

# THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY.

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## The Lutherans at Lausanne.

The movement to bring about closer relations among the churches along the lines of unionism, and eventually a union, which was inaugurated at the World Conference on Missions in Edinburgh in 1910 and at the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the same year and was supported by other American denominations, notably the Disciples and Congregationalists, gathered its forces this year in the World Conference on Faith and Order, which assembled August 3 at Lausanne, Switzerland, and sat for three weeks. Four hundred and thirty-five delegates attended, representing eighty-one communions, or groups. The only bodies not represented were the Roman Catholics and a branch of the Baptists (called in America the Southern Baptists). "Representatives from all the continents and many islands of the sea were there — patriarchs, archbishops, bishops, deans, canons, professors, executives, editors, ministers, priests, missionaries, and seven women." Bishop Charles H. Brent of Western New York, who has been a prime mover in this affair since the Edinburgh conference, presided, Professor Garvie (Congregationalist) being deputy chairman. The vice-presidents were Archbishop Soederblom, Archbishop Germanos, Dr. Merle d'Aubigné, and Professor Deissmann (of the University of Berlin). The object of the conference, says the preamble by Bishop Brent in the official report of the meetings, "is to register the apparent fundamental agreements within the conference and the grave points of disagreements remaining; also to suggest certain lines of thought which may in the future tend to a fuller measure of agreement." Seven subjects occupied the minds of the conference, all of which, except the first, were thoroughly discussed. "Each subject (of the six) on the agenda was first discussed in plenary session. It was then committed to one of the sections, of more than one hundred members each, into which the whole conference was divided. The report, after full discussion in subsections, was

finally drawn up and adopted unanimously or by a large majority vote by the section to which it had been committed. It was twice presented for further discussion to a plenary session of the conference. Thence it was referred to the churches in its present form. . . . We thank God and rejoice over agreements reached; upon our agreements we build. Where the reports record differences, we call upon the Christian world to an earnest reconsideration of the conflicting opinions now held and a strenuous endeavor to reach the truth as it is in God's mind, which should be the foundation of the Church's unity." (Preamble.)

What stand did the Lutherans take at the conference?

"Press reports have indicated that Lutheran delegates were of great influence in the conference." (*Lutheran*). The delegation of the United Lutheran Church had invited all the Lutheran delegates to a meeting on the evening of August 3 to consider the position to be taken on the important matters before the conference. About 60 attended. They discussed the questions: 1) What can the Lutherans do for the movement called Faith and Order? 2) What can the Lutherans do for the closer cooperation among the Lutherans in all lands? Archbishop Soederblom, says a Swedish journal, emphasized the responsibility which to-day rests upon Lutheranism to administer rightly its Reformation inheritance. Dr. Sherer, of the U. L. C., reports that those gathered there were of the opinion that the Lutheran Church has a contribution to make to the movement for unity and that they were desirous of making it. — The statement of the Swedish journal, reproduced by the *Lutheran*: "This meeting can, without exaggeration, be called historical, as the whole Lutheran Christendom of both the Old and the New World was here represented," contains an exaggeration. For instance, no delegate was authorized to speak for the Synodical Conference.

The first subject presented to the conference was the

### Call to Unity.

It was not discussed by the sections and subsections, but brought before the conference through addresses by leading men of the Lutheran, Reformed, and Orthodox churches. Dr. W. Elert, of Erlangen, said among other things: "We dare not hold fellowship with error. Truth and error cannot make peace with each other. Where the truth is at stake, there can be no compromise. . . . Our wish for this council is that it may discover the unity of the Christians in the truth and that it may announce the truth by

definite findings without compromise with error. . . . Our chief confession teaches: 'It suffices for the true unity of the Church to be one in the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. And it is not necessary that the human traditions or ceremonies which have been established by men should everywhere be alike.' We welcome the attempt to seek the unity of Christians in unanimity in the teaching of the Gospel. For we know from history that there are also surrogates of unity which deceive, where the true unity of Christians, the unity in the truth, does not exist. . . . Therefore our third wish for this council is that the differences in organization and rites may not form a hindrance to gaining that unity which we are seeking in the truth. . . . It should be easy enough to find theological expressions of compromise which might call for the consent of all of us or at least many of us. But these formulas are worthless if the great church-bodies to which we belong cannot find their faith and their knowledge of truth in them. Our assent to the coming formulas will have value only in so far as we can really speak for the churches which we represent."

