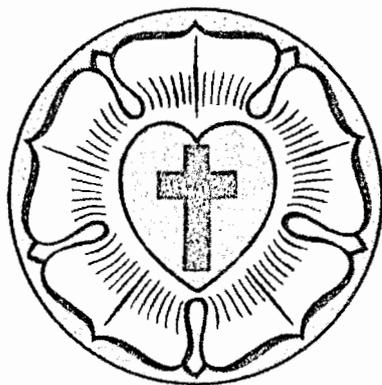


EVANGELICAL
DIRECTIONS
FOR
THE
LUTHERAN
CHURCH



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ERICH KIEHL
WALDO J. WERNING
Editors

Foreword

The Lutheran Congress with its emphasis on humble loyalty to the Scriptures and to the Lutheran Confessions is now history.

Through the pages of this book the reader may share in the rich experience of the listeners at the Congress during the days of August 31 to September 2, 1970. Calm and positive expression was given to eternal truths of the Scriptures, the truths which are also reflected in the Lutheran Confessions.

In one of his two essays delivered at the Congress, Dr. Francis Schaeffer recalled the tragic experience of his beloved Presbyterian Church. He reminded his Lutheran friends that many of them now stand at the same crossroads where his church once stood. Dr. Schaeffer retains all rights to his two manuscripts, and no publication is to be made without his personal permission.

We must remember that most Lutherans have never walked this way before. Most of us have never experienced a situation where God's Word is openly questioned, where eternal truths are relativized, traditional theological terms are emptied of their Biblical meanings, and the process of normal communication between brothers in faith is made difficult with endless ambiguity.

What shall we do as we face a new humanism, a new theology, and a new hermeneutic parading as permissible options for the Lutheran Church in the Twentieth Century? Speakers at the Lutheran Congress were conscious that many are deeply perplexed and pained by these challenges to the firm Biblical moorings of the historic Christian faith. The program was planned to give Scriptural and evangelical guidance and direction regarding the nature of Scriptural truth, faithful confessional life in the church, and evangelical communication of the Word.

Although all essayists sought to be faithful to the statements of purpose of the Congress, each essayist is responsible for the contents of his essay. Participants came as individual Lutherans to share their views as they understood the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. The only exception was Dr. Francis A. Schaeffer, who graciously accepted an invitation to come as a Presbyterian to speak to his Lutheran friends.

By common consent the essay on "Humanization and Mission" by Rev. Gunnar Stalsett of Oslo, Norway, does not appear in this book. He will be presenting this essay at several gatherings in Europe. It will then be published within the context of the mission enterprise of the church. Stalsett's provocative essay is available on cassette or tape for \$3.95 from the Congress Registrar, Roy Bleick, 2751 South Karlov Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60623. All essays can be attained from this source.

The editors ask the reader to join them in appreciation to the essayists who freely gave the rights of publication so that others might have the opportunity of reading their timely messages for Christians in mission for our Savior Jesus Christ.

Reformation Day
1970

Erich H. Kiehl
Waldo J. Werning
Editors

Our Lord Jesus gave His people direction in His day when He said to those Jews which believed on Him, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). Note that He spoke to believers. We who are assembled to bear witness to our faith will identify with these Christians of old. We believe in Jesus and would certainly seek knowledge and understanding from Him Whom we claim as our Savior.

What was His directive to those who believed on Him? "Continue in My Word" are the words which the Son of God urges upon His followers. We know Him as the one Who reveals to us the Father and sends the Holy Spirit to work and maintain faith in the hearts of men. His word, spoken by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, is the one guideline that never fails.

He makes a promise in connection with this statement when He says, "Then are ye my disciples indeed." Here speaks the Son of God, the omniscient God, the wise leader, the spokesman for the Holy Trinity. This is how we become disciples. The one who bears and heeds will be a disciple. Our God has spoken to us from the beginning in His word and deed and we have studied this word to become wise unto salvation.

A confessing Christian must know the truth. Jesus said, "I am the truth." Many uses have been made of the Word of God. Many have studied it so that they might attack it. Some have used it to demonstrate a preconceived idea. Some have employed it to exhibit great scholarship. Jesus holds out the brightest prospect and the real use to which it must be put. Seekers can find the truth there. The truth becomes evident to all who approach the Word of God humbly and find in it the truth, which is the foundation of their faith.

This truth will make men free. This truth shows a sinner the way to become free indeed. Under the forgiveness of sins, a believer will be free to pursue a free life of joy in Christ, a testimony to all who are still struggling to find life, a way of life which will lead to a true confession of Christ, the Lord, a freedom to serve this God with heart and soul and mind.

As we begin to speak to one another during these next three days, may God grant grace that we might continue in His Word.

Congress Call To Order

Edwin C. Weber, D.D.

Dear Fellow-Christians,

In our world, where everyone seems to be seeking a solid foundation for life here and the one to come, many articles have been written influencing the thought of our day.

One such article appeared in the syndicated column of Sydney J. Harris in the Detroit Free Press on August 14, 1970. In casting about for an opening statement to those who attend this Lutheran Congress, I chose this article to give momentum to our discussions here.

THE WORLD YEARNS FOR FALSE MESSIAH

People keep saying "We need a leader" or "We need better leadership," but that is not what they really mean. What most of them are looking for is not a leader, but a Messiah.

They want someone who will give them the Word. And the Word would be one that is agreeable to them, that appeals to their preferences and prejudices, so that they can follow it whole-heartedly.

But this is not what a true leader does — a leader tells people hard truths, gives them a difficult path to follow, calls upon their highest qualities, not their basest instincts. A true leader does not tell us what we WANT to hear, but what we OUGHT to hear.

Indeed, this is the difference between a false Messiah and a true one. A false Messiah — such as Hitler, in our time — caters to and inflames the fears, hates, angers and resentments of his people, and drives them to destruction rather than to salvation or self-realization.

A TRUE MESSIAH — such as Jesus, even taken on the worldly plane — rebukes his people, shows them their errors, makes them want to be better, not stronger or richer, and asks them to make sacrifices for the common good and for the good of their own souls. He is never followed by very many, usually killed by the majority, and venerated only when he is safely dead and need not be taken seriously.

What we are looking for, I am afraid, is neither a true leader nor a true Messiah, but a false Messiah — a man who will give us over-simplified answers, who will justify our ways, who will castigate our enemies, who will vindicate our selfishness as a way of life, and make us comfortable within our prejudices and preconceptions.

We are seeking for leadership that will reconcile the irreconcilable, moralize the immoral, rationalize the unreasonable, and promise us a society where we can continue to be as narrow and envious and short-sighted as we would like to be without suffering the consequences. In short, we are invoking magic, we are praying for the coming of the Wizard.

But there is no Wizard. There are only false prophets — and they come equally from left, right, center, and below. Wherever they come from, no matter how they differ, they can all be distinguished by the same sign: those we like make us feel better, instead of making us feel worse. We want to follow them because they "understand" us.

But all the true prophets, from the Old Testament through Jesus, made us feel worse. They knew, and said, that the trouble wasn't with our enemies, but with ourselves. They demanded that we shed our old skin and become New Men. And this is the last thing we want to do. What we are looking for is a leader who will show us how to be the same old men, only more successfully — and his ancient name is Satan.

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1. The Word of God

Paul A. Zimmerman, Ph.D.

We start at the beginning. "The Word of God" as the topic of an essay proceeds to the heart of modern man's religious problems: If there is a God, one who lives and acts, how do I know anything about Him? Does He communicate with man? If so, how? How can I be sure? How can I distinguish fact from fantasy, mystical musings from religious truth? Yes, how can I know? How can I be sure? To a child of the latter third of the hard nosed, technologically minded twentieth century, communication with a deity does sound strange and improbable. God's Word? How does God speak to me, or does He?

The answer of religious men through the ages has been threefold. If we in fact receive the religious data of faith or whatever from God, there are three possible sources. One is reason. I look at the universe, at man, and myself. I deduce certain things as God in effect speaks to me through His creation. The Apostle Paul refers to this natural knowledge of God (Romans 1:19-32). But reason has obvious limitations as both the Bible and the Church have always said. Another source of God's communication with man is said to be experience and feeling. Men assert that in their very living and self reflection they come to a knowledge of things about God. But it is all so subjective. Some experience high things. Others conclude there is no God, and they hear no voices.

The final possibility is revelation — God showing Himself forth in mighty acts, in words, in dreams, visions, and in Jesus of Nazareth. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament claim hundreds of times to be the Word of God, God revealing Himself, God speaking to the Israelites and to the world.

The Christian Church has always been convinced that the inspired Scriptures, in fact, do bring us the word of the true God, that He speaks in them, that His power is active in them. Thus we as Lutherans subscribe to the statement of the Formula of Concord: "We pledge ourselves to the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments as the pure and clear fountain of Israel, which is the only norm according to which all teachers and teachings are to be judged and evaluated."¹

In the constitution of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod we affirm: "Synod, and every member of Synod, accepts without reservation: The Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and practice."²

Few who bear the name Lutheran would challenge those paragraphs even in the eighth decade of the twentieth century. But there is a problem. Dr. C. F. W. Walther put it squarely in an essay delivered in 1858:

"Since all divisions within Christendom appeal to Scripture, the mere confession that one believes what is in Scripture is not a confession that clearly distinguishes the confessor from the false believer. For in spite of this confession no one knows whether one accepts Scripture in the true sense or not, or whether one is a Papist, or an enthusiast, or a Rationalist or an orthodox Christian . . . For the sake of clarity it is necessary to declare how one understands and interprets Scripture and the articles of faith that are contained in it."³

How do we, how must we, understand the Scriptures today? The voices engaged in offering answers are many. Never in history has one book been

the object of so much study. Archaeologists, literary critics, historians, theologians, and many others all have something to say. The problem is that what is said is a modern Babel. Theories come, live a while, are modified, or discarded. New ones take their place. Theologians emerge as shining stars only to be eclipsed by other intellectual giants. The sands of scholarship shift and change.

The Holy Scriptures — do they give us God's own words? Is the doctrine of the complete authority and truthfulness of Holy Scripture so long affirmed in the Church and now under vigorous attack, to be preserved, or is there another answer?

A survey of the status of Biblical scholarship today is at first blush extremely discouraging. J. Christian Baker, in the July, 1970, issue of *Interpretation*, stated that "The strange new world of the Bible has become so strange to the average student (in our seminaries and universities) that he can no longer find the bridge between his world of meaning and the biblical world. The alienation of the Bible is the predominant issue in theology today."⁴ Baker also commented that in many present day seminary courses the Biblical text is ignored in favor of "fanciful meditations on modern problems."

Carl Braaten in a recent book states that the question "How do you know? is always the first question the theologian is asked . . . The problem then is 'Where can revelation be found at all, now that the traditional equation of Scripture with revelation can no longer stand unchallenged in the face of historical criticism of the Bible?'"⁵ J. V. Longmead Casserly says simply that modern Biblical scholarship has produced "a way of studying the word of God out of which no word of God ever seems to come."⁶

Why does this situation exist? What is the source of the confusion? Moreover, why do those who still hold to the Biblical view of the inspiration of the Scriptures find themselves scornfully labeled as Biblicists, fundamentalists, and obscurantists? Have the Holy Scriptures really been scientifically discredited as being inaccurate, erroneous, contradictory, and so bound in human weakness as to be unworthy of the ascription "God's Word"? What is the evidence? What is the proof?

ASSUMPTIONS

We may be sure that the Word of God, the Holy Scriptures, has not been found wanting when placed under the microscope of scholarly scrutiny. Moreover, the Bible still speaks with the power of the Holy Spirit and as such needs no help or no defense. Yet attacks on the authenticity and reliability and complete truthfulness of the Scriptures should not remain unanswered.

As one trained as a scientist, as well as pastor, I have always been interested in assumptions or presuppositions. Every formula, every theory, every scientific conclusion, has behind it the things we take for granted. It is no better, no sounder than the assumptions on which it is based. Thus it seems useful to examine the assumptions, the unproved presuppositions of men who have developed theories of Scripture so alien to our belief of the past. For their conclusions are no better than the presuppositions on which they are founded. Let us then begin with an identification of these presuppositions.

Rudolf Bultmann, one of the fathers of form criticism, proposed the now famous idea for demythologizing the New Testament. He is very clear in stating his assumptions. His basic presupposition is essentially that we cannot accept the supernatural element in the Bible. He says that modern man will no longer accept the world view of the ancient Jews as reflected in the Bible. He states "The kerygma is incredible to modern man for he is convinced that the mythical view of the world is obsolete . . . all our thinking today is shaped by modern science."⁷

On the basis of this assumption Bultmann proceeds to dispense with heaven, hell, angels, demons, miracles, the vicarious atonement of Christ, and the physical resurrection on Easter morn. He rejects the possibility of God intervening in events in the world causally. It is important to realize that every look Bultmann takes at the Bible is colored by the bias of this presupposition.

We shall return later to the subject of alleged mythology in the Bible. But let us state now that no scientist can prove or disprove the items Bultmann rules out of Scripture so arbitrarily. If there is a God, He can surely act in a special way that we call miracles. Spirits, good or bad, won't show up on radar screens. The meaning of Christ's death on the cross in the presence of God is surely not subject to the laws of physics. And who can on scientific grounds say that the Lord of life cannot rise from the dead, that the tomb was not empty on Easter morning? To deny these things is to act from a conjectural and not a scientific basis.

Bultmann's influence is not as great as it once was, but many scholars still share his bias against the belief that God may act in a special way. Morton Smith, editor of the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, wrote recently "Nobody I know accepts the Old Testament chronology or thinks the nature miracles really happened."⁸ Incidentally, Smith scores as "pseudo-orthodox" those who try to save "old positions," those who say "If not true, let the stories be at least 'essentially' true. If not even 'essentially' true, let them at least teach some 'higher truth.'" One must at least applaud Smith's plea for academic honesty among theologians.

The case against verbal inspiration, especially the attempts to discredit the historical reliability of Scripture, also hinges on the presupposition that since men wrote the Bible, it must reflect their human frailties. Even Karl Barth took this position. William Temple showed the ultimate result of this presupposition when he stated concerning the Bible "The message is . . . so inextricably human and divine in one, that no single sentence can be quoted as having the authority of an authentic utterance of the All Holy God."⁹ S. J. Case, as early as 1912, maintained that religious knowledge cannot be supernaturally acquired by mere men and that one can not rely upon a record of a supposedly supernatural revelation.¹⁰

Still another assumption of many Biblical scholars today is the idea that many of the Biblical books consist of a number of small units which editors have forged into a larger work often adding "creatively" by composing their own additions. The books then reflect the work of many men and indeed of the entire church community. Thus the books of the Bible do not portray the life situation of the figures described, but the situation of a writer or writers to a greater or lesser extent removed from the historical events which they claim to describe. This "scissors and paste" method will be referred to later. Suffice it to say now that the hypothesized sources of the theory of literary criticism have not been found in the form of actual manuscripts. They exist in the minds of those who deduce them from their study of the Biblical books.

There are other assumptions in use today. Some are perfectly reasonable; others reflect a bias against the Scriptures as a reliable record of God's revelation to man through His acts and words. But it is quite evident that one whose assumptions are of the flavor described above cannot possibly ever conclude his research in a manner that is compatible with the concept of the Bible being God's very words to men. One may preserve larger or smaller portions of its spiritual message, but it will have become a message marred and perhaps mutilated beyond recognition.

I said earlier that the Bible stands on its own feet and we need not fear for its survival as the Word of God. Later I shall affirm this in Scripture's own words. But this fact ought not lead us to be indifferent to assumptions which cast doubt on the historical accuracy of the Old and New Testament. John W. Montgomery has pointed out that "Christianity is unique in claim-

ing intrinsic, not merely extrinsic connection with the empirical reality which is the realm of scientific investigation. Christianity is a historical religion — historical in the very special sense that its entire revelational content is wedded to historical manifestations of divine power. The pivot of Christian theology is the Biblical affirmation: 'The Word became flesh.' (John 1:14)"¹¹

Indeed, the creation of man, the fall, the call of Abraham, the exodus, the captivity, the incarnation, the ministry of Christ, His crucifixion, His glorious resurrection; all these are events which Scriptures testify happened in time and space. It is inconceivable that these mighty acts of God can be denied or diminished and a viable Christian faith nevertheless remain.

Peter's pentecost sermon in Acts 2:22 bears testimony to the importance of the record of actual happenings: "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God, with mighty acts and wonders and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves know."

Now there are some who speak of revelation as consisting almost exclusively of God's acting in history. They say it is the mighty acts of God, the great events such as the exodus that alone tell the story. Sometimes this is said to downgrade the importance of words in the Scriptures, that is, the verbal message, which is God's interpretation of the meaning of His acts. Concerning this position, however, James Smart writes:

"This tendency to equate revelation with the historical events fails to take account of the fact that everywhere in Scripture the revelation which is the inmost meaning of the event is hidden until it is revealed by the Spirit of God to the faith of man. The event itself is capable of receiving other interpretations. The cross to an indifferent onlooker was merely an unfortunate miscarriage of justice. The revelation of its meaning is nowhere described as a human inference from a divine event but as a direct revelation of God to man of what He is doing."¹²

Thus we see that it is the word that interprets the acts of God so that man may understand and believe.

ASSUMPTIONS EXAMINED

It is indeed important to note the impressive answers that Biblical scholarship has brought to the claims some modern critics have against the historical facticity of the Bible. For example, the archaeologist, Wm. F. Albright in a recent book takes issue with Bultmann's claim that we must purge myths from the Scriptures. Albright notes that the Bible writers indeed purged all mythology from their source material by "excising myths or taking certain mythical elements in their corresponding empirical form and using them in the service of a higher religious vision."¹³ Albright also speaks of Bultmann's rejection of the alleged mythical world view of the Biblical authors. He states, "It is quite absurd to claim, as Bultmann does, that New Testament Christianity presupposes a three-story universe, because no educated man (i.e. in those days) believed anymore than we do in a three-story universe or any other multi-story universe."¹⁴

Albright goes on to indicate that studies based on the Dead Sea Scrolls have shown the fallacy of postulating a late date for the writings of John in the New Testament. He states that John may have written as early as the late 70's of the first century.¹⁵ In the same book Albright states that arguments against the Pauline authorship of Ephesians have been greatly weakened, and that arguments for a second century dating of the pastoral epistles have been likewise weakened by information on literary style learned from the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Albright's conclusions regarding the New Testament are as follows. "First the books of the New Testament were composed during a period of possibly half a century, more likely 30 or 40 years. Second, there is no trace of evolution of doctrine in these books . . . Third, the whole New

Testament bears witness to the early Christians' faith in the risen Lord."¹⁶ In other words, the facts of recent discoveries support the idea that the New Testament is exactly what the books claim to be in terms of circumstances of composition and authorship.

Likewise evidence has accumulated against the famous Graf-Welhausen or Documentary Hypothesis of the Pentateuch. The theory has been modified repeatedly since its introduction in the nineteenth century, but in its modified form is still widely taught in theological seminaries. Briefly stated, the theory denies the Mosaic authorship of the first five books of the Old Testament. It claims that there is internal evidence that the books represent four major traditions (JEDP) and are the work of numerous authors and redactors who patched and repatched together various earlier documents and bits of writing and tradition.

Now it is true that the Old Testament, as does Luke's Gospel, refers to sources that were used in its composition. Numbers 21:14 refers to the *Book of the Wars of Jehovah*; Joshua 10:13 and II Sam. 1:18 mention the *Book of Jasher*. I Kings 11:41 lists the *Book of the Acts of Solomon*, I Kings 14:29 names the *Chronicles of the Kings of Judah*, and I Kings 14:19 refers to the *Chronicles of the Kings of Israel*. There are historical sources which the authors of the Biblical books used under divine guidance.

Why then do we object to the use of the Documentary Hypothesis (JEDP) with its constant reference to the hypothetical Jahwist, Elohist, Deuteronomist, Priestly, and other sources of the Pentateuch? There are two basic reasons. First, we believe that the Documentary Hypothesis operates with basic pre-suppositions which do not stand up under scrutiny. Secondly, the method used atomizes the books, proposes the concept of the evolution of religion, postulates a very late date for most of the Old Testament, insists that contradictory and untrue material has been included, and in the minds of many destroys the credibility of the accounts. George F. Moore in his book on *Judaism in the First Century of the Christian Era*, observes that "In fact the application of modern historical and critical methods and above all the introduction of the idea of development, involves consciously or unconsciously a complete change in the idea of revelation, a change which orthodoxy, whether Jewish or Christian, has resisted with the instinct of self preservation."¹⁷

H. L. Ginsberg, American Jewish scholar, says that the proponents of the Wellhausen method "heavily underestimated the value of the Hebrew Scriptures as a historical record."¹⁸

M. H. Segal, of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, condemns the so-called JEDP hypothesis for its highly artificial character. He points out that proponents of the theory postulate a method of formation of literature for which no other example exists in ancient Hebrew or other related literature. He condemns "the use of highly improbable assumptions without offering any evidence for their veracity."¹⁹

Keystone of the method is the use of divine names *YHWH* (Jehovah) and *Elohim* (God) in distinguishing two of the principal sources of the Pentateuch. Segal in his research analyzes the use of these divine names in other historic books of the Old Testament. He concludes that his study: ". . . disproves decisively that the change of these names in the Pentateuch is caused by a change of literary source or document. The evidence shows that the two names are found side by side in contexts that are of an absolutely unitary character."²⁰

Segal also points out that even advocates of the Documentary Hypothesis admit that each of the four hypothetical documents used not a peculiar dialect, but the ordinary literary Hebrew. He is critical of other alleged proofs of the JEDP theory and finally draws the conclusion that "The claim of Biblical tradition that Moses himself was the author of his Torah in the Pentateuch is fully worthy of credit."²¹

One also hears much today of form criticism and redaction criticism. Form criticism assumes that the Biblical books came into existence as an amalgamation of oral traditions and various smaller literary units such as, in the case of the Gospels, collections of miracle stories, parables, sayings of Jesus, etc. Some of this material is regarded as authentic, but much is considered merely a fabrication of the early church. Form critics hold that we must look for the life situation (*Sitz im Leben*) of the books in the activity of the *post-ascension* era of the early Christian church, rather than in the life of Jesus. Form critics believe they can detect the forms of the sub-units which were used in the composition of the Biblical books and thus get behind the text to the sources of the text.

Redaction criticism is an offshoot of form criticism and is concerned with how the smaller units of the Gospels were put into larger units and in particular how the material was modified to express the theological convictions of the redactor or final author. It is obvious of course that both form criticism and redaction criticism are methods of literary and historical criticism akin to the Wellhausen hypothesis.

Raymond Surburg, professor of Old Testament at Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, has analyzed Old Testament form criticism in *A Project in Biblical Hermeneutics*, 1969 publication of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Committee on Theology and Church Relations. Surburg states that "one of the implications of form criticism in the Old Testament is that of distinguishing between the Word of God and the word of man, especially in the prophetic writings . . . Like higher criticism, form criticism operates with the conclusions that the Old Testament Scriptures contain not only inaccuracies and errors, but outright contradictions."²²

C. S. Lewis has likewise analyzed the methods of the form critics and found them wanting. He finds no support for them in literary analysis and is particularly critical of their speculative nature. Lewis states: "One is after all sailing by dead reckoning; the results cannot be checked by fact . . . The 'assured results of modern scholarship' as the way in which an old book was written are 'assured' we may conclude only because the men who knew the facts are dead and cannot blow the gaff."²³

There are some who allege that form criticism and redaction criticism can be used with Lutheran presuppositions and thus cleansed as it were. While there can be no doubt that the literary and historical study of the Bible has positive aspects and values, the methods essentially suffer from the unLutheran and unscriptural assumption that the exegete can sit in judgment over the Biblical text and decide what is authentic, what really happened, what Christ said, or what the exegete decides he can delete or not accept. In a 1969 publication on redaction criticism Norman Perrin writes:

"That redaction criticism makes Life of Jesus research very much more difficult is, of course, immediately obvious. With the recognition that so very much of the material in the Gospels must be ascribed to the theological motivation of the evangelist or of an editor of the tradition, or of a prophet or preacher in the early church, we must come to recognize that the words of R. H. Lightfoot were fully and absolutely justified: the Gospels do indeed yield only the whisper of Jesus' voice."²⁴

Perrin attempts to salvage inspiration somewhat by holding that even so Jesus is somehow speaking through the early church.²⁵ But it is evident that the method makes mockery of the authenticity of the text.

As an exhibit of the arbitrary action of the literary critic, consider the example where Matt. 11:2-6 is submitted to scrutiny. It deals with Jesus' answer to John the Baptist concerning His identity. One author states: "Although Jesus probably thought of himself as the Christ, it is very improbable that he ever spoke the words assigned to Him here. He could not have honestly said that He raised the dead, and it is doubtful that He said that He healed the blind and lepers."²⁶ Note the method: The presupposition is that even Christ could not perform miracles. Hence the critic believes this

account cannot be genuine, because it reports Jesus as claiming just that power.

It is not hard to realize in the face of all this why Biblical studies are in a state of confusion in so many centers of theological learning. It has been said that much of this negative viewpoint toward the reliability of Scripture could have been avoided had theologians paid more attention to Biblical archaeology. Time permits only passing reference to this phase of the question. K. A. Kitchen, archaeologist of the University of Liverpool, in a recent work has summarized the current situation in Biblical archaeology. He judges that the "wholesale reconstructions" of the Bible have been at "variance with the existing documentary evidence."²⁷ He says that "we have as yet no single scrap of external objective, i.e. tangible, evidence for either the existence of the history of "J" or "E" or any other alleged source document."²⁸ Kitchen shows that what we now know of the history, the social customs of the age of the patriarchs, the names, the cost of a slave, the legal covenant forms, the geography, etc. — agree with the Old Testament record.

Some critics have dated the Proverbs in the fourth century because of the literary device of the personification of abstracts (e.g. Wisdom in Proverbs 8-9). But it is now known that this device was not first introduced as critics allege under the Greek influence of the 4th century B.C., but was in common use in the Ancient Near East 1500 years before Solomon was born.²⁹

Kitchen also comments on the position of higher critics that Genesis 1 and 2 are duplicate and contradictory accounts of the creation. It is now known to have been a common practice among the Egyptians to tell a story in two distinct styles, one following directly on another. Kitchen judges "failure to recognize the complementary nature of the subject — distinction between a skeleton outline of all creation on one hand and the concentration on man and his immediate environment on the other, borders on obscurantism."³⁰

Edwin M. Yamauchi points out that arguments for a late date for the composition of the book of Daniel based on Greek words for musical instruments are fallacies. Archaeology shows contacts between the Semites and Mycenaean Greek traders as early as the late Bronze Age (1500-1200 B.C.).³¹ Moreover historical evidence indicates that Greek musicians were in great demand at the time of Daniel. Thus any Greek musical terms in Daniel do not necessarily indicate a composition long after the exile as some have taught.

Time does not permit more examples. But many more exist — cases of arguments used against Scripture's historical accuracy — arguments which knowledge from later discoveries have shown to be unfounded. There do indeed remain archaeological difficulties and unresolved mysteries in connection with Scripture. This is not surprising in view of the fact that archaeological work in Palestine has touched only a small fraction of the ancient sites.³² But the evidence is that the historical accuracy of Scripture is not to be taken lightly.

THE WITNESS OF THE WORD

But in the final analysis it is not enough to expose weaknesses in literary theories; it is not enough to show a strong probability for the historical faithfulness of the Old and New Testaments. The Word of God, as we said above, speaks for itself and with God's own power.

The "Word" of God. The Hebrew vocable for word, *dabar*, has a dynamic quality. The etymology of the word is that of something being behind something and pushing forward. It thrusts forward to do its work. Walter Roehrs, professor emeritus of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, states that the term "*Dabar*" ("Word") as a revelatory act is used 224 times in construc-

tions which speak of the word of God coming to man in prophetic revelation. It occurs 300 additional times in connection with God's name as a suffix or in direct context.³³

These passages often stress the power and thrust of God's Word. Joshua 21:45 reads: "There failed not any *dabar* (word) of all the good *debarim* (words) which the Lord spake unto the house of Israel." Psalm 33:6 reminds us that "By the *dabar* (word) of the Lord were the heavens made." The creative power of the word also rings out in Ezekiel 37:4, "Prophecy upon these dry bones. Hear the *dabar* (word) of the Lord." So also Psalm 119:130: "The entrance of the *debarim* (words) giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple."

The importance of the "word" is highlighted in Deut. 32:46 where the people are told: "Set your heart unto all the *debarim* (words) which I testify among you this day . . . all the *debarim* of the Law, for it is not a vain *dabar* to you, because it is your life and through this *dabar* you shall prolong your days."

Roehrs points out that in the Old Testament entire prophetic books are simply introduced as the "*dabar* of the Lord" — So Hosea, so Micah, so Zephaniah, and Isaiah introduces his book as "the vision of Isaiah which he saw." The implications of this for the doctrine of inspiration are obvious.

How does the word of God come to a man? It is important to note that the Scriptures do not seek to describe the process of inspiration. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the writer may draw on his own personal experience. John begins his first letter with the claim: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the words of life — the life was made manifest and we saw it and testify to it." (I John 1:1-2)

Luke starts his Gospel by references to many who were compiling narratives. He speaks of information given him by eye witnesses from the beginning. And he states his intention to write an orderly account. (Luke 1:1-4) He clearly intends to give Theophilus an accurate account and to demonstrate that Christianity is deeply rooted in history.

Other parts of Scripture reflect the private meditation and worship life of the author, all this also under the Spirit's guidance. Such as the Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon and Ecclesiastes.

Beyond this there were the instances when God spoke very directly. I Samuel 3:4 describes the young Samuel hearing God call his name and speaking words. Verse 15 calls it a "vision." Genesis 32:28 speaks of Jacob wrestling with One who told him his name was to be changed to Israel. And Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face" (Gen. 32:30). In II Kings 3:15 Elisha is said to have had the word of the Lord come to him after a minstrel played. I Kings 22:19 speaks of the prophet seeing the Lord on His throne and hearing him speak.

The same word of the Lord is recognized also in its written form. Huldah the Prophetess tells King Josiah, "Thus says the Lord. Behold I will bring evil upon this place and upon its inhabitants all the words of the book (i.e. of the Law) which the King of Judah has read. (II Kings 22:16; cf. also Jer. 25:13; Jer. 30:1)

Christ Himself treated the Old Testament as the very word of God. Indeed He links the two phrases directly in John 10:35: "If He called them gods to whom the *Word of the Lord* came, and *Scripture* cannot be broken."

The Letter to the Hebrews speaks of the various methods of inspiration when it says in its opening verse: "In many and various ways God spake of old to our fathers by the prophets." Then, reminiscent of John's Gospel which calls Christ the "Word" in its opening verses, Hebrews continues "God . . . in these last days He has spoken to us by a Son whom he appointed the heir

of all things.” (Heb. 1:1-2) Christ Himself was God’s word incarnate in His very being and in His revelation of the plan of salvation in word and in deed.

In II Timothy 3:16 Paul calls the Scriptures “inspired” (God breathed) and he says it of *all* Scripture, of all the sacred writings, i.e., the Old Testament. He knows of no diminution, no stratification, no separation of human and divine. It is all God breathed, inspired.

Peter speaks of the sacred writings of the Old Testament and said “no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” (Peter 1:21) It is clear from this why the church fathers made bold to speak of God as the author of the Bible.

Even more remarkable is I Peter 1:10-12 where Peter says that the prophets “inquired what person or time was indicated by the Spirit of Christ within them when they predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent process, yet not understanding fully its ramifications, and yet clearly foreglory.” This passage shows the prophets to have been conscious of the telling the future of the Messiah’s ministry.

We know that the New Testament apostles and evangelists claimed also for their message the same authority of being God’s word. Paul flatly says: “We impart this in *words* not taught by human wisdom but *taught by the Spirit*, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit.” (I Cor. 2:13; cf. also I Thess. 2:13-15; I Cor. 14:37)

Finally Peter himself links the authority of Old and New Testament when he refers to Paul’s letters and those who distort them “as they do the other Scriptures.” (II Pet. 3:16)

Christ’s own endorsement of the Old Testament was referred to previously. It is important to add John 5:39 to the references quoted: “You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness of me.” Those who have trouble accepting the messianic content of the Old Testament thus clash with Jesus’ own position. The grandest endorsement possible of the Old Testament is found in Luke 24. Jesus on Easter evening walks with two of the disciples. Rather than have them recognize Him by sight of eye, He leads them through the Scriptures to find Him there. “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory. And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” Critics, faced with this passage and other endorsements of the Old Testament by Christ, often speak of Christ accommodating Himself to the ignorance of the people or even not really knowing Himself the true state of affairs. But this is to add poor Christology to the list of other problems of those who will not let the text speak for itself.

The power is there in the Bible! It claims it and we feel it! Hebrews 4:12 tells us that “The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

The power is there because the Spirit speaks in the Word. Peter and John told the church that the Lord spoke by “the mouth of our Father David saying by the Holy Spirit” and then quotes Psalm 2 as a prophecy of Christ (Acts 4:24-26).

But what does the Word of the Spirit, particularly as the Gospel word, accomplish in our lives. Robert Preus has catalogued them in an essay on the Power of God’s Word:³⁴

1. It works salvation — Eph. 1:13
2. It works faith — Rom. 10:17; John 17:20
3. It works regeneration and new life — I. Pet. 1:23
4. It works hope, an eschatological viewpoint — Col. 1:5
5. It works strength for every issue of life — Eph. 6:15; John 15:7; I Cor. 2:5; I Thess. 2:13

It works these miracles and we know it is true because our heart sings within us in sweet assent. Here is God's own power, a true existential experience as we meet God in the Gospel which the great Apostle called "The power of God for salvation to every one who has faith." (Rom. 1:16) This needs no proof. We can neither add nor detract from it. It is God's power, a power of grace that conquers the gates of hell.

INERRANCY

A postscript now, but an important one — I speak of inerrancy. Actually although the term was not used, the concept has pervaded all of our earlier discussion. For inerrancy is part and parcel of Scripture's truthfulness. But let us deal now with the topic somewhat more specifically.

A clear definition of inerrancy as it is commonly understood in our midst is to be found in the Brief Statement, five times reaffirmed by The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in its conventions. It states:

"Since the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, it goes without saying that they contain no errors or contradictions, but that they are in all their parts and words the infallible truth, also in those parts which treat of historical, geographical, and other secular matters, John 10:35."

The emphasis on inerrancy has been lampooned by many who find this exercise easier than dealing head-on with the issues. But inerrancy does matter. The issue was stated well by Martin H. Franzmann in his essay to The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Counselors Conference just a decade ago. Franzmann wrote:

"Revelation is both encounter with the Revealer and the receiving of information from the Revealer. Faith is both faith *in* and belief *that*, in organic unity; that is, faith in a Person is possible only on the basis of believing that the Person is a certain kind of person and has acted in a certain way. Therefore the record of God's revelatory deeds and words is essential to the birth of faith and to the life of faith.

Now the value of a record is entirely dependent on its truth, its veracity, its factuality, in a word, on its inerrancy. 'I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob' is recital, is crystallized history. Its value as revelation depends entirely on the truth of the fact that God is what the Old Testament proclaims Him to be, the living God, the Lord of history and manifested in history; it depends on the truth of the fact that God did deal effectually, graciously, and faithfully with the patriarchs. If He did not in fact thus deal with them, the record is worthless as a medium of revelation."³⁵

Inerrancy is no recent aberration of die-hard fundamentalists, as it is often alleged. Luther stated clearly: "The Scriptures have never erred."³⁶ He also wrote: "It is impossible that Scripture should contradict itself: it only appears so to senseless and obstinate hypocrites."³⁷

The Lutheran confessions speak likewise. The *Large Catechism* teaches: "My neighbor and I, in short all men may err and deceive, but God's word cannot err."³⁸ The *Formula of Concord* states clearly: "God's word is not false, nor does it lie."³⁹

Wm. Arndt, sainted professor of New Testament at the St. Louis seminary, dealt with many of the alleged contradictions of Scripture in his volume *Does the Bible Contradict Itself?*. The importance of inerrancy is underlined by Arndt when he wrote: "It will have to be granted that if the Scriptures do contain actual discrepancies, they have not in every part been given by divine inspiration. To make contradictory statements means to err, to blunder. A book that contains errors, or blunders, cannot in its entirety come from the great, the all-wise, the perfect God."⁴⁰

Now there are those who dispute Arndt's point. But the record shows him to be correct. Look at the progression of the argument. The real argument over inerrancy today is not concerning apparent discrepancies, scribal

errors; concerning, for example, the length of Israel's sojourn in Egypt, the burial places of Jacob and his sons, or the number of men killed in a battle. Such problems of apparent Biblical discrepancies have been discussed for centuries. The issue today regarding inerrancy centers in the heartland of Scripture: creation, the messianic prophecies, the nature, words and works of Christ, the virgin birth, the resurrection of Christ, and many others. The real question is: Can one view the Bible as a reliable witness at all to God's acts and God's words to man? This is what we have been talking of in this entire essay.

Inerrancy in the final analysis is a matter of faith. In a comprehensive essay Robert Preus points out two basic principles of the Lutheran fathers:

1. Scripture is *autopistos*. It creates faith in its credibility and its message by virtue of its being God speaking to his people.
2. Scripture is *anapodeiktos* — It is self authenticating. It brings its own proof, its own demonstration of the power of the Spirit.⁴¹

Arndt in his book on apparent contradictions in the Bible made the same point: "To him (the Christian) it is a divine book, having demonstrated its heavenly origin to him by proofs which are quite sufficient to him, His faith in its inspired character does not depend on the results of critical investigations carried on by learned, but very fallible scholars, but he has a far stronger staff to lean on. The Scriptures have brought him the message of redemption through the blood of Christ and have convinced him that this message is God-given and true and therefore they are his only source of hope. In this message he has found peace and joy and strength. The same Scriptures inform him that they are in their entirety given by inspiration of God and infallibly true in every detail . . . These declarations must be true, the Christian says to himself, because they are contained in the life-giving revelation of God. He that sent His only Son to die for us surely is not leading us astray when He tells us that the Bible is His own Word from beginning to end and that His Holy Spirit filled the Prophets, Apostles and Evangelists and guided them in such a way that what they wrote was not their own message, but that of the great Father in heaven."⁴²

Martin Franzmann adds another great point when he urges our attitude toward Scripture in our use of it be that of Christ and the Apostle Paul. These are surely the most potent authorities one could ever quote. Franzmann says:

"The New Testament is conscious of this. Jesus, for all His freedom over against the Old Testament Law, a freedom that seemed blasphemous to His scrupulous contemporaries, nowhere doubts or calls into question any event recorded in the Old Testament. He argues from the factuality of the Old Testament event, not about it. He argues from what God said about man and woman at creation, not about it. He argues from the fact that the men of Nineveh listened to the word of Jonah, not about it. Even when the Old Testament record is used by others to embarrass and contradict Him, as when the Jews point out that Moses commanded the bill of divorcement (Matt. 19:7,8), Jesus does indeed correct their misquotation of the record ("Moses *permitted*"), but He does not question the accuracy of the record; He does not operate critically on the record. And the apostles follow their Lord in this as in all else. Neither Paul nor James argues about the record of Abraham and his faith; both argue from it.

As with the Old Testament record, so with the New Testament. Paul stakes his whole apostolate and the faith and the hope of the church on the bare fact that the resurrection of Jesus Christ did take place. Everything depends on these things being so; and Paul cites more than 500 witnesses in proof (1 Cor. 15:1-19). Peter protests vigorously against the idea that any humanly devised myth can serve as the vehicle of the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ and emphasizes the eye-witness character of the apostolic proclamation (2 Peter 1:16-18). Inerrancy matters."⁴³

This is a good place to close. The Holy Scriptures claim to be the Word of God in all their parts. To attack that claim is to lose certainty in the message and even the message itself. To accept it in faithful hearts is to follow the practice of Christ our Savior, the very Word of God incarnate, about whose person and saving work both Old and New Testaments revolve. God has spoken to us through prophets, apostles, evangelists and His own Son. He still speaks. In the last book of the Bible, Christ says seven times: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22)

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2. Theologies

Martim Warth, M.S.T.

Never in history were there so many differing theologies claiming to be authentic interpretations of Christianity as in our contemporary age. The privilege to hold a specific theology is not only claimed by church bodies with differing confessional stances, but also by individual theologians of one and the same church. It is said to be a sign of man's coming of age when a theologian interprets his faith according to his own self-understanding, and is open to allow others to do the same. One wonders whether this is also the meaning of the suggestion made by Section II of the V Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation, where it states, that "in our search for unity today we must not insist upon uniformity in theological formulations and in practice" but must use the variations "rooted in the Scriptures to help bring together divided groups of people in the world into 'one body with many members.'" (LWI 40/70,2.)

When the Lutheran Confessors claim that it is possible to reach a "unanimous consensus and exposition of our Christian faith" (Intro., FC, 4), they certainly think of theology in a different way than those who defend a multiplicity of possible theologies. The difference may certainly not be objectively described by the affirmation that one group uses Scripture as their authoritative text while the others don't, since any "Christian" theology claims its relation to Scripture in some way. But when theologians claim that the multiplicity of theologies is due to the nature of the Biblical witness itself, they certainly do have a different understanding of Scripture than that of the Confessors.

To illustrate the difficulty which exists in today's theological world, where not even the use of the same language does imply that one says the same thing, an affirmation of Professor Gerhard Ebeling may serve. Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Tuebingen, he says that "the Gospel has and gives free access to a multiplicity of traditions, without having to be confused with any one of them."¹ One has to learn from extensive reading of his works that Ebeling uses the word "Gospel" in a very personal meaning. In this context it does not designate one of the four Gospels of the New Testament, nor does it have the meaning of the objective Good News which is transmitted in Scripture. Ebeling uses the word "Gospel" to describe a subjective revelation of God as a God of love, which happens in man through a "word-event." "Gospel" can never be transmitted or conserved, it can only happen subjectively, according to Ebeling. This "Gospel" permits a multiplicity of traditions and expresses itself in multiple forms.

Ebeling continues: "For the Gospel makes use of Tradition in many ways: the various forms of Christian witness and Christian preaching; the *verbum visibile* of sacramental ritual; the kerygmatic patterns; the orders and services of the *ekklesia*; the authoritative texts; the tradition of theological interpretation; Christian ethics; it permeates the whole breadth of life in ethics, culture, and history."² In this list of possible traditions which may be used by "Gospel", Scripture is mentioned as the "authoritative texts." "Gospel" is understood as the subject's realization that God is only Love, which from another point of view coincides with man's eschatological self-understanding of faith. This Gospel, or God's Word in man, happens, according to Ebeling, through any true, authentic human word, since language itself is the sign of man's image of God. But it needs the witness of faith of others to happen again. This faith, which is the constant in Christianity, may express itself in

a multiplicity of forms, so that even a multiplicity of Christologies is possible, since faith itself has no specific content. Faith is reduced to man's final self-understanding before a God who is problematical.

The position of Ebeling might be considered an extreme exception, but it is not. He considers himself a conservative in view of other theological trends. And certainly he does not go as far as Herbert Braun, or as Richard Shaull, but far enough to prove that his theology is being developed exclusively from the viewpoint of a "worldly talk of God," as he himself calls it. For him, as for most of the modern theologians, a supernatural understanding of God became problematical in view of the thesis of secularization. The pressure of scientific research, which supposedly is achieved without the help of a supernatural God, requires, according to this thesis, man's coming of age also in religious matters, so that theology can no longer speak of divine interference in human matters and history. God has to be found in the human environment, and only there.

