but do not hold them in the same reverence, emphasizing instead a personal faith in the living God through the living Christ. The report sought, with much difficulty, to cover both of these positions." It surely was difficult, as the report shows. And Lutherans find it not only difficult, but also impossible to accept the report.

Some of these articles will be touched upon under the heading of "Unionism." The points to be touched upon here are the following. The Church to-day needs additional creeds besides the Nicene and the Apostles' Creed. (We note, in passing, that the Athanasian Creed was ignored at Lausanne.) A man may believe that Christ was "crucified, dead, and buried" and still not have the Christian faith. No Unitarian doubts that Christ was crucified. Protestants and Catholics are fully agreed on the death of Christ, but widely divided on the question of the effect of Christ's death. We need additional creeds. Dr. Sherer's interview: "Under no circumstances could the Church of to-day ignore what was won in centuries after that in which the councils of Nicaea and of Constantinople were held. Justification by faith, the universal priesthood of believers, phases of the doctrine of sin and grace, particularly as to the means of grace, were not defined prior to the sixteenth century. The statements of the Church upon these are as essential to the convictions of present-day believers as are those that concern the Trinity and the person and nature of Christ."

What does the statement mean: "It is understood that the use of these creeds shall be determined by the competent authority in each church"? It does not refer, of course, to the time and frequency of their use in worship. Does it mean that the Disciples are free to declare some or all of these doctrines open questions? Does it mean that the Methodist Church and others have the right to delete the "descended into hell"? And, by the way, does it mean that besides the authority of Scripture, and the authority of the congregation derived therefrom, there are other authorities that should act in this matter?

"We desire to leave on record our solemn and unanimous testimony that no external and written standards can suffice without an inward and personal experience of union with God in Christ." Substituting "without faith in the Gospel" for the modern formula:

“an inward and personal experience,” etc., we agree with this solemn testimony. We doubt, however, whether the repudiation of the substitution of the creeds for faith on the part of the formalists is the sole intent of this paragraph. This paragraph was brought forth in hard travail. Originally it read: “Finally, inasmuch as in dealing with this subject of creeds we have been occupied in considering the place and importance of a common confession of the faith, we desire at the same time to leave on record our solemn and unanimous testimony that no external and written standards can take the place of that inward and personal experience of union with the living Christ, which is the only experience of spiritual vitality, and that the object of our faith is not any statement about Christ, but the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.” The report as sent out by the Press Bureau of the World Conference contained this final statement: “and that the object of our faith is not any statement about Christ, but the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.” (The report published by the Boston Secretariat, given in this article, omits that statement.) It cannot, of course, stand. Surely the object of our faith is the Lord Jesus Christ, but the statement puts into opposition what belongs together. Any man who refuses to believe the Biblical and confessional statements about Christ does not believe in Christ Himself. Christ is found only in the Word. “Outside of His Word and without His Word we know of no Christ, much less of Christ’s thoughts. For that Christ who offers Christ’s alleged thoughts without His Word is the odious devil out of hell, who assumes Christ’s holy name and peddles under this name his infernal poison.” (Luther, 17, 2015.) The animus of the men who appeal from the statements about Christ to Christ Himself is thus described by Bishop Candler: “The rationalists of the present generation, by their denunciation of all creeds, delude themselves into imagining that their opposition is to dogma rather than to Christ. But at the bottom their hostility is to Him. — Belittling the creed which enshrines Him, they betray the Savior, whom it glorifies.” (*The Christ and the Creed*, p. 24.) Men of this stamp were responsible for the appearance of the pronouncement under discussion in the report in its original form. It brought out their position exactly. Frederick A. Wilmot, whose articles on the conference were widely approved in America, refers to this final statement approvingly and comments: “We imagine that even Dr. Harry E. Fosdick would not feel cramped with such an understanding of Confession of Faith; in fact, somehow across thousands of miles of ocean and in historically different

communions, Dr. Fosdick's new emphasis on our approach to unity seems to obtain." The questions now arise: Why was this final sentence deleted? And is what remains of the paragraph no longer a concession to anticonfessionalism? We can well imagine how "the creedal controversy" here raged and the "report sought, with much difficulty, to cover both" positions. Are both positions covered by the report in its final form? If the deletion of the original final sentence meant a repudiation of the view it expresses, the conference should have inserted in place of it a plain statement to that effect. Lacking this, the whole paragraph, we fear, is meant for a concession to the anticreedal party. It must now develop whether this party will repudiate or accept the report.