The conference was thus made acquainted with the principle enunciated in Art. VII of the Augsburg Confession. It was told in plain Lutheran language that it would be a waste of time to aim at effecting unity on the basis of the sameness of "rites or ceremonies" and of "order," that agreement in the doctrine of Scripture constitutes the true unity of the Church, and that the Lutheran Church will make no compromise with error. — Those portions of the address which denied the Lutheran principles will be touched upon later.

### Report of Section II. The Church's Message to the World — the Gospel.

(Received by the full conference, *nem. con.*, August 19, 1927.)

"1) The message of the Church to the world is, and always must remain the Gospel of Jesus Christ. 2) The Gospel is the joyous message of redemption, both here and hereafter, the gift of God to sinful man in Jesus Christ. 3) The world was prepared for the coming of Christ through the activities of God's Spirit in all humanity, but especially in His revelation as given in the Old Testament; and in the fulness of time the eternal Word of God became incarnate and was made man, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man, full of grace and truth. 4) Through His life and teaching, His call to repentance, His proclamation of

the coming of the kingdom of God and of Judgment, His suffering and death, His resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of the Father, and by the mission of the Holy Spirit He has brought to us forgiveness of sins and has revealed the fulness of the living God and His boundless love toward us. By the appeal of that love, shown in its completeness on the cross, He summons us to the new life of faith, self-sacrifice, and devotion to His service and the service of men. 5) Jesus Christ, as the Crucified and the Living One, as Savior and Lord, is also the center of the world-wide Gospel of the apostles and the Church. Because He Himself is the Gospel, the Gospel is the message of the Church to the world. It is more than a philosophical theory; more than a theological system; more than a program for material betterment. The Gospel is rather the gift of a new world from God to this old world of sin and death; still more, it is the victory over sin and death, the revelation of eternal life in Him who has knit together the whole family in heaven and on earth in the communion of saints, united in the fellowship of service, of prayer, and of praise. 6) The Gospel is the prophetic call to sinful man to turn to God, the joyful tidings of justification and of sanctification to those who believe in Christ. It is the comfort of those who suffer; to those who are bound it is assurance of the glorious liberty of the sons of God. The Gospel brings peace and joy to the heart and produces in men self-denial, readiness for brotherly service, and compassionate love. It offers the supreme goal for the aspirations of youth, strength to the toiler, rest to the weary, and the crown of life to the martyr. 7) The Gospel is the sure source of power for social regeneration. It proclaims the only way by which humanity can escape from those class and race hatreds which devastate society at present into the enjoyment of national well-being and international friendship and peace. It is also a gracious invitation to the non-Christian world, East and West, to enter into the joy of the living Lord. 8) Sympathizing with the anguish of our generation, with its longing for intellectual sincerity, social justice, and spiritual inspiration, the Church in the eternal Gospel meets the needs and fulfills the God-given aspirations of the modern world. Consequently, as in the past, so also in the present, the Gospel is the only way of salvation. Thus, through His Church, the living Christ still says to men: 'Come unto Me. . . . He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.'"

No Lutheran can accept these theses on the Gospel. The Gospel here described is not the Gospel confessed in the Lutheran