The Confessors certainly thought of a different theology when they confessed that they reached a "unanimous consensus and exposition of our Christian faith." They knew about the possibility of producing a "worldly talk of God," but they understood that this knowledge of God which man could produce by his own possibilities was not able to produce a theology that could help man in any way. Theology was thought of by the Confessors as a "godly talk of the world", if one may use these words. That is, they understood that theology was not to be interpreted as man's tentative identification of God, but as God's revelation of Himself to man. This disclosure of God to man, by which God established His gracious presence with man, did, for the Confessors, not only happen in Biblical times through His mighty acts, but happens still today through His mighty Word. They understood that this Word of God for the man of today was Holy Scripture. Since they understood that the only possible identification of God was given by Holy Scripture, they accepted Scripture as providing, not only the gracious presence of God, but truth expressed in such a form of human language that one could reach a "unanimous consensus and exposition of our Christian faith" all through history.

Since the Confessors accepted theology from the perspective of God, they were able to affirm only one theology and pronounce a "damnamus" on all others. If one makes theology from the perspective of man, one has no authority to pronounce a "damnamus." From the perspective of man the identification of God is impossible, and this means to continue under the judgment of God, not under His grace.

Milestones In The Development Of "Theologies"

1. The German period of Enlightenment may be called the first significant milestone in the development of differing theologies within Lutheranism. This is the period of time in which most standards of human life and thinking were re-examined. During the second half of the eighteenth century not even theology did escape from this examination. It was asked about the meaning and the necessity of religion, and the answer was that religion could not be justified as a doctrine or a theological reflection, but only on the basis of its significance for life and for the *praxis pietatis*. To be meaningful, religion had to provide ethical standards and improve the world and benefit man as a moral being.

On the basis of this principle Johann Salomo Semler examined Scripture. He accepted, as Word of God, only those texts which he considered directly aiming at the improvement of mankind. All others he called only holy writings. This brought about the distinction between Word of God and Holy Scripture in the Bible. Scripture was no longer accepted as God's revelation as a whole, but human criticism was now called to be the judge according to anthropological standards.

2. A second milestone we may find at the time of the German Idealism, especially through the influence of Hegel. In his effort to understand reality

as a whole, Hegel included also theology in his philosophical system. God, world and man were seen in one spiritual relation. This understanding of reality marked the theological impulses of Schleiermacher, who developed a theology with the presupposition that faith is reduced to the self-understanding of existence. This self-understanding, which Schleiermacher calls affection (Gefuehl), is able to apprehend God and the world. This concentration of theology on the existence of man led to a rupture with the supernaturalistic understanding of Scripture.

Since this time, theology received the marks of existentialist thinking. God is being spoken of according to the pattern or human self-understanding. Idealism affirmed that the human mind apprehends and projects reality, not that reality imposes itself on man. From this point of view, man would have the possibility of understanding and even of projecting the relation God-world-man by and from himself. It puts Scripture as revelation on a secondary plane, subject to discussion and correction. From the point of view of this anthropological optimism, characteristic of Idealism, the human side of Jesus became very important, and the human side of Scripture was overemphasized. This idealistic optimism still pervades modern theology. It does not consider the seriousness of the fact that man and all his achievements stand under judgment before God.

3. The third milestone is marked by the concept of liberty. Luther's thesis of the freedom of the Christian man was no longer understood as a given freedom, given through the suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, but as a natural freedom of man. This concept of freedom was so general, that it developed into a theological liberalism. Truth was no longer given by God, but had to be achieved by responsible analysis of reality. Truth and reason became subject to historical development. The doctrinal statements of Scripture, and especially the later formulations of the tradition of the Church, were submitted to the criterion of intellectual honesty.

a) David Friedrich Strauss introduced the idea that theology is independent of its historical setting. So he distinguishes in his book of the "Life of Jesus", published in 1835, between the man Jesus and the theology which distorted this historical human figure. Strauss' point of departure is the idealistic heritage of human optimism. The central idea of religion was for Strauss the reconciliation between God and man. But he did not receive this reconciliation as a message from God through the salvation effected by Jesus Christ, but as part of the natural structure of the human truth-creating mind. Reconciliation was interpreted as man's intellectual apprehension of the God-world-man relation, as it reappears later in Gerhard Ebeling and Henri Perrin, who counsel us to find our salvation by penetrating deeper and deeper into ourselves.

Strauss held that this idea of reconciliation was common to the primitive Christianity. In their theological efforts they tried to visualize this idea on one individual man, Jesus Christ. According to Strauss the evangelists who wrote these stories did not only memorize the sayings of those who at that time revered Jesus, but acted themselves creatively, introducing also their own theology. To stress a theological point, they had recurrence to mythical trappings and historical inaccuracies. But, according to Strauss, this does not invalidate the theological message.

Ferdinand Christian Baur developed the same presuppositions of Strauss on a more scientific level. According to Baur the historical information of Scripture is not accurate and needs not to be so, since the important factor in Scripture is the theological idea.

Most of these features are common in modern theology. Willi Marxsen, who considers himself a good spokesman of modern theology, gives in his pamphlet "Der Streit um die Bibel," an average pattern of modern methods of interpretation of Scripture. He continues the tradition of Baur and gives free play to the critical historical method. As Baur, he affirms that the historical inaccuracy of the Bible does not destroy its theological message. The

argument is that an historical judgment is not equal to a theological judgment. The thesis seems to be logical, but it ignores the fact that God revealed Himself in exact and specific historical actions, described in reliable propositional statements. If the historical affirmations are not reliable, the theological affirmations have no value at all, except in the case where theological affirmations are understood as variable subjective speculations on a given theme. The Confessors understood that the theology of Scripture was given in lasting propositional truth, while Marxsen, interpreting the general theological scene of today, advocated the position that Scripture only conveys general theological ideas which are subject to development and differing interpretation.

For Marxsen the major issue in Scripture is Jesus, in whom the writers of the New Testament localize historically the idea of the encounter with God. Each of the writers creates his own theology around this principle. This proves for Marxsen that history does not matter at all.

The theological implication of this viewpoint becomes clear when Marxsen describes the difficulty of the Evangelists to speak of the supposed mystery of Jesus' encounter with God. For him Mark describes the mystery of Jesus in a Jewish fashion, describing his encounter with God in the historical setting of His Baptism, where God adopts Him as His Son, while Luke and Matthew use the Hellenistic thought pattern and describe Jesus' mysterious encounter with God in another mythical figure, namely in His direct descentance from God through the stories of His miraculous birth. For Marxsen no one of these historical settings is real. The important factor for Marxsen is that the message of the encounter with God does not get lost in the mythical trappings.

The Confessors ignore completely this myth of modern theology which speaks of Jesus' encounter with God. For them Jesus *was* God, the incarnate Son of God, as identified by God Himself all through Scripture. But the freedom from historical accuracy, introduced scientifically by Baur, by which the Biblical writers are granted the permission to falsify history for the sake of a theological idea, gives the theologian today the freedom from all Confessional and dogmatic formulations.

b) It has to be noted that this first period of theological liberalism in Germany was followed by a reaction of those who wanted a confessional Lutheranism and went back to Scripture as God's revelation to man. Among this group developed the personality of Dr. C. F. W. Walther, the great leader of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

But in Germany the main theological trend continued to be liberal and developed new facets which became important for the development of new theologies. The importance of Albrecht Ritschl in this development is realized only through his re-interpretation by Wilhelm Herrmann, the teacher of Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann. Ritschl decided that only that has a right in theology which comes to experience through faith. But he still wanted to make a theology in the established church and according to its principles. Wilhelm Herrmann, on the other hand, operated on new principles, which became a standard for most of the modern theologians. He teaches that the theologian cannot operate on presuppositions which are not developed by the theologian's own, free, and lively insight. Only that which develops freely from faith may be the object of faith. Nothing else may be established as standard, not the authenticity of the New Testament writings, nor the formulas of the Confessions. Everything has to be open to free acknowledgment by faith and to free scientific discovery of truth. And with this affirmation Herrmann executes the heritage of Ritschl: Nothing belongs to theology which does not come from experience and does not prove its truthfulness through experience.

In the last analysis Herrmann bases faith on faith, and reduces Christianity to the autonomy of faith, a characteristic which becomes more apparent in the theologies of Gerhard Ebeling and Paul Tillich. For Herrmann this autonomy is developed on the basis of the inner life of the historical Jesus, who serves as an example of freedom and authenticity.

Modern theology assimilated this principle of Wilhelm Herrmann. If each theologian has to operate on the basis of those presuppositions which flow from his own understanding of faith and the scientific discovery of truth, Scripture and the Confessions may indeed be considered as valid interpretations of theology for the theologians of that time, but they are in no sense binding for the theologians of today who live in a secularized scientific age, where all supernatural relations become problematical, according to the thesis of Friedrich Gogarten. These theologians do not consider that they stand under judgment before God. Their identification of God is made from the viewpoint of man. But God has to be identified by Himself, *not* by human standards.

c) A third facet of this liberal tradition becomes evident in the development of the History of Religions School. The thesis of this school was that in the examination of the Biblical witness any similarity with other religions had to be interpreted in favor of those religions. Through the scientific effort of this school the sayings of Jesus and the witness of the Apostles were submerged piece by piece into the stream of the religious thought which filled the world of the New Testament and from which the New Testament writers borrowed their ideas. Most of the New Testament sayings were not accepted as authentic and specific Christian theology.

Adolf von Harnack became known by his famous criticism of the Apostolic Creed. He pleaded for the substitution of the Creed by a shorter formula, which, according to him, would translate the authentic Christian faith without the historical discrepancies which the Apostolic Creed contains. So he eliminated the formula: "who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary" with the argument that the primitive Christianity wanted only to express the idea that the origin of the Gospel, as well as the origin of its central figure, was mysterious.

Johannes Weiss develops this method of the History of Religions School and demonstrates that the idea of the Kingdom of God comes from Persian religions, that Baptism comes from the mystery cults, that half of what Paul said may be traced back to primitive paganism.

4. An intermediate position was taken by the theologians who defend a Salvation History. Many confessional theologians of today find that the pattern of a Salvation History is able to reconcile the concerns of the historical criticism and the question of revelation. They agree that God acted in the world and so has a history with His people. God reveals Himself historically by His mighty acts, and through Jesus Christ. But for most of these theologians the revelation of God is restricted to acts and does not include words, so that Scripture cannot be considered a propositional revelation of God to the man of today. Jesus is the Word of God in action, the Apostles may have received a special inspiration, but the writers of Scripture, especially those of the New Testament, were not inspired. Their writings are only reports of the preaching of the early community about the mighty acts of God in history.

The theory of Salvation History is not logical, because it recognizes God's revelation in acts and denies *a priori* that God may have acted particularly at the inspiration of Scripture, by using the gifts which God Himself gave to the holy writers. These theologians want us to take seriously the mighty acts of God which are transmitted by what they consider unreliable witnesses to these acts of God.

5. Certain aspects of this theory of Salvation History crystallized in what is known as the Form Criticism and Tradition History, two theories which are complementary. *The aim* of Form Criticism is to discover the original form of the scriptural witness, free it from supposed later additions, and determine its development from earlier oral or written sources. The history of the pre-literary form is examined by the Tradition History, Augustin Cardinal Bea, in his book "The Study of the Synoptic Gospels," has pointed to the fact that this kind of procedure does not necessarily invalidate the principle of propositional inspiration by God, since God used the writers with their abilities and studies as Luke testifies in Acts 1:1. But acknowledgment of verbal in-

spiration was not part of the presuppositions of those who developed Form Criticism. For these men Scripture was recognized as a collection of sermons, and each writer collected not only the theological expressions of the early church but contributed creatively with his own theology, so that one cannot equate Scripture with the Word of God. This theory was already defended by Johann Salomo Semler, so that one may close the circle of milestones where it began.

Some Contemporary Theologies

In their effort to reach an encounter with God through what they call "pure" faith, that is, through faith without an identifying content, the modern theologians have missed the most important of all issues, namely the correct identification of the God with whom man needs to have a gracious encounter. Many theologians present a description of Christian faith in which it is impossible to recognize Christianity at all. In a very brief characterization we attempt to identify some of the present-day theologies.

1. It is true that Karl Barth saw that the important issue in man's relation with God was his correct identification of God. For him God identified Himself in Scripture. His theology is developed from the point of view of God, that is, that God, the "wholly other," as Barth calls Him, reveals Himself in a supernaturalistic way to man. Barth even denies any possibility of a natural knowledge of God. God is, for Barth, so wholly other that not even faith is able to bridge the gap between God and man. Faith is only a "jump into a vacuum," since man is only able to stand in respect before God, but never to commune with God. In respect before God man has to order his life. For this reason Barth's theology developed into an ethical system, but was not able to identify the God of Scripture, the God who became man in Jesus Christ and enters human life through faith.

2. Bultmann says that Jesus is the Word of God for us, the point which he wants to make is that there is now a *message* which questions my existence as man and calls for a decision in my life. This self-understanding which is reached in the decision of faith supersedes the domination of the former misunderstandings in my existence before God. The reality of salvation does not depend on *facts* which lie behind the *kerygma*, but salvation is in the preaching of the message itself. Faith itself is the truth of the message, since faith depends on itself and has the character of a risk. In his intention to purify the message, Bultmann reduces it to the religious idea of encounter with God; but destroying the historical revelation of God by which He reveals and identifies Himself, Bultmann misses the most important of all: the correct identification of God.

3. Gerhard Ebeling, as the systematician of the Bultmann School, does not have the exegetical interest in Scripture which Bultmann had. It is not even important for his theological system, since only one aspect is central for his understanding of faith, namely the historical figure of Jesus, or more specifically, Jesus' faith. The fact is that there is only a God of love, a God of love who is always present with man through the happening of word itself. Where this word is executed in the right way, it reveals that God is love. This self-understanding is then said to be faith. It opens a new future for man.

Ebeling uses the terminology of traditional theology and wants to proclaim the results of the Christian message, namely that God is love, without taking into account the cost of this love of God in Jesus Christ. Ebeling does not consider the seriousness of the accusations of the Law, nor the fact that man stands in judgment before God. In his clearing effort he cleared God away, instead of identifying Him as God identified Himself in Scripture.

4. Braun is willing to substitute for Christ any message or personality which would bring about the encounter with the "wherefrom of my being urged", as he calls God. The central issue is the same as that of the existentialist school: man needs a new self-understanding. Where it comes from is not the important question.

From this point of view to a theology of Marxism, or a theology of revolution the way is short. Richard Shaull, in his theology of revolution, insists that there is not only a necessary revolution of love in Christianity, but that Christians, if necessary, have to engage in material revolution against social standards and political systems. This justifies the Church's interference in political affairs and gives the Christian the right and the duty to change the establishment even by force.

5. The theology of Juergen Moltmann is in some way dependent on the philosophy of hope of Ernst Bloch. In his theology of hope Moltmann does not identify God as the coming of the true humanity in the same way as Bloch does, but the coming of God is made possible in the true humanity of Jesus. Jesus is for Moltmann only a Jew, but God promises true and new humanity through Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus opens a new future to man, so that the believer may expect the fulfillment of God's promises with the resurrection of man.

Moltmann's theology of hope is certainly an answer to the authoritative theology of existentialism and opens the way for an eschatology which is not imminent in this world. But he does not identify the God of Jesus Christ as God identifies Himself in Scripture.

One Theology

God really gave enough evidence in Scripture to the fact that there is only *one* possible correct identification of God, and that there is only *one* theology in the Old and New Testaments. As soon as the Israelites deviated a little bit from this identification God punished them, exhorted them, called them to repent. So, when God saved His people in Egypt, He required from His people the sacrifices to remember this salvation and to expect the final salvation in the Lamb of God who was promised. But when the people offered these very same sacrifices according to all the rules established, God rejected their sacrifices during the time of the prophets because they identified God in a wrong way. The people understood at this time that God was satisfied with external sacrifices. But God demonstrated through the prophets that He was a God who wanted their heart, their faith, their trust in His promises, for which the sacrifices were only a symbol.

The same happened again with the Pharisees at the time of Jesus. How often He had to identify God as the God who wanted to live in their hearts by faith, and was not satisfied by external and human standards of changes and behavior. It is not possible to make theologies from the point of view of man. There is only one possible theology: the one which is given from the perspective of God Himself. The Confessors understood that this *theologia revelata* was given in Scripture in such a form of exact and truthful language that it was possible to speak of and insist on one "unanimous consensus and exposition of our Christian faith."

From this perspective Francis Pieper, one of the fathers of The Missouri Synod, oriented his theological work and teaching. He starts from the presupposition that God *is*, and that He revealed Himself clearly in truthful theology in the words of Scripture. Pieper understands that the God who created language is not dumb, but that He speaks clearly to man in Scripture. The God who spoke His Word to the writers continues until today with this Word, so that it is the means through which God communicates Himself in His grace to man in faith. This sacramental character of the Word makes it also wholly reliable, so that it is possible to identify God correctly through this Word. If one looks at Scripture from this perspective of God, which certainly is supernaturalistic and has to be so by necessity, one does not find myths, legends, and other impossible affirmations in Scripture. It certainly does not solve all exegetical problems, but it allows the Christian to identify God as He wants to be identified. It allows the Christian to have a certainty of faith, and to agree with the Confessors that it is possible to reach a "unanimous consensus and exposition of our Christian faith."

The diversity of Scripture and the possibility of differing theologies exist

only where the anthropological perspective is chosen. But then it is not possible to differentiate these supposed "Christian" theologies from Buddhism, Marxism, and all other kinds of religious and philosophical speculations. These theologies are not able to identify the God who loved us in Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son, since they do not allow God to speak to them Himself in Scripture and to enter their lives by a God-given faith.

FOOTNOTES

¹Gerhard Ebeling, *The Word of God and Tradition*, trans. S. H. Hooke (Phil.: Fortress Press, 1968), p. 146.

²*Ibid.*, p. 147.

3. Truth Versus the New Humanism and the New Theology

Francis A. Schaeffer, D.D.

Those who assigned this topic understood that there is a *new* kind of humanism and a *new* theology. Where did they come from and what is our relationship to them? Unless we understand the new forms of humanism and theology, we are not discussing the real issue of the day. Luther reminds us: "If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides, is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point."

What is the *new* theology and what is its relationship to the *new* humanism? I will assume some knowledge of my books *Escape From Reason* and *The God Who Is There* in which I dwell at length on this question.

As we come to a critique of any kind of liberalism — the old-fashioned or the new-fashioned liberalism — we must stress clearly that the reason we reject liberal theology is not because we are opposed to scholarship. Constantly through the years great Lutheran scholars have dealt with what is usually called lower criticism — the question of what the best text really is. The same has been true for my own Presbyterian tradition — for example, such men as Robert Dick Wilson at Princeton Theological Seminary before liberalism took over that institution. Textual study is important to us. It is natural that we as biblical Christians should be especially interested in the best text, because we believe that the Scripture really is the propositional communication from God to men. Consequently our scholars have labored through the years in the area of lower criticism. Our rejection of liberalism is not a rejection of proper scholarship.

Higher criticism, of course, is quite a different matter. Higher criticism picks up where lower criticism leaves off. It brings in subjective elements in an attempt to determine upon its own subjective basis what is to be accepted and what is to be rejected of the text after the best text has been established. The "new hermeneutic" is a case in point, for in the "new hermeneutic" there is no real distinction between the text and the interpretation. It is all run together.

Let us identify the real place of struggle. It is not a matter of scholarship. It is rather a matter of presuppositions. Both the old liberalism and the new liberalism operate on a set of presuppositions different from those of historic, orthodox Christianity.

In order to understand this, we must go back about 250 years to Germany when the German liberalism was born. At that particular time the German universities and the German faculties were moving over into modern naturalism.

The basic presupposition of naturalism, as it was born at that particular time, is the uniformity of natural causes in a closed system. This is now the basic presupposition of our own generation. Normally, it is not argued, but simply accepted. Everything else in our generation is considered unthinkable except the fact that everything starts and operates within a total cosmic machine. Where did this notion come from?

I have elsewhere written about the distinction between what I call modern science and modern modern science. Modern science derives from the work of men in the time of Galileo and includes the work of Francis Bacon and others up to and including Newton. These men believed in the uniformity of natural causes. Otherwise they could not have produced a science at all. This notion of the uniformity of natural causes was linked with the Christian intellectual framework then dominant.

Alfred North Whitehead, in fact, once said that modern science could never have been born except in a Christian setting. The reason for this, he pointed out, is that these early scientists believed that the world, the universe, was created by a reasonable God and, therefore, the nature of the universe — the truth of the universe — could be discovered by reason. But the early scientists did not assume the uniformity of natural causes *in a closed system*. They held a uniformity of natural causes in an *open system*. They believed the system could be interrupted by God and man. They did not see God as caught in the machine nor did they see man as caught in the machine.

This is what I call modern science, the uniformity of natural causes in an open system. In contrast to this is modern modern science which is naturalism; here we have the uniformity of cause and effect in a closed system.

On this basis modern man sees himself as only part of a cosmic machine. Science (not only chemistry, astronomy, and so on, but also the modern social sciences and modern psychology) works on the basis of the uniformity of natural causes in a closed system. So even man himself is a machine caught in the cosmic machine.

Therefore, let us understand that at one particular era in the German universities there was a shift. In the academic disciplines surrounding the faculties of theology there was a moving over from what had been the view of the older science (the uniformity of natural causes in an open system) to modern modern science (the uniformity of natural causes in a closed system). A new dominant view was coming in — a total consensus. The result back in Germany was that the theological faculties were isolated from the other faculties, and at that time theology itself capitulated by accepting the naturalism of the other faculties.

I believe that the reason they capitulated is that their theology was already less than it should have been. By the time you get to about 200 years ago in the German universities, the theology of the Reformation with the burning heart was coming to an end. Largely it had become only a repetitive theology. Such a thing, of course, can never long stand.

I believe that one can see an often repeated cycle in church history: living orthodoxy moves to dead orthodoxy and then to heterodoxy. I think that is exactly the case in the German universities at that particular time. The German faculties did not accept the presupposition of the uniformity of natural causes in a closed system because they were forced to by the facts. They did so simply to conform, and liberal theology has been conforming ever since. We must understand that liberal theology from that day to this has been a theology of naturalism. It had a naturalistic perspective. This is totally opposite from the framework of historic Christianity and the Bible.

The Bible has a perspective, a presupposition. The infinite-Personal God created the external universe; the external universe is there and is not an extension of God's essence. It is a reasonable universe and therefore something of its nature can be detected by reason. There is order: the universe is not chaotic nor random. There is cause and effect.

But even so the Bible's viewpoint and historic Christianity's viewpoint is contrary to naturalism in that God can work down into space-time history. This is miracle. God is able to work into the cause and effect flow of history. Man as made in the image of God can also work into the cause and effect flow of history. (This, by the way, means man is not dead; he is not a machine.) But more importantly, God can work into the world and change the cause and effect flow of the world, and this is miracle. This is the biblical view.

More than this, the Bible emphasizes, and historic Christianity has always emphasized, that God not only can work into the world but that He has spoken to men in the historic space-time situation. He has given a propositional, verbalized communication to men that is true about Himself, true about history, and true about the cosmos. That's what revelation is.

This should not take us by surprise. Modern anthropology stresses that what distinguishes man is not that he is a toolmaker, but that he is a verbalizer. If God has made man in His own image and made us so that we can verbalize propositional facts to each other on the horizontal level of communication, we should not be surprised that God would also vertically communicate to men, made in his image, propositional truth on the basis of verbalization.

We must understand that the Bible says God works in history and speaks to man in history. These both are opposed to naturalism. In other words, the presuppositions of historic Christianity and of naturalism are in complete antithesis.

Of course, we must be careful to make a distinction here. The Bible never says that God gives us exhaustive truth, but it does claim that he gives us true truth. He gives us true truth about Himself, true truth about history, true truth about the cosmos. Consequently, the nature and grace problem did not exist in the Reformation because there was a unity, not on the basis of man's wisdom, but there was a unity because God has told truly of Himself and God has told truly of the world and of history. So the Reformation had no dichotomy between nature and grace.

Liberal theology was born in the German universities by theologians giving in to the surrounding secular naturalistic thought. From that time to this, liberal theology has followed secular thought.

The new humanism is different from the old humanism, and the new theology is different from the old form of liberal theology. Basically both the old and new humanism, and the old liberal theology and the new liberal theology are all of one piece in that they all are naturalistic. Yet we must understand within this unity the shift that has taken place between the old and the new or we will never understand exactly what the discussion is in our own generation. There has been a change from the old humanism to the new humanism, a change from the old liberal theology to the new liberal theology, and we must understand that change.

I believe four men are the watershed into the modern world: Jean-Jaques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, Hegel, and Kierkegaard. After these four men we have a completely new world, and now it has boiled over out of the philosophical discussion, down into the streets, out into the violence of the street. The modern generation gap is a generation gap of the different way of considering truth. As I have written elsewhere, I believe that the generation gap is not one of morals, but of epistemology. There is a complete dichotomy between how the different generations look at truth and at knowledge.

1. First, let's consider secular, naturalistic thought *prior* to Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, and Kierkegaard. What was thought like then? Basically men were optimistic: they optimistically believed that on the basis of rationalism, man rationally could find a unified answer to all knowledge and all of life. Let us notice the definitions here: *Rationalism* means that man can understand the universe by beginning from himself without recourse to outside knowledge, specifically outside knowledge or revelation from God. *Rationally* sounds something like the word *rationalism*, but in reality the two have no real relationship. *Rationalism* means man beginning only from himself. *Rationality* means that reason is valid. The first axiom of the classical concept of rational methodology is that "A is not non-A." That is, on the basis of reason, if a thing is true the opposite is not true. And in the area of morals if a thing is right the opposite is wrong. That is rationality.

The old secular thinkers believed optimistically that they could begin only from themselves (rationalism), apply reason, and come to a unified concept

of knowledge and of life. They thought this would lead them to find true answers. They were optimists at this place on the basis of reason.

Where did liberal theology stand in that same period prior to these four men? Liberal theology simply echoed this. If we were to make a graph, we would find secular thinking or secular naturalism on a curve always followed by liberal theology following the same curve only a few years later. Thus liberal theology is to be understood as secular thinking that uses different terminology and yet says almost the same things just a few years later.

In this period the liberal theologians also were optimistic. They believed that on the basis of rationalistic scholarship they could find the historic Jesus while eliminating the supernatural from the biblical account. They believed that they could take reason, apply it to the Bible, and come up with the historic Jesus even though they rejected the supernatural elements. By presupposition they were naturalists, and the supernatural made them uncomfortable. But notice that they were simply following exactly that which secular thinking had already said several years before.

2. What's the next step? The next step takes us to Rousseau, Kant, Hegel and Kierkegaard or Kierkegaardianism. At this particular place rationalistic philosophers decided that on a rational basis they could not find a unified answer to knowledge and to life. Their end was failure. It was like Satre's *No Exit*.

Now what happened to liberal theology? Liberal theology has always been the tail on the dog ever since it accepted the presupposition of naturalism. It has always followed secular thinking and has never blazed a way of its own. Liberal theologians had been optimistic about being able to separate the historic Jesus from the supernatural Jesus of the Gospel accounts. With Schweitzer's quest of the historic Jesus, however, they found they were not going to be able to do it. This was the end of an era. They found that the supernatural and the historic Jesus were so united that if you removed all the supernatural you had no historic Jesus. And if you kept the historic Jesus, you had to have the supernatural.

Now we have moved through two steps. We have moved first through the step of optimistic secularism, that somehow rationalistically they would be able rationally to arrive at a unified system of knowledge and life. But when with these four men rationalism came to the conclusion that it was not going to go, liberal theology followed the same curve. Liberal theology had thought that on the basis of reason and scholarship they could separate the supernaturalism in the Bible from the historic Jesus. They then came to the conclusion that this could not be done.

3. In this situation what did secular rationalism do? Rationally, there were two possibilities. The first was to become nihilistic — to believe that one can know nothing. (It is a step taken by a number of 20th Century thinkers. But it leads to the confusion of reality and fantasy and a complete pessimism about knowing.) On the basis of reason they could therefore have decided to give up all hope. The other thing they could have done if they were to consistently follow their reason was to conclude that their rationalism was wrong, that they as finite could not gather enough particulars to make universals, and that therefore they needed knowledge outside of themselves if they were going to find an answer to life. In other words, they would have to accept the concept of revelation. They could have done either of these and have remained reasonable men.

Instead, something new came. There is something new in the world, the new humanism, a different concept of truth, a new epistemology that is really new. If we don't understand this, we will not understand the liberalism which we are facing today in the area of theology. They did what would have been unthinkable to all previous educated men — they split the field of knowledge.

Philosophers had thought they would have a unity, but they gave up this hope. So what did Rousseau say? Prior to him, in the high renaissance, men had faced the problem of nature and grace. The high renaissance concept of

grace had nothing to do with the Christian concept of grace. Rather it was the universal that gave a meaning to the particulars of life. With Rousseau the formulation changed: instead of the problem of nature and grace, with him there was the formulation of nature and freedom.

Rousseau saw that rationalistically on the basis of reason, everything about the cosmos, including man himself, is a machine. This could be a machine governed by chemical determinism (as has been held by the Marquis de Sade and now by Francis Crick) or by psychological determinism (as held by Freud). And, of course, if man is a machine, then he has no freedom. And since it was Rousseau's central desire for man to have autonomous freedom, Rousseau had to abandon reason as giving a unified understanding of the world. At just the point where Rousseau should have abandoned his rationalism and held on to his reason, he abandoned his reason to cling to autonomous freedom. In this one can see that Rousseau is the key to the hippy movement and to the modern hedonism.

In his revolt against God, therefore, man held on to his rationalism and gave up his rationality. And that's the mark of the 20th Century, and the mark of the *new* humanism and of the *new* theology as well. Out of this autonomous freedom came the Bohemian life. Gauguin becomes a hero when he goes to Tahiti, even though he leaves his children home to starve. And the modern generation is permeated with hedonistic thought.

It is no wonder that the church cannot talk to hippies: The church doesn't understand where they come from; it doesn't understand their origin in philosophy and therefore does not understand who they are.

Immanuel Kant spoke in the same way as Rousseau but used different terminology, the noumenal and the phenomenal world. Then Hegel came and said our whole methodology had been wrong. He wanted us to stop talking about methodology of antithesis and instead said: If you are going to find truth, it is always in the area of synthesis. Thus modern relativism was formed.

There is no use talking about truth in the midst of the 20th Century until you hammer down the fact that truth can exist. Many use the word truth today and do not mean what we mean by truth. In many, truth is always relative whether it is in the field of government, sociology, sexual ethics, or theology. Following Hegel there is thesis and antithesis that leads to a synthesis but that itself is only then a further thesis. One never arrives at anything that can be said to be true. Kierkegaard and Kierkegaardianism took it a step further, saying that on the basis of reason we will always come to pessimism. Man is a machine and meaningless. Therefore they projected a concept of non-reason, an attempt to have a way for man to achieve meaning and significance outside the framework of rationality.

You who were raised in the old Christian viewpoint and in the old middle-class way of looking at things may find it hard to believe how completely this predominates today in the arts, drama, newspapers and journalism, how completely it is carried by the mass media to your own children. In this view, hope always comes in the area of non-reason, and you must not think there is any interchange between the reason that leads to despair and the non-reason that gives some optimistic hope. Picture the line between reason and non-reason as a solid reinforced concrete wall ten thousand feet thick with a barb-wire in the middle charged with ten thousand volts of electricity. Then you can begin to understand how there can be no osmosis between the lower-storey with reason which leads to despair and the upper-storey of hope without reason. That's modern man's problem. That's what the new humanism and new theology brings. Every thing that is worthwhile — meaning, values, love — all these things are always without reason in the new humanism. What is left is a semantic mysticism with no facts.

The problem developed first of all with the existentialists, Sartre, Heidegger, and Karl Jaspers. Each of them basically says the same thing: We live in an absurd universe but we try to find some authentication of life in the upper-

storey without reason. This led to horrible results. Sartre, for example, said that since we live in a totally absurd universe, we must try to authenticate life by an act of the will. But it doesn't matter how the will acts, because reason has no place in it. So if you see an old lady by the side of a road and you pick her up, you have authenticated yourself though the meaning is absurd. But if you speed up your car and you kill her, it is an equal authentication in the midst of an absurd situation. That's our modern generation.

One must realize that this was the birth of the whole drug movement. Aldous Huxley said that reason will lead us nowhere, so let us give well people drugs in the hope that they can have an experience without reason that will give meaning to their lives. Every serious drug taker I have ever talked to has recognized this as the basis of his drug taking. You are not going to deal with your own children or the children of your congregation or in your community in the area of drugs until you understand the philosophic basis of modern drug-taking.

How does liberal theology fit into this? You must understand that Karl Barth never to the end of his life gave up his acceptance of the higher critical theories. He brought in the new variety of liberalism. With Schweitzer the liberal had given up a hope of finding a historic Jesus on the basis of rationalistic scholarship. Karl Barth, as it were, turned this over. In his first *Römerbrief* he indicated his relationship to Kierkegaard, and in his *Dogmatics*, II, it is plain that he is an existentialist as far as epistemology is concerned.

His basic position was: Of course, the Bible has all kinds of mistakes in it, but it does not matter; believe it religiously. That's the birth of the new theology. At the end of his life Karl Barth struggled to hold back the natural direction which he had opened to a man like Tillich and the death-of-God theology and all the rest. Nevertheless, he was the one who opened the door.

The new theology which dominates the situation today in this country and throughout the world is an existential theology. It is a theology that is related to the new humanism, a humanism that is separated from the concept of unified truth whether it is in drug-taking or saying that the Bible is full of mistakes but that we should believe it as "religious truth." The new theology says it really doesn't matter if the Bible has mistakes in it because you can believe it religiously anyhow.

4. Now let's come to the dilemma which the new humanism and secularism faces. At first the new humanism seems like a great hope. For even though reason leads to despair, what does it matter? I will seek meaning and hope in the existential experience. But there are thousands of young people who are never coming home from Morocco or east of Turkey simply because they have been caught in this search and have been carried down into it. It has not proved a hope. It has proved a real damnation. It is not just an intellectual problem. It is a problem of our culture, a problem of our government, and it is why I believe that unless we return to the Reformation base there is nothing ahead for us except further disintegration. I believe that unless we have a new Reformation there is only one thing that can come in the chaos which we face—some form of totalitarianism. What I am saying is not theoretical nor abstract.

The intellectual thought today relates man only to a machine, an IBM card. And when man thinks man is a machine, he will treat him like a machine. And that is what we are going to see more and more. Mortimer Adler (of the University of Chicago) in *The Difference of Man and the Difference it Makes* said (though he has no answer to the problem) that if we don't soon find some way to show how man is different we will treat him like a machine. I think he is old-fashioned. We *are* treating men like machines. The young people are right in their screaming against the educational institutions where they are being treated like machines. We are treating man like a machine in all the areas of life. That's downstairs in the lower-storey on the basis of rationalism, rationally man is only a machine. What despair!

But what is the problem upstairs? Take Karl Jaspers who says the mean-

ing of life must be found in the final experience. But the final experience is completely separated from all reason and therefore you cannot talk about its content even to yourself. All you can say is that I have had an experience. I have had men come to me influenced by his thinking; they say they have had some experience two or three years ago. Think of the hell of their life. They stand there and say they understand the meaning to life, not on the basis of reason, but on the basis of a big experience. It's all right on the day of the experience and perhaps the next day. But what about the day after that, and the day after that, and the day after that, and six months after that, and a year after that, when the only meaning of life is a mystery that has grown cold and dead and gone. Cry! — because that is where our generation lives.

It is more than this, however. We must understand that because we have separated the meaning of life from any connection to reason, we are left with no categories of truth — what is true and what is not true — of right and wrong. The film-makers have done more with this than any other group. And the best of the films was Antonioni's *Blow Up*, advertized as "love without meaning, murder without guilt." What was Antonioni saying? He was saying, "Up here in the upper-storey without reason, don't you understand there are no categories of moral values and there are no categories of human values either." Down here in the lower-storey with reason man is only a machine. He may be expressed with a mathematical formula. Upstairs man has become something like a Greek shade. He cannot even be sure of the difference between reality and fantasy. That was shown in *Juliet of the Spirits*, *The Hour of the Wolf* and *Bel de Jour*. And many modern novels also ask, "Are you sure that the external world is even there?" This is where we are!

Wittgenstein in *Tractatus* came to this same place, saying that in the area of all values, all meaning of life, all ethics, there is nothing but silence. Then he turned from his positivism and gave birth to linguistic analysis where one only deals with language that leads only to language. Do some of you theologians begin to hear sounds that are familiar? You cannot stand against the new liberalism if you do not understand its source. It does not stand alone. It stands related to, and following and putting into theological terms, what the new humanism has become. This is where we are. The new liberal theology is still just following along — it is still the tail on the dog.

The death-of-God theology says in the area of reason there is no reason to say that God is there. On the basis of naturalistic theology they are not wrong, they are right. On the basis of liberal theology's presuppositions every liberal theologian should be a God-is-dead theologian. But they turn from reason to the upper-storey and say that here one can have an existential experience. But don't you understand what is upstairs? This existential experience is completely separated from reason or content about God, and all concept of a personal God is dead. Some liberals who did not like this newer God-is-dead theology objected loudly. They wished to continue to use the word *God*, but they were in the same situation as the God-is-dead theologians because, while these people say the word *God*, all content about God is dead; and any concept of a really personal God is dead. That is what we have left in liberal theology.

But we must understand that this situation has resulted from following the trend of secular thought. We are thus left with the new theology — "contentless connotation" religious words. Words like *Jesus* became a banner; they are separated from all reason and have no real base. So what is the word *Jesus*? A contentless banner which men take and say, "Follow me" on the basis of the motivation force of the word *Jesus*. That's all it is. And so it becomes Jesus-like to sleep with a girl if she needs you. They say this even though this contentless banner denies everything that Jesus said about His own sexual ethic. The new theology is not only wrong but dangerous. It destroys the truth and sends men to hell and, even in the present life, it opens up a complete field of manipulation. Religious motivation words that are separated from all content are used to teach the next generation to do that which

is completely contrary to Scripture. That's our battle today, and it should make us cry and act.

The new liberal theology provides no concept of verification or falsification because it is completely separated from all history. When these men say that the Bible is full of mistakes, it is because they are being honest men on the basis of their own presuppositions. But any religious value is completely separated from all methods of verification. I would like to remind you of what J. S. Bezzant, the last of the old liberals at Cambridge University, said in *Objections to Christian Beliefs*. "When I am told that it is precisely its immunity from proof which secures the Christian proclamation from the charge of being mythological, I reply that immunity from proof can 'secure' nothing whatever except immunity from proof, and call nonsense by its name." And he is right. We must cry because this is where the whole modern stream of the new theology is in our own generation.

Now we come to the next step. There are many who would not stand with the liberal theologians concerning the whole Bible but, while saying they remain in the conservative camp, are applying the same methods to the first half of Genesis. They say "The whole Bible is not to be separated this way, only the first half of Genesis." This is the place where the battle is now being fought. Theological seminaries in America that for many years taught men to stand for the Bible and the Christian faith are now applying the same method to the first half of Genesis while liberal theologians apply this to the whole of Scriptures. I would remind you of what T. H. Huxley said in 1890: I visualize the days not far hence when faith will be separated from all facts, and especially pre-Abrahamic scriptural narrative, and then faith will go on triumphant forever. Of course, because it is separated from all facts, it doesn't mean anything. Grandfather Huxley said it as a jibe, but today the modern theologians act that way. In other words, modern theology in 1970 stands in the same place where agnosticism stood in 1890.

The only difference between liberal theology and secular rationalism is that liberals use religious terms instead of secular terms. When our children come home and say, "I hate God-words," if we are to be real Christians, we must also say, "I hate God-words, too," for they are words separated from all verification or falsification. The new theologians (Teilhard de Chardin is an excellent example) seem to be saying something more than secular thinkers because they use religious words. But they are really saying the same things.

In conclusion we must realize that liberalism is one unified system. In one sense, it did not change with the birth of the new theology, existential theology. It is rooted in the German higher criticism, and this has never changed. It is rooted in naturalism, and this has never changed. The new existential theology is not really any closer to historic biblical Christianity than is the old liberalism. It is really farther away. At least the old liberalism did deal with the normal meaning of words and the concept of truth.

When Harry Emerson Fosdick back in the 30's said that he denied the Virgin birth, we knew exactly what he was talking about. When he said he did not believe in the physical resurrection, he was using normal epistemology, normal words with normal definitions. The modern theologian is different. When the new theology speaks, we are left only with words totally separated from any normal usage. This is not really different from the modern Rock group's use of the word *Jesus* in their songs, not really different from the modern drug-taker's trip. When we can understand this, we can understand the battle that confronts us.

When you listen to Rock groups, what do you hear? *Jesus, Jesus, Jesus*. Listen to Joan Baez sing with a faultless voice, "Some call him Jesus, I'll call him Savior." Don't misunderstand. They don't believe that a single word of this has anything to do with reason or with truth. Jesus is a trip. The drug-taker takes a trip, and the new theology is a trip. It has no more relationship to verifiable truth and falsifiable truth than a drug trip, none what-so-ever.

The new theology denies the God who is there, it denies the divine historic Christ, it denies God's way of salvation, it denies the Bible as the verbalized communication of God to man. The new theology is simply modern thought using religious words, and it is under the line of anthropology. It only dwells in the world of men. It is faced with "a philosophic other" that is unknown and unknowable. The new theology is in the circle of the finite, and it has no meaning and it has no authority beyond the authority and meaning which finite man can give it. In other words, not having any propositional, verbalized communication from God to man, in the new theology man is on his own with only religious words rather than religious truth. Historic Christianity has nothing in common either with the old or the new humanism, and it has nothing in common either with the old or the new liberalism, and it has nothing in common either with the old or the new liberal theology. Historic Christianity and either the old or the new liberal theology are two separate religions with nothing in common but certain terms which they use with totally different meanings.

Books by Dr. Francis Schaeffer which supply background for this essay are:

Escape From Reason (Inter-Varsity Press)

The God Who Is There (Inter-Varsity Press)

Death In The City (Inter-Varsity Press)

The Mark Of The Christian (Inter-Varsity Press)

The Church At The End Of The 20th Century (Inter-Varsity Press)

Pollution And The Death Of Man, The Christian View of Ecology (Tyndale House Press)

4. Shaping Society — Social Action

Richard Klann, Ph.D.

Every revolutionary attempt is powered by a dream regarding the possibilities of human attainment: it may be the dream of reason which people have dreamt since the beginnings of Western Enlightenment or it may be the dream of an ideological utopia which has captured masses of men during this century.

The present revolutionary ideology, which seems to have invaded Lutheran seminaries in America also, is a combination of many ideological elements. But we can easily recognize large quantities of Marxism and questionable elements of Freudianism as well as the existentialist seasoning.

It is an ideological mix most congenial to those who agree on the agenda (à la mode Marcuse) that everything in our society must be turned into its opposite: our freedoms are seen to be devices to enslave us; our democratic ideals become mental perversions; our economic prosperity is the opium of the masses; we are accused of being dehumanized in America because too many of our people have too much. The revolutionaries want to liberate us all by making everybody at least as miserable as the sociological underclass to which they seem committed, even though they obviously despise them.