This section, as the report in its original form informs us, "has been occupied in considering the place and importance of a common confession of the faith." That was the time and the place for the Lutheran committeemen to propose the Book of Concord. The Lutheran Confessions propose themselves as such — the common confession of Christendom. The Apology declares: "Our confession is true, godly, and catholic"; and the Augsburg Confession: "This is about the sum of our doctrine, in which, as can be seen, there is nothing that varies from the Scriptures or from the Church Catholic." (*Trigl.*, p. 315, § 59.) A confessional Lutheran would not be true to his convictions if he refused to offer the Book of Concord as the true and comprehensive presentation of the Christian doctrine. Such an offer would, indeed, have produced another violent clash. But the object to be gained would fully compensate for the temporary hurt. The conference is striving after unity, and concerning that article which forms the heart of the Lutheran Confessions, the article of justification, Luther says: "If this single article remain pure, the whole Church will also remain pure, harmonious, and without factions." (5, 1170.) If Dr. Scherer had been a member of this section, he would have proposed it, we think; for in speaking of the confessional statements of his church, he chose to make use of this form: "the statements of the Church"; the Lutheran Confessions give voice to the mind of Christendom. And he would have had the approval of the *Lutheran*, which quotes approvingly the advice given to the Lutherans by Professor Rockwell of Union Seminary: "Why should not you Lutherans now take the initiative? . . . Here is a basis for discussion of a perfectly proper question: Why cannot Protestantism agree on its oldest creed, the Augsburg Confession? The discussion may not eventuate in church unity, any more than will

the great Life and Work or the impressive Faith and Order Conferences; but it will set the world talking about the Lutheran claims." — The insertion of such a proposal into the record would have provided splendid "material for future discussions."

The Ministry of the Church.

(Report of Section V. Received by the full conference, *nem. con.*, August 20, 1927.)

"We members of the Conference on Faith and Order are happy to report that we find ourselves in substantial accord in the following five propositions: —

"1) The ministry is a gift of God through Christ to His Church and is essential to the being and well-being of the Church.

"2) The ministry is perpetually authorized and made effective through Christ and His Spirit.

"3) The purpose of the ministry is to impart to men the saving and sanctifying benefits of Christ through pastoral service, the preaching of the Gospel, and the administration of the Sacraments, to be made effective by faith.

"4) The ministry is entrusted with the government and discipline of the Church, in whole or in part.

"5) Men gifted for the work of the ministry called by the Spirit and accepted by the Church are commissioned through an act of ordination by prayer and the laying on of hands to exercise the function of this ministry.

"Within the many Christian communions into which in the course of history Christendom has been divided, various forms of ministry have grown up according to the circumstances of the several communions and their beliefs as to the mind of Christ and the guidance of the New Testament. These communions have been, in God's providence, manifestly and abundantly used by the Holy Spirit in His work of enlightening the world, converting sinners, and perfecting saints. But the differences which have arisen in regard to the authority and functions of the various forms of ministry have been, and are, the occasion of manifold doubts, questions, and misunderstandings.

"These differences concern the nature of the ministry (whether consisting of one or several orders), the nature of ordination and of the grace conferred thereby, the function and authority of bishops, and the nature of apostolic succession. We believe that the first step toward the overcoming of these difficulties is the frank recogni-

tion that they exist, and the clear definition of their nature. We therefore add as an appendix to our report such a statement, commending it to the thoughtful consideration of the churches we represent.

“By these differences the difficulties of intercommunion have been accentuated to the distress and wounding of faithful souls, while in the mission-field, where the Church is fulfilling its primary object to preach the Gospel to every creature, the young churches find the lack of unity a very serious obstacle to the furtherance of the Gospel. Consequently the provisions of a ministry acknowledged in every part of the Church as possessing the sanction of the whole Church is an urgent need.