symbols, proclaimed in the Bible. The vicarious satisfaction rendered by Christ and justification by faith are not as much as mentioned. That is the chief article of the Christian religion. Every adherent of the Augsburg Confession recognizes it as "the chief topic of Christian doctrine." (Apology. *Trigl.*, p. 121.) And as the fathers declared when preparing for a World Conference on Faith, he declares to-day: "Of this article nothing can be yielded or surrendered, even though heaven and earth and whatever will not abide, should sink to ruin." (Smalcald Articles. *Trigl.*, p. 461.) The Church that adopts these Lausanne Articles surrenders everything of the chief article. These articles teach a way of salvation which is not that of justification by faith. The representatives of the Orthodox Church did not hesitate to subscribe to these articles. Dr. Peter Ainslie, editor of the *Christian Union Quarterly*, writes in the *Christian Century*: "The Eastern Orthodox delegation asked to be excused from voting on the other reports; but they heartily supported this one." They found nothing in it to conflict with their doctrine of justification by works. Any Ritschlian will heartily subscribe to Article 4. And the two Roman Catholic priests who were present as unofficial observers could have subscribed with a clear conscience to the statement: "The Gospel is the joyful tidings of justification and of sanctification to those who believe in Christ." It is the modern social gospel which the United Church of the future is asked to spread, not the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins for the sake of Christ. Article 8 has a lot to say of the longing for intellectual sincerity and the God-given aspirations of the modern world. Its great need, the forgiveness of sins, is not met by the United Church. Article 4 does indeed speak of forgiveness of sins. Ritschl and Hermann also speak of it — in their sense. And what sense would you connect with the statement: "Through His call to repentance . . . Christ has brought to us forgiveness of sins"? The articles abound with indefinite phrases, of a rhetorical nature and often entirely meaningless, but there is no clear-cut statement on the nature of the Gospel, its gracious offer of the righteousness gained by Christ. How does Dr. Ainslie interpret them? He finds the Gospel described therein as "the prophetic call to sinful men to turn to God as the only way by which humanity can escape" — from what? — "from those class and race hatreds which devastate society and fulfil humanity's longing for intellectual sincerity, social justice, and spiritual inspiration." No Lutheran is going to subscribe to Section II.

The Lutheran members of Section II, of which Professor

Deissmann was the convener, failed to bring Lutheranism into play effectively. Bound to administer the Reformation inheritance, they were under obligation to bring in articles clearly and firmly setting forth the article of justification by faith. It was not sufficient that the U. L. C. delegation distributed 500 copies of the Augsburg Confession and the Smalcald Articles. It was not sufficient that Dr. Sherer stressed, in an address before the plenary session, the importance of this article: "If this sacerdotal theory be accepted and consistently carried out . . . , Christ is no longer the sole Mediator between God and man, the universal priesthood of believers is degraded to an inferior position, and the doctrine of justification alone by faith in Christ, which Luther called 'the article of a standing or a falling church,' is thereby endangered, if not surrendered." That surely was the voice of Lutheranism. But the voice of Lutheranism was silenced when the section formulated its report. The reports on the other subjects register, clearly and unmistakably, disagreements. Dr. Sherer states in an interview published in the *Lutheran* that the purpose of the conference was to "bring into relief some of the most radical differences which obstruct the way of union." Disagreements on the church, the ministry, etc., are brought out, but no disagreement on the chief article. The observer sent by the *Lutheran Church Herald* states that "according to the rules of the convention any group with particular convictions can arrange to have that brought out in the meeting." The convictions of the Lutherans were not brought out in the report of Section II. "Received by the full conference, *nem. con.*" There were serious clashes on relatively minor points. The clash should have set in right here. And if the section refused to incorporate the protest of the Lutherans into their report, the Lutherans were bound to sever all connection with this section. "Of this article nothing can be yielded, even though heaven and earth" and Section II "should sink to ruin."

Even though the whole World Conference should sink to ruin. The Lutherans might conceivably have waited to see what action the plenary session would take and, to bring about action, bring their protest before the entire body. In a manner that was done. In a manner — because the protest was not strong enough and because it was not reenforced by the requisite action. It could not have been strong enough because it did not make much of an impression. Dr. Ainslie records the vehement protest raised by the Anglo-Catholics in the matter of Subject VII, but not a word on a protest in the matter of Subject II. The preamble by Bishop Brent creates