Some teachers at American seminaries seem to have joined other radicals in their program of declaring that the society in which revolutionary professors live and those who support the institutions where they teach are evil beyond redemption. This is also their way of justifying anything that they may say or do against their enemies. For them, offices must be seized in any way possible for the promotion of the revolution, and public relations is the means of supporting revolutionaries by telling the truth selectively.

The most dangerous virus invading the Lutheran churches is false doctrine promoted in the pulpit, in the classroom, or in the publications of the Lutheran churches. Every false doctrine taught in our churches is not merely a sign of unbelief or apostasy; it may also be a sign of an intended subversion in the church.

Despite some pious disclaimers by public relations experts who seek to win the support of men of good will, and sometimes capture it, such attempts at subversion should not be overlooked. Our people should learn to understand the salesmanship of some of our ecclesiastical bureaucrats when they peddle the line that no one teaches false doctrine or observes objectionable practices. Our Christian people ought to see clearly that these church leaders follow a policy of vigorous praise for Lutheran confessional claims or statements and determined action to further liberal or non-evangelical programs. When they appear at District Conferences it seems they try to give our people the "verbal gloss" treatment about the most vital issues. In some places they seem to have done a remarkable selling job.

If the experience of both the ancient and modern Christian churches show what may happen to our Lutheran churches and to us, then we surely do have every reason to present to the open light of day our Christian witness on the topics which concern the fidelity of the stewardship of the Lutheran churches in doctrine and practice.

That we are assembled here is another witness to the fact that Lutheran churches have been infected with false doctrine. Specifically, the loud and insistent pleas for healing in my own synod are clear evidence of a widely articulated desire to have no more tranquilizers distributed by those who

seem to be public relations experts in the disguise of pastors of the Lutheran Church.

As Christians, it is our disposition to think well of all those who claim the name of Jesus Christ. But the radical drift in our midst will not disappear by wishful thinking. If we believe that "judgment must begin at the house of God" (I Pet. 4:17), it is obvious that we shall have to confess our choices and live with their consequences.

The assignment given to me:

SHAPING SOCIETY — SOCIAL ACTION

may raise the expectation among you that I am going to assume the function of a social planner or of a social engineer, full of ready answers or at least a box full of band aids for the ills of our times. I will not do that. Good programs of social action have been formulated among us and they are available for use in a congregational setting. I intend to propose for your inspection several major theological issues and affirmations about Christian ethics pertaining to social action.

THESIS I: Social action in the Christian Church must be an expression or product of the order of salvation (*ordo salutis*).

St. Paul states our thesis thus: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God — not because of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." (Eph. 2: 8-10 RSV)

When we speak of the order of salvation in Christian theology we mean broadly all that is mentioned by our creedal affirmations, ranging from our creation to our glorification at the end of time. [In a narrower sense, the *ordo salutis* has been understood to apply to the Christian's pilgrimage from conversion until death.]

In our Lutheran understanding of the order of salvation we maintain the unity of the work of redemption: the work of atonement by Jesus Christ and the work of renewal of the Holy Spirit by the means of grace. We confess that God the Creator is also God the Redeemer and God the Sanctifier.

Specifically, we say with the Gospel that this God, in the Person of the only-begotten Son, was made man and born of the Virgin Mary. We say that this birth or incarnation of the Son, whom we confess to be "very God of very God," was an historical event, and that we have an account or description of it in the Gospels.

Evangelical Lutheran Christians see a total contradiction between their understanding of the source and dynamics of social action and the proposals emerging from humanistic or non-Christian ideologists. The point is of such great importance that we must take time to explain it.

The best of men may seek to advance their society by considerations of human need. Social disorganization and squalor offends their aesthetic proprieties. Some men also carry with them the ideal of a better quality of human life than they observe in their society. Not only do they wish to become benefactors of their contemporaries, but some know that their own welfare depends on at least a minimal social peace and economic prosperity.

Nor should we conclude that only prudent considerations impel non-Christians to social action. We should readily acknowledge that such people may theoretically seek maximum justice for all members of society. In fact, their sensitivity for the oppressed of this world may be so effectively expressed in their ideological propaganda that by comparison they seem to make Christians appear to be inactive in areas of social action.

Apart from such observations, we should also note that interest in particular areas of social action can change even more rapidly than the hemlines of our ladies. Very likely, the cries for more social action in the Lutheran

churches, from the offensive actions of some representative individuals at Denver to the latest harrangues of unappeasable actionists in various areas of service in the Lutheran churches, do not seem to have their source in the order of salvation nor derive their force from the Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation.

Perhaps a much more likely explanation of their zeal and offensive behavior lies in their expectation of extracting or extorting from the Lutheran churches large quantities of cash to be used ostensibly for their special programs. Some may be most content to bask in the public exposure of an opportunity to denounce the Lutheran churches. Those who threaten Christians with some form of implied violence or disruption of their meetings certainly do not beseech them evangelically by the mercies of God.

The Lutheran understanding of the order of salvation, which is the source and dynamic of Christian ethical action, asserts that the new creation is that redeemed man who lives by his faith in the Redeemer. This life of faith is not a mere verbalization or a pious phantasy of Christians, but the new reality for man, continually moving him from task to task in a life of repentance until the consummation of God's promise at the end of history.

God declares the sinner a saint on account of the work of Jesus Christ. Without this Savior, a man can do nothing. The Christian therefore always remains the sinner who is a beggar before God and at the same time is a just and righteous man in the power of God's promise. He is totally God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that he should walk in them.

The Christian's justification is an alien righteousness. As Luther said to his students who were impatient for better things: We have not made it yet; but we shall be like Him, as He has promised. No psychological explanation can be offered to explain the nexus between the simultaneous state of the Christian man as saint and sinner. The mystery of the work of the Holy Spirit who continually works faith in our hearts by the means of grace, so that Christians confess the one Name given under heaven whereby they must be saved — that mystery must be proclaimed, not explained.

It is therefore a distortion of the Lutheran understanding of the order of salvation if we teach in such a way that our Christian love becomes the source and dynamic of social action. St. Paul said it rather differently: "The love of Christ constrains us."

The "Mission Affirmations" of the Missouri Synod's Detroit Convention of 1965 were unsatisfactory to many pastors and laymen because the "Theological Basis of the Mission of the Church" was used for ambiguous or unacceptable applications. Since the six "mission resolutions" of Floor Committee I refer to "Report of Mission Self-Study and Survey, I. Theological Basis of the Mission of the Church (CW, pp. 113-123)," we have the right to assume that the latter document must be studied for the proper understanding of the six resolutions presented by Floor Committee 1.

A Statement of Principle of Social Action, adopted by the Denver Convention (*Proc.* p. 141 ff.) in response to the overtures submitted (CW, pp. 393-396), must surely be considered a partial correction of the distortions implied by the rhetoric of the Detroit "Mission Affirmation." Significant is this quotation: "When the church becomes involved in social ministry and action, it needs to understand not only the principle of love but also the 'distinction between Christ's kingdom and a political kingdom,' as defined in the Lutheran Confessions." (*Proc.*, 1969, p. 142.)

THESIS II: All proposals for social action, as well as all pastoral admonitions, must be made only after Law and Gospel have been clearly distinguished pertaining to such proposals.

The implications of this thesis, derived from Art. V of the Formula of Concord, must be considered after some comment on the meaning of the key

terms. The Lutheran churches of the 16th century were seriously troubled by a menacing confusion regarding the meaning of the Gospel. Melancthon had taught his students, somewhat on the order of our "Lutheran Barthians" today, that the Gospel is also the teaching of penitence (*doctrina poenitentiae*). It was done in such a way that the biblical distinction of repentance and forgiveness was covered up in the understanding of Christian.

That is very far from being a minor matter today. I have met many students in classes which I have taught who had come to the seminary convinced that it was "old fashioned" or "fundamentalistic"* to say that programs of social action must be powered by much more than a general feeling of love for those in need.

Some, unfortunately, seem to come out of our educational system full of hostility to the confessional truth regarding the necessity of distinguishing clearly and at all times between Law and Gospel.

Let me quote from our confessional distinction between Law and Gospel (*F.C., Art. V., Tappert, p. 561 f.*):

Strictly speaking, the law is a divine doctrine which reveals the righteousness and immutable will of God, shows how man ought to be disposed in his nature, thoughts, words, and deeds in order to be pleasing and acceptable to God, and threatens the transgressors of the law with God's wrath and temporal and eternal punishment. For as Luther says against the nominalists, 'Everything that rebukes sin is and belongs to the law, the proper function of which is to condemn sin and to lead to a knowledge of sin' (Rom. 2:30; 7:7).

The Gospel, however, is that doctrine which teaches what a man should believe in order to obtain the forgiveness of sins from God, since man has failed to keep the law of God and has transgressed it, his corrupted nature, thoughts, words, and deeds war against the law, and he is therefore subject to the wrath of God, to death, to temporal miseries, and to the punishment of hell-fire. The content of the Gospel is this, that the Son of God, Christ our Lord, Himself assumed and bore the curse of the law and expiated and paid for all our sins, that through Him alone we re-enter the good graces of God, obtain forgiveness of sins through faith, are freed from death and all the punishments of sin, and are saved eternally.

Since the beginning of the world these two proclamations have continually been set forth side by side in the church of God with the proper distinction.

The failure to distinguish between the function of Law and Gospel is demonstrated in the "Report of Mission Self-Study and Survey" (*Convention Workbook, 1965, p. 113 ff.*). The author fails consistently to differentiate between Christ's work *for* the world and our task *in* the world. In his presentation that "The Church is Christ's Mission to the Whole Man" (*ibid.* p. 117, col. 2) the writer argues that the distinction between "spiritual" and "material" is an illicit or an "impossible" distinction, so that "material" interests are just as important as the "spiritual" interests of man:

God's mission to the world in Christ brings human life to its fulness. This is the intention of the redemption. The whole of man, not only the soul, is meant to have eternal life here now in time.

The view implied seems remarkably close to the notion of "godmanhood" advocated by the late Paul Tillich in his *Systematic Theology*, II. But Tillich did not invent the notion of an ontic transformation of the conditions of this existence in time. Philosophers have suggested that the idea came to the West from India early in ancient times. After all, Hinduism does offer the hope of divinity and a place in the Hindu pantheon to the devotees.

Our Lord Himself has made a clear distinction between the values pertain-

FOOTNOTE

*Incidentally, while I personally prefer the term "orthodox," it is my growing conviction that the term "fundamentalist" is now rapidly becoming a "code word" for "believer" and that it expresses the furious aversion of some within the church for the Person of Jesus Christ and for His work of redemption.

ing to body and soul in a statement which many of our people probably memorized in confirmation class when they studied the First Commandment: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matt. 10:28) For this aspect of his preparation the author could with profit have recalled the last lines of Luther's great hymn:

And take they our life,
Goods, fame, child and wife,
Let all these be gone,
They yet have nothing won;
The kingdom ours remaineth.

The confusion of Law and Gospel is bound to result in false expectations of what the Christian or the Christian churches can do in the world. Where in the Scriptures are Christians urged to undertake "a real partnership" with non-Christians? It may be a good recommendation for those who are confessed or surreptitious proponents of the social gospel. But neither our Lord nor His disciples ever recommended a real partnership with the world. Christians have no more guarantee that they can save Western culture than the Christians of the early church possessed regarding theirs.

A major topic for the consideration of social action, and also an aspect of the distinction of Law and Gospel, is Luther's interpretation of the distinction between Christ's kingdom of power and His kingdom of grace. All men live in the kingdom of power, but only the disciples of the Lord are in the kingdom of grace. Social justice achieved by social action is always desirable in the kingdom of power, and we ought to testify to all those who exercise magistral power that they owe this obligation to God.

But the Gospel, His word of forgiveness, pertains to the kingdom of grace. The context of events in Luke 12, where our Lord refused to intervene in a dispute between brothers concerning an inheritance on the grounds that such a work was not part of His redemptive task, should make it clear to any thoughtful reader that the Christian Church as the mystical body of Christ has no institutional mandate to organize for social action. But there is no such limitation on the service of Christians. Members of the churches should assume responsibilities for social action in accordance with their callings, opportunities, and abilities. They may organize to the limits of their resources for such tasks which serve the neighbor and the society in which both live.

According to Luther's understanding of the "secular" (*aeuszerliche Ordnung und weltlich Ding*) in relation to the "spiritual" (a distinction like Law and Gospel observable to the reader also in the exposition of the *Apology* of the *Augsburg Confession*), it is simply false to direct the Christian churches to invest their resources and energies in the promotion of aspects or programs of the social gospel. After all, the Christian is only *in* this world, but not *of* this world. Services to the world — yes; "a real partnership" with the world — no. The very idea of the Church as "Christ's mission" is a contradiction of the notion of a "real partnership," because both are impossible. Our Redeemer "partook" of the conditions of existence of the human race when He was born in order to save that which was lost. The notion that He ever entered into "a real partnership with the world" is completely foreign to the Gospel of the New Testament.

One of the memorable descriptions of Luther's encounter at Marburg is his famous word to Zwingli: "You have a different spirit." Despite all sorts of well-publicized denials, it should be obvious even to the least attentive in our midst that a different and alien spirit is being heard and apparently followed in our theology; specifically in the areas pertaining to social action. We should carefully take note of this fact and draw proper conclusions from this. Then the Holy Spirit, who witnesses to the Gospel in our hearts, will also clearly lead us "into all truth" in accordance with His word and promise.

5. Confessing and Confession Today

Manfred Roensch, D. Theol.

Perhaps there is one or the other among us, who is of the opinion that it is still clear in a church faithful to the confession of the Christian faith what confessing means according to the Confessions that bind us and unite us with the true church of all times and that for that reason no great discussions need be held about confessing and confession. I cannot join this conviction, at least not in view of the theological and ecclesiastical situation in Germany; and for that reason have chosen the above topic. The conditions in church and theology of the United States are, of course, not as familiar to me as those in Germany, but according to my observations and personal impressions that I have had during various visits in the U. S. during the last ten years, the confessionally serious Lutheran churches in America are in danger of relativizing the concept of the historic confessions by an existentialist concept of faith and confession, and thus to see no more in the Confessions than a witness of generations of confessors of previous generations to their faith, which we will honor, but whose statements touch and concern us only inasmuch as they show clearly, how existential faith presents a confession as its own product out of itself.

Such and similar ideas, and the insecurity thus given to every genuine confessional position, are no doubt due to the so-called existential theology, which in turn is a child of the existentialist philosophy. Let me, therefore, begin my lecture by demonstrating by the example of an internationally known German existential theologian, namely Gerhard Ebeling, to show by this example what kind of a concept of faith and confession this theology has. I hope you will pardon if I must feed you a number of Ebeling quotations for this purpose. In his book "Vom Wesen des Christlichen Glaubens" Ebeling talks about what he calls the place of faith (Ort des Glaubens) in the following manner: "Faith does not derive from certain intellectually acquired objects of consciousness (Bewusstseinsgegenstaenden) but from its own foundation. And only this can be object of my faith to me in the traditional sense of what is the foundation of faith (Grund des Glaubens) and becomes for me a witness to that faith. To cling to that, to depend on that with every fiber, in order to live as faith on that basis, is of course essential to faith. But I deem it unfortunate, to call this the Foundation of Faith, because the disastrous concept of a certain mass of articles of faith to be acquired and laboriously to be mastered is raised thereby. We had better abandon the concept of the object of faith altogether and speak of the Material of Faith. Fichte once called the world the material of duty. Now I would in contrast like to call the world the material of faith. This is not the material of the duty of faith. Doubtless faith has a number of problems to solve in the world as the material of faith does not in the first place mean something that falls into the category of works and fruits of faith, rather that which belongs into the category of the essence of faith. This is the essence of faith that it alone and by itself overcomes the world, that it finds in this world its material, its object, its resistance, its concretion and therewith its reality. What then does it mean 'I believe in God the Father', or 'I believe in Jesus Christ', or 'I believe in the Holy Ghost'? In themselves these are certain thoughts, confessional statements and doctrines, and these are in a necessary connection with faith. But only in concrete situations, i.e. in face of that, in endurance

of that, in persistence against that which concretely blocks and contradicts this that God is my Father, that Jesus Christ is the Lord, that the Holy Ghost has been outpoured, can we believe concretely. Where faith is not assailed it is no faith at all, for faith exists only where it can say 'nevertheless', this is valid also for thoughts — and is ever concrete in its realization in life."¹ What really happened here? Here is a conscious secularization not only of the object of faith, or as Ebeling chooses to call it the "material of faith," for the world is, according to Ebeling, material of faith; here faith is not only cast back upon itself and separated from the effect of the workings of the Holy Spirit, but here furthermore every continuity of faith which dwells necessarily in every confessional statement is dissolved in favor of a concept of a situation, which makes faith in the Triune God a concrete act of life, which is in the last analysis determined by a negation. Faith in the Triune God which has permeated the history of the Church from the time of the Apostles to our day is not known to Ebeling. This he openly says: "Faith is not a separate act, or some kind of speculative lift into the beyond. But faith is the determination of existence as existence in the here and now, and therefore not something besides all that which I do, suffer, and hope and experience, but something that is concrete only in all this, namely the determination of my doing, suffering, hoping and experiencing. If faith determines man's personhood, if it decides concerning who I am before God (that is, one with whom God is), then faith is never without all of that which I am concretely and only in relation to this. If only with all reflection on the essence of faith one would learn this above all that faith does not want to be believed *per se* but concretely! Then it should also have become clear that, since the world is the place of faith, one may and must also say, time is the place of faith. For the world is viewed here as that world which concerns and touches me in a concrete situation, that world that is determined by time, the historical world. One who does not concern himself with the world, that is, does not consider what time it is, one who is not open to the fact that everything has its time, and one who does not pay attention to the difference in the times, in other words, one who flees from the place of faith, such a one may indeed have a timeless relationship to concepts of faith which were shaped by the past, but this is not faith. On the horizon of history this general manageability of concepts of faith appears as an abstraction. It is time alone which turns faith into an 'I believe!'"²

Time, therefore, is the place or locus of faith, but a time that has no extension, which knows only the *hic et nunc* but no fulfillment as the New Testament has it. Just so sporadic is also the concept of history that Ebeling develops. The horizon of his history allows only abstract concepts of faith, which thereby also are of yesterday and surpassed by time and history, since presumably they are without concrete act of faith or life. Except that Ebeling here confuses as a true disciple of the existentialist philosophy "Geschehen" and "Geschichte" (event and history). Thereby he foregoes the possibility of seeing the workings of the Holy Ghost in time and history. This punctiliar understanding of time and history is an essential trademark of existentialism, to which every historic confession must be an abomination.

Faith is for these theologians always only possible in an existential way and cannot be passed on, transmitted, or consummated by others. The faith of this existential theology believes only in itself as the ground of faith. The faith in Jesus is made into a "faith like Jesus" and Jesus Christ, the very foundation of our faith, is turned into Jesus of Nazareth, a witness of faith. Ebeling asks: "What is believing in Jesus Christ" and answers: "It means to let him be the witness to the ground of faith and therefore enter into him and his work; to participate in him and his way and thereby participate in that which has been promised to faith, namely the Omnipotence of God."³ Our faith therefore is supposed to enter into the way of Jesus and thus participate in something God has never promised to faith. Such a statement is blasphemy when it is confronted with the statements of Holy Scriptures, that God has promised forgiveness of sins to all that believe in Jesus Christ.

It should be clear from the above that for an existential theologian actual

confession of faith is something altogether different from what it is for a Christian, who confesses his faith in Jesus Christ as his Savior and Redeemer. It is also clear that to such a theologian any formulated confession which claims to be the confession of the Church throughout this time and world until judgment day is nonsense.

Now, I do not think that in our churches which take the confessions of the Book of Concord seriously there are a number of theologians who fully endorse existential theology. On the other hand, I am convinced that many of our theologians, especially some of the younger ones, have been strongly influenced by existential theology, without necessarily being aware of it. This is true particularly with regard to the confessional question when one asks: Shall I spontaneously and concretely confess my faith in Christ in word and deed? "Yes!" Must I be pledged to a confession that was made 450 or even 1600 years ago under completely different intellectual, cultural, and social circumstances? "No!" Perhaps this is not often stated so bluntly, but there are more who think this way than we would like. This is our problem: How can we properly bring the historical confession of the church and our own act of confession together? How can we confess our faith and our theological conviction resulting therefrom in such a way that it does justice to the historical confession of the church? To put it another way, How do we find an inner access to the historical confession of the church which will enable us to understand its ultimate concern and central thrust, so that we will not only have no difficulty in supporting this confession but that we may also see our own theological stance embedded in it, and the central affirmation of the confession becomes our very own confession? "I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord." This statement is not only well known and familiar to us, but we should have no difficulty to give expression to our own conviction in these words.

Admittedly, we have less difficulty repeating Luther's Catechism statements, since they are directed at the expression of a personal faith, than we have with most of the other confessional statements. No one can seriously question that Luther's explanation of the 2nd Article correctly interprets Paul's word in I. Cor. 12: "No man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost." But this manifests not only the continuity in content of all scriptural confessions, coupled with the process of a legitimate interpretation and unfolding of the content of the apostolic proclamation, but also extremely important but often neglected fact that confessional statements are affirmations of faith, which are existentially possible for the believer only in faith, not on the basis of scientific research but by the operation of the Holy Spirit. However, this dare not be overlooked, the faith affirmation of the confessions does not have faith as such as its content, it does not reflect on the phenomenon of faith as existential theology does, but it is directed toward the object of faith. This object has been recognized in faith and is made manifest in the confession.

Hans Joachim Iwand, it seems to me, has said something very significant about the relation between faith and the object of faith, especially in view of the modern existentialist concept of faith: Iwand says: "Modern Protestantism is fully on the road to a complete inversion of faith. Although everything you could ask for is there: the ego that is conscious and certain of itself as believing; the proper order of the 'credere' before the intellect, also the understanding, which now refers to this act of faith. But this all is irrelevant and empty. Everything vibrates around the 'Ego', the Reflecting. Everything concerns this Ego as becoming a Believing out of an Unbelieving. Here Kierkegaard has opened a chasm, into which modern theology was thrown deeply and no one knows how to fill the gap. Is it not significant that the Bible speaks differently? The Bible says: 'We have believed and known that thou art the Holy One of God.' Knowing is thus more than self-realization. I do not only arrive at an understanding of myself but rather the Object is grasped and held firmly in the statement I make. Not the condition but the Object is the

theme, not that we are something, have or attain something, but this that man lets go of himself, is free of himself and apprehends as does the eye of one healed of blindness, the reality, which lies in view."⁴

The ultimate content of our faith and confession is therefore Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God. He is this however in two ways, according to His person and work. Though the person of the God-man stands in the center of every apostolic statement of faith, yet one can never and dare never disregard the fact that Jesus Christ, Son of God and Mary's Son is our's and the whole world's Redeemer. Never must the fact that He was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification be pushed into the background. For this reason Luther in his explanation of the second article joins to the confession of the person of the Redeemer the confession of the work of the Redeemer. "Who has redeemed me a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with his holy precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death." Without exaggeration we can say that in this sentence Luther makes a confessing statement with the fullness of the apostolic proclamation of the work of redemption in a truly unique condensation. Again I can quote Hans Joachim Iwand here who defines the content of every genuine confession: "What now are the contents established by a confession? They all proceed from the person of Christ. In Him the government of God has become present (Mt. 12:28). And we note that the contents refer in such a way to Him that they are at the same time a confession of His person and His work. It is possible to emphasize the person so strongly that thereby His work recedes and vice-versa. From these two sides of the revelation of God in Christ Jesus one could explain the history of dogmatics. Eastern theology has (in following St. John) occupied itself much more with the mystery of the person, and western theology with His work. If the work of Christ is completely absorbed by His person, as it was done in the christology of the ancient church, there is danger of speculation. If the work alone is made the point of departure there is the danger that the dogmatic dissolves itself in ethics, that is the danger of western theology."⁵

The correctness of Iwand's last sentence, it seems to me, is evident in the development of the Existential theology, which finally, because it doesn't know what to do with the person of Christ as the Son of God made man, has only a legalistic ethic left over and proclaims a life "like Jesus." The apostolic gospel in every case does not separate the person and work of Christ but proclaims both in indivisible unity. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). "But when the fullness of time was come God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4,5).

And this gospel in its uniform testimony to and of the person and work of Christ is to the Lutheran Confessions, which claim to be ecumenical confessions, not only the center of all confession but at the same time the center of the whole Bible and the key to its understanding. Apology IV, Paragraph 2 and 3 (Translation of the German Text) we read: "Again, that we hold, teach, and confess, that no one is reconciled to God and no one obtains forgiveness of sins, except alone by faith in Christ. Since, however, there is such dispute about that highest and chief article of the whole Christian doctrine, so that so very much depends on this article, which also serves eminently for a clear and correct understanding of the whole Scripture and alone shows the right road to the inexpressible treasure and the true knowledge of Christ, and also alone is able to open the door into the Bible, without which article no poor conscience could have a true, constant and sure comfort, nor would be able to recognize the treasures of the grace of Christ, . . . we beg that imperial majesty would listen to us concerning this great, brave, most important matter according to need and graciously."

The Gospel in its application, namely that a sinner is justified before God by believing the Gospel and believing in the person of Christ and in that

which this person has done for us is herewith unmistakably defined as the center of all confessing, the center of Scripture and at the same time the sole legitimate access into it. The ultimate content of Scripture is exactly just as the ultimate content of confession the gospel of Jesus Christ proclaimed to be believed and confessed in faith. In *De Servo Arbitrio* Luther says: "For what higher thing can be hidden in the Scriptures after the seals have been opened (Rev. 6:1) after the stone has been rolled from the door of the tomb and the highest mystery has become revealed, that Christ suffered for us and that He will reign forever? . . . All of Scripture deals only of Christ. It is therefore all clear as to what matters are contained in Scripture." For Luther the final decision in his confessional stance is taken always starting from Christ and from the Gospel, and this particularly in his defense against false doctrine. So, for instance, in regard to the Lord's Supper. In his *Great Confession of the Lord's Supper* this becomes especially evident. A statement which he makes in this work, which was also used in the Formula of Concord, shows this to my opinion, especially clearly: "For you must place this being of Christ, who is one person with God, very far, far outside of the creatures, as far as God is outside of them; and again as deep and near within all creatures as God is within them. For He is one inseparable person with God, where God is there must He also be, or our faith is false." (Sol. Decl. VII, 101) Luther who placed the work of Christ back into the center of theology, who rediscovered the *theologia crucis*, never forgot that the faith in the person of Christ as the God-man Redeemer, absolutely and unconditionally belongs together with faith in the redemptive work of Christ. Whenever he saw this unity endangered he reacted with severity and a consistency, which we can only appreciate, if we see clearly that the confession of the full gospel demands a rejection of all such opinions and statements that deprecate this gospel from any direction and endanger the unity of the apostolic confessions as to the person and work of Christ.

The discussion about the "condemnations" in our Confessional Writings and their meaning and validity is particularly timely, since in North America as well as in Europe dialogues have been held between Lutherans and Reformed, which aim at establishment of fellowship between the Lutheran and Reformed Churches of the world. Such is of course only possible if and when more than one "damnamus" of our Lutheran Confessions is pushed aside. Dr. Marc Lienhard of the Strasbourg Institute for Ecumenical Research was commissioned to conduct an examination of the condemnations of the confessions of the 16th Century ("Untersuchung zu den Kondemnationen der Bekenntnisse des 16ten Jahrhunderts"). He reaches among other things the following conclusion: "On the one hand the condemnations cannot be weakened or overcome by considering them timebound phenomena of that time which have no validity for our day . . . Whatever has been recognized as faulting the gospel cannot become truth in a new situation. If, for example, the Lutheran Confessions reject an opinion that sees the Lord's Supper merely as a memorial meal then this decision cannot simply be reinterpreted." If this were the final theological result of his investigation we could have only a happy agreement with Dr. Lienhard's conclusion, for he has recognized, that the condemnations and rejections of the confessions are all made in view of the Gospel and reject the attempt to adulterate the Gospel. Sorry to say, he believes to have discovered something more and by this he nullifies what he has just said. He continues, "On the other hand, the confessions also are subject to the contingencies of history. We must certainly respect the Lutheran concern and conviction to have found the center of Scripture in the doctrine of justification founded on Christology. Certainly we will have to speak of a continuity of the Church in relation to the confessions of the past. And yet, the confessions including the condemnations cannot simply be repeated for the sake of their place in history, but must be confessed with a new interpretation. In this perspective the Lutheran Church today will not be able to adopt all the condemnations in the Formula of Concord." "Thus," he continues, "it does not seem possible to condemn the opposition to 'genus majestaticum' and the doctrine of 'ubiquity' as false doctrines." Lienhard, as we see, brings

the point of history into play. We will immediately have to speak of this. For the sake of the Gospel he does not want to join in the condemnations of the Formula of Concord against the doctrines which raise doubt precisely against the properly understood Gospel which is based on the unity of person and work of Christ. For the "genus majesticum" and "ubiquity" safeguard just the unity of the divine and human Nature of Christ. Whoever denies these doctrines must hear the "damnamus", for the sake of the Gospel. The apostolic Gospel knows no separation of the person and work of Christ, and for that reason the christologically based doctrine of justification is not just a concern (Anliegen) only, that we should hear, as Lienhard says, but it is the Gospel, the redeeming and saving message of the person and work of Christ. The confessions of the Lutheran Church have never seen it otherwise. All their thinking and speaking proceeds from the center of Scripture, the Gospel. Especially also there where the confessions speak of matters which seemingly have little to do with the person and work of Christ, we can see that light flash forth, sometimes unexpectedly, as a point of reference. So, for example, in the Apology of the A.C. in the second article where Melancthon comes to grips with the scholastic concept of original sin. Twice, in this connection, the same argument arises, even if not in the same words; once we read in Paragraph 33: "Neque enim postest intelligi magnitudo gratia Christi, nisi morbis nostris cognitis." (Triglotta, page 113 Apology) Engl.: "For the magnitude of the grace of Christ cannot be understood unless our diseases be recognized." Again in Paragraph 50: "Beneficia Christi non poterunt cognosci nisi intelligamus mala nostra." (Trigl. Apology page 119) Engl.: "It will not be possible to recognize the benefits of Christ unless we understand our evils." In other words according to Melancthon the right understanding of the Gospel presupposes recognition of the complete and full sinfulness and lost condition of man, and vice-versa.

It might be proper at this place to avert a possible misunderstanding, one of which some men of the time of the reformation were victims, namely that the importance of the Gospel for Lutheran Theology and for the Confessions was seen so onesidedly that thereby the one immutable will of God, as the Formula of Concord says, namely God's holy law is considered superfluous. The confession itself does not fall prey to this misunderstanding. Immediately following the citation above from Article IV of the Apology, namely that only by faith in Christ and the gift of justification before God all Scripture can be understood, we read (Triglotta, Apology, page 121) "All Scripture ought to be distributed into these two principal topics, the Law and the promises. For in some places it presents the Law, and in others the promise concerning Christ, namely, either when it promises that Christ will come, and offers for His sake the remission of sins, justification and life eternal, or when, in the Gospel, Christ Himself, since He has appeared, promises the remission of sins, justification and life eternal." (Note: The English text is a translation and conflation of both the Latin and German texts. The quote above is the translation of the Latin).

For the Lutheran Confessions the law is the essential counterpart to the Gospel, for the confessions are clear on this that the Holy Spirit must first do His "strange" work in us by the Law before He can perform His proper work by the comfort of the Gospel and proclaims to us the grace of God for Christ's sake. S. D. V. Paragraph 11 we read: "Therefore the Spirit of Christ must not only comfort, but also through the office of the Law reprove the world of sin, John 16:8, and thus must do in the New Testament as prophet says, Is. 28:21, opus alienum, ut faciat opus proprium, that is, He must do the work of another (reprove), in order that He may, afterwards, do His own work, which is to comfort and speak of grace."

But let us return to our main topic.

If we want the Confessions to come alive in our own faith and confession and for our theological thinking and speaking, if furthermore we will not be satisfied with only citing statements out of them or accepting them *en bloc* at the time of our ordination, then we will have to undertake the task to try and

understand and use them according to their own essential content, and I can add of my own personal experience, that this would really be worthwhile. The Confessions not only point to the gospel as the foremost hermeneutical principle but demand that they be interpreted and understood according to the Gospel.

In this a difficulty becomes evident which anyone of us who has tried to understand the historical confessions has clearly experienced; this difficulty is the fact that they are conditioned by history. This is after all the age old difficulty of faith and history. The last of the Confessional writings in the Book of Concord has recognized this historic character which by the very essence of history is part of all historic confessions and therefore has established that in matters of doctrinal decisions the confessions must never be taken in isolation but must always be finally made on the basis of Holy Scripture. In the Summary of the Epitome of the F.C. we read: "The other symbols and Writings mentioned are not judges as is the Holy Scripture, but only witnesses and declarations of faith, to show how at all times the Holy Scriptures have been understood in regard to disputed doctrines and interpreted by the then living confessors, and how the contrary doctrines have been rejected and condemned." The Confessions are here understood to be the witnesses of faith and interpretation of Scripture on the part of their first confessors. Are they not thereby decidedly devaluated and thus only have the significance of historic monuments to faith? The Formula of Concord is not of this opinion. In view of the Augsburg Confession we read in the *Solida Declaratio*: "Thus we subscribe to the first unaltered Augsburg Confession not because it was set up by our theologians, but because it was taken from Holy Scripture and well and firmly founded on it." Here we have the confession of theologians, of whom none were among the confessors at Augsburg who now fifty years later state that the Augsburg Confession is their confession, not in pious respect of the fathers, but because they had to accept the confession of the fathers since it was based on Holy Scripture. And since we know that the authors of the Formula of Concord understood and interpreted the Scriptures by its core, namely the Gospel, it clearly becomes the deciding factor also for us today.

Our faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ is the faith of men who live in time and history. This faith, strictly speaking has no unhistorical or suprahistorical content, but is faith in the revelation of God's act in time and history by Christ Jesus and His vicarious suffering, death and resurrection for us. Faith in the Gospel is therefore faith in this act of God in this world and its history. This faith comes to life through the witness of this act of God by the power of the Holy Spirit, and calls forth this confession to the person and work of Christ in the course of history again and again in those who believe in their Lord and Savior. So there is not only a continuity of faith but also a corresponding continuity of confession. The legitimacy of a historic confession can therefore be established always only in reference to the Gospel and I can make it my own only in faith in the Gospel. Thus it becomes my personal confession.

This Gospel, whose preaching and teaching the Lord Jesus Christ commissioned to His disciples and His whole church before His ascension, is being accepted, declared, taught and defended against all heresy that might adulterate the truth of God in and by the confession of the church throughout the centuries of the church's history. The defense, however, can only be done in such manner, that that Gospel given to us in the Scriptures, the Word of God, is unfolded and interpreted. Confession, therefore, is always also and not only in a lesser manner *Exegesis*. The Confessions can and will never say or teach anything beyond Scripture, but it intends emphatically to declare its doctrine and to reject expressly any contrary doctrine. Thus the Confessions never intend to be a substitute for the Scriptures of the Old or New Testament. Luther has expressed this clearly in his writing "Of the Councils and the Church." He says: "And there is no council or fathers, where we might find and learn the whole Christian doctrine . . . The Nicene Creed

tells mainly that Christ is true God. The confession of Chalcedon that Christ has two and not one nature, a divine and human; . . . and in summary, put them all together and you would not dig the whole doctrine of Christian faith out of them and if you'd dig at it eternally" (WA 50,546). The importance and function of the Confessions of the Church is found mainly in this, I dare say, that it has a serving character. It is not just to lead us to the Holy Scriptures, but into the Word of God. It shows us the person and work of Christ, the Gospel as the center of the Scripture. It thus brings us by the power of the Holy Spirit to the confession of Jesus Christ and so includes us in the confession of the true Church of all times until the Day of the Lord.

FOOTNOTES

¹Gerhard Ebeling, *Vom Wesen des Christlichen Glauben* (Tuebingen: J. C. Mohr, 1959), p. 207 ff.

²Ibid., p. 209 ff.

³Ibid.

⁴Hans Joachim Iward, *Du bist Christus*, Vol. I, p. 32 ff.

⁵Ibid.

6. Confessional Subscription

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What is a Lutheran? What is the nature of subscription to the Lutheran Confessions? These two questions which are often considered together and which are as inseparably related as Siamese twins have become increasingly important in our day when Lutheranism is fighting for its identity and life. Today most of the Lutheran pastors and teachers throughout the world subscribe, at least *pro forma*, all the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran church: the ancient catholic creeds and the great Lutheran confessions of the 16th century, i.e. the Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Luther's two catechisms, the Smalcald Articles and the Formula of Concord. What does such subscription mean? Is such subscription any longer possible in our day of academic freedom and vaunted autonomy, ecumenism and dialogue? Many today think that subscription to any creed or confession is no longer viable and can represent only an impossible legalistic yoke upon an evangelical Christian or pastor. This is the conviction not only of Baptists and other traditionally non-credal denominations, but also of such renowned and conservative theologians as Karl Barth who holds that any human formulation of doctrine (as a creed or confession must be) is only a quest, an approximation, and therefore relative.¹

Are such objections valid? Is the Lutheran church able to justify confessional subscription today? And is she able to explain and agree on precisely what is meant by such subscription?

Today questions concerning the nature and spirit and extent of confessional subscription have become a vexing problem, an enigma or even an embarrassment to many Lutherans.

There was no difficulty in answering such questions in 1530, however, when the great *Magna Charta* of the Lutheran Church, the Augsburg Confession, was presented by the Lutheran princes to Emperor Charles V, or again in 1580 when thousands of Lutheran pastors accepted and subscribed the Book of Concord.²

From the time of John Philip Spener in the late 17th century disagreement and debate among Lutherans concerning confessional subscription began to develop, and these problems centered largely in the extent of that subscription. The question was: ought one to subscribe the confessions *quia* (because) they agreed with Scripture, or only *quatenus* (in so far as) they agreed with Scripture. This latter *quatenus* mode of subscription meant that one subscribed the confessions with reservations; the act was therefore a contradiction in terms and no real subscription at all. As John Conrad Dannhauer said, one could subscribe the Koran in so far as it agreed with Scripture.

Questions still arise regarding the extent of confessional subscription, and one occasionally hears theologians asking whether we are bound to the belief in the perpetual virginity of Mary or to the judgment that the papacy is the Antichrist or to the number of sacraments listed in our symbols, etc. Often this sort of picayunish discussion and complaint is quite beside the point and represents only a subterfuge which serves to hide deeper misgivings concerning the theology of the confessions. Today, I am convinced, the confessional problem among Lutherans does not lie primarily in the extent of confessional subscription, or even in the theology of the confessions. After all, the Lutheran symbols can be used as a waxen nose (just like Scripture) and turned

to suit the fancy of liberal theologians who find themselves in territorial churches or synods which still give some sort of formal status to the symbols. No, the problem facing us today, as Peter Brunner implies,³ is whether a person can be loyal to any confession or creed at all, whether theologians who have abandoned the authority of holy Scripture can have confessions any longer, whether modern latitudinarianism and indifference so rampant in practically all synods and church bodies today is at all compatible with confessionalism. In short, the issue is with the very nature of confessionalism, with the spirit of confessional subscription, with the very possibility of subscription at all.

I. The True Nature Of Confessional Subscription Misrepresented

Today the *quia—quatenus* distinction is no longer in vogue. The mere *quatenus* subscription has been so thoroughly discredited that no Lutheran theologian, at least in our country, wishes to identify with it. Does this mean that a straightforward unconditional (*quia*) subscription is now acceptable to all Lutherans in our country? By no means.⁴ There are current in the Lutheran church today many utterly inadequate approaches to the Lutheran confessions and to confessional subscription. And there are many Lutheran theologians who relativize the confessions and subscribe to them only with various sorts of qualifications. I shall now list four of these inadequate modern approaches which seem to be quite common.⁵

1. *The first inadequate approach to the Lutheran confessions today is to relativize them historically.* This is an old ruse, already called attention to by Dr. Walther.⁶ Briefly put, this attitude toward the confessions argues that the Lutheran symbols, like every writing (including the Bible) are historically conditioned. They were indeed good and adequate confessions for their day. But we are living in a different age. And therefore these ancient writings cannot speak as directly to us as to their own day. And we cannot subscribe them in the same sense as the original subscribers. If we had been living at the time of the Reformation, however, we would have identified wholeheartedly with them. This seems to be the kind of qualified subscription that Theodore Tappert advocates when he says,⁷ "When subscribing the confessions today, Lutherans assert that, in view of the issues which were then at stake and the alternatives which were then offered, the confessors were right." There is good reason for Carl Braaten to comment,⁸ "This is merely a new declension of the old *quatenus* formula." And as we might expect Tappert's historically relativized subscription enables him to quarrel with the *doctrine* of the confessions, e.g. on the necessity of baptism and on the third use of the Law as a norm for Christian life.

2. *The second inadequate approach to the Lutheran confessions today is to relativize them reductionistically.* This approach reduces the role of the confessions to a function, namely as evangelical witness. This is the simplistic and arbitrary position of Carl Braaten.⁹ Gratuitously assuming that the Confessions provide no formula of subscription for succeeding Lutherans, Braaten claims that we are free today to work out our own approach toward the confessions. He then polemicizes without abandon against any unconditional subscription to the confessions as such. This he calls "symbolatry" (a word not coined by him), "doctrinal legalism", "confessional totalitarianism", "restitution", "a kind of doctrinal methodism". Again the ruse, this time pompous, declamatory and misleading, to bully and intimidate anyone who would subscribe without reservation the doctrinal content of our confessions. And what does Braaten offer as the only legitimate attitude toward the confessions? "Constructive confessional Lutheranism" is the term he employs, which means that we accept the confessions as an example of evangelical witness which were formulated in a "special kairos" for the crisis of their day.

Now, certainly our confessions are such a witness, but they claim to be much more than that, namely true, ecumenical, permanently valid exposi-

tions and formulations of biblical truth, which claim the acceptance of every pastor who desires the name Lutheran and evangelical.

A similar type of reductionism may be found in the recent document "A Call to Openness and Trust" issued by certain persons within the Missouri Synod. The statement is there made: "We *identify* too with the historic confessions of the Lutheran Church, understood, as all such statements must be, in the historical setting and terms of their time. We see these confessional statements as *setting forth a life of Christian freedom in the Gospel.*" And that is all that is said! Again the confessions serve as a mere example for us today. Interestingly, this statement too feels free to break with the confessions on their insistence upon a definite doctrine of the presence of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper.

3. *The third inadequate approach to the Lutheran confessions today is to ignore or avoid the issue of subscription.*

A true Lutheran does not need to protest and avow continuously his loyalty to the Lutheran confessions. His ministry and teaching and personal confession will be a witness to his commitment to our confessions. However, there are times and circumstances when one must clearly enunciate his position toward the creeds and confessions of the church. To be silent would constitute a denial of meaningful commitment. Such is the case with two "Position Papers" on the subject "The Status of the Nicene Creed as Dogma of the Church", delivered by Warren Quanbeck and George Lindbeck in consultation with several Lutheran and Roman Catholic theologians.¹⁰ Not one word in either paper on the status of the Nicene Creed as Dogma of the church. The only statement pertaining to the subject mustered by Quanbeck, after all kinds of qualification, is the following: "Our confession of the Nicene Creed is our recognition that *given the fourth century situation* we stand with Athanasius against Arius on Trinitarian and Christological issues." Simply to take sides like this is a subscription to nothing. Meanwhile Lindbeck's presentation pedantically questions the Creed in a variety of ways, thus avoiding the subject of the status of the Creed in the church or our posture toward it today. How ironic to hear the Roman Catholic counterpart in the discussions, John Courtney Murray, addressing himself to the same subject and speaking unequivocally of "the immutability of the Nicene dogma", insisting that it will ever remain true and relevant to affirm that Christ, the Son, is consubstantial with the Father and that the Creed will always be relevant and "intelligible *suo modo* as a formula of faith."¹¹ Here is one speaking in the spirit of credal subscription.