“There has not been time in this conference to consider all the points of difference between us in the matter of the ministry with that care and patience which could alone lead to complete agreement. The same observation applies generally to proposals for the constitution of the United Church. Certain suggestions as to possible church organization have been made, which we transmit to the churches with the earnest hope that common study of these questions will be continued by the members of the various churches represented in this conference.

“In view 1) of the place which the Episcopate, the Councils of Presbyters, and the congregation of the faithful, respectively, had in the constitution of the early Church, and 2) the fact that episcopal, presbyterial, and congregational systems of government are each to-day, and have been for centuries, accepted by great communions in Christendom, and 3) the fact that episcopal, presbyterial, and congregational systems are each believed by many to be essential to the good order of the Church, — we therefore recognize that these several elements must all, under conditions which require further study, have an appropriate place in the order of life of a reunited Church, and that each separate communion, recalling the abundant blessing of God vouchsafed to its ministry in the past, should gladly bring to the common life of the united Church its own spiritual treasures.

“If the foregoing suggestions be accepted and acted upon, it is essential that the acceptance of any special form of ordination as the regular and orderly method of introduction into the ministry of the Church for the future should not be interpreted to imply the acceptance of any one particular theory of the origin, character, or function of any office in the Church or to involve the acceptance

of any adverse judgment on the validity of ordination in those branches of the Church Universal that believe themselves to have retained valid and apostolic orders under other forms of ordination, or as disowning or discrediting a past or present ministry of the Word and Sacrament which has been used and blessed by the Spirit of God.

"It is further recognized that inasmuch as the Holy Spirit is bestowed upon every believer and each believer has an immediate access to God through Jesus Christ, and since special gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as teaching, preaching, and spiritual counsel, are the treasures of the Church as well as of the individual, it is necessary and proper that the Church should make fuller use of such gifts for the development of its corporate spiritual life and for the extension of the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

"In particular, we share in the conviction, repeatedly expressed in this conference, that, pending the solution of the questions of faith and order in which agreements have not yet been reached, it is possible for us, not simply as individuals, but as churches, to unite in the activities of brotherly service which Christ has committed to His disciples. We therefore commend to our churches the consideration of the steps which may be immediately practicable to bring our existing unity in service to more effective expression.

"In conclusion, we express our thankfulness to Almighty God for the great progress which has been made in recent years in the mutual approach of the churches to one another and our conviction that we must go forward with faith and courage, confident that with the blessing of God we shall be able to solve the problems that lie before us.

"Notes. — 1. The following is the view of the Orthodox Church as formulated for us by its representatives: —

"The Orthodox Church, regarding the ministry as instituted in the Church by Christ Himself, and as the body which by a special *charisma* is the organ through which the Church spreads its means of grace, such as the Sacraments, and believing that the ministry in its threefold form of bishops, presbyters, and deacons can be based only on the unbroken apostolic succession, regrets that it is unable to come, in regard to the ministry, into some measure of agreement with many of the churches represented at this conference; but prays God that He, through His Holy Spirit, will guide to union even in regard to this difficult point of disagreement."

"2. In Western Christendom also there are conspicuous differences.

“One representative view includes the following points: a) that there have always been various grades of the ministry, each with its own function; b) that ordination is a sacramental act of divine institution and therefore indispensable, conveying the special *charisma* for the particular ministry; c) that bishops who have received their office by succession from the apostles are the necessary ministers of ordination; d) that the apostolic succession, so understood, is necessary for the authority of the ministry, the visible unity of the Church, and the validity of the Sacraments.

“On the other hand, it is held by many churches represented in the conference, a) that essentially there is only one ministry, that of the Word and Sacraments; b) that the existing ministries in these churches are agreeable to the New Testament, are proved by their fruits, and have due authority in the Church, and the Sacraments ministered by them are valid; c) that no particular form of ministry is necessary to be received as a matter of faith; d) that the grace which fits men for the ministry is immediately given by God and is recognized, not conferred, in ordination.

“Further we record that there are views concerning the ministry which are intermediate between the types just mentioned. For instance, some who adhere to an episcopal system of church government do not consider that the apostolic succession as described above is a vital element of episcopacy, or they reject it altogether. Others do not regard as essential the historic episcopate. Those who adhere to presbyterial systems of church government believe that the apostolic ministry is transmissible and has been transmitted through presbyters orderly associated for the purpose. Those who adhere to the congregational system of government define their ministry as having been and being transmitted according to the precedent and example of the New Testament.”