the impression that there was unanimity in the conference on Subject II. It so impresses Dr. Zoellner as set forth in the *Allg. Ev.-Luth. Kirchenzeitung*. And a letter by Bishop Brent states: "The most important thing is that unanimity was brought about in the matter of the message of the Church to the world, the message of the Gospel, since every delegate heartily accepted the report on this subject." It must have escaped the attention of Bishop Brent that the disagreement voiced by the Lutherans referred also to Section II. The fact is that the Lutherans voiced their disagreement. We hasten to give this fact all the publicity we can because the readers of the official report cannot but get the impression that there was unanimity on this point and because some Lutheran publications have failed to report this important development. Dr. Sherer's interview, for instance, does not mention it. It was with great pleasure that we read of it in the *Allg. Ev.-Luth. Kirchenzeitung*. The declaration of the Lutherans, presented to the plenary session, signed in the name of the Lutheran delegates by L. Appia of France, P. Hognestad of Norway, M. G. G. Sherer of America, N. Soederblom of Sweden, A. Steimle of America, W. Zoellner of Germany states: ". . . It is, according to our Confessions, not necessary for the unity of the churches that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies be everywhere alike; but it is necessary that there be unity in the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. . . . 2. Accordingly, no definitive vote on the articles here formulated should be taken. They should be published in the report merely as material for future discussions." The Norwegian delegation, with the exception of Bishop Hognestad of Bergen, was willing, partly through a misconception, to accept the articles on Subject II. But the official declaration of the Lutherans, as presented to the conference, clearly shows that the Lutherans took a stand on this subject different from that of the Orthodox Church. However, the conference somehow failed to see that. That being so, it was the duty of the Lutherans to reenforce their declaration by unmistakable action. An ultimatum, if rejected, must be followed by the severance of relations. The very least the World Conference Lutherans can do with reference to this point is to demand that the conference acknowledge the vital disagreement on the article of justification existing among the participants.

For that purpose it would become necessary to draw up articles that set forth the Lutheran position as clearly and strongly as possible — along the lines, say, of the Apology and the Smalcald

Articles, with the additional reference, however, to the grave errors of modern Protestants on this point. And here lies the fatal weakness in the Lutheran declaration. It is willing to use the articles of Section II as material for future discussions. But these articles are absolutely unfit for that purpose. Articles so flagrantly unscriptural as these cannot yield material for fruitful discussions. It never entered the minds of the fathers at Smalcald to present articles for discussion at the proposed general council which embodied the views of the Roman Catholics. The Lutheran declaration at Lausanne certainly cannot mean that their sole purpose in bringing up and discussing these articles is to reject them. It means that they contain, in their view, germs that might be made to develop into a Scriptural presentation of the doctrine of the Gospel. The declaration should have informed the conference that the mind of the Lutheran Church is already made up on these articles, that it looks upon them with abhorrence.

#### **Report of Section III — The Nature of the Church.**

(Received by the full conference, *nem. con.*, August 19, 1927.)

“God, who has given us the Gospel for the salvation of the world, has appointed His Church to witness by life and word to its redeeming power. The Church of the living God is constituted by His own will, not by the will or consent or beliefs of men, whether as individuals or as societies, though He uses the will of men as His instrument. Of this Church Jesus Christ is the Head, the Holy Spirit its continuing life.

“The Church as the communion of believers in Christ Jesus is, according to the New Testament, the people of the New Covenant, the body of Christ, and the temple of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner-stone.

“The Church is God’s chosen instrument, by which Christ, through the Holy Spirit, reconciles men to God through faith, bringing their wills into subjection to His sovereignty, sanctifying them through the means of grace, and uniting them in love and service to be His witnesses and fellow-workers in the extension of His rule on earth until His kingdom come in glory.

“As there is but one Christ and one life in Him and one Holy Spirit, who guides into all truth, so there is, and can be, but one Church, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

“The Church on earth possesses certain characteristics whereby

it can be known of men. These have been, since the days of the apostles, at least the following:—

“1) The possession and acknowledgment of the Word of God as given in Holy Scripture and interpreted by the Holy Spirit to the Church and to the individual (a);

“2) The profession of faith in God as He is incarnate and revealed in Christ;

“3) The acceptance of Christ’s commission to preach the Gospel to every creature;

“4) The observance of the Sacraments;

“5) A ministry for the pastoral office, the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the Sacraments;

“6) A fellowship in prayer, in worship, in all the means of grace, in the pursuit of holiness, and in the service of man.