4. *The fourth inadequate approach to the Lutheran confessions today is bombastically to reject subscription.* This approach resembles the relativizing principle enunciated above (point 2) but is overt and frank. For instance, Richard Neuhaus writes,¹² "A theologian worth his stipend can hardly be constrained, either in methodology or conclusions, by the statements of theologians of the 16th century." (One might ask whether he would include theologians of the first century such as Paul or John or Jesus!) Then follows the bombast which serves to sweeten the fare, like canned gravy over rancid beef, and thus palliate a simple rejection of confessional subscription. "Theology must argue rather than assert," Neuhaus asserts, "convince rather than coerce, persuade rather than appeal to authority." Again he magniloquently and irrelevantly asserts that confessions are not like "traffic cops directing theology's course"; they are "not binding as a form of canonical law", etc. In the end, after the reader is sufficiently embarrassed over even the semblance of confessional subscription, the bombast subsides and the concluding statement sounds almost magnanimous toward the confessions, although it turns out to be only a variation of the principle of relativizing the confessions historically (point 1).¹³

II. The Nature Of Confessional Subscription According To The Confessions

The modern approaches toward our confessions which I have just briefly described have one thing in common apart from their weakening or virtual

rejection of confessional subscription: they all (except perhaps for point 1) obscure or confuse or complicate the notion of confessional subscription. There is, however, nothing obscure or confused or even complex about the concept of confessional subscription. This is the reason why the notion is not discussed at length but only touched upon by our confessions themselves. The creeds do not bother to explain what is meant and involved by the formula "I believe". Nor do our Reformation confessions go into any disquisition on the meaning and implications of the formula, "*Ecclesiae magno consensu apud nos docent*" (Our churches teach with great unanimity), or, "We believe, teach and confess." Why not? Because the nation of confession, subscription to confessions, commitment to the Gospel and all its articles and to a definite doctrinal position was clear and clearly understood by all.

In our day too there has been little discussion on the meaning and nature of confessional subscription for the simple reason that there does not need to be. When orthodox Lutherans have written on the subject it has been usually to clear up misunderstandings and aberrations introduced by those who wish to make only some sort of conditional subscription to the confessions (Walther) or to recall Lutheran pastors to their ordination vow and to rally behind the confessions (Hummel) or to emphasize certain aspects of confessional subscription such as its relation to the *sola scriptura* principle (Brunner).

What then is the nature of confessional subscription?

Confessional subscription is a solemn act of confessing in which I willingly (AC, Conclusion: FC SD XII,40) and in the fear of God (FC Epit. XII,13; SD Source and Norm,20) confess my faith and declare to the world what is my belief, teaching and confession. This I do by pledging myself with my whole heart (*bekennen wir uns; ampleximur; toto pectore ampleximur; FC SD Rule and Norm, 4-7*) to certain definite, formulated confessions. I do this in complete assurance that these confessions are true and are correct expositions of Scripture (*aus und nach Gottes Wort; weil sie aus Gottes Wort genommen und darin fest und wohl gegründet ist; ibid.5,10*). These symbolical writings become for me permanent confessions and patterns of doctrine (*Begriff und Form; forma et typus. ibid. 1; einhellige, gewisse, allgemeine Form der Lehre; ibid.10*) according to which I judge all other writings and teachers (*wofern sie dem jetzt gemeldeten Vorbild der Lehre gemäzz. ibid. 10*).

Confessional subscription is not some sort of individualistic, autonomous act. It is not identical with what Jesus calls for when He tells me to confess Him before men (Matt.10:32; Rom.10:9; 1 Pet. 3:15; 1 John 4:2), although it includes that. It is a responsible *public* act of confession, done in fellowship and union with the Christian church and indicating that I share unconditionally the "unanimous and correct understanding" of the church which has steadfastly remained in the pure doctrine (*ibid. 13*). The confessions do not belong to me, but to the church as the unanimously approved pattern of doctrine (*ibid.1*). They are above me or any individual (*ibid.10*). As Schlink says,¹⁴ the consensus, so often mentioned in the confessions and so important to them, "makes plain that the confession is not the doctrine of an individual but of the church."¹⁵

It is essential that we base our notion of the nature and extent of confessional subscription on what the confessions themselves say or infer about such subscription. It should go without saying that we must either subscribe the confessions in the spirit and sense in which they were originally intended to be subscribed, or not at all.

A few statements from our confessions will bear this out. In speaking of the entire Book of Concord the Formula of Concord says the following (FC SD, Rule and Norm. 10):

Our intention was only to have a single, universally accepted certain, and common form of doctrine which all our Evangelical churches subscribe [*bekennen; agnoscant et amplexantur*] and from which and according to

which, because it is drawn from the Word of God, all other writings are to be approved and accepted, judged and regulated. Cf. par.13.

Concerning the Augsburg Confession and its permanent validity in the church the following is said (FC SD Introduction, 5):

Similarly we are determined by the grace of the Almighty to abide until our end by this repeatedly cited Christian Confession as it was delivered to Emperor Charles in 1530. And we do not intend, either in this or in subsequent doctrinal statements, to depart from the aforementioned Confession or to set up a different and new confession.

Possibly the strongest statement pertaining to confessional subscription is found in the Preface to the Christian Book of Concord (Trig.p.23). Having pledged themselves to the earlier symbols the confessors say:

Therefore we also have determined not to depart even a finger's breadth either from the subjects themselves nor from the phrases which are found in them, but, the Spirit of God aiding us, to persevere constantly, with the greatest harmony, in this godly agreement, and we intend to examine all controversies according to this true norm and declaration of pure doctrine.

On the basis of such statements which tell us as much about the spirit of confessional subscription as the nature and extent of it Walther offers the following splendid summary of the nature of confessional subscription,¹⁶

An unconditional subscription is the solemn declaration which the individual who wants to serve the church makes under oath 1) that he accepts the *doctrinal content* of our symbolical books, because he recognizes the fact that it is in full agreement with Scripture and does not militate against Scripture in any point, whether that point be of major or minor importance; 2) that he therefore heartily believes in this divine truth and is determined to preach this doctrine, whatever the form may be in which it occurs, whether the subject be dealt with *ex professo* or only incidentally. An unconditional subscription refers to the whole content of the symbols and does not allow the subscriber to make any mental reservation in any point. Nor will he exclude such doctrines as are discussed incidentally in support of other doctrines, because the fact that they are so stamps them as irrevocable articles of faith and demands their joyful acceptance by everyone who subscribes the symbols.

Notice that Walther's description, like the confessions themselves, (Tr. Conclusion; FC SD Rule and Norm, 10ff; FC SD Introduction,3), makes the object of our subscription the *doctrinal content* of the confessions. That is what we pledge ourselves to, and that is all. To my knowledge no Lutheran ever required any more. Walther makes this clear, and so do the Lutheran Fathers before him.¹⁷ It should be unnecessary therefore constantly to repeat this obvious fact,¹⁸ unless theologians are deliberately beclouding the issue. We do not pledge ourselves and subscribe to the Latin or German grammar of the confessions, or to the logic or illustrations used there, or to what they might say about historical or scientific matters, or liturgical usages of vestments, or the numbering of the sacraments, or to the mode of baptism (which seemed to be immersion. See SC IV,11. Latin: *quid autem significat ista in aquam immersio?*), or to non-doctrinal "pious" phraseology like the "*semper virgo*" which we find in Selnecker's translation of the Smalcald Articles.¹⁹

We are bound however to the *exegesis* of the Confessions. This assertion requires just a bit of explanation. Obviously, as Walther points out, we are not bound to every choice of passages our confessions make in supporting their doctrine, or to every precise detail in their exegesis of Scripture passages. But we cannot reject the exegetical conclusions (many of which are only implicit in our creeds and symbols) of our confessions without rejection of the confessions themselves as being statements of doctrine *drawn from the Scriptures*. It is clear that a rejection one by one of the passages used to support Lutheran doctrine or a rejection of the exegetical methodology of our confessions is tantamount to a repudiation of the confessions themselves. It is not correct to say that it is un-Lutheran to require agreement in exegetical

conclusions. Consensus, for instance, on the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Sacrament of the Altar is contingent upon agreement on the exegetical conclusions drawn from the words of institution (FC VII). And the same could be said for any number of articles of faith which the confessions defend exegetically.

III. Adjuncts To Confessional Subscription (The Spirit of Confessional Subscription)

Confessional subscription can be truly appreciated and understood not simply by knowing what it is, but by understanding what is involved and implied by it. Therefore we must mention two important adjuncts of confessional subscription.

A. *Confessional Subscription and the Gospel*

Confessional subscription is an act motivated and determined by the Gospel. A Lutheran's attitude toward the confessions will indicate his attitude toward the Gospel itself.

1. Our Lutheran confessions are truly Gospel centered and were written for the sake of the Gospel.²⁰ The Gospel of Christ is the central theme (*praecipuus locus doctrinae Christianae; doctrina praecipua de fide; fundamentum; der erste und Hauptartikel*. SA II,1ff. also Intro.). The very structure of certain confessions such as the Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, and the Smalcald Articles is centered around the article of the Gospel, and when secondary topics and abuses are discussed, such as the mass, the invocation of the saints, chapters and monasteries, they are always related to the chief article of the Gospel which pertains to our knowledge of Christ (SA II,II,III). The two great discussions of the Apology which center in the doctrine of justification and repentance reveal the total Gospel concern and orientation of that great confession. Even the Formula of Concord which was written to settle controversies which had entered the Lutheran church deals with these problems and settles them from a definite Gospel perspective. For instance, the Flacian error concerning original sin is shown to conflict with the several articles of the Gospel (redemption, sanctification, resurrection, FC SD I,43-47).

Our confessions were written to preserve the Gospel. This is why Melancthon in the Apology condemns so strongly the work righteousness of the papists; for such a doctrine "buries Christ", "obscures" and "abolishes" the glory of Christ and the knowledge of the Gospel (Apol. II,44; IV,204,213; XI,9,77). And why is the Gospel so important to Melancthon, Luther and the other writers of our confessions? Not only because their personal salvation is involved, but because of their evangelical concern for lost sinners and their spiritual welfare, because of their loving concern over tender and terrified consciences, their concern over confused Christians (Apol. IV,301,321; XI,10; XII,28; XIV,4-5; SA Preface, 3,10; SC Preface,2,4,6), yes, concern for the eternal salvation of these people (FC Epit. Rule and Norm,5; SD, Rule and Norm, 8; XI,96; Apol IV,332. German, Bek.223).

It is this cause and concern with which a Lutheran pastor identifies when he wholeheartedly and joyfully subscribes and commits himself to the Lutheran symbols. The doctrinal content of the Lutheran symbols which he subscribes is the Gospel and all its articles.

2. The Gospel is doctrine. Subscription to the Lutheran Confessions, motivated and determined by the doctrine to the Gospel, involves total commitment to this doctrine. And this doctrine of the Gospel is a definite, authoritative, cognitive message and proclamation (FC Epit. V,5-7,9; SD, V,20 *passim*).²¹ No wonder our confessions take doctrine so seriously and insist that they believe, teach and confess the pure doctrine (FC SD Introduction,3). The salvation of souls is at stake. "These important matters also concern ordinary people and laymen who for their eternal salvation must as Christians know the difference between true and false doctrine. . ." (FC SD

Rule and Norm,8; cf. Epit. Rule and Norm,5). No wonder they insist on condemning false doctrine with countless antitheses and condemnations wherever it crops up. Again the Gospel is at stake. "In order to preserve the pure doctrine and to maintain a thorough, lasting, and God-pleasing concord within the church, it is essential not only to present the true and wholesome doctrine correctly, but also to accuse the adversaries who teach otherwise (1 Tim.3:9; Tit.1:9; 2 Tim.2:24; 3:16)" (FC SD Rule and Norm,14).²² No wonder the framers of our confessions, convinced that their doctrine is true and based upon the Word of God (FC SD Rule and Norm 2,4,5,16), determine, as they put it, "by God's grace to remain steadfastly in our commitment to this confession until we die" (FC SD XII,6). Just listen to the spirit of doctrinal certainty, based upon Scripture and wrought by the Spirit of God, which breathes forth from their confession,

We have no intention (since we have no authority to do so) to yield anything of the eternal and unchangeable truth of God for the sake of temporal peace, tranquility, and outward harmony. Nor would such peace and harmony last, because it would be contrary to the truth and actually intended for its suppression. Still less by far are we minded to whitewash or cover up any falsification of true doctrine or any publicly condemned errors. We have a sincere delight in and deep love for true harmony and are cordially inclined and determined on our part to do everything in our power to further the same. We desire such harmony as will not violate God's honor, that will not detract anything from the divine truth of the holy Gospel, that will not give place to the smallest error but will lead the poor sinner to true and sincere repentance, raise him up through faith, strengthen him in his new obedience, and thus justify and save him for ever through the sole merit of Christ. (FC SD XI,95-96).

Listen again to the certainty, this time uttered with eschatological assurance, with which they make their confession also for their posterity:

Therefore, in the presence of God and of all Christendom among both our contemporaries and our posterity, we wish to have testified that the present explanation of all the foregoing controverted articles here explained, and none other, is our teaching, belief, and confession in which by God's grace we shall appear with intrepid hearts before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ and for which we shall give an account. Nor shall we speak or write anything, privately or publicly, contrary to this confession, but we intend through God's grace to abide by it. (FC SD XII,40.)

Here we see the glad, free, confident spirit of an unconditioned subscription to the Lutheran confessions.

The pastor who pooh-poohs purity of doctrine, who squirms when false doctrine and teachers are condemned, who cannot be certain of his own doctrinal position cannot subscribe the Lutheran confessions and forfeits all right to the name Lutheran.

The notion has been expressed for various reasons by theologians ever since the Reformation that subscription, total, unconditional and unqualified subscription, to the Lutheran confessions is legalistic, a violation of Christian freedom, etc.²³ Opposition has centered especially against the condemnation of false doctrine so common in our confessions. Such a reaction not only manifests an ignorance of the spirit of confessionalism which puts the truth of the Gospel above every other consideration, but is itself a kind of insidious crypto-legalism, a pressure (using such pious phrases as "law of love", "freedom of faith", "tolerance" etc.) exerted to divert one from making total commitment to an articulated Gospel, a definite doctrinal position. Paul was an obedient servant of Christ who loved his Lord, but he also emphasized the great importance of pure doctrine (2 Tim.1:13-14 [cf. FC SD Rule and Norm,9] 1 Tim.4:16; Tit.22). And he did not hesitate to condemn false teachers (2 Tim.1:20; Rom.16:16; Gal.1:8), even by name (1 Tim.1:20; 2 Tim.2:17). Was Paul a legalist? Not at all, he was positively and totally evangelical, motivated wholly by the Gospel. And so is the church and the

individual who like Paul, the slave of Christ, determines to subscribe a body of doctrine, a "pattern of sound words" (2 Tim.1:13), which both articulates the Gospel and is formulated and professed for the sake of the Gospel. No, the fact is that it is not only un-Lutheran but unevangelical *not* to subscribe the Lutheran confessions. Confessionalism springs from a love of Christ, a love toward lost sinners, and a loyalty to the Gospel. As Peter Brunner says,²⁵ "It is not a matter of vindicating the Lutheran Confessions of the 16th century at all costs in the present ecumenical discussion, but it is a matter of vindicating the apostolic Gospel given to us in the Scriptures."

To force legalistically, to pressure, to bribe or wheedle anyone into subscribing the Lutheran symbols has never been advocated or even suggested in the Lutheran Church.²⁶ Coersion would indeed have been legalistic and would constitute a denial of our confessions and what they are, namely symbols around which Christians rally willingly and joyfully and in all Christian freedom.²⁷

B. *Confessional Subscription and the Sola Scriptura*

The Gospel to which our symbols commit themselves and out of which they speak is the Gospel of Scripture. By relating oneself by unconditional subscription to the Lutheran Confessions one *ipso facto* relates oneself not only to the Gospel, but also to the Scriptures of which the confessions claim to be an exposition. "All talk of commitment to confession is senseless when Holy Scriptures have been lost as the concrete judge over all proclamation."²⁸ It is significant that the Introduction to the Book of Concord and particularly the FC Rule and Norm which speak of the authority of the confessions are the very sections which affirm and delineate the authority and infallibility of Scripture as the only source and norm for judging all doctrine and teachers. The unconditional subscription to the confessions, far from closing off Scripture to the theologian, as Braaten suggests,²⁹ actually places the Lutheran pastor in the only correct relation to the divine Word, under its authority. The authority of the confessions as a definite form and pattern of doctrine (*Vorbild der Lehre, Form der Lehre, FC SD Rule and Norm.10*) is the authority of writings which are drawn from the Scriptures (*aus Gottes Wort genommen*) and present the doctrine of Scripture correctly.³⁰

What are the implications of this fact for our day? One implication is surely that confessional Lutheranism today must stand squarely upon the *sola scriptura* principle as it is understood and employed in the confessions themselves. Any diminution of the apostolic source of our doctrine, of biblical authority, will undermine or vitiate entirely our confessional subscription. As Peter Brunner puts it,³¹ "If the New Testament no longer harmonizes, if in the canonical writings of the New Testament a consensus is no longer heard regarding the Gospel that is to be proclaimed, then a confessional commitment has become fundamentally impossible." Our confessions speak repeatedly of the apostolic Scriptures and identify the doctrine of the Gospel (*doctrina evangelii*) with the doctrine of the apostles (*doctrina apostolorum*).

It is clear what Brunner is disturbed about. He is frightened over the destructive results of the so-called modern historico-critical method of approaching Scripture, a method which undermines the apostolic and divine origin of the New Testament witness by cutting it off from direct line with the divine, historical Christ, and then by a naturalistic and pagan understanding of the historical process, reducing that witness to a mere *Gemeindeftheologie* or pious self-understanding of early Christians. There are many Lutherans today who, unlike Brunner, do not understand that there is a war on, quiet and largely unnoticed, but deadly serious. They sit at the sidelines and wonder, or they uncritically judge that this method can somehow be employed with Lutheran presuppositions. They do not realize or will not admit that the method has its own built-in presuppositions (as every method must have) regarding history and scripture and these rule out the *sola Scriptura* of our Lutheran confessions. It is high time that we who wish to be and remain confessional and evangelical Lutherans recognize that the evangelical *sola Scriptura* of

our confessions (as well as many articles of faith drawn from the practice of this principle) is incompatible with the historico-critical method of approaching the divine Word of Scripture. If we cannot face up to this crisis which is the great crisis facing Lutheranism today, we will lose our identity, true Lutheranism will pass away, we "will deny the Spirit of God, who now, today, here, in our historical situation, demands loyalty to the apostolic Gospel together with its actualizing interpretation" (Brunner). And Christianity will be poorer for all that (We have an ecumenical obligation!).

But we must not fail. Too much is at stake. And by God's grace we will not fail. God will see to that. We too will stand, like those confessors before us, "with intrepid hearts before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ. . . and we shall give account." (FC SD XII,40). And then in that great day we will know all the glory of confessing Christ.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936-69), I,1,9ff. The same position seems to be taken by responsible Lutherans. Cf. the position paper, "Doctrinal Concerns", issued by the Church Council of the ALC at Winnipeg, Manitoba, June 23-29 where par.C reads, "His [the believer's] best efforts to formulate a theology in terms of propositions and statements will fall short. To assume that the church can arrive at human concepts or expressions that are in every respect correct is as much a symptom of pride as to assume that the church or its members can achieve sinlessness in their daily life." Commenting on this statement, Hermann Sasse says, "What nonsense! . . . True Lutheranism has never and can never accede to that. The moment it does it has lost its sound confessional character and its certainty of the Gospel." See Waldo Werning, "Issues in Deciding the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod American Lutheran Church Fellowship Matter" (Milwaukee: no publisher, no date), p.10.
- ²Even in the early days of our Missouri Synod most Lutherans seemed able to comprehend the meaning of an unconditional subscription to the Lutheran symbols and were prepared to make this pledge, or not to. See C. F. W. Walther, "Why Should our Pastors, Teachers and Professors Subscribe Unconditionally to the Symbolical Writings of our Church?" Trans. by Alex Guebert, *CTM*, XVIII,4 (April, 1947).
- ³Peter Brunner, "Commitment to the Lutheran Confession—What Does It Mean Today?" *The Springfielder*, XXXIII,3 (Dec. 1969), pp.4-14.
- ⁴Ironically theologians whose acceptance of the confessions is clearly conditional offer the most disparate opinions of the old distinction. Theodore Tappert holds that one can and ought to subscribe the confessions both *quia* and *quatenus* and holds that the confessions themselves assert this, a position which seems very like nonsense, and certainly contrary to the original sense of the distinction. See Theodore Tappert, "The Significance of Confessional Subscription" in *Essays on the Lutheran Confessions Basic to Lutheran Cooperation*, published by the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and the National Lutheran Council (New York, 1961), p.30. Compare this with the position of Carl Braaten who finds fault with both the *quia* and *quatenus* formula for subscription. See Carl Braaten, "The Crisis of Confessionalism" in *Dialog*, I,1 (Winter, 1962), p.46 *passim*. The *quia* formula, he avers, "can make it appear as if the confessions close off the circuit between ourselves and the Scriptures, as if the confessions exempt us from continually examining the Scriptures with modern tools to gain new light on our situation." There is no evidence for such a declamation, and so Braaten offers none. But he betrays his loose stance toward the confessions when he says, "It [the *quia* formula] suggests that we believe in the inerrancy of our confessions and therefore that we aprioristically preclude the possibility of correcting them."
- ⁵Actually there is general disagreement, if not veritable confusion, among those Lutherans today who cannot accept the confessions unconditionally. This sad fact was brought out with force and pathos by the disparate reactions to Horace Hummel's recent sane attempt to recall Lutheran pastors to what they should all have confidently and intelligently affirmed at their ordination. See *Lutheran Forum*, Oct. 1969. Also Dec. 1969; Feb. 1970 and Mar. 1970.
- ⁶*Op. cit.*, "Again some say: The Symbols must be understood in their historical setting. This is correct, for the historical background sheds the necessary light on the manner in which men understood and interpreted Scripture at the time when certain articles were in controversy in the church and the contrary doctrines were rejected and condemned." But the statement is false if it is employed to create the impression that the doctrinal articles contained in the symbols are not eternal truths, but applicable only for certain times and conditions and therefore subject to revision and even rejection."
- ⁷*Op. cit.*, p.29. a more radical example of this same approach, and showing none of the appreciation of the confessions evinced by Tappert, is shown by non-theologian, Rachel Wahlberg, who frankly feels that the confessions are out of date, although she offers nothing constructive for updating them, but only criticizes them. See Rachel Wahlberg, "Let's Update the Confessions", *Lutheran Forum*, Feb. 1970, p.10.
- ⁸*Op. cit.*, 41.
- ⁹*ibid.*
- ¹⁰*The Status of the Nicene Creed as Dogma of the Church*. Theological Consultation between Representatives of the U.S.A. National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation and the Bishops' Commission for Ecumenical Affairs held July 6-7, 1965, in Baltimore, Maryland.
- ¹¹*ibid.*, p.21.
- ¹²*Lutheran Forum*, April, 1969, p.15. Cf. also Ernst Werner, "The Confessional Problem", *The Lutheran Quarterly*, XI,3 (Aug.1959), pp.179-191.
- ¹³"Within such historical realities, confessional statements continue to make a contribution to the living tradition of the Church." Perhaps it is fair to say that this position toward the confessions is the dialectical one that a person must break with them and even deny them to be truly faithful to them, analogous, I suppose, to the view that one must commit acts of civil disobedience and disloyalty to country in order to uphold the spirit of its constitution. If such a position seems illogical to us, we must not discard it as merely the gut reaction of an abnormally activist but uncritical theologian. The position, I think, would be compatible with various existentialist theologies, process theologies and marxist theologies of our day, if not with the static rules of rational thought. For this reason we must take such a position seriously (even if nonsensical) as typical of the subjectivistic madness of our *Zeitgeist*.
- ¹⁴Edmund Schlunk, *The Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*. Trans. by Paul F. Koehnke and Herbert J. A. Bouman (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), p.19.
- ¹⁵Because the confessions are above the individual the Lutheran church in the past has periodically examined and investigated its teachers and pastors. In the light of what the confessions are and claim to be, such action is the right and duty of the church. To complain that such action or investigation is tyrannical or legalistic or to label such investigations as "inquisitions" as those do who do not like to be examined doctrinally only reveals that such objectors do not understand the ecumenical nature of our confessions. See Preface to the Book of Concord, Tappert, p.14.
- ¹⁶*Op. cit.* Cf. the similar statement by John Benedict Carpvov, *Isagoge in Libros Ecclesiarum Lutheranarum Symbolicos*. Leipzig, 1965. p.6: "Therefore he who binds himself to profess and defend the symbolical books, if he desires to do so seriously, cannot commit himself or subscribe to these books with any mental reservations or under the condition that they agree with Scripture and the ancient church. For the question is not concerning the truth or falsity of the dogmas contained in the symbolical books—these dogmas are

presupposed by the one who subscribes and binds himself to these books—no, the question is concerning a person's professing and defending this doctrine in that church to which he pledges his support. Anyone who sincerely subscribes the symbolical books obligates himself to just such a profession. But he who doubts the doctrine contained in the symbolical books, and either does not allow himself to be correctly informed or attacks the doctrine and contradicts the language and matter of speaking, such a person transgresses the limitations which have been placed upon him by the church in which he teaches and cunningly vaults himself over the church whose symbols he has subscribed."

¹⁷Cf. *ibid. passim*. Also Abraham Calov, *Criticus Sacer vel Commentarius Apodicticoelenchiticus super Augustanum Confessionem*. Leipzig, 1646. Cf. also competent Lutherans today. i.e. Arthur Carl Piepkorn, "Suggested Principles for a Hermeneutics of the Lutheran Symbols", CTM, XXIX.1 (Jan.1958), pp.5,14ff. Herbert Bouman, "Thoughts on the Significance of Confessional Subscription", in *Essays on the Lutheran Confessions Basic to Lutheran Cooperation*, p.35ff.

¹⁸See Hummel, *op. cit.*

¹⁹Selnecker translated freely the words *von der reinen, heiligen Jungfrau Maria with ex Maria pura, sancta, semper virgine*. The "semper virgo" is a phrase used with great regularity by Selnecker as he spoke of the Virgin Mary.

²⁰Preface to the Book of Concord, Tappert, p.13. See Herbert Bouman, *op. cit.*, p.41. Cf. also Walter Bouman, "The Gospel and the Smalcald Articles", CTM, XL,6-7, pp.405-414, where the author shows the evangelical character and structure of the Smalcald Articles. Cf. also Robert Preus, "The Confessions and the Mission of the Church", Essay delivered at the 1970 meeting of the overseas representatives of churches in fellowship with the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, p.10 *passim*.

²¹See Robert Preus, *ibid.* p.11: "We must bear in mind that the Gospel as understood by our Confessions is more than a mere divine dynamic. It is a cognitive, dianoetic message, a doctrine. The entire IVth article of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession struggles to articulate this Gospel of justification. True, the Gospel is no mere theoretical statement, but it is a true cognitive doctrine, nevertheless. Thus our Confessions speak of the *ministerium docendi evangelii* (AC V.1). The church whose burden is to preach the Gospel is a *teaching church: Ecclesiae magno consensu apud nos docent* (AC I.1). The church *teaches* the Gospel of Christ (Ap.IV, 400). The marks of the church are *the pure doctrine of the Gospel (pura evangelii doctrina)* and administration of the Sacraments (Ap. VI,5). And so the church is called the pillar of truth (1 Tm.3:15) because it retains the "pure Gospel" (Ap.VII,20). Without the true doctrine (*die reine Lehre*) concerning Christ and the righteousness of faith there can be no church at all (Ap. IV,377 German). Doctrine is stressed all through the Confessions; and the church of the Lutheran Confession with its burden to proclaim Christ's Gospel believes, teaches (*lehren*), and confesses the true doctrine (*Lehre*). In fact the Gospel is doctrine (Ap.XII,10); the *doctrina evangelii* is the *doctrina apostolorum* (Ap.VI,38). In fact the who teaches opinions contrary to the Gospel teaches contrary to the truth of the church (Ap.IV,400)."

The modern tendency to place pure doctrine in opposition to the Gospel (See Martin Kretzmann, "What on Earth Does the Gospel Change?" in *Lutheran World*, XVI,4 (Oct. 1969), pp.311,313,315,316,321) is utterly un-Lutheran and contrary to our confessions.

²²See the statement of the Gnesio-Lutherans in the *Protestatio Winariensium* of Sept.20,1557 (CR IX,286) as they defend the Gospel motivation for their use of antitheses: "Now if anybody should say that we are hereby seeking to exalt our name and not what serves the glory of God and the common good of the church, then we confess before God the Lord who also sees and judges the innermost thoughts of all men that from the beginning to the present hour we have sought by our condemnation of all corrupt teachings and now seek nothing else than the preservation of the pure teaching of the Gospel and the separation of the true church from all other rabble and sects." Hans-Werner Gensichen correctly says that, as a matter of principle in any confession, "The antithesis exists in fact only for the sake of the thesis and must be used in its service." See Hans-Werner Gensichen, *We Condemn. How Luther and the 16th Century Lutheranism Condemned False Doctrine*. Trans. but Herbert J. A. Bouman (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), p.209. So it is with our Lutheran confessions, as Gensichen points out abundantly.

²³This common slur against genuine confessionalism is not confined to our indifferentistic age (See the statements of Braaten and Neuhaus above), but was common also among the Calvinists and humanistically orientated Lutherans, like John Sturm, in the 16th century. See Gensichen for an excellent and full treatment of this entire matter. The Calvinists, who were really just as dogmatic as the Lutherans except in their confessions which did not usually contain condemnations, attacked the Lutheran confessional principle for political and psychological reasons. Sturm tried to rise above all "parties". It is primarily against the condemnations that the Calvinists railed, and, as Gensichen points out, they exploited the "law of love" in their polemics.

Today one of the tragedies of Lutheranism is its inability to understand the evangelical concern behind condemnations and the necessity of these antitheses to safeguard and clarify the true doctrine of the Gospel. For instance, the LWF at its recent meeting at Evian, France actually proposes, through its joint committee, the elimination of all doctrinal condemnations of the past as obsolete in the light of recent theological development. See NEWS BUREAU release 70-84, LCUSA, Erik W. Modean, ed. July 29, 1970, p.12. This is in the interest of fellowship with the Reformed. Thus we observe the tragic demise of all true confessionalism in large sectors of Lutheranism.

²⁴The Reformed in the 16th century argued that the Lutheran unconditional subscription to the confessions violated a Christian's freedom. Leonhard Hutter (*Libri Christianae Concordiae*. Wittenberg, 1608, p.34 astutely answers this objection: "In this way [the Reformed] show very clearly that they are not yet certain of the truth of their own doctrine and confession." And he accuses the adversaries of trying to impose their own uncertainty and indifference upon those who are able confidently to confess their faith. At the risk of poisoning the wells I would suggest that those who constantly harp and warn about a legalistic subscription to the confessions today are possibly revealing only the tentative nature of their own theology.

²⁵*ibid.* p.12.

²⁶*Concordia Triglotta*, F. Bente, Historical Introductions, p.248.

²⁷Cf. the excellent statement by F. E. Mayer, *The Religious Bodies of America* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1945), p.138ff "The Lutherans consider the confessions not only a doctrinal standard; they are more than a body of truth; they become a public confession, a confessional act. They are, in the *first place*, the believer's joyful response to God's gracious offer in the Gospel. The Lutheran confessions are kerygmatic and prayable, i.e. they belong in the pulpit and the pew. They are a doxology. In the *second place* the confessions establish the consensus with the fathers and with their own contemporaries. The act of confessing places the present church in the continuity of faith and is a public testimony that she shares the conflicts and the conquests of the faithful of all ages. And *finally* Lutherans believe that loyalty to the confessions is a precious heritage which each generation must recapture for itself and transmit to its descendants. Lutherans believe that divine truth is absolute, has not changed since Apostolic times, will not change during future generations in accord with Jesus' saying that His words shall never pass away. The Lutheran confessional principle is expressed in the slogan:

God's Word and Luther's doctrine pure
Shall to eternity endure.

²⁸Brunner, *op. cit.*, 4, cf. also p.5: "The Lutheran Confession commits congregations, their shepherds and teachers exclusively to the apostolic Gospel. Therefore the Lutheran Confession contains no truths that rest in or consist of themselves, but all valid expositions it sets forth receive their validity solely from the apostolic Gospel. . . . By committing the church exclusively to the apostolic Gospel, the Lutheran confession frees the church from the binding power of all teachings not based on God's Word." Brunner's entire article is to show the inextricable relation between confessional subscription and the *sola Scriptura*.

²⁹*ibid.* 47.

³⁰Hutter, *op. cit.*, p.15: "It is easy to decide concerning the authority of these [symbolical] books. Although they can by no means be made equal with the canonical Scriptures, nevertheless because [quatenus] they agree with the Sacred Scriptures they deserve our faithful acceptance and they deserve that degree of authority which symbolical books can and ought to have."

³¹*Op. cit.*, p.7.

7. Confessional Declaration

Alvin E. Wagner

... "That the truth of the Gospel might continue with you"
... Galatians 2:5

Not long ago a young pastor torn between his loyalty to the Scriptures and his love of the church asked me with evident anguish: "How can I remain faithful to the Word and our Confessions while my Synod involves me in ties with church bodies whose teachings and practices I recognize to be un-Scriptural?" He realized that the Scriptures bind a bishop to "hold fast the faithful Word as he hath been taught that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9). He recognized his duty to confess and confute the opposition. He remembered how faithfulness moved St. Paul in a time the Gospel was endangered to "withstand to the face" His own fellow-apostle (Gal. 2:11) and never to give place by subjection to false brethren, no, not for an hour; that the "truth of the Gospel might continue with you" (Gal. 2:5). He knew that times would come when men would not stand for sound doctrine and "gather a crowd of teachers to tickle their ears" (II Tim. 4:2-5 NEB). He understood also that Scriptures such as II John 9-11 clearly demand *separation* if clear, decisive steps to thorough reform are not taken or are indefinitely delayed.

The young pastor's question, therefore, is one that concerns all faithful Christians who suddenly find themselves in church bodies which make official doctrinal pronouncements or take fellowship actions that compromise the Word and endanger the Gospel. What shall they do?

That they are in a church whose doctrine and practice cannot be tolerated indefinitely without becoming "partakers of the evil" is evident (II John 11). In times past some loyal evangelical pastors and congregations felt they could maintain their doctrinal integrity while remaining in their apostate group, but they soon found their witness muffled and their stance weakened. It wasn't long before they became not only partakers but also victims of their denomination's evils. To prevent that tragedy what can the faithful do? What is required?

Immediate Withdrawal?

I have felt that to leave abruptly without seeking to effect an internal reform by demanding disciplinary action of those who are causing division through their persistence in error and to turn away suddenly without consideration for loyal members who are still unaware of the peril and without serious attempts both to inform and draw the concerned together in a new alignment would not be in accord with Christian love. Some time must be allowed for corrective endeavors and unifying efforts. This is a part of sound confessional declaration.

But the question is: What can the faithful do to avoid compromise in their own deteriorating organization and maintain a good conscience with respect to the Scripture's requirements for purity of doctrine and practice during the difficult in-between-period while avenues are being explored to restore doctrinal unity or attempts are being made to form a new alignment?

To the distressed young pastor who posed this very vital question I answered: Declare yourself openly to be *in statu confessionis* and encourage your congregation and brother pastors to do the same.

"In Statu Confessionis?" What Is That?

Dr. John W. Montgomery recently described to a friend the meaning of

that Latin term thus: "A technical term of Lutheran theology meaning: officially labelling the body as apostate and giving public notice that the continuance of error is intolerable and cannot be given support until doctrinal clean-up takes place and ways and means are discovered for creating a new pan-Lutheran confessionally orthodox church body if officials cannot be brought to act responsibly."

Actually, the Lutheran Church is the only group that has developed this recognized procedure. It has done so, however, not merely with the purpose of bringing pressure on elected officials to act responsibly but primarily to help faithful confessional Christians to maintain a good conscience in the difficult period when their organizational ties involve them in alliances, practices and publications that are un-Scriptural.

This procedure of declaring oneself *in statu confessionis*, i.e., in a state of confessional protest, grew out of the adiaphoristic controversies which led to the Formula of Concord (1577). It should be noted that this great Confession of the Lutheran Church is so conscientious in avoiding even the appearance of compromise that it disallows (refuses to approve) making concessions under certain defined circumstances even in matters which are not in themselves right or wrong.

The statement reads: "There has been a controversy among some theologians of the Augsburg Confession concerning ceremonies and church rites which are neither commanded nor forbidden in the Word of God but which have been introduced into the church with good intentions for the sake of good order and decorum or else to preserve Christian discipline. The one party held that even in a period of persecution and a case of confession, when enemies of the holy Gospel have not come to an agreement with us in doctrine, one may still with a clear conscience, at the enemies insistent demand restore once more certain abrogated ceremonies . . . The other part, however, contended that under no circumstances can this be done with a clear conscience and without prejudice to the divine truth, even as far as things indifferent are concerned, in a period of persecution and a case of confession." (FC, Art. X, Tappert)

Using Scriptural references such as Gal. 2:5, St. Paul states: "To whom (the Judaizing brethren) we gave place by subjection, no not for an hour; that the truth of the Gospel might continue among you," the Formula of Concord in the Epitome, Art. X, Antithesis 3 answers: "We reject and condemn as false and contrary to God's Word . . ." That in a time of persecution and when public confession is required, one may make concessions to or come to an understanding with the enemies of the Holy Gospel . . . in such indifferent things and ceremonies." And is it not rather significant that it was precisely such an indifferent thing — a ceremonial matter — which constituted the difference between Paul and Peter at Antioch, and caused the former to oppose his fellow-apostle publicly because at that time the relation of Law and Gospel was in dispute.

Thus the Epitome states that these restrictions apply "in casu confessionis". The original German of the Thorough Declaration twice uses the term — "im fall des Bekenntnisses", the literal English for both phrases "in case of confession" (Concordia Triglotta, pp. 828 and 1052). From this term the later form *in statu confessionis* is derived. Both terms mean, in general, a situation in which clear-cut confession is called for.

Application Of The Status Confessionis

It is to be noted that confessionally oriented church bodies, such as The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod traditionally has been, are normally and continually in a state of confessional separation, thus giving an implied or an expressed testimonial protest against other church bodies which deviate from their ecumenically valid standard of confessional truth.

But, the term *in statu confessionis* has been employed especially when an individual or a group within a church body has discerned deviations from the

standard among its own associates and has found it necessary to protest against them.

Thus after The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod's Denver Convention of 1969 many of its pastors, laymen and congregations found the Altar and Pulpit Fellowship Declaration with the American Lutheran Church (Res. 3-15) to be based not on the Scripturally required agreement in doctrine and practice but on a bare majority vote. Convinced that the radical differences on Scripture, lodge-practice and unionistic involvements with the WCC, LWF and other erring groups had not been Biblically resolved, my congregation and I felt compelled by doctrine and conscience to protest the action of the Convention. We let it be known to the elected officials of our Synod, Districts and Circuits that for conscience's and doctrine's sake we could not at this time offer the hand of fellowship to the American Lutheran Church much as we desire the reunion of Lutheranism and all Christendom. We committed ourselves to pray that through orderly efforts of our leaders as well as our own confession and writings the obstacles might be removed, and we declared that if there was no real progress in those efforts we would be forced to require Synod to rescind the Fellowship Resolution at its next convention.

In this way we declared ourselves "in statu confessionis." And we have been heartened by the fact that many others have done likewise. It is generally publicized that only 20 pastors have separated themselves from our Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod pursuant to its Denver action, but it isn't emphasized that we have in our files no less than 246 pastors, 133 teachers and 295 laymen, a total of 655 people who took the time and effort to study the matter and with their own signature declare themselves *in statu confessionis*; nor does this include many others who are expressing the same position in other ways.

We realize that in many quarters the "Status Confessionis" is decried as "unnecessary polarization," right wing-radicalism and extremism. But this indicates that even our opponents recognize its procedure and practice to be what it intends to be — the very strongest kind of protest that can be made without actual separation.

The Need Of Confession With Protest

There is great need in Lutheranism as well as all Christendom for Confessional Declaration in the form of some clear-cut precise statements and definitions on the nature of the Word of God, the Church and Its Mission.

Some of us in California have tried to make a beginning in what we have called "An Ecumenical Declaration Of Faith," to which we invite all theologians of the world to offer their constructive critique through our bi-monthly journal *Sola Scriptura*. We reject the position of the American Lutheran Church, officially and unanimously endorsed in its "Doctrinal Concerns" (A.L.C. General Convention 1966, Point 4) that the past Confessions are all-sufficient and that no new credal confessional statements can be made binding on the conscience of Lutherans and other believers. This not only violates the very spirit in which the Lutheran Confessions were drawn up but also ignores the fact that it was always the historical situation which compelled the fathers to compose the Confessions. Thus the fact is conveniently bypassed that the current existentialistic approach to Scripture with ultimate disregard of its objective, propositional Word of God character veritably shouts for an additional statement of certain issues not specifically covered by the Confessions of the past.

To deal with the new problems and the new errors that insinuate themselves into the Church is the theological task and requires further confessional statements. In fact, I venture to predict that if Lutheranism's conservative theologians will not do this, in a few short years the liberal ones will, and we shall have on our hands an ambivalent ambiguous synthetic neo-orthodox statement foisted on our people much like the Presbyterians with their New Confession of 1967.

But while we contend that Confessional Declaration requires a clear thetical and anti-thetical statement, we must also ask what does such declaration amount to if it is not backed up with proper practice and a proclamation that includes vigorous public protest in word and deed over against the errors and errorists weakening the church? Without that, Confessional Declaration becomes meaningless religious jargon, promotes rather than prevents relativizing the Scripture's concept of truth, and serves only as a kind of hallucinatory drug that creates the illusion of strength and purity while becoming more accustomed and addicted to the deviants from truth.

"The Practice Of Truth"

I was happy, therefore, to note that our guest lecturer, Dr. Francis A. Schaeffer of L'Abri, Switzerland, made a notable contribution to our cause. His book, "The God Who Is There" in the chapter "The Practice Of Truth" sees and underscores an important issue. His basic principle is "the full doctrinal position of historic Christianity must be clearly maintained," and he adds: "it would seem to me that the central problem of evangelical orthodoxy in the second half of the twentieth century is the problem of the practice of this principle."¹

"Thus," he continues, "it must be said that in spite of (and even because of) one's commitment to evangelism and cooperation among Christians, I can visualize times when the only way to make plain the seriousness of what is involved in regard to a service or an activity where the Gospel is going to be preached is not to accept an official part, if men whose doctrine is known to be an enemy are going to be invited to officially participate. In an age of relativity the practice of truth when it is costly is the only way to cause the world to take seriously our protestations concerning truth. Cooperation and unity that do not lead to purity of life and purity of doctrine are just as faulty and incomplete as an orthodoxy which does not lead to a concern for, and a reaching out towards, those who are lost."