Passing over, for the present, the unionistic pronouncements in this section, we find a number of other objectionable features. A few may here be pointed out. “The ministry is essential to the being and well-being of the Church.” The Lutheran doctrine is that the ministry is essential to the well-being, but not to the being, of the Church. Again: “We recognize that these several elements [the episcopal, presbyterial, and congregational systems] must all have an appropriate place in the order of life of a reunited Church.” A Lutheran does not use the word “must” in this connection. (It will, by the way, require very much further study to find the

conditions which will give an appropriate place to all three systems. It does not require any study to find a place for a *modified* episcopal system, but the real episcopal and presbyterial systems "as accepted by great communions" cannot be mixed with the congregational system.) Again: "— the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments to be made effective by faith." If that means that the efficacy of the means of grace is derived from faith, it voices the teaching, not of Scripture, but of enthusiasm.

Then, several important declarations are lacking. The Lutherans should have insisted on getting in a clear-cut statement to the effect that according to Scriptural and Lutheran principles the highest authority in the Church is vested in the congregation, such as is provided by the Smalcald Articles, p. 510: "Christ gives supreme and final jurisdiction to the Church when He says: 'Tell it unto the Church'; 'when two or three are gathered together in My name.'" Mere reference to the "congregational system" is not sufficient.

Finally, in view of the very great length of this section and the great importance attached by the conference to these matters it was indispensable that an eighth paragraph be added, declaring that the unity of the Church does not depend on "order," polity, forms of church government, and the like. The men back of the Lausanne movement are making too much of these matters. Its very name betrays it: "Conference on Faith and Order." The *Lutheran* is right in taking exception to this "cryptic caption" and in saying: "It is of little use that we try to place order in the same category as faith." The unity of the Church does not depend on unity of government. This Lutheran doctrine was brought to the attention of the conference. Dr. Elert's address did that. Also Dr. Scherer's: "The Church is free to determine its polity according to the circumstances and requirements of time and place." And he went on to repudiate the sacerdotal theory of the ministry, the necessity of episcopal ordination, the theory of apostolic succession, etc. Section V did not see fit to incorporate this doctrine in its report, and that, no doubt, was the reason why the *plenum* of the Lutheran delegation refused to vote on it definitively. But they should have gone a step farther and demanded that this or a later conference go on record in favor of Article VII of the Augsburg Confession, concerning which Professor Rockwell said: "Here is a great and, in the best sense of the word, *radical* statement: Church unity may be had *without* any so-called apostolic succession of bishops and without any historic episcopate." The report speaks

of "proposals for the constitution of the United Church" and says that "certain suggestions as to possible church organizations have been made." Why not make Article VII of the Augsburg Confession one of the articles of the proposed constitution? Unless that is done, the United Church will be united in name only. And it will be headed Romeward. The papacy developed, in part, from the misconception of the nature of the ministerial office, of "order," of "orders." The Roman Catholic theory, as set forth by an article in *America* discussing Lausanne, that "unity in government is an essential link of the unity of the Church of Christ," is only a few steps in advance of the faith-and-order theory. It is the business of the Lutheran Church to testify to these people on the supreme importance of the unity of faith, the relative unimportance of unanimity in questions of order.

The Sacraments.

(Report of Section VI. Received by the full conference, *nem. con.*, August 20, 1927.)

"We are convinced that for the purpose in view in this conference we should not go into detail in considering Sacraments, by some called 'mysteries.' The purpose, therefore, of this statement is to show that there may be a common approach to, and an appreciation of, Sacraments on the part of those who may differ in conception and interpretation.

"We testify to the fact that the Christian world gives evidence of an increasing sense of the significance and value of Sacraments, and we would express our belief that this movement should be fostered and guided as a means of deepening the life and experience of the churches. In this connection we recognize that the Sacraments have special reference to the corporate life and fellowship of the Church and that the grace is conveyed by the Holy Spirit, taking of the things of Christ and applying them to the soul through faith.