“As to the extent and manner in which the Church thus described finds expression in the existing churches, we differ. Our differences chiefly concern:—

“1) The nature of the Church Visible and the Church Invisible, their relation to each other, and the number of those who are included in each (b);

“2) The significance of our divisions past and present (c).

“Whatever our views on these points, we are convinced that it is the will of Christ that the one life of the one body should be manifest to the world. To commend the Gospel to doubting, sinful, and bewildered men, a united witness is necessary. We therefore urge most earnestly that all Christians, in fulfilment of our Savior’s prayer that His disciples may be one, reconsecrate themselves to God, that by the help of His Spirit the body of Christ may be built up, its members united in faith and love, and existing obstacles to the manifestation of their unity in Christ may be removed; that the world may believe that the Father has sent Him.

“We join in the prayer that the time may be hastened when in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

#### NOTES.

“a) Some hold that this interpretation is given through the tradition of the Church; others, through the immediate witness of the Spirit to the heart and conscience of the believers; others, through both combined.

“b) For instance:—

“1) Some hold that the invisible Church is wholly in heaven;

others include in it all true believers on earth, whether contained in any organization or not.

"2) Some hold that the visible expression of the Church was determined by Christ Himself and is therefore unchangeable; others, that the one Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit may express itself in varying forms.

"3) Some hold that one or other of the existing churches is the only true Church; others, that the Church as we have described it is to be found in some or all of the existing communions taken together.

"4) Some, while recognizing other Christian bodies as churches, are persuaded that in the providence of God and by the teaching of history, a particular form of ministry has been shown to be necessary to the best welfare of the Church; others hold that no one form of organization is inherently preferable; still others, that no organization is necessary.

"c) One view is that no division of Christendom has ever come to pass without sin. Another view is that the divisions were the inevitable outcome of different gifts of the Spirit and different understanding of the truth. Between these, there is the view of those who look back on the divisions of the past with penitence and sorrow, coupled with a lively sense of God's mercy, which in spite of, and even through, these divisions has advanced His cause in the world."

Before proceeding to discuss this third subject, we are constrained to point out that an all-important subject has been overlooked — intentionally. For all members of the conference knew that the subject in question insistently called for thorough discussion and an unequivocal declaration. It is the subject of the inspiration of Scripture. The preamble states that the object of the conference is to register the apparent fundamental agreements and the grave points of disagreements within the conference. All know that a bitter controversy has been waged these many years on the question of verbal inspiration. The conference did not choose to register this fundamental disagreement. The one declaration on this point to be found in the record is contained in this section: "The possession and acknowledgment of the Word of God as given in the Holy Scripture." The conference here took a straddling position, evading entirely the question of inspiration and leaving the question open whether the Word of God and Holy Scripture must be identified. The World Conference Lutherans failed in their duty toward God and the Church in that they did

not demand that this fundamental disagreement on inspiration be registered and, further, that agreement on verbal inspiration be set down as a *conditio sine qua non* of any proposed union. The Lutheran Confessions teach the verbal inspiration and identify Scripture and the Word of God. Professor Elert does not. In his conference address he declared for the modern-Lutheran view: "We believe with all Christians that the Holy Scriptures hold divine authority for us as the true record and testimony of the historical revelation of God." He is not in a position to perform the duty laid upon him by the Lutheran confessions. Others should have performed the duty and demanded that the conference disavow the modern Protestant and modern Lutheran teaching.