This is the spirit of St. Paul's vital "protestifying" (as one has called it) letter to the Galatians with its uncompromising martial call: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (1:8). And when confronted with "false brethren" (2:4), he did not give place by subjection (yield by submission), not for an hour, "that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you" (2:5). But can we say that is our situation today?

Are We In Imminent Danger Of Losing The Gospel?

About a month ago in Washington, D.C. it happened that the president of my congregation in North Hollywood, Calif., an extremely handsome, astute, 32 year old corporation attorney attended the Bible Class as well as the worship service of one of our churches near his hotel. Some having read *Newsweek's* article on the LCMS, wanted to know what the issues were which are currently troubling the Synod. When the pastor answered that they were nothing to worry about, purely academic matters, of concern only to scholarly theologians, our young lawyer arose and asked in his very courteous friendly way, "Had this been Luther's policy in the 16th century to keep people uninformed and uninvolved, would there have been a Reformation?" No answer was given.

But are the concerns which have brought us from far and near to this Lutheran World Congress purely academic? Are they issues that need not interest laymen and that parish pastors may minimize? Is it just an academic question whether seminary faculties have the right to use the historical critical method, and that consequently nothing essential, doctrinal or confessional is at stake? Is it just a play of power politics, a battle of the ultras (the ultras of the right and the ultras of the left), a struggle between "purists" who insist on agreement in the tiniest detail and the "pluralists" who want openness to diversity even on essentials, a conflict at which the great moderate middle may stand off and look on in silent amusement?

I submit that the aberrations from the truth of the Gospel in modern Lutheranism, including my own Synod, are as serious as those which moved the inspired apostle of our Lord, St. Paul, to protest in Jerusalem and tell the Galatians later: "To them we did not yield submission even for a moment; that the truth of the Gospel might be preserved for you" (2:5). If God condemned the "Judaizers," the "false brethren," whom Paul withstood in Jerusalem, what would he say today to Lutherans who deny the historicity of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, the inspiration and factual accuracy of the Scriptures? They were not questioning the reality of Old Testament prophecy and its fulfillment or the propositional objective Word of God character of the Bible. They were not advocating evolution in place of Creation or denying the account of man's fall into sin and his consequent need of an atoning, forgiving Savior as is being done in modern Lutheranism. If St. Paul declared himself so vehemently to them to protest — "that the truth of the Gospel might be preserved unto you," what would he say today to Lutherans who embrace the "New Theology" with its attack on Gospel content?

What shall we say when we now see that precious Gospel of grace and freedom in Christ our Savior diluted by vicious and cunning errors? What shall we do so that its truth may continue among us? Say nothing? Cool it? Tell our people that there's nothing to worry about, it's all a lot of nit-picking, leave it to the scholars and theologians and seminary faculties, trust your elected officials to clean house, and don't rock the boat? Raise no protest? Take no stand? It is difficult to see how any authentic confessional Lutheran can long maintain a good conscience and make a good confession in a doctrinally deteriorating organization in such a way. Faithful confessional life in the Church requires much more. It demands of us an either-or.

An Either - Or

Either there is a decisive move toward reform or cost what it may we must (separate and) seek a new alignment.

The "Status Confessionis" procedure implies this, as the Commission of Theology and Church Relations (LCMS) in its April 1970 opinion of the term well recognizes.

"In the current usage of our church it is quite generally employed to declare that a particular teaching, practice or action of the church against which the protest is lodged is contrary to the Word of God or endangers the Gospel. Used in this sense the declaration that one is *in statu confessionis* is not tantamount to the breaking of fellowship. If, however, the circumstances which called forth the protest are not corrected in due time, the implication is that the protest will lead to the severing of fellowship relations."

Severing Of Fellowship Relations?

We realize that in most quarters of Lutheranism today the mere mention of severance, separation or breaking fellowship ties is regarded a crime against the *Una Sancta* and an offense to the world. What is forgotten or left unexplained is that the real fellowship, the true inner unity (not just the organizational tie) has been broken by those who have deviated from the correct standard of Scripture. The offense is being given not by those who are loyal to the Scriptures, the Confessions and even the Synod's constitution but by those who are confusing and confounding people by advocating a pluralistic doctrinal position. Like in a marriage the break, the divorce is caused not by the faithful but by the unfaithful.

It should be clear, therefore, that the Status Confessionis procedure is not a negative, legalistic, divisive, splintering device. It is a most wonderful tool that our Lord places into our hand for times such as ours. Its purpose is not just to pressure officials of the synods to act responsibly; it is not merely to help faithful Biblical Christians to confess with good conscience. It is a procedure that aids and abets the *Una Sancta*, the one holy Christian and Apostolic Church, the Body of our Lord, in that it is truly positive.

Truly Positive

What we are confessing before the whole world and all our brothers when we enter *in statu confessionis* is that the Gospel of our Savior is so precious to us that we are ready to forfeit anything for Him, even our most cherished earthly attachments, such as the church body we have loved and served with joy at home and abroad, in private and public, in word and deed. Could there be any more positive Confessional Declaration?

In this sense, the Status Confessionis can be called neither negative nor legalistic. It is truly evangelical.

Truly Evangelical

What prompts faithful ones to confront their church body with an alternative that says either there is a decisive reformation or we shall have to separate? Some false zealotry? Dogmatic rigidity accompanied with pride in one's position? Unwillingness to bend or yield? Certainly, the Spirit-filled people will be ever careful to watch that their motivations are not these? But when they are motivated by the love of Him who loved them first and gave Himself for them, their protest to error and their declaration of Status Confessionis cannot be termed legalistic. It is truly evangelical and has, as experience proves, the Lord's blessing. For, it is truly strengthening.

Truly Strengthening

The proper use of a conscientious Status Confessionis has both an internal and external invigorating effect.

Internally, within one's own group it heartens the discouraged by assuring them of good conscience. It steadies the wavering who have been asking: Am I alone in this battle for my Lord's truth? It invigorates the preaching, enabling the pulpit to proclaim the Gospel with firmer conviction and still clearer definition. It is the kind of Confessional Declaration that is heard and cannot be ignored by one's organization and leaders.

Externally, the Status Confessionis can have a powerful effect. It can reach across synodical and denominational lines to the faithful, prompting them into a proper Status Confessionis in relation to the erring in their own group. And when they have done so and they find themselves in full doctrinal agreement with the faithful in other groups they can enter into altar and pulpit fellowship with each other. What is separatistic about that? It is seeking true ecumenical unity and such practice mightily strengthens those who have a difficult stand in their own organization. It helps them to remain steadfast until this final form of protest has led either to reform, or failing that, to separation, in which case the ground has been laid for an upsurge of authentic Lutheranism and a new Scripturally faithful alignment in doctrine and practice. Our European Lutheran Free Churches have found it a great aid in establishing their unity; it is truly ecumenical.

Truly Ecumenical

It is understood, of course, that the Status Confessionis procedure can be misused. It is not an attitude that can be maintained indefinitely without turning it into its very opposite: a form of compromise rather than an unqualified testimony to the truth maintained with integrity. It must lead within a reasonable time, dictated by circumstances, either to reform or to a separation. Titus 3:10. Where that is not understood or practiced, a wrong kind of "Selective Fellowship" develops, such as Synodical Officials often recommend to pastors and congregations who are in protest. They suggest "Selective Fellowship" as a means to ease the process of union or merger for congregations which have some misgivings about it. But that is, to say the best, a degenerate form of the Status Confessionis. It cannot be adjudged as anything but a means of sinful compromise and no valid confessional declaration.

Conclusion

It is the Formula of Concord, Article X, which uses the term "in casu (statu) confessionis," and in the Epitome, Art. X Antithesis 3 states: "We

reject and condemn as false and contrary to God's Word . . . that in a time of persecution and *when a public confession* is called for one may make concessions to or come to an understanding with the enemies of the Holy Gospel."

That great "protestifying" Confession of Authentic Lutheranism (at that time called Gnesio-Lutheranism) took years to formulate with finality (1567-1580). Nevertheless, its uncompromising stand was blessed by the Lord to bring a great measure of strength, peace and unity to Lutheranism. Extremists on both sides held aloof for awhile. A large sector responded with quick acceptance. And let's not doubt that our Lord can bless a Confessional Declaration in the same manner today; it must be done, however, with all seriousness, commitment and readiness to enter into *Status Confessionis*.

While under God Lutheran historians give much credit to Jacob Andreae for his patience, persistence, calm, kind work free from all personalities, credit must go to Martin Chemnitz for giving the Formula its theological clarity and correctness, and to Nicolaus Selneker for his courage and pastoral insight. We are also told that some laymen like Elector August of Saxony and his wife not only spent "tons of gold" to bring the theologians and scholars together, but they also daily kneeled before God and appealed to him for grace and blessing on these efforts!

O Lord to us may grace be given, to follow in their train. Amen.

FOOTNOTE

¹Francis A. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1968), p. 168.

8. Confessional Church Polity

George F. Wollenburg

The assignment to prepare an essay on Confessional church polity covers a wide area. In order to do justice to the topic in the time allotted, I have prepared this essay in the form of short theses with the appropriate citations from the Book of Concord listed under each of the theses. This means that an exhaustive analysis of each individual thesis will not be possible. I urge readers to study carefully the citations given from the Book of Concord.

This material is prepared with the fervent prayer that it may serve in some small measure to resolve some of the problems which plague the Lutheran Church today. It is my hope that it may contribute toward that true Christian unity and concord which we seek for the churches of the Augsburg Confession.

1.

Confessional church polity must begin with a correct doctrine of the church. The church is not a visible organization or community which corresponds to Israel in the Old Testament, but it is all those who have the Holy Spirit and true faith in the heart. These persons are found wherever the Gospel is in use.

“. . . one holy Christian church will be and remain forever. This is the *assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity* and the sacraments are administered according to the Gospel.” (AC VII p. 32)

“If we were to define the church as only an outward organization embracing both the good and the wicked, then men would not understand that the kingdom of Christ is the righteousness of the heart and the gift of the Holy Spirit . . . then too, what difference will there be between the church and the Old Testament people? Yet *Paul distinguishes the church from the Old Testament people* by the fact that the church is a spiritual people, separated from the heathen, not by civil rites, but by *being God’s true people, reborn by the Holy Spirit.*” (Ap. VII, VIII; p. 170:13,14)

“Our opponents also condemn the part of the seventh article in which we said, “for the true unity of the church it is enough to agree concerning the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments . . . *We are talking about true spiritual unity*, without which there can be no faith in the heart nor righteousness before God.” (Ap. VII, VIII; p. 173:30)

2.

The church according to its proper definition is “all believers in Christ—and only believers in Christ.” This “one, holy, Christian, and Apostolic church” transcends denominational boundaries, for it is found wherever the Gospel is in use. There the Holy Spirit gathers a congregation of believers when and where it pleases God. This church is a hidden church, for it is hidden under the visible group that gathers there, and is not accessible to sight, but alone to faith. For we say, “*I believe one, holy, Christian and Apostolic church.*”

“. . . one holy Christian church will be and remain forever.” (AC VII p. 32)

“We are talking about true spiritual unity, without which there can be no faith in the heart nor righteousness in the heart before God.” (Ap. VII, VIII; p. 173:30)

“I believe that there is on earth a little holy flock or community of pure

saints under one head, Christ. . . . It possesses a variety of gifts, yet is united in love without sect or schism.” (Large Catechism, Creed; p. 417:51,52)

3.

The faith which makes persons members of the “Holy Christian and Apostolic church” is true faith in Christ, which is created by the Holy Spirit through the external ministry of the word and sacraments. This ministry is both a gift and command from God, for it is only through this ministry that men are brought to eternal salvation. (John 20:19-23; Matt. 28:18-20)

“In order that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted. . . . *Through these, as through means, He gives the Holy Spirit* Who works faith, when and where He pleases, in those who hear the Gospel.” (AC, V p.31)

4.

The public exercise of the church’s ministry is carried out through regularly elected and called pastors. (I Tim. 3:2,3,4,6; Tit. 1:9; I Cor. 9:14; Gal. 6:6; Acts 20:28; I Tim. 5:17,18)

“It is taught among us that nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call.” (AC, XIV p. 36)

5a

Government is the regulating of activity that is carried on by prescribed means beyond specific occasions, persons, and factors. Government in the church is the organizing of the activities which are necessary in order that the Gospel be proclaimed and the sacraments administered. The need for government in the church arises from the need of the church to elect and install pastors.

The qualifications for the office demand that the persons called be examined. Who is to perform these acts? Even in the case of election by the whole congregation the need for some regulatory restrictions is obvious. Young children must be excluded. This means that it is necessary to establish the age of majority. Passing judgment upon the doctrine and teaching of the person called can by no means be alone by every adult. The individual congregation is not independent and self-sufficient. (I Cor. 14) The “evangelical doctrine” is not the concern of the individual congregation alone. How is this to be carried out with other congregations who likewise confess the “evangelical doctrine”?

“It is taught among us that nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call.” (AC, XIV p. 36)

5.b

Preparation for the pastoral office demands study. Therefore there must be teachers of theology. Who is to teach? When there is a conflict between a congregation and a pastor regarding doctrine, shall the congregation’s verdict be accepted without further investigation? In that case the very person who has been called to proclaim and teach the “evangelical doctrine” would be eliminated. These and many other questions make church government a necessity. Organization with regulations governing the carrying out of the tasks of the church are needed.

6.

It is necessary to distinguish between the power of the Keys and the power of jurisdiction (church government). The power of the Keys is the power to administer the sacraments, preach the Holy Gospel, absolve from, and retain, sins. The power of the Keys is of divine origin. The authority of church government, jurisdiction, is of human origin.

“. . . according to the Gospel the power of Keys or the power of bishops is a power and command of God to preach the Gospel, to forgive and retain sins, and to administer and distribute the sacraments.” (AC XXVIII, p. 81:5)

"This power of Keys or of bishops is used and exercised only by teaching and preaching the word of God and by administering the sacraments." (AC XXVIII; p. 82:8)

"The openly wicked and despisers of the sacrament are excommunicated. We do this according to both the Gospel and the ancient canons . . . our pastors do not force those who are not ready to use the sacraments." (Ap. XI, p. 181:4)

". . . Christ bids Peter to pasture the sheep, that is, to preach the word or govern the church with the word . . . Christ gave the apostles only spiritual power, that is, the command to preach the Gospel, proclaim the forgiveness of sins, administer the sacraments, and excommunicate the godless without physical violence." (Tractate, p. 325:30,31)

"The Gospel requires those who preside over the churches that *they preach the Gospel, remit sins, administer the sacraments, and in addition exercise jurisdiction*, that is, excommunicate those who are guilty of notorious crimes and absolve those who repent." (Tractate, p. 330:10)

7.

Church government belongs to the orders of creation. It is a matter of order in the church, and does not have a divine command, for the church, properly speaking, is not a visible organization, but a spiritual fellowship of faith in the heart and the Holy Spirit.

". . . One holy Christian church will be and remain forever. This is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the sacraments are administered according to the Gospel. (rightly administered) (AC VII p. 32)

"The church is not merely an association of outward ties and rites like other civic governments, however it is mainly an association of faith and of the Holy Spirit in men's hearts." (Ap. VII, VIII; p. 169:5)

"If we were to define the church as only an outward organization embracing both the good and the wicked, then men would not understand that the kingdom of Christ is the righteousness of the heart and the gift of the Holy Spirit. . . . Then, too, what difference will there be between the church and the Old Testament people? Yet Paul distinguished the church from the Old Testament people, separated from the heathen, not by civil rites, but by being God's true people, reborn by the Holy Spirit." (Ap. VII, VIII; p. 170:13,14)

"Our opponents also condemn the part of the seventh article (AC VII) in which we said, "For the true unity of the church it is enough to agree concerning the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. . . . We are talking about the *true spiritual unity*, without which there can be no faith in the heart nor righteousness in the heart before God." (Ap. VII, VIII; p. 173:30)

". . . the various ranks of the ecclesiastical hierarchy . . . were created by human authority." (Ap. XIV, p. 214:1)

8.

A distinction must be made between the direct call of the prophets and apostles, and a call extended through men. When the Augsburg Confession teaches that no one is to preach or teach publicly in the church without a "regular call", it refers to a call extended through men, not a direct call as in the case of the prophets and apostles. Inasmuch as the call is extended by God through the election of men it is a divine call. However, since the office has been conferred mediately through the election of men, a person called can also be removed from such office by the action of those who elected him in the first place.

". . . we have given frequent testimony . . . to our deep desire to maintain the church polity and the various ranks of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, although they were created by human authority." (Ap. XIV; p. 214:1)

"If the bishops were true bishops and were concerned about the church

and the Gospel, they might be permitted (for the sake of love and unity, but not of necessity) to ordain and confirm us and our preachers . . ." (SA X, p. 314:1)

9.

The right to call and install men into the public office is not limited to the local congregation individually. Congregations of a larger group have the right to delegate to the group the calling or election of men to serve in various capacities such as, superiors to whom is delegated the right of visitation, e.g. bishops, District Presidents, etc. This also includes the right to elect and call men as theological professors. The congregations' right to call men for such positions carries with it the obligation to determine whether the person chosen is qualified to watch over what he teaches and to depose him if he openly contradicts the "true doctrine." (See above citations)

10.

It is the duty of church government to seek to order matters in such a manner that the Gospel is proclaimed and spread, that members of the church live under the discipline of the words of Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:18-20), and that the unity of the church be preserved against those demonic forces that threaten to destroy Christian unity. The threats to unity are; a lack of love for one another, pride over against other Christians, self-righteousness, failure to be concerned about the brother and his relationship to God, prejudice against other people, the erosion of the life of the Spirit in the members by following a way of life that is obviously contrary to the will of God, and *false doctrine*.

" . . according to the Gospel the power of Keys or the power of bishops is a power and command of God to preach the Gospel, to forgive and retain sins, and to administer and distribute the sacraments." (Ap. XIV; p. 214:1)

"This power of Keys or of bishops is used and exercised only by teaching and preaching the word of God and by administering the sacraments." (AC XXVIII; p. 81:5,8)

" . . it is the *office of the bishop to preach the Gospel, forgive sins, judge doctrine, and condemn doctrine* that is contrary to the Gospel . . . all this is to be done not by human power but by God's word alone . . . on the other hand if they teach or institute anything that is contrary to the Gospel, we have God's command not to be obedient in such cases, for Christ says in Matt. 7:15: "Beware of false Prophets." (AC XVIII; p. 84:21)

"Christ bids Peter to pasture the sheep, that is, to preach the word or govern the church with the word." ". . Christ gave the apostles only spiritual power, that is the command to preach the Gospel, *proclaim the forgiveness of sins, administer the sacraments, and excommunicate the godless without physical violence.*" (Tractate: p. 325:30)

11.

False doctrine brings discord and scandalous division into the church and thereby impedes the course of the Gospel. It is therefore the duty of church government to order things in such a manner that Satan is not allowed to imperil the souls of men by the seeds of false doctrine.

" . . the *foe of mankind bestirred himself to scatter his seed of false doctrine and discord* and to bring about the destruction and scandalous division in churches and schools so that he might thereby adulterate the pure doctrine of God's word, sever the bond of Christian charity and agreement, and *in this way hold back and perceptibly impede the course of the Holy Gospel.*" (preface to the Book of Concord p. 3)

"The weak in faith . . . will be scandalized; some will doubt if the pure doctrine can coexist among us with such divisions, . . . these controversies . . . are of such a nature that the opinions of the erring party cannot be tolerated in the church of God . . ." (FC SD; 8ff, p. 502,503)

12.

It is the responsibility of church government and organization to preserve

the pure doctrine of the Gospel against all false teaching. By such government Christians exercise their God-given right and duty to judge doctrine and teachers.

“. . . it is the office of the bishop to preach the gospel . . . *judge doctrine and condemn doctrine* that is contrary to the Gospel . . . (AC XVIII; p. 84:21)

“Just as the church has the promise that it will always have the Holy Spirit, so it also *has the warning that there will be ungodly teachers and wolves.*” (Ap. VII, VIII; p. 172:22)

“. . . they (the bishops) neglect the state of the churches, and they do not see to it that there is proper preaching and administration of the sacraments in the churches. They admit all kinds of people to the priesthood quite indiscriminately.” (Ap. XXVIII p. 281)

“. . . all Christians ought to beware of becoming participants in the impious doctrines, blasphemies, and unjust cruelties of the pope. “Beware of false prophets.” (Matt. 7:15). (Tractate p. 327:41)

13.

Christians have the right and duty to remove from office those who teach contrary to the word of God. This is true, whether these persons hold positions of church government (jurisdiction) whether they are theological professors, pastors, or other persons who occupy the teaching offices in the church.

“. . . on the other hand, *if they (bishops) teach or institute anything contrary to the Gospel, we have God's command not to be obedient in such cases,* for Christ says in Matt. 7:15, “Beware of false prophets.” (AC XVIII; p. 84:21)

“St. Augustine also writes in his reply to the letters of Petilian that one should not obey even regularly elected bishops if they err or if they teach or command something contrary to the Divine Holy Scriptures.” (AC XXVIII; p. 85:28)

“We . . . we have not ceased to apply our diligence to the end *that false and misleading doctrines* which were introduced into our lands . . . *might be checked.*” (Pref. p. 4)

“The ninth question of the third canon states, ‘No one shall judge the supreme see, . . . Thus he forbids a judicial examination. The latter does more harm than all punishments, for when proper judicial process has been taken away, the churches are not able to remove impious teachings and impious forms of worship, and countless souls are lost generation after generation.’” (Tractate; p. 329:28)

14.

However, Christians are to avoid creating schism in the church because they are offended by the ungodly conduct of pastors or teachers. This includes the matter or practice, provided that the practice does not involve a denial of the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures.

“Christ has also warned us in His parables on the church that we should not be offended by the personal conduct of priests or people, *we should not incite schism* as the *Donatists* wickedly did. We regard as utterly seditious those who have incited schisms because they denied to priests the right to hold property or other possessions.” (Ap. VII, VIII; p. 178:49,50)

15.

Proper judicial process is to be provided within the church for the removal of error and those who teach error. Christians are to work within the framework of that judicial procedure. Only when it fails or no longer functions may they act apart from it.

“The Gospel requires of those who preside over the churches that they preach the Gospel, administer the sacraments, and in addition *exercise jurisdiction*, that is, excommunicate those who are guilty of notorious crimes and absolve those who repent.” . . . when the regular bishops become enemies of the Gospel and are unwilling to administer ordination,

the churches retain the right to ordain for themselves.” (Tractate: p. 330,331: 60,66,67)

“The ninth question of the third canon states, ‘No one shall judge the supreme see, . . . thus . . . he forbids a judicial examination. *The latter does more harm than all punishments, for when proper judicial process has been taken away, the churches are not able to remove impious teachings and impious forms of worship, and countless souls are lost generation after generation.*” (Tractate; p. 329: 28)

“. . . Paul commands that bishops who teach and defend impious doctrines and forms of worship should be regarded as anathema.” (Tractate; p. 332: 72)

16.

The standard by which all teaching and teachers in the church are to be judged are the plain and clear words of Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Symbols contained in the Book of Concord of the year 1580. (The chief Symbol is the Augsburg Confession. The other symbols are an explanation of how the Augsburg Confession is to be understood.)

The laity are to judge teachers and doctrine. This is obvious from the command of Christ to flee from false teachers. Such a command would be senseless if it were impossible to judge doctrine without a seminary training.

This does not mean that every layman is qualified to act as a judge in matters of interpretation of every individual passage of Scripture, particularly those which are difficult.

“. . . a short confession was compiled out of the *Divine, prophetic, and Apostolic Scriptures* . . .

“. . . the doctrine that is contained in it is based solidly on the Divine Scriptures. (Preface to the Book of Concord, p. 3)

“. . . we are certain of our Christian confession and faith on the basis of the Divine, Prophetic, and Apostolic Scriptures . . .” (Pref. Book of Concord p. 12,13)

“Since these matters also concern the laity and the salvation of their souls, we subscribe *Dr. Martin Luther’s Small and Large Catechism* as both of them are contained in his printed works. They are the “*layman’s Bible*” and contain everything which Holy Scripture discusses at greater length and which a Christian must know for his salvation.” (Epitome FC, p. 465: 6)

“*All doctrine should conform to the standards set forth above.* (Ecumenical creeds, Augsburg Confession, Apology, Large and Small Catechism of Dr. Luther) whatever is contrary to them should be rejected and condemned as opposed to the unanimous declaration of our faith.” (FC Epitome, p. 465: 6)

17.

For the learned and scholars to insist that they may not be judged by simple laymen — or that the Scriptures are such a difficult book that they can be understood only by men like themselves — is to deny the words of Jesus, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. A stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him.”

“. . . when *proper judicial process* has been taken away, the churches are not able to remove impious teachings and impious forms of worship, and countless souls are lost generation after generation. (Tractate, p. 329: 50)

“. . . Paul commands that *bishops who teach and defend impious doctrines and forms of worship should be regarded as anathema.*” (Tractate, p. 323: 72)

“. . . we want to set forth and explain our faith and confession unequivocally, clearly, and distinctly in theses and antitheses, opposing the true doctrine to the false doctrine, so that the foundation of divine truth might be made apparent in every article and that every incorrect, dubious, suspicious, and condemned doctrine might be exposed, no matter where or in what book it might be found or *who may have said it* or supported it. We

did this so that we might thereby faithfully forewarn everyone against the errors contained here and there in the writings of certain theologians, lest anyone be misled by the high regard in which these theologians were held.” (FC, SD, p. 507:19)

18.

The church has the right to require of those that teach in it that they speak in clear and plain language, and in a time of controversy and dissent that they also reject in unequivocal terms and words the false doctrine which is contrary to the word of God. In times of controversy it is not sufficient merely to affirm the positive true doctrine.

“All doctrine should conform to the standards set forth above. (Ecumenical creeds, Augsburg Confession, Apology, Large and Small Catechisms of Luther). *Whatever is contrary to them should be rejected and condemned as opposed to the unanimous declaration of our faith.*” (FC, Epitome, p. 465:6)

“The weak in faith will be scandalized; some will doubt if the pure doctrine can coexist among us with such divisions, while others will not know which of the contending parties they should support. After all, these controversies are not, as some may think, mere misunderstandings or contentions about words, with one party talking past the other, so that the strife reflects a mere semantic problem of little or no consequence. On the contrary, *these controversies deal with weighty and important matters*, and they are of such a nature that the opinions of the erring party cannot be tolerated in the church, much less be excused and defended.” (FC, SD, p. 502,503:8)

“In order to preserve the pure doctrine and to maintain a thorough, lasting, and God-pleasing concord within the church, *it is essential not only to present the true and wholesome doctrine correctly, but also to accuse the adversaries who teach otherwise.*” (I Tim. 3:9; Tit. 1:9; II Tim. 2:24; 3:16) (FC, SD; p. 506:14)

“... we wanted to set forth and *explain our faith and confession unequivocally, clearly, and distinctly in theses and antitheses*, opposing the true doctrine to the false doctrine, so that the foundation of divine truth might be made apparent in every article and that every incorrect, dubious, suspicious, and condemned doctrine might be exposed . . .” (FC, SD; p. 507:19)

19.

Those who are either incapable of doing so, or unwilling to do so because of a secret or hidden disposition to accept such doctrine and permit its teaching, should not be permitted to continue or to hold positions of influence and authority, for people must be able to place trust and confidence in their pastors and teachers, and in their church leaders.

“... *under the name of the frequently mentioned Augsburg Confession, the contrary doctrine about the holy Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ and other erroneous opinions were now and again introduced in our churches and schools.*” (Preface to the Book of Concord p. 6)

Because there were persons who tried to appeal to the agreement at Frankfurt-on-Main and at Naumburg to confirm their erroneous doctrines, it was necessary that false and erroneous doctrines be rejected and condemned. (cf. Preface to the Book of Concord p. 8-11)

“... in the presence of so many intrusive errors, aggravated scandals, dissensions, and long-standing schisms a Christian explanation of all the disputes which have arisen should come into being. Such an explanation must be thoroughly grounded in God’s Word so that pure doctrine can be recognized and distinguished from adulterated doctrine and *so that the way may not be left free and open to restless, contentious individuals, who do not want to be bound to any certain formula of pure doctrine*, to start scandalous controversies at will and to introduce and defend monstrous errors, the only consequence of which is that finally correct doctrine will be entirely obscured and lost and nothing beyond uncertain opinions and dubious, dis-

putable imaginations and views will be transmitted to subsequent generations." (Preface to the Book of Concord p. 13)

"... Paul commands that bishops who teach and defend impious doctrines and forms of worship should be regarded as anathema." (Tractate; p. 332:72)

"... the opinions of the erring party cannot be tolerated in the church of God, much less be excused and defended." (FC, SD; 8ff p. 502-503 see above theses 8)

"... we wanted to set forth and explain our faith and confession *unequivocally, clearly, and distinctly* in theses and intitheses... that every incorrect, dubious, suspicious, and condemned doctrine might be exposed... thereby faithfully (to) forewarn everyone against the errors contained here and there in the writings of certain theologians lest anyone be misled by the high regard in which these theologians were held." (FC, SD; p. 507:19. See theses 18 above)

20.

No one who is unwilling to state his doctrine and confessional position clearly in time of controversy has the right to demand that the church tolerate his holding office, or to insist that he holds such office by divine right.

"... Paul commanded that bishops who teach and defend impious doctrines and forms of worship should be regarded as anathema." (Tractate; p. 332:72)

"The weak in faith... will be scandalized, some will doubt if the pure doctrine can exist among us with such divisions,...*these controversies* are not, ... mere misunderstandings about words... so that the strife reflects a mere semantic problem of little or no consequence... and they are of such a nature that the opinions of the erring party cannot be tolerated in the church of God, much less be excused and defended." (FC, SD; p. 502,503 8ff. See Theses 8,9 above.)

"... we wanted to set forth and explain our faith and confession unequivocally, clearly, and distinctly... so that *the foundation of divine truth might be made apparent in every article, and that every incorrect, dubious, suspicious, and condemned doctrine might be exposed*... no matter who may have said it or supported it." (FC, SD; p. 507:19)

21.

In removing from office those who are unable or unwilling to make a clear declaration of their confession and doctrine the church is not exercising the office of the keys, since it does not excommunicate, but merely deprives them of the office which it has entrusted to them.

The anathemas pronounced in the Lutheran Symbols are not intended to be applied indiscriminately against those of a different confession, but only against those who stubbornly and obstinately teach doctrines which overthrow the foundations.

"St. Augustine also writes in his reply to the letters of Petilian that one should not obey even regularly elected bishops if they err or if they teach or command something contrary to the divine Holy Scriptures." (AC XVIII; p. 85:28)

"... the responsibility devolves upon the theologians and ministers duly to remind even those *souls who err ingenuously and ignorantly* of the danger to their souls and to warn them against it, lest one blind person be misled by another." (Preface to the Book of Concord p. 12)

"The marks of the church... , the pure teaching of the Gospel and the sacraments. This church... retains the pure Gospel and what Paul calls the "foundation" (I Cor. 3:12)... there are also *many weak people in it who build upon this foundation perishing structures of stubble*, that is, unprofitable opinions. *But because they do not overthrow the foundation, these are forgiven them and even corrected.* (E.g., the writings of the holy Fathers) (Ap. VII, VIII; p. 172:20)

The Church of the Augsburg Confession has no right or authority to demand of its pastors and teachers more than the word of God demands, or less than the Sacred Scriptures demand. The Lutheran Symbols are creedal confessions intended to demonstrate that the doctrine of the Lutheran church is the catholic doctrine of the church as defined in the Ecumenical Creeds. Pastors and teachers of the Church of the Augsburg Confession are pledged to teach in accordance with these creedal confessions because (not in so far as) they are the true and correct exposition of the Holy Scriptures.

“Christ has also warned us in His parable on the church that *we should not be offended by the personal conduct of priests or people, we should not incite schisms* as the Donatists wickedly did. We regard as utterly seditious those who have incited schisms because they denied to priests the right to hold property or other possessions.” (Ap. VII, VIII; p. 178:49,50)

“All doctrine should conform to the standards set forth above. (Ecumenical Creeds, Augsburg Confession, Apology, Large and Small Catechisms of Luther) whatever is contrary to them should be condemned as opposed to the unanimous declaration of our faith.” (FC, Epitome; p. 465:6)

“As soon as this article is weakened and *human commandments are forcibly imposed on the church* as necessary and as though their omission were wrong and sinful, *the door has been opened to idolatry, and ultimately the commandments of men will be increased and put as divine worship, not only on a par with God’s commandments, but even above them.*” (FC, SD, X; p. 613:15)

“We believe, teach, and confess that the Prophetic and Apostolic writings of the Old and New Testament are the only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged . . .” (FC, Epitome; p. 464:1)

23.

The church of the Augsburg Confession has no right to demand of its pastors and teachers that they subscribe to a doctrinal statement adopted by a convention of Synod, or that such a statement be made a test of orthodoxy. No one is required to take ordination vows that bind him to future doctrinal decisions of the synod, neither would it be right to require such ordination vows, since the future is uncertain, and such a vow would amount to an oath in uncertain matters.

“. . . we are certain of our Christian confession and faith on the basis of the divine, prophetic, and apostolic Scriptures.” (Pref. p. 12,13)

“We believe, teach and confess that the *Prophetic and Apostolic writings of the Old and New Testament are the only rule and norm* according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged . . .” (FC, Epitome; p. 464:1)

“All doctrine should conform to the standards set forth above. Whatever is contrary to them should be rejected and condemned as opposed to the unanimous declaration of our faith.” (FC, Epitome; p. 465:6)

“The primary requirement for basic and permanent concord within the church is a summary formula and pattern, *unanimously* approved, in which the summarized doctrine commonly confessed by the churches of the pure Christian religion is drawn together out of the Word of God.” (FC, SD; p. 503:1)

“. . . we have from our hearts and with our mouths declared in mutual agreement that we shall *neither prepare nor accept a different or a new confession of our faith.*” (FC, SD; p. 503:2)

24.

To permit everyone in the church to interpret the Lutheran Symbols in his own way would create chaos and confusion in the church, cause further schism, and promote the work of Satan (who is the author of chaos); create uncertainty in the minds of the people, and ultimately destroy what St. Paul calls “the foundation.” *Since even those who subscribe to the Lutheran sym-*

*bol*s may under such a subscription understand them differently, it is necessary that the church set forth clearly in what way they are understood, and in the case of controversy arrive at a unanimous agreement.

"Some, while boasting of and benefitting from their adherence to the Augsburg Confession, even dared to give a false interpretation to these articles. This caused serious and dangerous schisms in the true Evangelical churches . . ." (FC, SD; p. 502:6)

"The weak in faith, . . . will be scandalized; some will doubt if the pure doctrine can coexist among us with such divisions . . ." (FC, SD; p. 502:8)

"The primary requirement for *basic and permanent concord* within the church is a *summary formula and pattern, unanimously approved*, in which the *summarized doctrine commonly confessed* by the churches of the pure Christian religion is drawn together out of the Word of God." (FC, SD; p. 503:1)

"We therefore declare our adherence to the first, unaltered *Augsburg Confession . . . as our symbol in this epoch . . .*" (FC, SD; p. 504:3)

"This, of course, does not mean that other good, useful, and pure books, such as interpretations of the Holy Scriptures, refutations of errors, and expositions of doctrinal articles, should be rejected. If they are in accord with the aforementioned pattern of doctrine they are to be accepted and used as helpful expositions and explanations." (FC, SD; p. 506:10)

"Our intention was only to have a *single, universally accepted, certain, and common* form of doctrine . . ." (FC, SD; p. 506:10)

"All doctrine should conform to the standards set forth above. Whatever is contrary to them should be rejected and condemned as opposed to the unanimous declaration of our faith." (FC, Epitome; p. 464:6)

25.

Since a Synod is a voluntary organization and form of church government, it may ask its members to teach in accordance with its *unanimously approved* understanding of the Lutheran Confessions or request them to withdraw, provided that such understanding does not conflict with the clear and plain words of the Lutheran Symbols.

"Some while boasting of and benefitting from their adherence to the Augsburg Confession, even *dared to give a false interpretation to these articles*. This caused serious and dangerous schisms in the true Evangelical churches . . ." (FC, SD; p. 502:6)

"We wholeheartedly subscribe this Christian and thoroughly scriptural Augsburg Confession, and we abide by the *plain, clear, and pure meaning of its words*." (FC, SD; p. 502:4)

"We consider this Confession (Augsburg Confession) a genuinely Christian Symbol which all true Christians ought to accept next to the Word of God . . ." (FC, SD; p. 502:4)

"The primary *requirement for basic and permanent concord* within the church is a *summary formula and pattern, unanimously approved . . .*" (FC, SD; p. 503:1)

26.

Those who create needless controversy in the church are guilty of creating schism, and must likewise be required to desist from such activity, or to withdraw.

". . . we should at all times make a *sharp distinction* between *needless and unprofitable contentions* (which, since they destroy rather than edify, *should never be allowed to disturb the church* and *necessary controversy* (dissention concerning *articles of the Creed* or the *chief parts of Christian doctrine* when contrary error must be refuted to preserve the truth." (FC, SD; p. 506:15)

27.

Church practice, which might otherwise not be divisive, becomes a matter of confession, when doctrinal controversy is involved.

"Hence, *yielding or conforming in external things, where Christian agreement in doctrine has not been previously achieved*, will support the idolaters in their idolatry, and on the other hand it *will sadden and scandalize the true believers* and weaken them in their faith." (FC, SD; p. 613:16)

"As soon as this article is weakened and human commandments are forcibly imposed on the church as necessary and as though their omission were wrong and sinful, the door has been opened to idolatry, and *ultimately the commandments of men will be increased* and not only be put on a par with God's commandments, but even above them." (FC, SD, X; p. 613:15)

". . . at a time of confession, as when enemies of the Word of God desire to suppress the pure doctrine of the Holy Gospel, the entire community of God, yes, every individual Christian, and especially the ministers of the Word . . . are obligated to confess openly, *not only by words but also through their deeds and actions*, the true doctrine and *all* that pertains to it . . ." (FC, SD, X; p. 612:10)

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9. Confessional Practice

Waldo J. Werning

Francis Bacon once wrote: "‘What is truth?’ said jesting Pilate, and he would not stay for the answer." Whether jesting or cynical, he was not in the mood for truth. Many Christians today, including some Lutherans, don't want the answer, especially when it applies to Christian life and practice.

The price of possessing the truth about God and the soul and the Savior and the Cross as revealed in God's infallible Word should be one of intensity, seriousness and high determination. If Louis Pasteur would not turn back in the midst of research but cry out, "God forgive a scientist's passion!" then it must be expected that every sincere Christian will pray, "God give me an intense love and passion not only for Christian doctrine, but also for Christian practice!" New Testament truth seems to cry out: "You can't have me and my saving knowledge unless you desire me with seriousness of intent and ardor of pursuit."

Lutherans today should be in the forefront of Christendom in answering what is right in doctrine and practice in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is pathetic to find Lutherans who will invoke the name of Jesus as they mouth subjective truth that is merely their personal opinion and a practice that was given birth from cultural weaknesses rather than the Spirit of God. The mood of Scriptural truth and practice must be a mood of intensity and expectancy, for truth and practice are not antithetical, but go together as love and kisses. Doctrine and practice go together, just as faith and witness are twins.

When the Philippian jailor (Acts 16:27-34) was surrounded by the miraculous power of God and asked, "Men, what must I do to be saved?", they did not say "Do your own thing!", or act sincerely, but: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household!" That's practice! Believing and telling the saving Gospel and giving love and service to the precious Savior is the practice or response to what God has already done for us in Jesus Christ.

God showed Himself concerned about the believer's practice already when Cain and Abel came to worship Him with their offerings. Abel's practice was to bring firstfruits, which God found acceptable. But Cain became very angry, and so God asked: "If you have been doing right, should you not be happy?" (Gen. 4:7) One cannot be right or evangelical without pure Gospel preaching, faithful Christian practice, and taking directions only from God's holy Word. As the Athenians were religious but not according to knowledge (Acts 17), so Christians can be mistaken in their worship and practice. St. Paul's charge to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:3) required faithful practice in his ministry and even warned that people would prefer unfaithful preaching and practice to the faithful: "Charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." We should not be surprised, therefore, that even Lutherans are tempted to turn away from truth and give attention to legends,

but we must not tolerate it. The New Testament does not allow us to affirm man in his sin and weakness, but rather to rescue him through the Gospel of repentance and forgiveness. Revelation 2 and 3 reminds all who have ears to hear what the spirit of the Lord is saying to the churches in regard to their belief and practice.

The theological differences between evangelical theology and the "New Theology" are not just differences of interpretations, but are differences concerning the very basics of the faith. Those who fail to recognize antitheses should realize there is a law of cause and effect. Logic reveals this to be the ultimate canon of the sciences. In every scientific investigation this truth is assumed. The truth of the law of cause and effect is seen in Rom. 1:18-32, which reveals a frightfully descending of moral steps of belief and life in actual practice. These Scriptures tell us that God's Word should be plain to men, but some do not allow the truth to shape their belief and practice. They become vain in their imagination, their thoughts become nonsense, and they indulge in futile speculation (v. 21). Behind a facade of wisdom, they become fools (v. 22). They change the glory of the incorruptible God into images made to look like corruptible men (v. 23). God's Word describes the process of human corruption taking place in our day. The results are revealed in v. 24: God gives them up to do the filthy things their hearts desire. They change God's truth into a lie, and they make more of material life than the Creator (v. 25). They reverence the things made instead of the Maker. God then gives people up to vile affections and actions—abnormal use of sex (v. 26-27). Since they refuse to keep in mind the true knowledge about God, He gives them over to their corrupt and depraved minds (v. 28). They become deceitful and proud, and they give approval to unnatural and wrong things. Truly, the "New Theology" leads to the "New Morality" in practice.

The cause and result of Scriptural perversion and lack of love of truth is shown in 2 Thes. 2:11, "For this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie." Such strong religious delusions have been proclaimed in many forms since the Apostolic Age when delusions were preached by Judaizers, Gnostics, and Montanists. Following centuries had their Manicheans, Donatists, Arians, Pelagians, and others. In the last century and a half Europe has given birth to many systems of theologies and America a producer of "new" things in religion. Most of them are old heresies revived in new form.

The historical aspects of the written Word show the practice of the believers and of the Christian faith. *Biblical history* shows actual individual and corporate practice, not stories or myths that somehow make a spiritual point. Jesus never hesitated to rebuke existing religious views that were not true, and He did not accommodate Himself to false traditions. By repeating Old Testament history and miracles, He showed the authenticity and accuracy of Old Testament accounts and historical practice of the faith, as Norman L. Geisler says: "Six times in the Sermon on the Mount He contrasted His affirmations with false Jewish interpretations of the Old Testament, in such phrases as 'you have heard that it was said . . . but I say unto you' (Matt. 5:21-22, 27-28, 31-32, 33-34, 38-39, 43-44). Jesus often told them, as in Matthew 22:29, 'You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.' . . . *Christ's verification of the historical character of Old Testament events*: Jesus personally verified the historical truth of (1) Adam and Eve (Matt. 19:4); (2) Abel's murder (Matt. 23:25); (3) Noah and the Flood (Luke 17:27); (4) Lot and the destruction of Sodom (Luke 17:29); (5) the existence of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Luke 13:28); (6) Moses and the burning bush (Luke 20:37); (7) the wilderness wanderings of Israel (John 3:14); (8) the story of Elijah and the widow (Luke 4:25); (9) Naaman the Syrian leper (Luke 4:27); (10) David and the tabernacle (Matt. 12:3-4); (11) Solomon and the queen of Sheba (Matt. 12:42); (12) Jonah and Nineveh (Matt. 12:41); and (13) Daniel the prophet (Matt. 24:15). . . . *Christ's verification of the Miraculous Character of Old Testament Events*: The events of the Old Testament were not only considered to be historical but many of them were supernatural in character. In effect,

Jesus' references verify the miraculous nature of Old Testament events:

1. The world's destruction by a flood (Luke 17:27)
2. Lot's wife being crystallized (Luke 17:32)
3. The burning bush before Moses (Luke 20:37)
4. The healing of Israel from snakebites (John 3:14)
5. The manna from heaven (John 6:49)
6. The healing of Naaman the leper (Luke 4:26)
7. The miracles of Elijah for the widow (Luke 4:25)
8. The preservation of Jonah in the whale (Matt. 12:41)."