"We agree that Sacraments are of divine appointment and that the Church ought thankfully to observe them as divine gifts.

"We hold that in the Sacraments there is an outward sign and an inward grace, and that the Sacraments are means of grace through which God works invisibly in us. We recognize also that in the gifts of His grace God is not limited by His own Sacraments.

"The Orthodox Church and others hold that there are seven Sacraments and that for their valid administration there must be

a proper form, a proper matter, and a proper ministry. Others can regard only Baptism and the Lord's Supper as Sacraments. Others again, while attaching high value to the sacramental principle, do not make use of the outward signs of Sacraments, but hold that all spiritual benefits are given through immediate contact with God through His Spirit. In this conference we lay stress on the two Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper because they are the Sacraments which are generally acknowledged by the members of this conference.

"We believe that in baptism, administered with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit for the remission of sins, we are baptized by one Spirit into one body. By this statement it is not meant to ignore the difference in conception, interpretation, and mode which exists among us.

"We believe that in the Holy Communion our Lord is present, that we have fellowship with God, our Father, in Jesus Christ, His Son, or living Lord, who is our one Bread, given for the life of the world, sustaining the life of all His people, and that we are in fellowship with all others who are united to Him. We agree that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is the Church's most sacred act of worship in which the Lord's atoning death is commemorated and proclaimed, and that it is a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving and an act of solemn self-oblation.

"There are among us divergent views, especially as to 1) the mode and manner of the presence of our Lord, 2) the conception of the commemoration and the sacrifice, 3) the relation of the elements to the grace conveyed, and 4) the relation between the minister of this Sacrament and the validity and efficacy of the rite. We are aware that the reality of the divine presence and gift in this Sacrament cannot be adequately apprehended by human thought or expressed in human language.

"We close this statement with the prayer that the differences which prevent full communion at the present time may be removed."

In view of the wide gulf separating the Lutheran and the Reformed conception of the Sacraments we cannot understand how a Lutheran could subscribe to a statement which proposes "to show that there may be a common approach to, and appreciation of, Sacraments on the part of those who may otherwise differ in conception and appreciation." This statement minimizes the differences and asserts that the Lutherans and the Reformed have much in common in this matter. (Section VI did not, it seems, in

establishing the common ground, aim at covering those churches which have seven sacraments and those which, "while attaching high value to the sacramental principle" [!], have no Sacraments.) A Lutheran cannot admit that because Lutherans and Reformed both hold that the Sacraments are of divine appointment, Baptism must be administered with water, etc., and that in the Holy Communion our Lord is present, they occupy common ground on the doctrine of the Sacraments. These two groups, of which one denies, and the other asserts, that the body and blood of the Lord are present under the bread and wine and that Baptism and the Lord's Supper convey the forgiveness of sins, have no common approach to, and no common appreciation of, the Sacraments. The prayer for the removal of the differences which prevent full communion at the present time must be accompanied by an honest recognition of the gravity of the differences and the insistence on the part of the Lutherans that the Reformed view of the nature and effect of the Sacraments be abandoned as unscriptural. It is not sufficient to state that there are divergent views. The situation calls for the statement that unless the unscriptural teachings be abandoned, there can be neither communion nor union.

Moreover, the Reformed members of Section VI succeeded in impressing their phraseology and views on the articles of agreement accepted by the Lutheran members. The Reformed view finds adequate expression in statements like these: "taking of the things of Christ and applying them to the soul through faith," "who is our one Bread," "in which the Lord's atoning death is commemorated and proclaimed." The statement, "We recognize also that in the gifts of His grace God is not limited by His own Sacraments," is perilously indefinite.

Finally the articles of agreement employ terms which cover up the divergence with ambiguous phrases: "Baptism administered . . . for the remission of sins." Have the Reformed agreed to the teaching that Baptism forgives sins? Certainly not, for the next sentence informs us that the difference in conception remains. So here we have a term which means something different to the Lutheran and to the Reformed. "We believe that in the Holy Communion our Lord is present." The Lutherans believe that the body and blood of the Lord are really present. The Reformed believe that the body and blood of the Lord are really and absolutely absent. But both hold that the Lord is present! E.

(To be concluded.)