This missing section should also have contained an article on the source and norm of doctrine. The *Church Herald* states that "there seemed to be a general consent to the Bible as authority," and the *Lutheran*, that the conference was agreed "that Holy Scripture is the sole ultimate authority for the doctrines and practises of the Christian religion." Unfortunately the record does not show that. Was it not considered of sufficient importance? Or was it omitted because a general agreement was taken for granted? Then too much was taken for granted. The *Herald* declares: "We know that the attitude of many to the Bible as a clear, perfect, and sufficient guide is not subscribed to." Dr. Cadman does not subscribe to it and plainly told the conference so. His address to the conference contains these statements: "In brief, Christian theology was treated as a vital science in which no article was so perfect in its primary stages that it required nothing in addition. The apostles and their successors received from our Lord the seed of faith and the nucleus of a coherent system of belief; a vital seed, a vital nucleus, to be developed according to their potentialities under the Holy Spirit's illumination." And what does the phrase in the preamble mean: "strenuous endeavor to reach the truth as it is in God's mind"?

We have not the space for an exhaustive treatise of Subject No. 3 or of the others. But to touch upon a few points: The Biblical doctrine of the means of grace is not brought out. We have, indeed, the statement: "sanctifying them through the means of grace." A Lutheran would have added and put into the first place: "justifying." A Lutheran would not subscribe to the statement as it stands: "The Church is God's chosen instrument by which Christ reconciles men to God." Every Lutheran will subscribe to the statement: "God has given us the Gospel for the

salvation of the world." But so will every Catholic and every Unitarian. So it means nothing. Dr. Sherer, in his conference address, stressed the importance of the doctrine of the means of grace: "With the Lutherans the thing of chief importance is that the Word and the Sacraments, which are the divinely appointed means of grace, shall continue with the Church in their purity." And the *Lutheran*, in the issue which published this address (August 11), declares: "Right here is the sharp line of demarcation between Lutheranism and the Reformed type of Protestantism." That is generally admitted. Dr. Edmund D. Soper, dean of Duke University, reporting on the conference, writes in the *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, as quoted by the *Christian Century*: "The question is, How can this presence [of Jesus Christ in the Church] be assured? And here is where the divergence is sorely apparent to-day." Section III has failed to bring out the fundamental divergence.

"Christ reconciles men to God through faith, bringing their wills into subjection to His sovereignty," etc. That is not the Lutheran definition of faith. It is the definition given by the Ritschlians: "If he has in consequence attained to the religious standpoint of faith or to the attitude of entire surrender to the spiritual power there revealed [in the Bible]," etc. (W. Herrmann, *Sys. Theol.*, p. 60.)

"Note a): Some hold that this interpretation is given through the tradition of the Church; others, through the immediate witness of the Spirit to the heart and conscience of the believers; others, through both combined." But there are still "others." And they hold that the Holy Spirit speaks through Scripture itself, and through Scripture alone.

"Note c). One view is that no division of Christendom has ever come to pass without sin." So the Reformation was a sinful adventure. "Another view is that the divisions were the inevitable outcome of different gifts of the Spirit and different understandings of the truth." Accordingly, a peculiar gift of the Spirit is responsible for the attitude, *e. g.*, of the Roman Catholic Church towards the Reformation, and the Canons and Decrees of Trent express the truth as well as the Augsburg Confession. The third view also calls for penitence for the sinful Reformation. The Lutheran members of this section did not insist on, or did not succeed in, having a fourth, the Lutheran, view brought out in the report. Were they in accord with the sentiment uttered by Bishop Brent in the opening address, as reported in the *Federal*

*Council Bulletin:* "If unity has slipped away from our grasp, it is the common fault of the Christian world. . . . Every section has shared in shattering unity"? Were they not in accord with Dr. Sherer's conference address? It stated: "The reformers gathered at Augsburg were not unaware that a deplorable schism was taking place; but to them there was something to be dreaded far more than schism; that was that they should lose the light of the Gospel. . . . Where they put the blame for the schism is expressed in the following words: 'Those who in the beginning condemned manifest truth and are now persecuting it with the greatest cruelty will give an account for the schism that has been occasioned.'"

The plenary meeting of the Lutheran delegation did well in refusing to have the conference vote on the articles of this section as well as of the others; not so well in offering them to the churches as fit material for further discussion.

E.

*(To be concluded.)*

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