Confessing our faith is of the very essence of Christianity. Our Lutheran Confessions were real acts of Confession — of practice of the faith, often in the face of extremely trying circumstances. Confessing what we have heard and seen in Jesus Christ — practicing our faith — is the foundation, the life, and the activity of the *Confessing Church*. The "church" that is Confessional in name without being Confessing in practice has no right to the name Christian or Lutheran. The Confessional practicing Lutheran Church is dedicated to the restoration, preservation, and extension of both its *truth* and its *unity*. "Evangelical Directions for the Lutheran Church" (A general theme of our Congress) imposes upon us evangelical practice. The Evangelical Lutheran Church must share fully the attitude of the Lutheran Confessions in adherence to the Apostolic writings (the sacred Scriptures) and practice according to them. Such a church takes seriously these writings as the very Word of God, and does not treat them as though "these Words fell from the Holy Spirit unawares" (Apology IV, 122:108. That church acknowledges its need of these writings since "a human being must have the very Word of God to know the will of God" (Apology IV:262, Page 145) and holds that "we can affirm nothing about the will of God without the Word of God" (Apology XV, 217:17) and cannot know "the Apostles' wish and intention" apart from their *writings* (Apology VII and VIII, 176:40). In that church which steadfastly consults the sacred Scriptures, we can with confidence make theological affirmations and agree on Christian practice and know "that what we have said is what Paul (for instance) really and truly means" (Apology XII, 194:84). The Evangelical Lutheran Church can confidently make theological affirmations because the "Words (of Scripture) are so *clear* that they do not need an acute understanding but only attentive listening" (Apology IV, 111:33).

As Lutherans in our practice and teaching in classrooms and pulpits we must say with the Confessions: "That is manifest and evident (to speak without boasting) that we have diligently and with God's help prevented any new and godless teaching from creeping into our churches and gaining the upper hand in them" (Augsburg, Conclusion, 95:5). "We cannot surrender truth that is so clear and necessary for the church. We believe, therefore, that we must endure difficulties and dangers for the glory of Christ and the good of the church. We trust that God approves our faithfulness and we hope that posterity will judge us equitably" (Apology, Preface, 99:16). "We believe, teach, and confess that at a time of Confession, as when enemies of the Word of God do desire to suppress the pure doctrine of the holy Gospel, the entire community of God, yes, every individual Christian, and especially the ministers of the Word as the leaders of the community of God, are obligated to confess openly, not only by word, but also through their deeds and actions, the true doctrine and all that pertains to it, according to the Word of God. In such a case we should not yield to adversaries even in matters of indifference, nor should we tolerate the impositions of such ceremonies on us by adversaries in order to undermine the genuine worship of God and to introduce and confirm their idolatry by force." (S. D., Article X, 612:10). Lutheran doctrine is simply the verbalizing of our Christian faith on the basis of God's own book, the Bible. If doctrine goes, our faith and practice goes, too. These days call for a united effort based on a sound Confessionalism which is at the same time a dynamic Confessionality in the form of Gospel proclamation to ourselves and to the heathen masses, and we can ill-afford arguments that neither edify nor build the Kingdom.

Thus we bow before the infallible Word in humility and faith in order to practice it, not adding thereto or subtracting therefrom by the use of logic, human wisdom or reason or semantics.

Any attempt to circumvent the authority of the written Scripture in seeking spiritual direction for the life of the Christian and the practice of the church is doomed to failure. Everything that was written in the Lutheran Confessions, to which all Lutherans are bound, was directed to the practice of the life of the church in practical administration and in its daily work. So we hear the Confessors say: "We do not propose to look on idly or stand by silently while something contrary to the Augsburg Confessions is imported into our churches and schools in which the Almighty God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has appointed us teachers and shepherds" (SC XII, 632:6). That this was not dead orthodoxy but the product of a live faith can be known from our Lutheran fathers: "From our exposition friends and foes may clearly understand that we have no intention (since we have no authority to do so) to yield anything of the eternal and unchangeable truth of God for the sake of temporal peace, tranquility, and outward harmony. Nor would such peace and harmony last, because it would be contrary to the truth and actually intended for its suppression . . . We desire such harmony as will not violate God's honor, that will not detract anything from the divine truth of the holy Gospel, that will not give place to the smallest error but will lead the poor sinner to true and sincere repentance, raise him up through faith, strengthen him in his new obedience, and thus justify and save him forever through the sole merit of Christ . . ." (SC XI, 632:95 & 96). The Confessors demanded great caution in the church's doctrine and practice: ". . . since within the past 25-years a number of divisions have occurred among some of the theologians . . . We wanted to set forth and explain our faith and Confession unequivocally, clearly, and distinctly in theses and antitheses, opposing the true doctrine to the false doctrine, so that the foundation of divine truth might be made apparent in every article . . ." (SC, 507:19). They demanded a monolithic church: "As indicated above, our disposition and intention has always been directed toward the goal that no other doctrine be treated and taught in our lands, territories, schools, and churches than that alone which is based on the Holy Scriptures of God and is embodied in the Augsburg Confession and its Apology, correctly understood, that no doctrine be permitted entrance which is contrary to these" (SC Preface, Page 12). They were especially concerned about training their future pastors and teachers: "We desire particularly that the young men who are being trained for service in the church and for the holy ministry be faithfully and diligently instructed therein, so that the pure teaching and confession of the faith may be preserved and perpetuated among our posterity through the help and assistance of the Holy Spirit until the glorious advent of our only Redeemer and Savior Jesus Christ" (SC Preface, 12).

Luther was very clear that the church's practice must neither subtract from nor add to God's requirements: "The most common and, at the same time, the most noxious plague in the church is that people change what God has ordered, or that they grant preference to something else. There is only one right road. On this we must walk. They sin who swerve too much to the left by not doing or by ignoring what God has ordered. Those who swerve to the right and do more than God has ordered as Saul did when he spared the Amalekites (I Sam. 15:9), also sinned . . ." As he appealed to God's Word, Luther unashamedly wrote in 1523:

"What I have done and taught, teach thou,
My ways forsake thou never;
So shall My Kingdom flourish now
And God be praised forever.
Take heed lest men with base alloy
The heavenly treasure should destroy;
This counsel I bequeath."³

The Lutheran community must be a *Confessing Church* in the pulpit, congregation, publications, colleges and seminaries. But what is a *Confessing Church*? Such a church is one that lives what it believes, practices what it preaches, teaches what it professes, and actually uses the Word of God in its daily life as both a healing and a motivating power for its Gospel mission. The *Confessing Church* not only has a *Confessional basis* in its written documents of the past, but actually confesses openly and vigorously the doctrine contained in these *Confessions*, so that the Gospel may reach the lost. Confessing our faith in this way is not a matter of choice or indifference, but is of the very essence of Christianity. Our Savior reminds us that confessing Him before man is necessary, or He will not confess us before the Father in heaven. Our own Lutheran *Confessions* were real acts of confession, often in the face of extremely trying circumstances.

The *Confessing Church* presents clearly the facts of God's Word, the testimony of its *Confessions*, and the position adopted in its constitutional and Synodical resolutions at all times under all situations. It does so evangelically, winsomely, and with love. It presents its message with fidelity — clearly and unequivocally.

It has become popular in many church circles to claim open-mindedness in presenting issues by portraying the "pros" and "cons" and then ending with a synthesis of ideas, leaving the reader or listener to make a choice. This will not be true of the True Lutheran or *Confessing Church*. The *Confessing Church* presents the theses and antitheses, and then speaks clearly her *Confession* on the basis of God's Word and makes plain the church's position on the basis of the true Biblical doctrine.

Fidelity is required on this basis in publications: Major doctrines dare not be discussed through "pro" and "con" viewpoints, ending in an inclusive synthesis or a plea that we must keep an open mind. A *Confessing Church* has a *Confession* to proclaim.

Fidelity is required in all dialogs, discussions, and in disciplinary cases: It is not a question or argument between two opposing viewpoints, but the church's *Confession* is brought to bear on every situation, difficult or easy. Until the church itself changes its position and *Confession*, a *Confessing Church* has a *Confession* to proclaim.

The faithful, authentic Lutheran Church that adheres to the Holy Scriptures and its *Confessions* rightly adopts for its voluntary fellowship a church constitution or handbook and requires honesty in adhering to its convention proceedings in matters of doctrine in the life and practice of its pastors, professors, and congregations. The words "brotherhood," "democracy," and "communication" are meaningless if in a *voluntary* association of Lutherans, the church's handbook and convention proceedings in matters of doctrine are not held inviolate. The Lutheran Church that is not monolithic in doctrine and in practice where doctrine is involved is not true to its name or to the foundation on which it is built. One of the main challenges to Lutheranism today can be found at this point.

God's Word brings us *Christianity*, while the Lutherans *Confessions*, the church's Handbook, and the convention Proceedings bring us differing degrees of *Confessional Christianity*. Proponents of the "New Theology" sometimes offer false options, for example, an option between *Christianity* and *Confessionality*. It must be remembered, however, that we live on two levels: First, *Christian*; second, *Confessional* and organizational. God alone knows who belongs to the first group. Men must decide by basic Biblical principles they adopt who is to belong to their specific grouping on the second level and by what criteria decisions are to be made. They may be challenged, but they have the right to organize in *Confessional* groupings without inferring that others are not *Christian*, or second-rate at best. When a Lutheran body as mine takes a strong *Confessional* position on any legitimate subject and insists on it at the exclusion of fellowship with another Lutheran body, the question has been asked whether this means that we don't

consider the others Christian, whereas it is a question of whether we agree on Confessional principles and practices. Rom. 15:4-6 tells us: "For whatsoever things were written for our time were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be *like-minded* one toward another according to Christ Jesus: that he might with *one mind* and *one mouth* glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is not a sign of strength to have a babel of voices proclaiming varying basic theological viewpoints, some of which are evidently in conflict with Scriptural and Confessional commitments. When there is a demand for a diversity of viewpoints in Lutheranism and also that we be willing to recognize greater variety in theological statements and positions, we must remind ourselves that God demands that "Everything written in the Scriptures was written to teach us" and that God wants us to have the "same point of view among ourselves" and that we praise God "with one voice." (Rom. 15:5,6 TEV)

How urgently we are told: "I appeal to you, brothers, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ: agree, all of you, in what you say, so there will be no divisions among you; be completely united, with only one thought and one purpose" (I Cor. 1:10 TEV).

That circumstances are never to be settled with coexistence of "pro" and "con" viewpoints ending with a synthesis or diversity is evident from the Confessions themselves. The Confessions demand that the church must exercise its legitimate right of united defense against unScriptural doctrine and schism. It dare not be detracted by those who belittle the church's responsibility to discipline those who betray our fellowship as expressed in the Confessions and our public doctrine. The liberal press — religious and secular — have the type already set about "head rolling", "heresy hunting" and all other choice epithets to scare the leaders of Christ's church from doing their *proper Scriptural and Confessional task*. All members should insist that the public doctrine of the Lutheran Church will be reflected as faithfully as possible and with courageous conviction by all Lutheran institutions, publications, agencies, departments, as well as auxiliaries and affiliates — regardless of how distorted some editors may present these steps of Christian edification to the public.

Many of us have decried a Christianity which has not been lived and witnessed in the homes, farms, factories, stores, and streets. We have at times said, "Your actions speak so loud, I can't hear a word you say." While professors and pastors rightfully at times deal sternly with people do not witness to their faith, we are now living in a day when Lutheran members need to remind professors and pastors that at times their lack of faithful Confession is a scandal to the laity, as it is to Christ. There is no room for diversity or openness in church doctrine and practice where the Scriptures and Confessions speak clearly. The cliché "unity in diversity" which is repeated often and is becoming a by-word in Lutheran circles today was claimed already by the World Council of Churches in a brochure produced a number of years ago entitled, "Introducing The World Council Of Churches." Unity in diversity did not originate with Lutherans who use it today, but with the WCC years ago. Such Lutherans are 10 years behind the WCC. There is a demand for diversity or openness which the Scriptures and Confessions do not allow. Diverse interpretations, theological pronouncements, untrue practices, which negate Scriptural doctrines, and asquiescence affect the Gospel negatively. The laity today are dependent upon faithful pastors and professors who will trust Christ in His infallible Word and be unyielding in their practice when doctrine is concerned. Luther said: "The world, too, is now deliberating shrewdly about setting aside the controversies and dissensions concerning doctrine and life and effecting a compromise. It is said that the learned, the wise, the bishops, the emperors, and the princes should be allowed unanimously to decide these matters. Something, we are told, might be yielded on both sides . . . From the Word of God we know *He* does not want such patchwork produced;

but doctrine, faith, and worship are to be preserved pure and unadulterated, in complete agreement with His Word. There is to be no admixture of human nonsense, personal opinions, or clever expedients.”⁴ Luther again: “Let this be the sum of the matter: We should permit the robbing of our goods, reputation, life, and everything we have; but we should not bear to have the Gospel, faith, Christ, etc., taken from us; and cursed be the humility that here shows itself compliant. Here everyone should be arrogant and stubborn if he would not deny Christ. Wherefore, God granting me grace, my head shall be harder than the head of all men. Here I am hard and want to be considered hard. Here my motto is ‘I yield to no one.’”⁵ Luther was against openness and trust, as it is used today, for he knew that trust had been betrayed, and that there was openness only to the conclusions which are contrary to the Scriptures.

It would be hard to decide where to start with examples today of the off-beat and the unConfessional practice which are allowed in the name of diversity in the Lutheran Church. An Evangelical Presbyterian magazine recently asked: “Will people put up with anything?” The editorial went on to tell about the nude couple that went to communion at a Lutheran convention service. It quoted the pastor: “It shocked a few people, but it didn’t disrupt the service. We didn’t challenge her and she didn’t challenge us.” The editorial continues: “After that has had time to sink in, we would like to follow it with a question: Could anyone top that one? Who is willing to be counted on the Lord’s side in an effort to restore decency, purity and theological integrity in the church?” Yes, we sacrifice integrity when we demand an unScriptural diversity. Let those who have doubts settle them on their knees, not share them in classrooms and pulpits. The Confessions are not only to be in our hands and heads, but also in our hearts and lives. We seek love and peace in the church and in the world, and Lutherans should strive for it zealously, but only that love and peace which is created by the Word of truth, not man’s humanistic yearning for it.

Harold O. J. Brown writes: “The new trend is to give up the task of converting the world to Christ, and to set about the task of conforming the church to the world . . . The simple fact is that there is no way to overcome the enmity between the church and the world, between Christian faith and unbelief. There is no way short of the absolute victory of one side or the other . . . For the Christian to accept conformity to the world, either for himself as an individual or for his church as a whole, in an ostensible effort to help the world, is not only to betray Christ: it is ultimately to betray the world as a whole. Christ has sent His Church into the world for the healing of the world . . . Their task can only be fulfilled by representing Him.”⁶

There is a constant demand to allow two contrary viewpoints to stand together in the name of harmony and love and peace. Today we can find false practices which allow two mutually exclusive statements to stand together while the offending brother always cleverly retreats to the good statement when faced with the reality of his statements. When one becomes the child of Hegel by rejecting a proper thesis and antithesis while adopting synthesis in religious thought, he has disclaimed his adoption as a child of Christ. Some theologians in their attempt to produce a “meaningful restatement” are actually producing something that in no sense can be reconciled with Scripture or the Creeds. The issue is faith against lack of faith, faithfulness against unfaithfulness or faithlessness. The issue is honesty against dishonesty. Let’s be done with cliches and slogans that confuse the clear Word of God or pleas that “we are talking past each other” when the Word of God is frightfully discolored or beclouded. Our practice of teaching, preaching, counseling and leading is either a *witness* of our faith, or *denial* of it. It is no small thing what we confess and do *here* or at a closed “executive session” held at this hour 20 miles west — or at our church *conventions* — or in Lutheran *pulpits* — or in Lutheran *seminaries* and *classrooms* — or in Lutheran *boards* and *commissions* and *committees* — or in church *bulletins* or *newsletters* — or in *individual*

counseling — or anything said or done by any professor, teacher, pastor, lay man or lay woman anywhere in the name of Jesus Christ and as a member of the Lutheran Church.

The dishonesty and refusal to live by the church's standards amounts to what *Christianity Today* calls "Subversion In The Church." If we are to be faithful in our Confessional practice, we will do well to heed such advice: "There have always been false prophets who have gained their livelihood from the church while they have chiseled away at its cornerstones . . . Whatever the reasons, the results are the same: true religion suffers and apostasy comes, followed by God's judgment on His unfaithful church . . . Yet the particular tragedy of our day is not that there are false teachers in the Church; there have always been such. The tragedy is that the false teachers live off money that has been given to propagate what these teachers do not believe. They are twice deceivers, first because they remain in the churches even though they do not believe what these churches have historically taught, and second because they take salaries under false pretenses and undermine what they are paid to promote. The second aspect of the tragedy is that good men in the churches do little to rid their churches of the subverters. Because they are unconcerned or unwilling to act or fearful of the possible consequences, they silently endure what they should be challenging and opposing." The editorial then raises several pertinent questions: "Are not the churches *their* churches, begun and nourished in orthodoxy? Should true believers abandon to unbelief churches that have long been orthodox? Should not the righteous wait on God for deliverance and look expectantly for renewal under the Holy Spirit?"

A layman recently wrote us: "We cannot in good conscience support schools where professors teach contrary to God's Word or colleges which permit Black Panthers or other revolutionaries to hold rallies on our Lutheran campuses. Our medical schools don't invite quacks to teach phoney medicine, nor do our law schools hire members of the Mafia to teach law. Our business schools don't ask Billie Sol Estes to teach its students how to make money in a hurry, so why should a Christian school permit religious radicals to teach our children."

In a mimeographed essay entitled, "Adultery and Apostasy" (August 1970), Dr. Francis A. Schaeffer writes: "The apostacy must be called what it is, a spiritual adultery . . . They say they have done no evil by their spiritual adultery, while not only the church but the whole post-Christian culture shows the results of their unfaithfulness. I want to tell you that there is no adulterous woman that has ever been so soiled as is the liberal theology, that has had all the gifts of God and has turned away into a worship of something that is more destructive than Molech was to the babies whose parents were led astray from the living God to worship this Molech . . . I would say God says to our generation exactly the same thing as that which he said to Israel 2,500 years ago as He spoke through Ezekiel: 'I am broken with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, which go whoring after their idols.' I believe that is how God looks at much of the modern church, and on our western culture. I believe that is how He looks down upon our northern European post-Christian culture. I believe that is how He looks on our cinema, that is the way He looks to our drama, and the way He looks into our art museums, and above all else that is the way He looks into the churches wherein a Gospel that is no Gospel is being preached. God is saddened. Should we not be moved?"

WHAT IS NEEDED IF WE WANT TO BE AN EVANGELICAL AND CONFESSIONAL LUTHERAN VOICE? WHAT IS REQUIRED AS WE DESIRE TO BE STRONG IN MISSION?

We must adopt a theology of priorities. We must live by the hermeneutical principle of Scripture interpreting Scripture. We can tolerate no drifting. We must plan zealously on edification within the church and evangelization outside. Theology must search and scrutinize and change the traditions and

humanistic ways of man and his church, rather than doing this to God's Word. Let God's holy, inerrant Word, through which we receive Christ, focus on human and churchly words and ways to change them by the Spirit of God and do not allow man to tamper with God's Word. Heed God's Word, not man's words.

We need creative scholarship in theology which produces materials and books that will lead pastors to an aggressive ministry. Let books be written to direct all churchmen toward evangelistic endeavors which confront modern man with God's truth and the power to straighten out the mess in the world, rather than accommodating our ministry to what the world wants to hear. Scholars should help produce creative materials and books to confront the men of the world with God's Word. Required is parish renewal in congregations and renewed commitment on the part of individual Christians in order to win the world for Christ. Theology should lead the way by a holy reverence to God's Word, teaching faithfully to break down human barriers and to build fires for mission outreach. There is a great urgency for retooling for our mission, and faithful theologians can direct us by challenging us to prepare for a lively ministry to reach the world in our lifetime.

There are many forms in which vigorous Confessional activity should take place. The Confessional Lutheran should be a person whose authority is found in God's Word alone. He must be a man of faith — trusting Christ for his salvation and the Holy Spirit for his power. He must be a man of prayer and mean business for God. We submit the following blueprint for winning the Confessional battle:

1. Take and keep the initiative at all times on the basis of the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions, which are our only standard and norm.

2. Name the questions and issues that are at stake. Never let the opposition divert attention to secondary matters or confuse the points under discussion.

3. Don't get into arguments about words and definitions — use traditional terms and traditional meanings only.

4. Keep the opposition on the defensive and show them to be disloyal. Thus stress not only the theses of every issue, but also the antitheses. When the opposition indicates disagreement, then insist on an explanation and definition; when shown erroneous, ask whether this is what they want. This insistence on antitheses and where they lead will make clear that the opposition is disloyal.

5. Keep repeating that we are polarized and split theologically in most Lutheran Churches, and that it is those who are teaching contrary that are divisive. Our goal is not organizational unity, but unity in God's Word and in the Christian faith. We seek unity of Christ's believers through the Words which the Father has given, and then organizational unity and loyalty will follow.

6. Be salesmen for the faithful Scriptural and Confessional Lutheran position. Be well prepared. Do your homework. One great fault of Lutherans: they read too little! Read such books as Francis A. Schaeffer's "Escape From Reason," and "The God Who Is There." Read Norman L. Geissler's "Christ: The Theme Of The Bible."⁸

7. Encourage vocal support and witness to the faithful Lutheran position and practice by leaders and all members, and speak against all unfaithfulness to the Scriptural and Confessional standard.

8. Urge responsible leaders at every level to continue exploring the unresolved doctrinal problems within your own church and between churches and efforts to promote the *true* unity of the Lutheran Church. Seek discipline of errorists, even to their exclusion. Make them face their errors instead of the faithful running. Don't give up the church to errorists but ask them to withdraw. That will be the result of our "State of Protest."

9. Encourage and participate in serious Bible study in our homes, schools,

churches, and conferences to the end that we continue to learn the truth of God's word and will for our lives and apply it in practice.

10. Alert others through regular channels in our parishes, areas, and districts to the crucial needs of the church in this hour, and invite them to be active Confessors of the truth, and admonish any who err so that they might repent and experience forgiveness in Christ.

11. Show exemplary and dedicated stewardship, missions and evangelism efforts locally and throughout the world.

12. Support officials on the local and district levels who provide positive Confessional leadership for the constituency. Support the leaders of your church in their efforts to supervise doctrine and life, remembering them in our private and corporate prayers.

13. Outline and formulate a strategy that includes reading of essays and presenting of lectures on Scriptural and Confessional loyalty in the search to be an authentic Lutheran Church at all conferences, meetings, and at all occasions on all local, area, district, and national levels.

14. Plan rallies and influence the various boards and committees to which we belong to utilize prominent speakers who will speak on Scriptural and Confessional loyalty in seeking to be an authentic missionary Lutheran Church.

We need to follow the example of Nehemiah who in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem became a symbol of building the Kingdom of God. He sought the welfare of Israel and of God's Church. His enemies led by Sanballat derided and despised Nehemiah and his fellowmen. Sanballat was angry and indignant over against God's people because the wall was being successfully built. So Nehemiah (4:17) saw to it that the builders on the wall and those who bore burdens were armed, each carrying on the work with a tool or trowel in one hand and with the other holding his weapon or sword. When Nehemiah had the wall rebuilt with the gates still to be put in place, Sanballat came to him, saying, "Come, let us meet together in one of the villages in the plains of Ono," for he intended Nehemiah harm. Nehemiah 6:1-8 tells us that Nehemiah refused, saying, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down; why should the work cease, while I leave it and come down to you?" Four times Sanballat sent this message and four times Nehemiah replied the same way. A fifth time Sanballat sent a message, and still Nehemiah refused to leave the work of the Kingdom in order to have a discussion in the plains of Ono.

An authentic Lutheran Church must not leave building the Kingdom of God's Word in order to have theological conferences that mean getting away from the Word and work of God and thus compromise the Word with the new theology or new humanism. Let such theological conferences be held at the wall where the workers have a trowel in one hand to build and a sword in another to protect themselves. We will not build the Kingdom with a sword, but we cannot build the walls of Israel nor do our mission work without protecting ourselves with the sword of the Word. A society that will not defend itself against anarchists cannot long survive, nor a church that does not practice its Confessions and does not edify and discipline to the point of exclusion of those who do not confess or practice the Scriptural faith. The result will be the same: there will be no safety and rights for individuals where policemen are shot at random, and there will remain no Scriptural truth and Christian faith where future watchmen on Zion's wall are fed on New Theology without being led to the Christian and Scriptural viewpoint required by the historic Christ in His infallible Word. The temptation is always to go out to the plains of Ono to talk theology and leave a great work undone. The Lutheran Church must avoid that temptation, but practice its positive Gospel mission. Allow no detractions or detractors, for the cause of the Gospel is too great to be sidetracked. By God's grace may we all follow true Confessional practice!

FOOTNOTES

¹Norman L. Geisler, *Christ: The Theme of the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), p. 26, 23-25.

²Ewald Plass, *What Luther Says* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959), Vol. III, p. 1500, No. 4852

³*Lutheran Hymnal*, No. 387, v. 10.

⁴Plass, Vol. I, p. 413, No. 1219.

⁵*Ibid.*, No. 1218.

⁶Harold O. J. Brown, *The Protest Of A Troubled Protestant* (New York: Arlington House, 1969), p. 125.

⁷"Subversion in the Church" (editorial), *Christianity Today*, July 31, 1970, p. 16.

⁸Francis A. Schaeffer, *Escape From Reason* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity, 1968); Francis A. Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity, 1968); Norman L. Geisler, *Christ: The Theme of the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968).

Note: All quotations from the Confessions are from the Tappert Edition.

10. Confessional Ecumenism

Ralph A. Bohlmann, Ph.D.

There is little doubt that future church historians will describe the modern Ecumenical Movement as one of the most significant religious phenomena of the twentieth century. So pervasive is the influence of this movement on the theology and life of the contemporary church that no responsible Christian individual or denomination can afford to remain indifferent toward it. But perhaps more important, neither can we afford to be indifferent toward the problem of ecclesiastical division and fragmentation that the ecumenical movement proposes to solve. We can share the sentiment of the Roman Catholic theologian who, after noting the existence of more than 250 religious denominations in the United States alone, observes, "The general impression is that of being confronted by a religious world blown to atoms and whose secret of cohesion has been lost."¹ To deplore this situation is not enough; we must understand its causes, and then take proper and effective action. What principles and attitudes should govern such action? Should we participate in extant ecumenical activities and organizations, and if so, why, and to what extent? Because such questions involve an understanding of the nature and mission of the church, they are doctrinal questions. Furthermore, they call for an understanding of the nature and function of doctrine itself. Lutherans will base their answers to these questions on the Word of God and the exposition of that Word in the Lutheran Confessions. For that reason Lutheran ecumenism is always *confessional* ecumenism. Confessional ecumenism is not some chauvinistic attempt to achieve Christian union by securing formal subscription to the precise words and phrases of our 16th century confessional documents. It is rather the practice of developing our relationships with other Christians by means of attitudes, principles, and activities based upon the doctrinal content of the Lutheran Confessions as true expositions of the Word of God. Our essay attempts to serve such confessional ecumenism in two ways: first, by reviewing the crucially important confessional understanding of the nature of the church and its relationship to the Gospel; and second, by indicating some of the more important implications of this relationship for our attitude toward and involvement in ecumenical activities today.

I. Church and Gospel

In his inimitable fashion, Dr. Martin Luther writes in the Smalcald Articles: "Thank God, a seven-year old child knows what the church is, namely, holy believers and sheep who hear the voice of their Shepherd" (SA, III, xii, 2). Many today, although presumably wiser than the seven-year olds of Luther's day, have evidently forgotten the two chief features of this definition, namely, that the church consists of believers, and that believers follow the Shepherd's Word, the Gospel. The confessions deal at length with the intimate relationship between the church and the Gospel.²

(1) *The church in the narrow or proper sense is the "assembly of believers"* (AC VII). It is "mainly an association of faith and of the Holy Spirit" (Ap VII, 5) and not merely an "association of outward ties and rites". The great truth that the church is constituted by faith was articulated by Luther and his colleagues in the 16th century not only because of the polemical situation of that time, that is, to enable Luther to say in the Smalcald Articles, "We do not concede to the papists that they are the church, for they are not" (III, xii, 1). Much more, this understanding of the church as constituted by faith in Jesus Christ and not by membership in an external organization, fol-

lows from the great Apostolic and Reformation truth that man is justified by faith. Just as it is only by faith in Jesus Christ (or, the Gospel in the narrow sense) that a man is righteous in the sight of God, so the church is simply the totality of those who have such faith.³ The church is the Body of Christ because it has a living relationship with Him who is its Head. Apart from a living relationship with the Head, there is no living relationship with other members of the Body (Ap VII, 5). Apart from faith, there is no church. Just as faith alone justifies, so also faith alone constitutes the church. What this means dare not be overlooked! It is not our membership in St. Paul's Congregation, or in the American Lutheran Church or the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod or the Lutheran Church in America, or in any other organization that makes us "church." The church, properly speaking, is the community of all those, and only those, in whom the Holy Spirit has created saving faith in Jesus Christ. It is therefore both smaller and larger than any denominational structure. Its reality is *spiritual*, for it is constituted by *faith*. The precise limits of the church in the narrow sense cannot be determined by man, nor can its extent be measured statistically, organizationally, or sociologically.

(2) *The church is called and recognized by the use of the Gospel and Sacraments.* The church is GOD's creation. Because we cannot by our own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ or come to Him, the Holy Spirit calls us by the Gospel and enlightens us with His gifts. When the Gospel is communicated or the sacraments are used,⁴ God does miraculous things! The Holy Spirit works through these instruments to make saints out of sinners by creating faith in Jesus Christ. When He creates faith, He places the faithful into a community called the church. The church is people, not an intellectual abstraction. For the means by which the church is *called* is also the means by which it is *recognized*. So great is our confidence in God the Holy Spirit's operation through the Gospel and sacraments that we know that the church exists wherever His means are employed. Thus, to find or recognize the church, our confessions urge us to look neither for great programs, many buildings, and large and elaborate organizations, nor even for purity of life or excellency of love — important as all of these may be —, but rather ask us to look for the pure and right use of the Gospel and sacraments. This emphasis honors God as the Author of the church and recognizes the church as His creation, rather than our own.

(3) *The church is united spiritually; its unity is given with faith in the Gospel.* We confess in the Nicene Creed: I believe in ONE, holy Christian and apostolic church. Properly speaking, there are not 250 churches in America, but ONE church. We are one with every Christian who lives or has ever lived on the face of this earth. Christian unity is nothing other than the spiritual bond that unites all believers to their Lord Jesus Christ and thereby to each other. There is only *one* assembly of such believers in both space and time. *Ubi ecclesia, ibi unitas*, our fathers said; "Where the church is, there is its unity." When our Augsburg Confession states in its Seventh Article, "For the true unity of the church it is enough to agree concerning the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments", the confession is not in the first instance making a programmatic statement about our modern ecumenical problem.⁵ To quote from the Apology, it is rather describing "true spiritual unity, without which there can be no faith in the heart nor righteousness in the heart before God" (Ap, VII, 31). Unity is there correlated with faith and righteousness — *spiritual* realities rather than empirical objects. Such unity is found where the Gospel and sacraments are used purely and rightly, that is, where they are in the first instance, *qualitatively* pure and right, where the Gospel is preached and the sacraments are used without pollution and contamination by human additions or subtractions or by legalistic admixtures. For it is only through the pure Gospel that God creates the one and only church of Jesus Christ.

(4) *The church in the narrow sense is found only within the church in the broad sense.* Where do we find this one church of believers only? The

confessions answer: only in a larger assembly of people including hypocrites and unbelievers who for various reasons are gathered around the Word and sacraments together with the true believers. The confessions call this assembly the "association of outward ties and rights" (Ap VII, 5), or the church in the broad sense. The hypocrites and unbelievers in this assembly are not living members of the body of Christ but are only what the Apology calls "members of the church according to the outward associations of the church's marks" (Ap VII, 3), or "as far as outward ceremonies are concerned" (Ap, VII, 12). The church in this broad sense can be measured and described empirically and sociologically. Statistical yearbooks can be compiled on it. But it bears the name "church" only because of the true church within it. It too is identified by the use of Gospel and sacraments carried on in its midst and which continue to retain their divine power and efficacy even when done by unbelievers. This is not a second church, for there is only one church. But the one church of true believers — real people, not some Platonic idea or mere intellectual abstraction — exists within the broad church and is not simply coextensive with it. But it is the church in the broad sense that is involved in the modern ecumenical movement; it is in fact the normal identification of the word "church" today.

(5) *The external unity of the church in the broad sense is to be based on agreement in the Gospel and sacraments, that is, in "doctrine and in all its articles as well as in the right use of the holy sacraments" (FC, Ep, X, 7).* While unity is a "given" of the church in the proper sense, it is also a goal for the church in the broad sense, the "association of outward ties and rites". The Augsburg Confession was written not only to establish the fact that the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church was present among Luther's followers, but to help restore an outward unity that had been lost. The Preface of the AC states this purpose very clearly, namely, "to have all of us embrace and adhere to a single, true religion and live together in unity and in one fellowship and church, even as we are all enlisted under one Christ" (AC Preface, 4).⁶ Such outward unity is dependent on agreement in the Gospel and use of the sacraments according to Christ's institution. We are here talking about agreement in the Gospel in the broad sense.⁷ Why is such agreement necessary? To be sure, it is because Lutherans seek to be faithful to their Lord who commanded the church to "obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19, TEV). But it is also because the pure understanding of the Gospel and the consequent correct preaching of the Gospel in the narrow sense calls for a correct understanding of the Gospel in the broad sense, particularly of the articles of faith treated in the Augsburg Confession, defended in the Apology, and explained in the remaining Lutheran Confessions. All articles of faith are integrally related to the Gospel in the narrow sense; as the fathers often said, they are either antecedent or consequent to justification by grace. The Gospel in the narrow sense is central in the Gospel in the broad sense, and all aspects of the Gospel in the broad sense have a direct or indirect bearing on the Gospel in the narrow sense.⁸ Because of this relationship, the preaching of the Gospel according to a pure understanding of it becomes an impossibility whenever any article of faith is either falsified or denied. In this sense, the *pure* and *recte* of AC VII have also *quantitative* significance because the Gospel that creates and builds the church ultimately embraces all articles of faith revealed in Holy Scripture. For the confessions, it is self-evident that the norm for determining what is "pure" preaching of the Gospel and "right" administration of the sacraments is the Word of God, Holy Scripture. Whatever is faithful to Holy Scripture serves the Gospel, and whatever opposes Holy Scripture threatens the Gospel. An external fellowship in which the Bible's authority or truthfulness is denied or minimized jeopardizes the Gospel, for the testimony of the Scriptures is the God-spun fabric from which all articles of faith are woven. Recognition of the divine authority of Holy Scripture is a fruit of faith in the Gospel, but the *Biblical* content of the Gospel we preach and administer is in turn our assurance that our Gospel comes from God and therefore expresses *His* will and possesses *His* power.⁹ In this con-

nection, it should be observed that the Gospel is not to be confused with "ceremonies" that need not be everywhere alike (AC VII). Uniformity in ceremonies may be useful, but ceremonies not ordained by God have no organic connection with the Gospel and are therefore not criteria for fellowship. But the antithesis in AC VII is between the divine Gospel and human ceremonies, and not between the Gospel and "other" teachings of Holy Scripture.

(6) *Only such external unity within the church in the broad sense as preserves and employs the means of grace in their essential purity serves the true unity, preservation, and extension of the church in the proper sense.* The Holy Spirit builds the church through the Gospel and sacraments. Believing, teaching, and confessing the Gospel according to Holy Scripture becomes the one essential task of the church and the one God-given means for seeking and finding true Christian unity. In other words, the primary mission of the church is the faithful use of the means of grace. External unity in the church is not an end in itself, but serves the primary task of the church. *Concordia* is intended to advance *unitas*, and this is done only when the Gospel is faithfully preserved and consistently employed. Therefore, we cannot automatically assume that organizational mergers, participation in church federations, or even ecclesiastical declarations of altar and pulpit fellowship in themselves advance the cause of true Christian unity, for the decisive criterion remains whether such activities advance and are faithful to the Gospel.¹⁰ According to this criterion, not every separation of Christians from other Christians is to be condemned (however much it is deplored), for God Himself commands separation from all alliances that persistently falsify His Gospel, or tolerate such falsification.

To summarize: The church in the narrow sense, which consists of believers in Jesus Christ, is united spiritually by its common faith in the Gospel in the narrow sense, but exists within the church in the broad sense whose external unity is to be based on agreement in the Gospel in the broad sense. The Gospel in the narrow sense is related to all aspects of the Gospel in the broad sense, and is the means by which the Holy Spirit creates and extends the church.¹¹

II. Implications

(1) *Confessional ecumenism is based on the understanding of the church as the assembly of believers, rather than on the current misunderstanding of the church that defines it solely in terms of sociological and empirical terms.* This is one of the most serious errors of contemporary ecumenism. Its concomitant is the notion that equates denominational fellowship with Christian unity. Such thinking has either forgotten or rejected the spiritual unity of the church on the basis of its common faith in Jesus Christ. Confessional ecumenism, on the other hand, knows that while the church is not a mere abstraction, neither is it precisely identical with the institutional church or its trans-denominational ecumenical organizations. Confessional ecumenism recognizes the fact that the church is true believers and that accordingly only such activities as give that face preeminence are really and truly ecumenical. Understanding the true nature of the church is of crucial importance. According to the Apology, knowing that the church consists only of believers who enjoy the gifts promised by Christ is a great comfort against despair when we see "the infinite dangers that threaten the church with ruin" (Ap VII, 9). Moreover, "If we were to define the church as only an outward organization embracing both the good and the wicked, then men would not understand that the kingdom of Christ is the righteousness of the heart and the gift of the Holy Spirit but would think of it as only the outward observance of certain devotions and rituals" (Ap. VII, 13). In other words, misunderstanding the church may involve a misunderstanding of the Gospel itself.

(2) *Confessional ecumenism is predicated on the existence of true Christian unity among all believers.* The spiritual unity of believers is the presupposition and basis for seeking the empirical manifestations of that unity.

Let us state that somewhat less academically. It is precisely because we *are* one with all Christians that we are concerned about all Christians. It is because the Roman Catholic believer is my brother in Christ, for example, that I am concerned about his understanding of the role of Mary or the authority of the papacy. It is because the Baptist believer is my brother that I am concerned about his views on the sacraments. Oneness of faith leads and impels us to frank and earnest efforts with other Christians to help them preserve the faith, grow in the knowledge of the Savior, and share His love with others. On the other hand, it is for the sake of their common faith that Christians will often have to remain separate, individually and denominationally, from other Christians; for such separation as is commanded by God Himself serves as a fraternal admonition to the separated brethren to heed the whole counsel of God for the sake of their salvation. It is most unfortunate that so much recent ecumenical literature treats Christian unity only as the goal, and not as the presupposition, for our ecumenical efforts.

(3) *Confessional ecumenism is both evangelical and evangelistic.* It knows that the Gospel of Jesus Christ creates, sustains, and enlarges the church and therefore spares no effort to preach and administer that Gospel. It keeps the Gospel central (evangelical); it shares it with others (evangelistic). To be sure, Christians must be concerned with the great moral and social questions of our time, but not as a substitute for the Gospel or a means to promote true Christian unity, for the church's primary mission to itself and to others is fulfilled only by giving the Gospel pre-eminence in all it does. In fact, confessional ecumenism can be correctly understood as the practice of evangelism *within* visible Christendom.

(4) *Confessional ecumenism is doctrinal ecumenism.* It is committed to seeking full doctrinal agreement (i.e. agreement in the Gospel in the broad sense) as the basis for fellowship between Christian churches. For it knows that doctrine is in all its articles related to the Gospel by which the church lives, moves, and has its being. It therefore opposes both minimalistic and pluralistic doctrinal approaches to ecumenism. The former occurs in the appeal to practice ecclesiastical fellowship simply on the basis of a declaration of the Lordship of Christ, the "simple" Gospel, a Trinitarian statement, the fact of Baptism, or perhaps membership in a nominally Christian church.¹² As Lutherans, we must be particularly careful that AC VII is not misused in this way, as though the requirements for membership and unity in the *una sancta*, the church in the narrow sense, are a sufficient requirement for external unity or fellowship in the church in the broad sense.¹³ Closely related is the pluralistic assertion, so common in ecumenical literature, that many doctrinal positions can exist side by side within the same fellowship without disrupting the fellowship.¹⁴ This agreement to disagree is often bolstered by the fallacious argument that varying traditions of doctrine can enrich and help each other. Both the minimalistic and the pluralistic positions reflect an indifferentism to revealed doctrine that dishonors God's Word, weakens the Gospel that sustains the church and its true unity, offends the brethren, and ultimately promotes the external disunity of the churches. Such positions, often predicated on an inadequate notion of Christian love, serve the cause of neither love nor truth. Love demands that our brother be served by truth rather than by error, because error leads away from Jesus Christ, not toward Him. Doctrinal indifference ultimately destroys true Christian unity and produces schism, division, and polarization within Christendom. It is also to be emphasized that it is agreement in the Gospel — not in anything else, such as social action, liturgy, or structure — that is the basis for true Christian fellowship.¹⁵ Granted that the divided state of Christendom is a serious offense, it must be understood that doctrinal indifference or laxity not only does nothing to remove real barriers to fellowship, but creates an additional offense.

(5) *Confessional ecumenism accepts and employs Holy Scripture, the written Word of God, as "the only judge, rule, and norm according to which, as the only touchstone all doctrines should and must be understood and judged*

as good or evil, right or wrong" (FC, Ep, Rule and Norm, 7), and vigorously rejects whatever calls into question the authority or truthfulness of the Bible. Confessional ecumenism resists the temptation to pit the Gospel or Christ against the Scriptures, for it knows that Christ is the center of all Scripture and that Holy Scripture is God's way of revealing Christ to us. Confessional ecumenism therefore resists the new "enthusiasm" or mysticism which substitutes subjective ideas (usually on the pretext of being guided individually or corporately by the Holy Spirit) for the clear Word of Holy Scripture. To be sure, our Lord has promised to guide the church into all truth and to give it His Holy Spirit, but He gives His Holy Spirit through the Word of His truth, and not apart from it.¹⁶ Moreover, confessional ecumenism recognizes the *doctrinal unity* of Holy Scriptures, and therefore resist the contemporary ecumenical notion that theological diversity within the Scripture justifies theological diversity within the church. When it is asserted that the authority of the Bible is not the basis of fellowship, it must be recalled that the Bible is the basis, and fabric, as it were of all articles of faith and therefore the norm of the Gospel we preach and teach.

(6) *Confessional ecumenism knows that the basis of church fellowship lies in agreement in doctrine, not in human ceremonies.* "It is not necessary" states AC VII, "that human traditions or rites or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be alike everywhere". Christian fellowship should not be made more stringent than God has made it by requiring agreement in such ceremonial or human matters. Liturgical agreement and structural conformity may be highly desirable for various reasons, but are not of the essence of the church or its unity. Brethren contemplating the declaration of either separation or fellowship need to be very careful that man-made and external considerations are not determining factors.

(7) *Confessional ecumenism cultivates a fellowship that is vertical in time as well as horizontal in space.* It therefore cherishes its doctrinal heritage and makes its historic confessions its own. Moreover, it echoes the desire of the Lutheran confessors that our posterity will share our faith, and knows that this can be achieved when, by the blessing of God the Holy Spirit, men of all ages seek and find their common agreement in the Gospel of Jesus Christ on the basis of His Holy Word. Confessional ecumenism therefore deplores the current emphasis on theological change and novelty at the expense of continuity, particularly when such advocacy is predicated on the false notion that doctrine itself must change as part of the evolutionary and revolutionary process by which Christ is said to be exercising His Lordship over the world.

(8) *Confessional ecumenism recognizes the importance of practice as the application of doctrine to life.* Proper formulations of the meaning of the Gospel on the basis of the Scriptures, necessary as such formulations are, are no substitute for actually preaching, teaching, and living the Gospel and using the sacraments. Practice is a fair indication of fidelity to the Gospel. For example, it does little good to point to an excellent formulation of the lodge problem in a synodical constitution if in fact that policy is not being followed in the parishes. It means little to point to a fine statement on the inerrancy of Holy Scripture in the *Brief Statement* or the *United Testimony of Faith and Life* if, in fact, that position is no longer consistently followed. We need to remember that the Augsburg Confession (VII) is talking about a Gospel that is actually taught and proclaimed and about sacraments that are actually administered. Why? Because it is through the practice of the Gospel, if you will, that the Holy Spirit creates and sustains His church. To be sure, not all items in the area of practice are clearly defined in the Word of God, and this needs to be recognized. But where they are, or where they clearly relate to the Gospel, there can be no ecumenical retreat to the safety of written formulations at the expense of what is actually happening in the church's parishes as well as its seminaries, colleges, publishing houses, boards and commissions.

(9) *Confessional ecumenism employs both Law and Gospel in a fraternal and evangelical practice of Christian discipline toward those whose life or doctrine contradicts the teaching of Holy Scripture and vitiates or denies the Gos-*

pel of Jesus Christ, thereby impairing fellowship within the church of Jesus Christ. To be sure, the presence of error in a church body is not immediate grounds for suspension of fellowship. Heresy is the *persistent* advocacy of error, and erring brethren — whether individuals or churches — need our earnest efforts to correct them before we take the always regrettable ultimate step of separation. But doctrinal discipline is necessary for the preservation of the Gospel among us, for the promulgation or toleration of error neither builds nor sustains the church. It is therefore mandatory that procedures for doctrinal discipline within and between church bodies be as direct and uncomplicated as possible; that persons responsible for the public supervision of doctrine exercise that responsibility without prodding and without harassment, and that all of us, pastors and laity, keep ourselves informed on what is being taught, preached, and written in the church so that we can exercise a mutual ministry of concern toward each other. Evangelical doctrinal discipline is not legalistic, as some assert. It rather helps brethren remain faithful to the truth which alone makes men free.

(10) *Confessional ecumenism is grassroots ecumenism.* It involves the efforts of *all* Christians, both to become and to remain doctrinally informed, and also to give testimony of their faith to other Christians. Efforts toward achieving doctrinal agreement with other Christians should not be limited to the church's officials or theologians, important as these are. For true fellowship in the church in the broad sense is predicated on the assumption that the *believers*, whether pastors or laymen, are indeed united in the understanding and confession of the Gospel in the broad sense. Much more must be done to extend the ecumenical movement to our individual parishes.

(11) *Confessional ecumenism distinguishes between merger or altar and pulpit fellowship on the one hand, and cooperation in external matters on the other.* Fellowship with other Christians at the altar or in the preaching of the Word of God is clearly the pinnacle of Christian cooperative efforts, while joint efforts in social action or welfare and in other areas not directly affecting Word and Sacrament can sometimes be carried out with less than full doctrinal agreement. Even then, Christians will avoid giving the impression by such joint efforts that full agreement exists. The Formula of Concord reminds us that there are situations when there must be no "yielding or conforming in external things where Christian agreement in doctrine has not previously been achieved" (FC SD, X, 16). That statement means that even adiaphora, things neither commanded nor forbidden by God, can be a legitimate source of contention and separation between Christians when the Gospel is at stake. We should not hesitate to cooperate with other Christians in such matters when this can be done without offense or misunderstanding. Such activity, however, must not be regarded as a substitute for attaining doctrinal agreement, for this would be to confuse a merely secular ecumenism with authentic confessional ecumenism.

(12) *Confessional ecumenism distinguishes between merger or altar and pulpit fellowship on the one hand, and ecclesiastical participation in federations and councils of churches on the other.* Merger, organic union, and altar and pulpit fellowship are based on complete doctrinal agreement (i.e. the Gospel in the broad sense), while federations or councils, on the other hand, usually represent efforts to provide structures for achieving such agreement. Membership in the latter type of organization (e.g. LCUSA, LWF) would be possible (though not mandatory) without complete doctrinal agreement whenever (1) such membership would entail serious doctrinal discussions with a view to the attainment of full doctrinal agreement, (2) when the federation or council as such does not engage in activity which would identify it as a church, (3) when membership in the council or federation would not tend to identify the member churches as being in doctrinal agreement when in fact they were not, and (4) when membership in such an organization would not identify a member church with undesirable or questionable positions or activities of the organization as a whole or with any of its member churches. When such concerns are adequately met, membership becomes primarily a question

of feasibility. When such organizations are not fulfilling their potential usefulness in the attainment of external unity, attempts should be made to change the organization before withdrawing from it or entering it, as the case may be. For such organizations, ideally considered, offer a useful framework for seeking a greater measure of doctrinal agreement and for cooperation in externals.

(13) *Available time and resources, as well as the demands and opportunities in other areas of the church's task, suggest that Christian churches follow clear priorities in seeking closer ties with other Christians.* On the principle that those closest to us in the household of faith deserve our closest attention and most persistent effort we would suggest the following sequence of ecumenical priorities:

- (1) Attaining closer relationships with estranged brethren within our own denominational fellowships, where the doctrinal differences often appear to be as great as between denominations. Lutherans loyal to their synodical constitution should not make withdrawal or separation their goal, but should rather endeavor to correct their synodical problems through the forthright rejection of error and the fraternal discipline of errorists.¹⁷
- (2) Maintaining and enriching our fellowship relationships with daughter and sister churches around the world. In the case of the ALC-LCMS relationship, we need to encourage the Inter-Church Commission to deal effectively with the issues that were commended to it and to promote greater doctrinal discussion at all levels. Where problems exist, we need to recall that patient and fraternal exhortation should precede more drastic action — whether we are dealing with individuals or church bodies.
- (3) Seeking to restore fellowship with churches formerly in fellowship, such as the WELS, the ELS, or our Finnish brethren.
- (4) Attempting to attain sufficient doctrinal agreement for fellowship with Lutheran churches not in fellowship with us, such as the Lutheran Church in Australia and the Lutheran Church in America.¹⁸
- (5) Promoting closer relations with non-Lutheran Christians.¹⁹
- (6) Using available opportunities to discuss the Gospel with representatives of non-Christian religions or ideologies, provided such contacts give ample opportunity for a clear testimony to the Gospel and are not regarded as according the non-Christian religion an equal claim to the truth.²⁰

In all these contacts and efforts, the quality of participation certainly is as important as the quantity. It is unfortunate that many of the top-level ecumenical discussions are held between the more liberal representatives of the churches. This is one reason why conservative Christians often tend to be somewhat negative toward ecumenicity, and why serious doctrinal differences are not effectively dealt with.

(14) *Confessional ecumenism holds that considerations of truth must take precedence over considerations of love, should these be in conflict, for Christian love is always dependent upon the truth of the Gospel.* When a choice must be made between external unity and the truth of the Gospel, unity must yield to truth. For it is better to be divided for the sake of the truth than to be united in error. Such division is the responsibility of those who depart from the truth, rather than those who follow it.

(15) *Confessional ecumenism will continue to make the following statement from the Formula of Concord in the 1570's the Lutheran formula for concord in the 1970's:*

We have no intention (since we have no authority to do so) to yield anything of the eternal and unchangeable truth of God for the sake of temporal peace, tranquility, and outward harmony. Nor would such peace and harmony last, because it would be contrary to the truth and actually

intended for its suppression. Still less by far are we minded to whitewash or cover up any falsification of true doctrine or any publicly condemned errors. We have a sincere delight in and deep love for true harmony and are cordially inclined and determined on our part to do everything in our power to further the same. We desire such harmony as will not detract anything from the divine truth of the holy Gospel, that will not give place to the smallest error but will lead the poor sinner to true and sincere repentance, raise him up through faith, strengthen him in his new obedience, and thus justify and save for him forever through the sole merit of Christ, and so forth. (FC, SD, XI, 95-96)

That, dear brethren, is *confessional* ecumenism. God help us to practice it!

FOOTNOTES

¹Bernard Lambert, *Ecumenicism, Theology and History*, translated from the French by Lancelot C. Sheppard (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), p. 54.

²The following paragraphs reflect the confessional distinction between the narrow and broad sense of both "church" and "Gospel". The church in the narrow sense consists of all believers and only believers (cf. AC VII; Ap VII, 28) but the church in the broad sense includes also hypocrites and unbelievers (cf. AC VIII and Ap VII, *passim*). Gospel in the narrow sense identifies the message or promise of the forgiveness of sins for the sake of Jesus Christ, while in the broad sense it includes all Christian doctrine (Ap IV, 43, 345; FC, SD, V, 3-6).

³It should be understood that the faith which saves and makes a man a member of the church (*fides qua*, as distinguished from the *fides quae*) is faith in the Gospel in the narrow sense, but not the knowledge and acceptance of the entire body of Christian doctrine.

⁴The sacraments have the same purpose and effect as the preached or spoken Gospel, for they are also ways in which our gracious God "offers counsel and help against sin" (SA, III, iv). They should therefore be thought of as "signed Gospel" or "visible Word" (Ap XIII, 5), not as something distinct from the Gospel.

⁵There has, of course, been widespread misuse of this article by contemporary Lutherans. Its primary purpose was to state what is necessary for the true church to exist, and by implication to affirm that the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church was also present among Luther's followers. In this connection, it is useful to observe that the Latin versions of the Formula of Concord tend to use the term *concordia* when speaking of the external fellowship or unity of the church, and to reserve the term *unitas* for the spiritual fellowship existing among true believers in the *una sancta*.

⁶This language is substantially that of Charles V's imperial summons to the Diet of Augsburg.

⁷This broad sense of "Gospel", which is no doubt derived from the four "Gospel" accounts of the New Testament, was common usage in the sixteenth century and occurs in a variety of ways in the confessions. The expressions *iuxta evangelium* or *secundum evangelium* ("according to the Gospel") traditionally had reference to the four New Testament Gospels or a specific passage in them. The following confessional references are samples of such usage: AC, XXVIII, 5; Ap, XI, 4; XII, 122; LC, I, 65, 81, 276, 285. By extension, the term "Gospel" is sometimes applied to other parts of the New Testament, or to the Biblical teaching as a whole. For example, when Melancthon writes that the Mosaic ceremonial laws do not justify "according to the Gospel", his reference is to Colossians 2:16-17 (Ap, XV, 30). When the Apology asserts that we obtain forgiveness of sins freely because of Christ, it is possible to base this assertion on either *scriptura docet* (Ap, XII, 157) or *evangelium docet* (Ap, XV, 30). Likewise such expressions as *mandatum evangelii* or *evangelium iubet* evidently reflect this broad usage of the term (e.g., Ap, XII, 172). Melancthon laments the fact that the monks "neither hear nor preach the Gospel", and then asserts that the Gospel deals not only with forgiveness and justification but also is "about true penitence, about works that have the command of God" (Ap, XXVII, 54). Luther regrets that the clergy have learned very little from the "Gospel" about the conduct of their offices, with the result that they abuse their Christian liberty (LC, Preface, 3-4).

It is understandable that "Gospel in this broad sense was also used for the proclamation or teaching of the contemporary church. Luther claims, for example, that "the entire Gospel is an external, oral proclamation" (LC, IV, 30). The Apology equates *evangelium* with *doctrina* in defining the church as the assembly of saints who share the association of the same Gospel or teaching and of the same Holy Spirit" (Ap, VII, 8). Or again, one of the fruits of the fact that "the Gospel is taught purely and diligently among us" is that no Anabaptists have arisen in the churches of the Augsburg Confession; the teaching of Baptism is based on Matthew 28:19, but the content and effect as taught in the church is "Gospel" (Ap, IX, 2). It is often difficult to draw a precise line between the Biblical Gospel and its contemporary proclamation. When, for example, the confessions talk about the *praecipuus evangelii locus*, it is clear that they have reference to the forgiveness of sins for the sake of Jesus Christ (e.g., AC, XXVIII, 52; Ap, XII, 3, 10). But *evangelium* in this expression refers in the first instance to the entire doctrine of the New Testament and then to the proclamation of that doctrine in the church. This expression, incidentally, indicates that the Gospel-in-the-narrow-sense is the most important point and the chief topic of the Gospel-in-the-broad-sense.

Students of the confessions need to be sensitive to the various emphases in the use of the term "Gospel", for the confessions employ the term without great precision and sometimes use it in different ways in the same context (e.g., AC, VII; XXVIII, 5; Tr, 60).

⁸The Gospel has been likened to a seamless garment, a golden ring, or a wagon wheel whose hub is Jesus Christ and whose spokes are the articles of faith. The interrelationship of the articles of faith and their relationship to the Gospel in the narrow sense is explained in the following: "A Review of the Question, What Is a Doctrine?"; III, 7, in *1969 LCMS Convention Proceedings*, pp. 506-507; *Theology of Fellowship*, Part II, B, 2, in *1969 LCMS Convention Proceedings*, p. 535; and "The Doctrine of the Church in the Lutheran Confessions: Essay Adopted by the Commissioners of The American Lutheran Church and The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod", in *1967 LCMS Convention Proceedings*, pp. 417-419.

This interrelationship can be seen by thinking through the "simple" Gospel on the basis of a passage like John 3:16. Questions like the following lead to a consideration of all the theology from creation to eschatology, and indicate why agreement in the Gospel involves full doctrinal agreement: Who is "God"? Where did the "world" come from? Why did it need God's "love"? Who is God's "Son" and why is he called "only-begotten"? What did he do when the Father "gave" him, and how did this really change man's situation? What is meant by "believing in Him" and how does one get such faith? What does it mean that the world would "perish" without him? What is "eternal life"? On what basis can we be sure that our answers are God's?

⁹There is much confusion on this point, also within Lutheranism. But it must be understood that what is in conformity with the Gospel is determined by Holy Scripture, and not by man's subjective decision. It was axiomatic for the confessional fathers that Holy Scripture was God's authoritative revelation. It is a total misreading of the confessions to argue that they were interested only in the soteriological purpose of Holy Scripture and not in its divine authority and infallibility. For a systematic exposition of the confessional view of Holy Scripture, see my book, *Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Lutheran Confessions* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968) especially Part One.

- ¹⁰It is important to recall the earlier emphasis that the "simple" Gospel embraces all the articles of faith and that the proper administration of the sacraments includes the proper *doctrine* of the sacraments.
- ¹¹It is a serious confusion when the requirements for spiritual unity are made the sole basis for altar and pulpit fellowship. This was done, for example, in the Fellowship Supplement of *The Lutheran Witness Reporter*, Vol. 4, No. 22, November 17, 1968, which stated on p. 4: "That which is necessary and sufficient for the church's true spiritual unity is also necessary and sufficient for altar and pulpit fellowship". The statement either requires too much for true spiritual unity or too little for altar and pulpit fellowship (although the following context fortunately clarified the matter somewhat).
- ¹²Novel as it may be to use the word "fundamentalistic" correctly, it should be observed that it is "fundamentalistic" to base church fellowship on agreement in certain basic doctrines to the exclusion of others. This was the position of historic Fundamentalism as well as of the earlier Moravian slogan, "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity".
- ¹³Cf. the statement cited in note 11. This position would enable open communion, intercommunion, and unlimited participation in the ecumenical movement.
- ¹⁴The Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod recently criticized "A Call to Openness and Trust" for its advocacy of a pluralistic doctrinal position in a number of key areas. A similar advocacy was voiced earlier in "The Task Ahead", an editorial in the September 1969, *Concordia Theological Monthly*.
- ¹⁵Nor is sociological or psychological compatibility to be confused with true Christian unity. Advocates of the "more we get together, the happier we'll be" kind of ecumenism are too much in evidence.
- ¹⁶The appeal to truth or action on the basis of an intuitive reading of the times for a dynamic group process or other forms of experience apart from the Word is nothing other than "enthusiasm" (Schwaermerei). Luther reminds us that enthusiasm "is the source, strength, and power of all heresy" (SA, III, viii, 9). And heresy is the heart of the ecumenical problem.
- ¹⁷Although intra-denominational relations are usually not included in "ecumenism", the confessional distinction between the church in the broad sense and the church in the narrow and proper sense enables us to think of all ecclesiastical structure in terms of its contribution to the true spiritual unity among believers. It is worth noting that the primary objective of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is "The conservation and promotion of the unity of the true faith (Eph. 4:3-6; I Cor. 1:10) and a united defense against schism and sectarianism (Rom. 16:17)". In "Constitution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod", *Handbook*, p. 15.
- ¹⁸Membership in such organizations as the Lutheran World Federation and the Lutheran Council in the United States of America should be evaluated in connection with this fourth objective. Some criteria for this evaluation were listed above in thesis 12.
- ¹⁹Within this vast array of denominations, we should cultivate closer ties with evangelical Christians first, and then with more liberal groups. It is important for us to realize that significant changes have taken place in the traditional views of some denominations, including certain Reformed groups and Roman Catholicism. We should also be aware of changes being introduced into ecumenical structures in order to make it possible for more widespread participation (e.g., the National Council of Churches).
- ²⁰As we have defined the term, this activity is technically not "ecumenical", but evangelistic. See the discussion of this problem with particular reference to Judaism in Lambert, pp. 445 ff.

11. Ecumenical Concern and Communion Fellowship in Luther's Day and in Ours

Lowell C. Green, D. Theol.

1. *Historical introduction.*

There's a lot of talk today about the Ecumenical Movement. If a person is interested in ecumenical matters, this simply means that he's concerned about his Christian brethren throughout the world, in various countries and in other churches. Some of the most prominent leaders in the Ecumenical Movement have been scholars in Reformation history and theologians of the Lutheran Confessions. Among the most notable of these have been Werner Elert, Hermann Sasse, and Ernst Sommerlath, each of whom has been marked by his readiness to enter ecumenical encounter, while remaining steadfastly loyal to the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.¹

This uniting of ecumenical concern and confessional integrity should not surprise us. After all, both Martin Luther and Philipp Melanchthon were keenly interested in ecumenical meetings, as were most of the other reformers, while those who avoided such confrontation were the defensive leaders of the Roman Church. Notable examples of these dialogues were the Marburg Colloquy of 1529, the Augsburg Diet of 1530, the Wittenberg Concordat of 1536, and the unsuccessful discussions with the Roman Catholics at Haguenau, Worms, and Regensburg in 1540 and 1541.

The Marburg Colloquy was one of the most important religious discussions of the 16th Century, even if it ended in the permanent division of Protestants into the Lutheran and Reformed groups. While Ulrich Zwingli, the Swiss leader, was concerned that Luther's position seemed to conflict with human reason, Luther insisted that Scripture must over-ride human wisdom in case of a conflict, and based his case upon the word of Christ, "This is my Body." The story is told that Luther even wrote these words on the table with chalk, and that whenever his opponent tried to offer reasons for not taking Christ's words literally, Luther would draw aside the tablecloth, and say, "Yes, but Christ himself says, 'This is my Body!'" Melanchthon was every bit as insistent upon the Real Presence.² Still, recent studies show that it was not the Wittenberg but the Swiss theologians who rejected a compromise.³

This same concern for doctrinal purity together with Christian unity manifested itself in the discussions with the Roman Catholics. The Augsburg Confession of 1530 is a masterly document which demonstrates that the church of Luther was not a separatist movement, but one which stood in the best Catholic tradition. Since its catholicity was officially recognized in the Diet of Augsburg of 1555, even those who have rejected the doctrine of the Real Presence in the Lord's Supper have tried to claim themselves as adherents of this Confession. This is a tribute to the scholarship of its author, Philipp Melanchthon.⁴

Melanchthon also drafted the Wittenberg Concord of 1536, later incorporated into the Formula of Concord (1577), this document established communion fellowship with the churches of Upper Germany, as they were represented by Martin Bucer of Strassburg.⁵ This was an important step in

Reformation history. Previously, the Upper German cities, such as Augsburg, Ulm, and Strassburg, had been strongly influenced by the great Reformed theologians, especially Zwingli and Oecolampadius. Bucer enjoyed the role of a mediator⁶, and, in spite of the fact that he was not always completely candid in such relationships, he did in fact do much to draw southern Germany away from the Reformed circle and into the Lutheran camp. While these leaders of the southern German cities were likely motivated more by considerations of political expediency in uniting forces with the Lutherans to their north than they were anxious to accept the Lutheran understanding of the Sacrament, nevertheless the Wittenberg Concord succeeded. While some statesmen and churchmen were half-hearted in professing the Real Presence view,⁷ during succeeding decades these same south German churches became bulwarks of Lutheran doctrine when Luther's homeland in Saxony was under the power of Crypto-Calvinists. Luther himself was somewhat mistrustful of Bucer and the whole arrangement — he once called Bucer a *Klapper-Maul* (a chatterbox). Nevertheless, he felt duty-bound to accept Bucer's proposal at face-value and to extend the requested church fellowship, in spite of the risks involved. In fact, Luther made important doctrinal concessions in order to reach this agreement.⁸ Subsequent events proved the wisdom of Luther's moderation. This ought to teach us something if we are tempted to demand improper doctrinal *perfectionism* before we are willing to grant Communion fellowship to the other side.

Luther placed great hopes in the Wittenberg Concord, in spite of its watered-down terminology. Like Bucer, he thought it would conciliate the Swiss Reformed churches, and make possible the establishment of church fellowship with them. However, the Reformed leaders refused the efforts of Luther and Bucer, just as they had refused Luther's offer of a compromise at Marburg. Perhaps they were right. While the Wittenberg Concord was conciliatory almost to a fault, it refused to give up the Real Presence of Christ's Body and Blood in the Sacrament. At any rate, it was not the Lutherans but the Reformed who broke up this second attempt at reconciliation.⁹

Although Melancthon's doctrine of the Eucharist varied somewhat from Luther's position, it seems that he held to the Real Presence as long as he lived. Luther, who noticed the difference, refused to break with the younger colleague. However, there were times when the tension was great, such as when the Church Order for the Reformation of Cologne was published in 1543.¹⁰ Melancthon as well as Bucer had had a hand in its writing. Luther strongly disliked the statement on the Lord's Supper; his friend, Nicholas von Amsdorf, Evangelical Bishop of Naumburg, incited Luther to further hostility. With much justification, Luther complained: "It carries out a laborious jabbering about the usefulness, fruit, and glory of the Sacrament, but concerning its substance it mumbles uncertainly . . ."¹¹ It is clear that Luther, who was always ready to extend the right hand of fellowship where there was an honest regard for the teaching of Scripture, strongly opposed union formulations that were drawn up to disguise the differences. Luther made his meaning unmistakably clear when in 1544 he published his "Short Confession of the Holy Sacrament,"¹² his last work on the Lord's Supper. In spite of his dissatisfaction with them, however, Luther did not attack Melancthon or Bucer, but only levelled his polemics against the "Seven Holy Ghosts" who had raised their own teaching above the clear voice of Scripture — men like Schwenkfeld, Oecolampadius, Zwingli, and Carlstadt.

Determined attempts have been made to manipulate history in order to remove the clear distinctions between the Lutheran and Reformed positions. According to one report, Luther called for Melancthon before his last journey to Eisleben and said: "Dear Philipp, I must confess that we have gone too far in the matter of the Lord's Supper," and advised Melancthon to rectify his mistakes after his death. This story does not seem probable, since Melancthon did not mention it, and, in spite of subsequent attacks upon his doctrine of the Supper, Melancthon did not utilize it to relieve

pressure. When we further note that the story has come to us only through the hands of Albert Hardenberg, who had deserted to the Zwinglian fold and bitterly fought against his former Lutheran colleagues, we shall do well to doubt this legend.¹³

Another attempt concerns a remark Luther is alleged to have made about Calvin. Having come across a tract on the Eucharist by Calvin in 1545, Luther is said to have remarked that, had the Swiss spoken thus before, the whole sacramental controversy could have been avoided.¹⁴ Now, this statement does not harmonize with some better attested remarks about Calvin which were highly critical. Furthermore, this anecdote is handed down through Pezel, a Crypto-Calvinist, and Hospinian, a Reformed clergyman, both of whom fought against Luther's doctrine. Besides, Pezel was only 6 years old, and Hospinian not yet born, when this conversation is supposed to have taken place, so we cannot accept their testimony as sufficient.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the legend has been revived. A respected Reformation scholar, Joseph McLelland, retells the tale, and then asks: "Was this, too, hyperbole? Or was Luther sincere . . .?"¹⁵ Since McLelland made this assertion without giving any sources, I wondered whether he had formed better support for this story, and I wrote to ask him whether he could document his contro-matters of interpretation of every individual passage of Scripture, particularly versial statement. He could not find his source. Since McLelland is sarcastic with Luther but lenient with Zwingli, it is fortunate that his reputation does not rest upon his essay in *Marburg Revisited*.

2. Some doctrinal problems.

The Church of the Lutheran Reformation held that the Bible was the ultimate source and norm for all doctrines. However, she did not go to the extremes of the Reformed doctrine of the *sola Scriptura*. She recognized the hand of God in history, and therefore took a more positive attitude toward creeds, liturgies, confessions, and tradition in general. However, unlike the Roman Church, she held that not tradition was the norm for judging the Scriptures, but the Scriptures were the norm for judging tradition. Hence, while the Lutheran theologian today regards the Scriptures alone as authoritative, he eagerly consults the Confessions and other testimonies out of history for guidance, and thereby avoids the dangers of a shallow Biblicism. This shall be our approach as we briefly survey several problems in the discussions about Communion fellowship in our day.

One of the greatest perils is that American Lutherans will fall into the pit of subordinating the Lord's Supper by placing it under some general category which robs it of its uniqueness. A common mistake is to follow Karl Barth and others who call the Eucharist merely another form of the Word of God. This approach was much used by the Lutheran and Reformed essayists who contributed to the paperback volume, *Marburg Revisited*.¹⁶ It has the dubious merit of suppressing the elements that are most distinctive in the Lutheran Confessions and thereby offensive to the Reformed partners, but it does this at the expense of the uniqueness of the Sacrament. A similar way in which the Lord's Supper is lost in some dogmatics filing cabinet is when it is filed under the general rubric of "Sacrament." The word *sacrament* is not found in the Bible; nevertheless, it is a useful word, and, as such, is used in the Lutheran Confessions and in the writings of good theologians. But these have avoided constructing a system from the abstract concept of "sacrament" or even "means of grace". However, this can become a "game" by which attention is diverted from the basic question whether the Body and Blood of Christ are actually given under the consecrated bread and wine.¹⁷

Another manner in which the question of the Real Presence is avoided is the insertion of the Holy Ghost into the doctrine. It sounds pious to agree that the Spirit, after all, must play a role, too! But, we ask, why? Scripture mentions only Christ. Yes, but if Christ in his Ascension has entered a well-deserved retirement, as some think, then he will not be truly present in the Eucharist. How convenient at this point to press the Holy Ghost into service, who can be said to "mediate" the presence of an absent

Christ! Thus, one of the contributors to the book, *Marburg Revisited*, assures us, we no longer need the doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum*, i.e., that Christ's divinity empowers his human Body and Blood to be present in the Lord's Supper; he has discovered that instead one can appoint the Spirit as Christ's substitute, who will impart the "communication of grace", so that we no longer need bother about the nature of presence of Christ's Body and Blood, nor the *communicatio idiomatum*.¹⁸

It is curious how the opponents of the Lutheran doctrine, from age to age, accuse their partners of being too realistic and at the same time of not being realistic enough. The spiritual descendants of Luther are blamed, on the one hand, for stressing Christ's humanity too much in the Sacrament, and on the other hand, for not stressing his humanity enough in the doctrine of Christ. What they have failed to grasp is the dynamic relation between the doctrine of Christ and the Eucharist as the Sacrament of his continuing presence. At any rate, it shows that the divergence between the two Protestant groups is more than a question of the Sacrament. Werner Elert has stressed repeatedly that Luther's faith stood or fell with the proposition that God was fully present in his incarnate Son. One dared not face the God of wrath (*Deus absconditus*), who was a consuming fire; only the God who revealed himself as love in Jesus Christ (*Deus revelatus*) could be believed in. It was this God who drew near in the Eucharist and gave himself. Thus Luther's position at Marburg was described by an eye-witness: "He knew nor honored any God other than he who became man; aside from him, he would have none other. For none other could save. Therefore he could not stand it that the humanity of Christ was treated so condescendingly and slightly."¹⁹ The close relation between Incarnation and Eucharist has been developed by Ernst Sommerlath²⁰, just as Theodore Suss has stressed Luther's principle that all sound theology starts not with the Hidden God but with God revealed in the birth of his Son.²¹

The accusation that Luther and his followers were too realistic in their doctrine was accompanied by charges of materialism, a physical understanding of the Sacrament²², the enclosing of God in bread, or even cannibalism — a charge levelled also against the theologians of the Ancient Church!²³ How can one avoid such accusations? It's easy! Speak no longer about the presence of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist, but speak simply of the presence of the "whole person" of Christ.²⁴ As a matter of fact, certain Lutherans in America have decided to follow just this course. But it is a deceptive course. Naturally, one will no longer find the Calvinists in disagreement, since the idea of a personal presence of Christ is too vague. But from our Lutheran forefathers we might learn the way to unmask those who speak of a personal presence in order to conceal their denial of a Real Presence, the way to determine whether an objective presence of Christ is accepted quite aside from human attitudes, or whether merely a subjective presence is intended. That test is the doctrine of the *communio indignorum*: the teaching, based on I Cor. 11, 27-29, that Christ is indeed so objectively present that he who eats and drinks bread and wine without discerning the presence of the Body and Blood of Christ ". . . eats and drinks condemnation to himself. . ." This doctrine is the point which uncovers the Crypto-Calvinists. Of course, they protest, insisting that the Body of Christ of which unworthy participants are guilty is not the true Body of Christ, but the spiritual body, i.e., the Church. However, recent New Testament scholars have tended to confirm the Lutheran position.²⁵ After all, the warning about eating and drinking unworthily is connected with the doctrine of the Eucharist, and only indirectly, of the Church. This means that it is false "love" to issue a general invitation to all people present to come to the Lord's Table. Since those who come "unworthy and unprepared" become "guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord," the Lutheran Church must cling to her historic practice of admitting only those who are prepared.²⁶

3. *Toward a practical solution.*

A Lutheran pastor in the east once remarked that, as he practiced Open

Communion, it was embarrassing to give the Sacrament to children of other denominations, but to have to discriminate against Lutheran youth, since they were not yet confirmed. Perhaps the solution will be to reduce the age for Communion so low that Lutheran children can partake at an early age, too. Doctrinally, it is hard to see any serious objection to the proposal of the commission of the three Lutheran general bodies that confirmation be delayed until high school, and the Lord's Supper be moved earlier to grammar school age. Many churchmen, however, will question whether it is expedient to make such a change at this time. It would be untrue to say that American Lutheranism has never before stood at such a low level in this country, either in its attitude toward the infallible Word of God, or toward the Lutheran Symbols. This situation was far worse at the turn of the 19th Century. But we still must admit that our Church is not spiritually or theologically strong at this time.

There are undoubtedly several reasons for this. For one thing, all church bodies have been deeply troubled by the intellectual currents of the past 250 years. This is sometimes called, rather inaccurately, the conflict between religion and science. At any rate, church colleges and seminaries have been torn by dissension over the question of how much ought to be accepted from the newer tendencies, especially in theology. The question of the authority of the Holy Scriptures has been divisive, with vociferous extremists on the right hand and on the left. Some misguided conservatives have sought unholy alliances with other Protestants of conservative inclination; this however has only complicated matters by introducing needless ballast uncritically taken over from the arguments of the Fundamentalists. In the process, there is grave danger of being led away from the pure teaching of God's Word and into the snares of legalism.

Developments since World War II have been disappointing. The synods which formed the Lutheran Church in America have for the most part found a deterioration of confessional awareness in their new body. In the former American Lutheran Church, there was a strong group of confessionally-minded men. But the negotiations with the Missouri Synod had a disastrous effect. After doctrinal agreement had apparently been reached, the Missouri Synod, evidently placing too much reliance upon the small Wisconsin Synod, refused fellowship with the ALC. This was a serious set-back for men in the ALC who had worked for harmony between the two synods and had struggled for a stronger commitment to the Lutheran Confessions. The ALC was now driven into the merger of 1960. The doctrinal statement prepared for the new The American Lutheran Church reflects the rapid decline of the sounder theologians after 1950.²⁷ Since the merger of 1960, there has been a steady deterioration of doctrinal integrity. As was to be expected, the first help for confessional Lutherans in TALC was the establishment of pulpit and altar fellowship between The ALC and the Missouri Synod. It remains to be seen whether this step has come too late.

In closing, several principles should be proposed by which ecumenical concern and communion fellowship might both be safe-guarded in our day.

(1) The starting point is the fearless renunciation of false doctrine, the overcoming of theological indifference, and the search for a new sense of conviction in the faithful study of God's Word and the Lutheran symbols, together with other scholarly adjuncts.²⁸ American Lutheranism has been dominated by an obsession for an imagined Americanization and the assumption of the activist programs of other groups. This has led to a severe depression of doctrinal integrity. A new allegiance to Christ as Lord of the Church and to his Word is the only way out. This involves repentance and renewed commitment to the truth.

(2) Certainty of our convictions will guard us against false tolerance for error in our ecumenical relations. There have been two general approaches toward the ecumenical movement: (a) doctrinal indifference, calling for a speedy proclamation of church fellowship in spite of divergencies, with total unity as soon as possible; (b) the Lutheran emphasis instead has

been upon the ecumenical movement as an opportunity to confess Gospel truths, and to be used by God to achieve true unity by leading our erring brethren closer to Christ, the Lord of the Church. The first avenue, which appears to be the more loving approach, is actually a selfish attitude, just as the practice of gross open communion is really a lack of Christian concern for one's neighbor. The latter emphasis, while it is often criticized by the "ecumaniacs", is truly evangelical, and is in accord with God's Word: "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." (I Pet. 3, 15)

(3) ". . . With meekness and fear . . ." This leads us to the third aspect of our ecumenical witness. We believe that our Church is founded upon Christ the Rock, and that, like no other Church, our proclamation represents the true teachings of the Holy Scriptures. We believe that the seven Lutheran symbols in our *Book of Concord* are totally grounded in the infallible Scriptures. But now the spectre of spiritual pride raises its ugly head. Too often we Lutherans, convinced of our doctrinal superiority, have been infected by the worst sin of all, and have said with the accursed Pharisee: "God, we thank thee that we are not like the others!" We note in that parable that the simon-pure Pharisee didn't return to his house justified. (Lk 18, 11:14) With repentant hearts we must confess that our pride, in that which ought to have made us humblest, has caused us to show a haughty spirit not only to other Christian denominations but even to other Lutheran synods. With shame-filled hearts, we must grant that we have thereby brought reproach upon the Gospel and made of the Lutheran confessions a cause of stumbling for our weaker brethren. We Lutherans resent being told that at times we have been guilty of doctrinal perfectionism not unlike the moral perfectionism of the Pharisees of Jesus' day. Yet we must listen humbly. This is the Law of God, speaking to us, and accusing us of our sin of pride, which too often we have let becloud our Gospel message. Perhaps we as a Church should regard the doctrinal indifference pervading our ranks as the duly deserved consequence of our sins. Paul says: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." (I Cor. 13, 1) That's God's Word. Too often, the pure doctrine has been proclaimed by sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.²⁹ May God's Spirit call us to new repentance through his Law and Gospel.

(4) Finally, let us face the task ahead as one assigned to us not by a blind fate, but by God's loving providence.³⁰ It takes a lot of faith and courage to believe that God is still working among us. But it is to this that we have been called. Yes, literally, called! *Vocatio*, vocation! Perhaps you and I are too good for the place to which God has called us. Perhaps God wills to be dissatisfied with our situation, or even to bring about a schism in American Lutheranism to provide a more suitable spot for us. But let's leave that up to God's Spirit, which alone is to guide the Church. Meanwhile, let us not complain or find fault. Let us not put the pound that the Lord has committed to us in a napkin and bury it, safe from other Lutherans and the world. But let us use it in such a way that it will bring forth the highest possible yield. For it's not our Church, but Christ's; it's not our Word, but God's Word. Let's find strength in the Means of Grace and in the "mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren,"³¹ as we pray, "Even so, Lord, come quickly!"

FOOTNOTES

²⁹Ernst Sommerlath, noted confessional Lutheran systematician at the Leipzig University, met for ten years with the commission that later published its conclusions in the *Arnoldshain Theses* (1958); however, he found that the Theses glossed over the question of the Real Presence of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Sacrament, and refused to subscribe to them. See Ernst Sommerlath, "Auf dem Wege zur Einheit? Kritische Anmerkungen zu den Arnoldshainer Abendmahlthesen," *Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (1959), pp. 33-38.

For a convenient text and discussion of the *Arnoldshain Theses*, as well as a favorable opinion of them, see Eugene M. Skibbe, *Protestant Agreement on the Lord's Supper* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1968), esp. p. 90 ff.

For another vigorous affirmation of the Lutheran position, strengthened by solid research into the history

- of the Early Church, see Werner Elert, *Abendmahl und Kirchengemeinschaft in der alten Kirche hauptsächlich des Ostens* (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1954). Eng. tr. by N. E. Nagel, *Eucharist and Church Fellowship in the First Four Centuries* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1966).
- ²A useful English summary of the Marburg Colloquy as well as the Sacramental controversy in its larger context is given in the excellent monograph of Hermann Sasse, *This Is My Body. Luther's Contention for the Real Presence in the Sacrament of the Altar* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1959), 420 pp. Sasse refers frequently to the German classic on this subject by Walther Köhler, *Zwingli und Luther. Ihr Streit über das Abendmahl nach seinen politischen und religiösen Beziehungen*, Vol. II (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1953), 534 pp. Two other important German monographs are Ernst Bizer, *Studien zur Geschichte des Abendmahlsstreits im 16. Jahrhundert* (*ibid.*, 1940), and Hans Grass, *Die Abendmahlstheorie bei Luther und Calvin. Eine Kritische Untersuchung* (*ibid.*, 1954).
- ³A significant essay on the Marburg Colloquy alone is given in Werner Elert, "Luther in Marburg. Eine Säkularbetrachtung," originally published in *Zeitwende* 1929, 10. Heft, p. 315ff., and recently reprinted in *Ein Lehrer der Kirche. Kirchlich-theologische Aufsätze und Vorträge von Werner Elert*, ed. Max Keller-Hüschemenger (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1967), pp. 11-18.
- ⁴Luther is traditionally blamed for the failure to reach an agreement at Marburg, and for the consequent lack of fellowship between Lutheran and Reformed churches. This is no longer tenable. Luther proposed a formula of agreement which Zwingli summarily rejected, thus terminating the attempt. In spite of this, both sides subscribed to The Marburg Articles. See especially Sasse, *op. cit.*, p. 217 f. and pp. 266-272.
- ⁵The most complete monograph on the Augustana, together with collection of valuable parallel sources, is that by Johann Michael Reu, *The Augsburg Confession. A Collection of Sources with An Historical Introduction* (Chicago: Warburg Publishing House, 1930), 258 pp. plus 528 pp. While this book is out of print, a partial reprint is available at the bookstore of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo.
- ⁶Reprinted in *Corpus Reformatorum* (Halle: Schwetschke, 1834ff.), hereafter abbreviated as CR, Vol. 3, pp. 75-77.
- ⁷No doubt, some unkind historian will someday dub Bucer a busy-body. His talents ranged all the way from church unions to marriage unions. For a rather amusing portrait of Bucer in his prowess at arranging romances, see Ricardo Huch, *Das Zeitalter der Glaubensspaltung* (Munich and Hamburg: Siebenstern, 1964), p. 216 ff.
- ⁸See Bizer, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-228, and Köhler, *op. cit.*, pp. 456-518.
- ⁹At Bucer's request, Luther was willing to modify the important term of the *communio impiorum* (oral reception of Christ's Body by the godless) to the *communio indignorum* (reception by the unworthy). While this was not a substantive change, it helped achieve the agreement.
- ¹⁰See Sasse, *op. cit.*, pp. 307-311. It might be added that the use of the mediaeval phraseology of two substances in the Sacrament occurs in the Wittenberg Concord: . . . *duabus rebus, terrena et coelesti*. This is in spite of some scholars who claim these terms were first introduced in later Orthodoxy.
- ¹¹The Cologne Church Order is not easily obtainable, having not been reprinted since 1544. Portions of this crucial document which relate to education have been reprinted in Reinhold Vormbaum, *Die evangelischen Schulordnungen des sechszehnten Jahrhunderts* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1860), pp. 403-411. Excerpts are also given in A. L. Richter, *Die Kirchenordnungen des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Weimar, 1846), Vol. II, p. 30 ff., which was not available to me as I wrote these lines. The Cologne Reformation fell through when Archbishop Herman von Wied, who was promoting it, faced unsurpassable opposition from the Cathedral Chapter, and was deposed.
- ¹²From letter of Luther to Chancellor Gregory Brück, August 1544, in *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1883ff.), hereafter abbreviated WA, *Briefe*, Vol. 10, p. 618.
- ¹³"Kurzes Bekenntnis vom heiligen Sakrament," WA 54, pp. 141-167. See also the important introduction by Ferdinand Cohrs, pp. 119-140, upon which I have largely depended for information on the Cologne Reformation.
- ¹⁴This episode is critically evaluated by Sasse, *op. cit.*, p. 319, n. 37.
- ¹⁵Grass regards the story as questionable, *op. cit.*, p. 194f. The report of Pezel and Hospinian is related by Bizer without comment, *op. cit.*, 246.
- ¹⁶*Marburg Revisited*, ed. Paul C. Empie and James I. McCord (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1966), p. 44.
- ¹⁷*Ibid.*
- ¹⁸Ernst Sommerlath warns against this in his excellent orientating article, "Lord's Supper," *Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*, ed. Julius H. Bodensiek (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1965), Vol. II, pp. 1336-1342. This danger of emasculating the Eucharist by over-systematisation is discussed emphatically by Werner Elert, *Der christliche Glaube* (Hamburg: Furche, 1956), p. 356, who notes that among writers like Barth it is a sort of escape hatch. That the Confessions avoided this trap is developed in his masterly way by Friedrich Brunstäd, *Theologie der Lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1951), p. 134 f. Regin Prenter also expresses his concern in an essay, "Die Realpräsenz als die Mitte des christlichen Gottesdienstes," *Gedenkschrift für D. Werner Elert. Beiträge zur historischen und systematischen Theologie*, ed. Friedrich Hübner (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1955), pp. 307-319, and esp. p. 311.
- ¹⁹William O. Fennell, "The Nature and Manner of the Impartation of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper," *Marburg Revisited*, esp. pp. 76-78. In contrast to Fennell, Luther declared that he wasn't interested in *how* Christ was present, but concerned only that he was truly present. Luther preferred the simple statement that the bread is the Body.
- ²⁰Elert, "Luther in Marburg," *op. cit.*, p. 13. Cf. his *Morphologie des Luthertums*, Vol. I (Munich: Beck, 1952), esp. p. 31 ff., p. 93 ff., and p. 263 ff. Eng. tr. by Walter A. Hansen, *The Structure of Lutheranism* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1963), p. 35 ff., p. 106 ff., and p. 300 ff.
- ²¹See "Lord's Supper," *op. cit.*, and "Auf dem Wege zur Einheit?" *op. cit.*, p. 37.
- ²²Theodore Süss, "Non a summo, sed ab imo," *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, Vol. 82 (1957), pp. 731-742. The essay is a study of Luther's exposition of Gal. 1,3 in the Galatians Commentary of 1531/1535. Luther says: "Theology which is Christian moreover and true, as I have often warned, does not press upon God in his majesty, like Moses and other teachings, but upon Christ born of the Virgin, our mediator and highpriest." (WA 40 I, 77, 10ff.) Luther proceeds to warn against scrutinizing the abscondite God, insisting that we can know him only in the incarnate, humiliated Son. "Paul always connects Jesus Christ with God the Father, that he may teach the Christian religion, which does not, like other religions, start at the summit, but at the depths. [*quae incipit non a summo, ut omnes aliae religiones, sed ab imo.*] One must scale the ladder of Jacob, on which God also supported himself, the feet of which touched the earth at the head of Jacob. Wherefore when you want to do anything for your salvation, or ponder it, then lay aside all speculations of his majesty, all considerations of works, traditions, all teachings of philosophy and the divine law, and hasten to the manger and the bosom of the Mother; there lay hold of that Infant and behold the dear little son of the Virgin—how he is born, how he suckles at her breast, grows, moves among men, teaches them, dies, resurrects, rises above the heavens, and holds power over all . . . And this sight will hold you on the right way, so that where Christ himself has gone, you will also follow." (WA 40 I, p. 79-80)
- ²³Since the Lutheran theologians avoided the term "physical", it is not the best methodology to introduce the word today, as several contemporary Reformed historians have tried to do. Cf. Williston Walker, *John Calvin. The Organizer of Reformed Protestantism 1509-1564* (reprint New York: Schocken, 1969), pp. 184, 396, 423. Clyde L. Manschreck, *Melancthon The Quiet Reformer* (New York: Abingdon, 1958), p. 229, p. 240 ff.
- ²⁴It is generally known that early Christians were persecuted for "cannibalism", an obvious outgrowth of the belief in the Real Presence; since non-members were not even allowed to remain in the room during the Communion, let alone partake, the pagans concocted dreadful contortions. The Apostolic Fathers saw the notion of a merely "spiritual presence" of Christ in the Sacrament as related to the heresy of Docetism, i.e., that Christ was not truly come in the flesh, but was a phantom. Hence Ignatius blames heretics who ". . . abstain from Eucharist and prayer, because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ . . ." (Ep. to Smyrna VII, 1). For more on Close Communion in the Ancient Church, see Elert, *Eucharist and Church Fellowship* . . ., esp. p. 75 ff.

- ²⁴Calvin taught the "personal presence"; Melancthon used similar terms, but also spoke of the Body and Blood. (Late example: CR 9, 99). Hence Sasse is too severe in his criticism of Melancthon, *op. cit.*, p. 331 ff. Cf. my article on Melancthon, *Ency. of the Luth. Ch.*, *op. cit.*, p. 1524f. — The problem of the "personal presence" is discussed in Julius Schniewind and Ernst Sommerlath, *Abendmahlsgespräch* (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1952), pp. 16-18 (Schniewind) and p. 21 (Sommerlath).
- ²⁵Although we may not follow all Ernst Käsemann's views, we can only rejoice that his findings so often corroborate the Lutheran position. He states, "To me, it doesn't seem possible to connect to *soma* [the Body] with anything other than the earthly element in the Lord's Supper." *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen*, Vol. I (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), p. 27. The unworthy participant joins the foes of Christ who failed to discern that he was the Son of God and crucified him. *Ibid.*, p. 24. See a similar position in Julius Schniewind, *op. cit.*, p. 14. The same, Rudolf Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1954), p. 144 f.
- ²⁶The problem of Close Communion in the United States has been obfuscated by historical inaccuracy regarding the so-called Galesburg Rule. Actually, this document was rejected by the conservative Lutherans because of its unionism. A century ago, the Iowa Synod was trying to work together with the General Council, the most confessional group of the later ULCA. Iowa Synod sent observers to conventions, money was contributed toward General Council missions, the *Kirchenbuch* was published as a joint hymnal, and the move was toward unity. But this was disrupted by unionistic practices within the Council. At its Akron, Ohio, convention in 1872, the Council attempted to satisfy Iowa by promulgating the "Akron Rule", commonly confused with the "Galesburg Rule." Paragraph 1 contained the famous statement, "Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran pastors only, and Lutheran altars for Lutheran communicants only." Iowa rejected this Rule because Paragraph 2 and 3 recognized exceptions where unionism was permitted. Three years later, the Council sought to appease Iowa at the Galesburg convention by nullifying the second and third paragraphs. However, Iowa's confidence had been shaken, and the bodies did not grow closer. The attitude of Iowa Synod is described by its historian, Johannes Deindörfer, *Geschichte der Evangel.-Luth. Synode von Iowa und anderen Staaten. Abgefasst im Auftrag des Synodal-Ausschusses* (Chicago: Wartburg Publishing House, 1897), pp. 237-241. The documents were published by another Iowa Synod scholar in a remarkable volume, Christian Otto Kraushaar, *Verfassungsformen der Lutherischen Kirche Amerikas* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1911), pp. 473-475, together with Kraushaar's interpretation of events. The ALC officially accepts the Minneapolis Theses of 1930, which recognize only the Galesburg form (*Handbook of The American Lutheran Church*, Edition of 1969, p. 136), but in the United Testimony of Faith and Life of 1952, the unionist exceptions excluded by the "Galesburg Rule" are reintroduced from the Akron Rule (*ibid.*, p. 134).
- It is refreshing to note Martin J. Heineken's frank statements in *Marburg Revisited*. He inexorably exposes the fallacy of attempting to express the oneness of the church by an "open Communion". "The Lord's Supper is not to be used as a device to create unity but to give expression to an existing unity. Therefore, as long as separate confessions are held to be justified, there is no greater scandal involved in a separate Communion than in a separate denomination." (*Ibid.*, p. 102-103)
- ²⁷Although promises had been given to the contrary, when the report of the Joint Union Committee for the 1960 merger first appeared, dissension was hardly permitted. Several who questioned the doctrinal statement in Article IV of the proposed constitution later found themselves the objects of recriminations. Several members of the JUC were offended by my discussion in the article, "Toward an Evangelical Understanding of the Lutheran Confessions," *The Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol. IX (1957), p. 234 ff.
- ²⁸When the theological languages of Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and German are neglected in the schools, genuine Lutheran doctrine suffers greatly. In the former ALC, scholarship began to lag after the closing of Wartburg College at Clinton, Iowa, with its emphasis upon classics. Today, in contrast to a generation ago, there are comparatively few students for the ministry who are able to do independent study in the *Book of Concord*, since most do not have a reading knowledge of Latin and German. This is no doubt a large part of the reason for the declining interest in the symbols.
- It would appear that genuinely relevant theology in this area is being carried on only in the institutions of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Therefore it is regrettable that similar forces are leading that body to a retreat in language requirements. Perhaps comparatively few of a total class of seminary graduates will become experts in the Confessions, but, unless the languages are maintained, the Missouri Synod will follow the same fate as the ALC. See Luther's famous plea for retention of the theological languages. — "So dearly as we love the Gospel, so hard let us cling to the languages." WA 15, 37 *et passim*. See also Lowell C. Green, "The Renaissance in Lutheran Theology," *The Mature Luther* (Decorah: Luther College Press, 1959), pp. 171-174.
- ²⁹In our time, when the expression "pure doctrine" is found amusing even by our own theologians, an incisive voice is needed pointing a better way. Nevertheless, one is troubled by the voices of several conservative publications. Too often, the negative attitude is thought to insure orthodoxy and pure doctrine, but one wonders. Certainly, this was not the approach of the Formula of Concord, which dealt mercifully even with some unfortunate statements of Melancthon and his followers. One is instinctively attracted to the firm Lutheran position of a man like Ernst Sommerlath because of the kindly way in which he addresses his opponents, making clear that he is not seeking for personal laurels; while one must regret that a more famous contemporary of Sommerlath often repelled university students by his brusque manner, so that impressionable youth were attracted to the bland theologies of more gracious professors. The Lutheran Confessions teach that the Gospel must predominate in the voice of the Church. Cf. C. F. W. Walther, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1897), esp. Thesis XXV and p. 403 ff. Ought not he who claims to be a spokesman for this Church temper even his polemics with the conviction that only the Gospel can heal? Or, is such a spokesman not concerned about the winning of his opponent for Christ's truth?
- ³⁰When will the Lutheran Church take seriously Luther's conviction expressed in *De servo arbitrio* (WA 18, 600 ff.), that God is at work in her midst, using even human imperfection and sin to accomplish his final purpose?
- ³¹Luther: "Wir wollen nu wieder zum Evangelio kommen, welchs gibt nicht einerleiwise Rat und Hulf wider die Sunde; denn Gott ist reich in seiner Gnade: erstlich durchs mundlich Wort, darin gepredigt wird Vergebung der Sunde in alle Welt, welchs ist das eigentliche Ampt des Evangelii, zum andern durch die Taufe, zum dritten durchs heilig Sakrament des Altars, zum vierden durch die Kraft der Schlüssel und auch per mutuam colloquium et consolationem fratrum" with reference to Mt. 18,20. A.S., Part Three, IV. *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1952), p. 449.

12. Christian Education

Erich H. Kiehl, Th. D.

Ours is a highly technological age with heavy stress on mass production, mass marketing, and mass communication. The computer with all its implications is playing an increasingly important role in our society. One may characterize our age as one of "de-personalization."

A further factor which complicates the de-personalization problem is the increasingly great population mobility. Studies such as that done by Dr. Doxiades and his associates for Detroit indicate that by the year A.D. 2000, the population of our nation will be centered in a number of huge megalopoli in various parts of the nation.

In an address made at Concordia Teachers College, Seward, Nebraska, in November of last year, Dr. Andrew Greeley, the well-known Jesuit sociologist at the University of Chicago, said, "It is not God that died in the 1960's; it was rather the great god science."¹

Father Greeley reported the comment of a student. "Look," she said, "science has failed. It hasn't brought us peace, it hasn't brought us racial justice, it hasn't helped us to love one another any better. Our generation doesn't believe in it. We're looking for other systems to explain our life."²

The death of science as a god, the de-personalization of our age and other problems have resulted in various quests. According to Dr. Greeley the first quest is search for meaning in life. This has given rise to interest in the esoteric and the occult. Witness the devil worship cult in San Francisco, also the TV programs which center around the "black arts."

The second quest is for the warm and intimate relationships of the community of yesteryear in our de-personalized, computerized society.

The third quest is to become more oneself, that is, to become free from the fear of someone knowing intimately what we are, and also to be free from the sense of inadequacy with its implications. This quest involves a trusting relationship with others.

The fourth quest is the search for play. Dr. Greeley quotes the existentialist philosopher Jean Paul Sartre: "The serious man thinks that his environment is more important than he is, and the playful knows that he is more important than his environment." The point of the playful is that only in the world of make-believe can one "... encounter religion, mysticism, and ecstasy." And all of these involve a special relationship or even a union with some form of the Ultimate.³

Now all these various quests involve attitudes and relationships based on knowledge. Thus in our age we need, through the Spirit's power, to help people to know and to think more clearly on the basis of a better knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures and its meaning for life expressed in changed attitudes, demonstrated in positive relationships. The role of Christian education is to bring about such knowledge and God-pleasing relationships.

Christian Education: Its Meaning and Content

Christian education has always been of vital importance to the Lutheran Church. At its Denver Convention in 1969, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod passed the resolution (7-01):

Resolved, that the Synod in convention assert that Christian education, understood as the communication of God's edifying Word, is essential

to the life of the Church and is the primary process and fundamental activity of the Church in mission and the basis for church renewal.⁴

Note that Christian education is understood as "the communication of God's edifying Word." The content of Christian education is the Word of God. In the opening essay, Dr. Paul Zimmerman stressed the Biblical self-witness that all of the Scripture in all its parts is the inspired and the inerrant Word of God. Our Lutheran Confessions humbly and solemnly recognize this fact. The Bible is and always must be the content of Christian education.

In a world of momentous change and an age of easy relativism, the Word of God is the absolute which is changeless and always relevant to our every age. What Paul said to Timothy long ago is still very true for us today:

You know from whom you learned it
and how since you were a little child you have known the Holy Scriptures,
which can make you wise and save you if you believe in Christ Jesus.

All Scripture is inspired by God and helps us to teach,
to show what is wrong,
to improve and train in right living,
so that a man of God is ready and equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:15-17

Christian Education: Its Goal

It is this ageless Word, applicable to the needs of every age, which the Holy Spirit uses to lead men to faith, to nurture and stimulate their growth in faith so that they may through the Spirit's power witness through their life and with their lips to their faith relationship with God.

Christian education involves not only the intellect but also the total person. Writing for the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1964, Dr. Bruno Bettelheim of the University of Chicago said,

When the children now entering school will be grown up, the scientific revolution will be largely behind them. Ahead will lie a psychological revolution. What is sorely lacking in our education — and will have to stand at the heart of our efforts in the future — is the education of the emotions, an education which will permit people to live at peace with themselves and others.⁵

Dr. Randolph Crump Miller in *Christian Nurture and the Church* echoes a similar view but from a Christian perspective when he says,

The crucial factor is not information as such, not the capturing of the mind, and not the passing of an examination. The significant factor in Christian education is helping the individual, by God's grace, to become a believing committed member of the community of the Holy Spirit, obedient to Christ as his Lord and Master, and living as a Christian to the best of his ability in all his relationships.⁶

Thus, in Christian education, we strive through the Spirit's power to change attitudes on the basis of a clearer understanding of Scripture and its meaning and message for us. We also strive to motivate the learner to express his attitude in terms of relationships — his relationship with God and with his fellowmen.

Approach to the Word of God: The Problem

Much needs to be done to achieve all this in Christian education and to make of Christian education a lifetime experience for more people. As we know only too well, our involvement in Christian education begins to break down during the High School years and continues all the way through the adult years. Compared to communicant membership figures and making proper allowance for Sunday School staff, statistics for organized Bible study in this very extensive age bracket are very sad indeed.

Part of the problem, I suggest, lies in our approach to the study of the Scriptures. Let me illustrate symptoms of the problem: At Concordia, Ann

Arbor, we have found what you probably already know from your own parish experiences.

First of all, a positive experience: Allowing for the tensions of growing up, we find that by and large our students as they come to us understand that Jesus Christ is their Savior and Lord. We have a very fine group of dedicated youth. To work with them is a great privilege and a most stimulating experience.

But now some negative observations which illustrate the problem:

1. Most of our students have some understanding of the Gospels but one can hardly say a unified understanding;
2. For most the Old Testament is a closed and unfamiliar book, except for some acquaintance with heroes of the Old Testament such as Abraham, David, and Daniel. They also know that in some way the Old Testament speaks of the Christ to come, but have almost no grasp of the way in which it does so;
3. Many have the feeling that the Old Testament especially seems unreal and far removed from their experiences; the events seem to be those of a "never-never land";
4. Many are confused as to what constitutes Law and Gospel. Some think of the Old Testament as Law and the New Testament as Gospel. A probing into what they understand by Gospel too often results in the reaction that Gospel is doing. This may be due in part to the way in which Bible stories are sometimes made to fit some artificial theme and then need to be squeezed to convey a moral of some kind or other. To achieve this the story is at least sometimes taken out of its proper theological context.

Approach to the Word of God: Suggested Solution

And yet the Word of God in its total setting must be the content of Christian education. If we are serious about saying that all the Scriptures are God's Word and that through this infallible Word God speaks to us, we need to listen reverently and carefully to what God has to say in His Word in its original setting.

This means that through a careful study of the theological and historical setting we need to learn *what* God was saying to the people of *that* time before we seek to say what He is saying to us today. This has always been a basic principle of Biblical interpretation.

If we apply this basic principle through a careful study of and a humble listening to the Scripture, we will grow in a deeper understanding of the unity permeating the Scripture and its relationship implications for people of the Bible day and also for us today. This implies that we make use of the valid techniques of historical, archaeological, and linguistic investigation to see the true meaning of words and events in the historical and theological setting of that day. By this I mean techniques which respectfully recognize Scripture as a document of primary history, whose historicity must not be questioned, whose witness must be carefully listened to, and whose message cannot be mutilated.

If we listen to the basic unity of Scripture and apply such valid techniques of investigation, then the relationship implications for us today will often become so apparent that not much of what we term "application" needs to be done. The relationship implications for us today will flow naturally and very honestly from the text.

Covenant, the Unifying Theme

The Scriptures are like a Persian rug with a variegated pattern permeated by a unifying motif. Or, to put it in another way, the 66 books of the Scriptures are like the tesserae of a mosaic which through the Holy Spirit' indwelling inspiration form a beautiful integrated pattern.

Through the Scriptures runs the unifying and integrating pattern of the covenant theme. In the Old Testament the key word is "covenant," in the

Gospels "kingdom of God," and beginning with the Book of Acts the two terms in sequence "believers" and "church."

Please note that the inner core of this unifying covenant theme is the redemptive, sacrificial, and life-giving role of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. This role is carefully foretold and describes in the Old Testament beginning with the *Protevangelium* of Genesis 3:15 and sees its fulfillment in the mission of Jesus Christ and its aggressive proclamation by the apostolic church.

Covenant in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament the term "covenant" in its theological meaning is used over 80 times. A simple definition of covenant is God's arrangement of grace in choosing Israel to be His Chosen People.

The foundation for the covenant is God's gracious promise that the Woman's Seed would crush Satan's head. Genesis speaks in detail of God's gracious covenant with Abraham and the patriarchs. At the same time, the inner core of the covenant, the messianic promises, is reflected in Gen. 12:3 "in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" and in Genesis 49:10 "The scepter shall not depart from Judah nor the Lawgiver's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be obedience of people."

The climactic event in the history of Israel as Abraham's descendants, was God's mighty act of the Exodus, culminating in the covenant event at Mount Sinai. You may wish to compare Exodus 19:4-6 with 1 Peter 2:9-10 and see the close parallel between the covenant of the Old Testament day and that in which you and I live in our faith relationship with God.

God's covenant with His people involves relationships with God and with people. This becomes quite apparent as one looks at the six characteristics of the covenant relationship; 1. by grace alone; 2. God's providing, guarding presence symbolized concretely at the time of the Exodus by the pillar of cloud; 3. the will of God as the theocratic king to be supreme and lived out in Israel's covenant relationship with Him and expressed in their relationship with their fellowmen; 4. God's desire that His covenant people be a special, select people: "a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, my own possession" (Ex. 19:5-6); and 6. God's judgment which like a coin has two sides: salvation and condemnation.

Judaism has a saying, "The *Torah* is the supreme rule of faith; the rest is commentary." Just what does this mean? Judaism would say: The *Torah* or Pentateuch tells about God's making His covenant with His people and spells out its relationship implications for His people. The books from Joshua to Malachi merely comment on what happened to Israel in each age, depending on whether or not they lived in covenant relationship with God.

As the New Israel, you and I would add that the Messianic promise as the inner core of the covenant is repeated again and again in the books from Joshua to Malachi. And, in the process, the repetitions of this promise shed much light on the true nature and role of the Messiah and the implications of His redemptive work.

Intimately tied into this covenant theme is the role of the prophets who as God's spokesmen served as guardians of the covenant relationship. They carried out their role of forth-telling, that is, feeding and leading, guiding and correcting God's covenant people in their covenant relationship as the normal activity of their daily life. As God's spokesmen they also foretold future events.

Crucial in the whole covenant concept is the role of the covenant king in the theocracy. He served as God's representative. Both the kings of Israel and of Judah were judged by God from the viewpoint of the covenant perspective. To them God sent His prophets to lead and guide them so that they would remain faithful to their role as covenant kings. And thus the writer of 1 and 2 Kings says of a king, "He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord" or "he did what was right in the sight of the Lord."

The Covenant in the New Testament

Within the all-embracing context of the covenant theme, the Old Testament sets the stage for Jesus the Messiah, as the fulfillment of the inner core of this theme. From the viewpoint of faithfulness to the Scriptures and its theological thought patterns, the content of Christian education must vigorously address itself to questions such as these:

1. What is meant in the Gospels by the term "kingdom of God" and how does it fit into the covenant theme of the Scriptures?
2. What kind of a Messiah did the Jews expect and how did Jesus fit into their expectations?
3. Why did the disciples share the popular view of the Messiah and even ask Jesus just before His ascension, "When will You usher in Your Kingdom?"
4. How is Jesus' mandate "You shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria, and even to the ends of the world" the dynamic motif in the balance of the New Testament?
5. Why did the apostles stress that Jesus was the crucified, risen, and the ascended Christ? and why did they speak of Him as "Savior and Lord"?
6. Why do the Epistles stress not only the fact of the how of salvation but also always the relationship implications of salvation?

The tightly integrated covenant theme unifies the Scriptures and always forms the theological setting for its message. It is of crucial importance that this be understood by those who prepare curricular materials so that they faithfully and knowledgeably reflect this theme and its relationship implications. All involved in the education process also need to know and understand this unifying theme and its all-embracing implications.

The Total Setting of the Scripture

And now for seeing the Word of God in its total setting: In His great love and mercy God tells us about Himself in human language which we can understand. Under the Spirit's inspiration and guidance the divine Word was written by human writers in human language, human words, human literary styles and forms, and in terms of human life experiences and history. Some of these reflect language and settings which are quite foreign to our experiences in the twentieth century, but were completely familiar at the time of the inspired penman.

It is a basic principle of interpretation that the first sense of Scripture is the literal, that unless the Scripture signals otherwise, we take the words of Scripture in their literal sense. Such a principle implies that we know or will work hard to learn what the words meant to the original writer and reader.

If we are faithful to the implications of the Scripture as the inerrant Word of God in all its parts, then we will welcome the use of all that is valid in contemporary research to get at the meaning of this Word of God at the time when it was spoken or written and then also for us today. It should be self-evident that we do this always in humble submission to the Word of God. We will do this in the attitude of humbly hearing what God has to say to us, and not from the attitude of correcting or suggesting what we in sinful weakness or willfulness may think God should have said.

Let's take for example the much disputed book of Jonah to see how this works out:

God told Jonah to go to Nineveh and added "for its wickedness stares Me in the face" (1:2 NEB). The annals of history readily available to us tell us that Nineveh was the capital of Assyria and that Assyria was notorious for its wanton, cold-blooded brutality and its incredible pride and arrogance. Although at Jonah's time in the eighth century B.C., Assyria was at low ebb as a world power, it had been and would again in the future be Israel's worst enemy. In fact, God would use her as His instrument of wrath to destroy Israel in 722 B.C. (2 Kings 17)

Not wanting to see his nation's worst enemy experience God's forgiveness, Jonah took passage on a ship sailing westward from Joppa to Tarshish in Southern Spain. By the way, in December, 1966, the late Dr. Emmanuel Ben-Dor made an illustrated report on his excavations at ancient Tarshish at the annual meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America.

The reactions of the sailors to the dread storm and their urgent request that Jonah pray to his God reflect the polytheistic milieu of the Old Testament era. Note that in 1:9 Jonah emphasized that the sailors' gods were non-existent, that only his God was the Lord of the universe.

The Hebrew tells us that Jonah was swallowed by a large fish. We should know that there are on record several experiences parallel to that of Jonah. In an instance occurring near the Falkland Islands, a man lived to tell about his experiences in the belly of a large fish.⁷

The description of the once-proud capital city of Nineveh's reaction to Jonah's message reflects what is known about Assyria's history. At this time Assyria could hardly hold its own as a nation, let alone aspire to be a world power. Nineveh had experienced two decimating plagues, killing many of its people. History also records an eclipse of the sun, which for the Assyrians who worshipped heavenly bodies was a most devastating experience. From their polytheistic point of view, all that had and was happening to them told them that the gods were angry with them. Thus they were receptive to Jonah's message of Nineveh's impending doom and, as a result, repented. God had mercy on them and spared them, much to Jonah's chagrin.

The book of Jonah is one of the many cases in which a study of the total setting is crucial. But the same is true of many other events, words, and phrases. Dr. Dahood, for example, has stressed the importance of the Ugaritic, a Canaanite language related to Hebrew, for the understanding of certain Hebrew words and expressions found in the Psalms. In his essay Dr. Zimmerman referred to others in his reference to the work of Professor Kitchen.

Today there are many helpful resources which shed much light on the unifying theme of Scripture as well as on the Word in its total setting. Many of these are highly illustrated and relatively inexpensive. An intimate knowledge of Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, Ugaritic, and the like is not necessary for their use. A selection of such resources should be in the working library of every educator. A larger selection should be in every church library so that these will be readily available to every teacher as well as to individual members of the church.

What Needs to be Done?

What can be done to initiate or intensify such an approach to the study of the Word in its total setting with special reference to its unifying theme? Hopefully the following suggestions will prove helpful.

The role of the clergyman as the shepherd of the flock is very demanding in our complex and challenging age. For some the demands are so great that there seems to be little time for study. But we need to remember that the shepherd has the divine imperative to nourish and to feed, to guide and to lead his flock to a deeper understanding of the Word and its relationship implications.

To do so the shepherd must keep on working hard in studying the Bible. He needs to expound the text of his Sunday or midweek sermon within the framework of the Bible's unifying theme and the total setting of the text. The sermon is an important part of the educational program of the parish. Through it he may nourish and feed more people than through any other agency of Christian education.

The pastor's library needs to continue to grow, not only in the "how to" but especially in the "what" books. His library needs also to reflect a close acquaintance with the critical approach in what is popularly known as "current theology."

What about our Pastoral Conferences? Have we grown in our understanding of the Word through a meaningful study and discussion at our conferences or have we been content to talk about the "how" to the hurt of the "what"?

Is it possible that a survey of the program content of pastoral conferences would expose the urgent need to spend more time in serious Bible study, to trace Biblical themes through the Old and the New Testament to see their intimate relationship to the covenant theme and its relationship implications for us?

The last few years have seen the publication of many helpful books for such study: various volumes of Kittel in English translation, Barclay's New Testament wordbooks, Leon Morris' *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, Dr. Bruce's recent *The New Testament Development of Some Old Testament Themes* to mention just a few.

More purposeful Bible Study

The pastor needs to share such tracing through of Biblical themes with his members so that they too may become better acquainted with how the Bible does its own "theologizing." Although he may choose to do so in a series of sermons, he may wish in addition or instead to do so within the more informal setting of a Bible study group or series of such groups. The more members of such a group can enter actively in meaningful study and discussion, the more effective such study will be.

As the church's leader in Christian education, the pastor needs to work through the Scriptures' unifying theme and its sub-themes in their total setting with teachers of the Lutheran Elementary School, the Sunday School, and the Weekday School. The more they understand these and the better they become acquainted with the total setting of the Bible, the more effective they can be in the evangelical communication of the Word to their classes.

Better Use of Teaching Tools

Our teachers need to be trained also in the intelligent and effective use of the multiplicity of visual aids to help in communicating the Biblical message. Check your classrooms and class areas. How many have a chalkboard and a good set of maps, for example? How much and how well are these used by the teachers?

At Concordia we have found the overhead projector to be a simple but invaluable teaching tool in helping to communicate more effectively the great truths of Scripture.

Mechanically all one needs for preparing transparencies for use on this projector is a copying machine using a light or heat process, such as the Thermofax. It is easy to prepare a sketch and transfer it or a picture of a Biblical site or scene to a transparency by running it through a copying machine. Diagrams, charts, simplified maps, and similar teaching aids can easily be prepared for use on the screen. But these and other carefully selected visuals are invaluable aids in more effectively communicating the Word in its setting.

In our day God has given us such an abundance of visual teaching tools for communicating His Word that we evangelical Lutherans should be busy with Spirit-driven zeal, searching for and experimenting with the many tools whereby we can make plain to a questing and confused world that a new, ordered, happy and purposeful life can be found in the certain and eternal Word of the Scriptures.

Conclusion

The evangelical communication of the Word in Christian education demands that we faithfully communicate the Word in its total setting. It means that we must communicate effectively the unifying theme of the Scriptures and its sub-themes. It means that we must always search for the meaning of a given text within the historical and theological framework of the setting of that text before we seek to see its meaning for us today. This requires

toil and labor but it will demonstrate to us and to those whom we teach the eternal relevance of God's Word for each age.

FOOTNOTES

¹Andrew Greeley, "What Should the Future Shape of Christian Education Be?" *Issues in Christian Education*, IV, No. 2 (Spring 1970), p. 4.

²*Ibid.*, p. 5.

³*Ibid.*, pp. 7-9.

⁴"To Emphasize Christian Education and the Edifying Word—Resolution 7-01," *The Edifying Word—Convention Proceedings, 48th Regular Convention, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Denver, Colorado, July 11-18, 1969*, p. 132b.

⁵Bruno Bettelheim, "Stop Pampering Gifted Children (Speaking Out)," *Saturday Evening Post*, April 11, 1964, p. 10.

⁶Randolph Crump Miller, *Christian Nurture and the Church* (New York: Scribner, 1961), p. 4.

⁷Francis Fox, *Sixty-Years of Engineering*, pp. 298-300.

13. Professional and Higher Education

Edwin C. Weber, D.D.

Professional or Higher Education, as it pertains specifically to the training of those who will be pastors and teachers in our church bodies, is a subject under much discussion and disagreement among the membership of Lutheran churches in our country and elsewhere. For our purposes, we would confine ourselves to the system of Higher Education employed by The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in its pastor and teacher training program. This eliminates from consideration all tax-supported institutions of learning, commonly known as public schools of higher learning, as well as, church related colleges, which have as their purpose and goal, education for primary purposes other than training for the professional ministry of the church, although this may be a by-product of their operation.

The church owned colleges and seminaries of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod as any other Lutheran college, should be recognized as a "schools of the prophets", as primarily interested in supplying full-time workers for the church as the church needs them in its God-given purpose of preaching Law and Gospel in all the world. To accomplish this purpose, certain conditions and directives must be kept in mind:

I. Scripture has much to say about passing on to other generations the pure Word of God. Especially replete with such instructions are St. Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus. Among these we indicate for study such passages as 1 Timothy 1:3,4 4:1,2; also 2 Timothy 1:13,14; 2:2; 2:14,15; 2:23; 3:14; 4:2; 4:3,4. From Titus 1:9; 2:1; 3:9. There are, of course, many other passages pertinent to the subject.

II. Luther also has much to say about the kind of person who ought to appear in the pulpit and classroom. In his Table of Duties he lists many of the qualities which a person ought to possess in order to be a "bishop", beginning with his personal life and describing also the professional qualities of such a person, when he begins by saying, "a bishop must be blameless," and concludes that such a "bishop" must "hold fast the faithful Word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and convince the gainsayers".

To Luther and to us it is very important and God-pleasing that a very Christ-centered and Scripturally oriented ministry be trained to lead God's people into God's Word, so that the Holy Spirit "might make them wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Our preparatory and terminal schools have had and will continue to have as their primary obligation, the development, under God, of a doctrinally sound ministry.

III. Dr. C. F. W. Walther, when confronted by the matter of ministerial training at the first delegate convention of the Missouri Synod, had something to say in Ft. Wayne, Indiana in 1874 as he issued a warning from the history of the church in Europe. Translated, his remarks were these: "Instead of earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints, as Luther did, leaders of the church have made intellectualism and modernism their slogans. Instead of holding on to the precious inheritance of pure doctrine which was passed on to us by our fathers through bitter struggles and trials, some of the leaders, even while seemingly defending Christianity and Christian

doctrine as a whole, are tearing down individual doctrines by maintaining that certain doctrines are open for question and by casting doubt upon others. Even the precious doctrine of the divine inspiration and perfection of the Canonical Writings of the Old and New Testament is being questioned, yes, cast aside, and those who do this questioning and casting aside are not being reprimanded. Those who call themselves servants of the Word want to lead the apostles and prophets back to school. Instead of preaching to the present generation that which it so sorely needs, namely repentance and faith, the sting is taken out of the Law, and the Gospel is perverted and Christianity is presented in some general and indefinite statements. Instead of separating themselves from those who are opposed to God and His Word and closing ranks with those who are truly brethren of the faith, they practise religious unionism on every hand and even cast aspersions and look with disdain at those who want to hold on to that which is truly the heritage of the Reformation."

Evidently, Dr. Walther was issuing the warning to the following generations that we must concern ourselves with the preparation of our ministry at all times so that these workshops of the Holy Spirit may never deteriorate and that our ministry might at all times be founded and grounded in the Word of God.

IV. Pursuing this thought a little further, we quote from the letter of FAITH FORWARD FIRST CONCERNS within The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod: "We approve and applaud many of the curricular changes and innovations which have been introduced in the Synod's program of ministerial training in recent years. We believe it is good that the professional ministers of the Word are not simply assuming, as many did a generation ago, that the opinions and conclusions of men, even of the most prominent scholars, were always right, but are seeking to assure themselves of the correctness of the same through earnest questions and serious study. At the same time we are concerned that the plenary, verbal inspiration of the Scriptures continue to be forthrightly — publicly and privately — upheld by every member of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and that the authenticity of all Canonical Books of the Bible and particularly also the historicity of the first chapters of Genesis are accepted. We are also determined that every member of the Synod let the Bible speak as the final authority in every matter of doctrine and practise among us."

The letter goes on to state: "We have, however, come to the realistic conclusion that there are some pastors, some teachers, some faculty members at our colleges and seminaries, and some authors who either by deliberate intent or through unclear and indefinite statements, and sometimes by careless comments and innuendoes, perhaps even unintentionally are causing confusion among us regarding the inspiration, authenticity, and authority of Scripture. It is also our impression that some of these men are uncharitably belittling the writings of some of the past leaders and scholars of our Synod."

These men were properly concerned about the course of Higher Education among us and particularly for the future of their church.

V. What directives might an Evangelical Church give to those charged with Higher Education in our Church:

1. Since we recognize the inherent and essential power of the Word, this Word must be the center of all campus activity in all our schools of higher learning.
2. "Thus saith the Lord" must supersede whatever any learned scholars may have said or written.
3. The Word of God, inspired by the Holy Ghost, must be recognized as the utterance of God, not to be broken by attack upon its inspiration, authenticity, authority, truthfulness, and saving virtue.
4. Those charged with instructing must in all humility let the Word sit in judgement upon all their teaching everywhere.

5. The President of an evangelical Lutheran body must be encouraged to maintain the purity of doctrine in our church.

6. The President must be invited to consult with those in authority in our schools of higher education in order that he might in person convince himself that the purposes and goals of the Synod are achieved.

7. Urge the President in all honesty to inform the members of the Synod concerning real problems in doctrine and practice if they exist.

8. Urge the President to use the proper authority and obligation thrust upon him by the Constitution of the Synod. LCMS Handbook, Art. XI B 1.2.3.4.

9. Urge all who teach future ministers and teachers to remember that the church is not their servant, but that they are servants of the church, as well as, servants of their Lord.

In conclusion we state: Our Synodical Institutions of Higher Education are to be utilized as God's instruments for the advancement of His Kingdom and as the Church's proper vehicles to serve the church faithfully for defining and teaching and declaring God's truth. Men who accept the Church's call to equip and strengthen others for ministry are compelled by common decency, honesty, integrity, and simple duty to abide by the public doctrine of the church in their classroom teaching and in formal public oral or printed statements. This does not preclude, of course, inquiry and research, nor does it abolish the right of the presentation of differing tentative or final conclusions to colleagues who are competent to evaluate such conclusions, findings, propositions, or theories and to explore their implications, but it is surely necessary that such new ideas be tested and approved by the church before they are introduced into the teaching content of material presented by official synodical institutions.

So shall the Church, under God, preserve for itself a God-fearing, Holy Ministry.

14. Evangelism

William L. Gast

The Commission on Evangelism of The American Lutheran Church states that evangelism has the fourfold responsibility of:

- Preaching the Gospel that men may be *won* for Christ;
- Preaching the Gospel that men may be *kept* for Christ;
- Preaching the Gospel that men may be *recalled* to Christ;
- Preaching the Gospel that men may be *sent forth* for Christ.

If we look at the statistics of Lutheran churches for the past year, we discover that we have not been doing these things very well. On August 24th, 1970 the Lutheran Council in the USA published some figures indicating that in 1969 the Lutheran bodies of the U.S. suffered a net loss of 24,381 baptized members. About the same time the US Census Bureau published some preliminary figures on the 1970 census findings, and indicated that the population of our nation increased by approximately 1,600,000 souls last year. America is growing while our Lutheran Church is declining.

To dramatize the situation, let me point out that every 24 hours, the population increases by about 4,400 souls, but in that same period of time the membership of our Lutheran churches is declining by some 66 souls. To dramatize it even further, we can look at our watches and see that it is now 20 minutes after 2:00. By the time it is 20 minutes after 3:00, the population of the US will have increased by 180 souls, but the membership in our Lutheran bodies will have decreased by almost 3 persons. We are not doing well in evangelism.

A few years ago our staff published a manual for pastors and congregations entitled *Evangelism In Crisis*. It is an appropriate title, because evangelism is in crisis. It is in crisis because of the mobility of population. When men move to and fro, evangelism becomes difficult. It is in crisis because of the explosion in science and technology. As man increases in knowledge, he becomes sophisticated and believes that he can get along without God, and evangelism becomes difficult. Evangelism is in crisis because of the trend towards affluence and luxury. When men become lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, evangelism becomes difficult. Primarily, however, evangelism is in crisis, because our theology is in crisis.

THEOLOGY IN ACTION

T. A. Kantonen in his book, *The Theology Of Evangelism*, reminds us of the fact that "Evangelism is the living expression of a church's doctrinal theology." In other words, evangelism is theology in action, and if your theology is out of kilter with the truth of God's Word, then your evangelism efforts are going to be out of kilter with God's purposes.

It is for this reason that the Statement Of Purpose for this Congress on Loyalty to the Scriptures and the Confessions clearly states that we are not here only to be unified in the Spirit to the Holy Scriptures, and to the Historic Confessions of the Lutheran Church, but we are also here "that we may go aggressively forth and preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all the world." Our role is not to sit here like a bunch of Little Jack Horners, sticking our thumbs in the Scriptures to come up with some nice orthodox plumbs, so we can pat ourselves on the back and say, "My, what good little boys we are." No! We are here to pledge ourselves to the Scriptures and the Confessions in order that we might be on the right track with the task that God has given us — the task of evangelizing the world.

One reason that the church is having problems in evangelism is because there are so many who are not sure what the mission of the church is. Last year the LCA made a study to determine why it was losing members, and it came to the conclusion that at the local congregational level, problem number 1 was "Uncertainty of purpose." That church body is not the only one which has this problem. I have been to meeting after meeting, workshop after workshop, in which we have gone round and round on the question, "What is the mission of the church?"

The ALC is to elect a new president within a month, and the "Lutheran Standard" sent all the candidates a list of questions to answer. Question No. 1 was, "In your opinion, what is the mission of the church?" Ten to fifteen years ago we didn't have to ask ourselves this question, because we knew what the mission of the church was. God's Word, and the Confessions of the Church had made that mission clear. We knew that our basic task was to GO and PREACH THE GOSPEL OF SALVATION. We knew that our task was to take the message of Jesus Christ to all the world, in order that men might hear and be saved, and in this way the Kingdom of God would be advanced.

Now, however, because our theology is in a state of confusion, many are confused as to our mission. The liberal theological trend has so bewildered the church that many of us are honestly asking, "Just what are we supposed to be doing?" When I talk about this confusion as to mission, I think that I should clarify one point, and that is that I believe that both those who are of a liberal persuasion, and those who are of the more conservative persuasion have one common aim here. Both want to advance the Kingdom of God. So basically, we must say that the confusion really is not so much on the matter of mission, but on the matter of message and method. Just as there are some who wonder what they are supposed to do for God in the world, so there are some who wonder what they are supposed to say. As one man put it: "The situation in the church today is somewhat like the moments after a funeral. You know you ought to say something, but you aren't exactly sure what." That pithy question of the Bible now comes to mind here, "If the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself for battle?"

Having stated that theology determines the direction of evangelism, let us see how this works. Let us see how evangelical theology leads to evangelical evangelism, and how liberal theology can lead to an evangelism that is anything but evangelical.

Take the matter of neo-orthodox theology, for instance, and see how it leads to an evangelism which is really not evangelism. Neo-orthodoxy holds to the position that God's revelation of Himself is personal, not propositional, i.e., God reveals Himself by His personal acts in history, and not by any propositional revelation of Himself in the Bible. Therefore, it is claimed that the Bible is not a book with the inspired Word of God, rather it is merely man's record of his experiences with God's activities.

This philosophy leads the neo-orthodox person to reason something like this: "If I am going to help man to know God, then I must help man to experience God's activities." Listen to the words of a liberal, E. A. Aubrey: "Experience precedes theological formulas. In other words, religious experience is more fundamental than theology. Therefore, in order to understand the theology we must go to the experience behind the theology. So also, if we are to assist others with their understanding of God, we do not come to them with formulas, but rather we do what we can to enable them to experience Him."

It is this pattern of thought that causes many to put the emphasis on the Christian being "Christ's Presence" in the world. To emphasize what Jesus *did*, rather than what Jesus *said*. They believe that we successfully evangelize only by acting like Christ, so that through this men might experience God. They play down the Word, and the preaching of the Word, as necessary methods of advancing the Kingdom. They emphasize social action as the primary method of evangelization. They say in essence, "If man can know

God only through experiencing God in action, then we as God's Co-Workers, must help Him to act." This means — not preaching — not telling — but getting involved where God is involved. It means being where the action is. Sometimes it means getting involved violently, so that others can experience God more quickly and more decisively, and thus we can bring about the Kingdom of God more rapidly.

The New Testament makes it clear, however, that while Christ did act, he also had a message for the world. Our task is to proclaim that message. We are to "Go" as He said, and "Preach" and "Teach" the "Good NEWS." Evangelism deals with a message, the announcement and proclamation of that message. God's Word is efficacious: "It shall accomplish that for which it hath been sent." The WORD by the power of the Holy Spirit gets the job done. The great patron saint of our church, Martin Luther, had implicit faith in the Word of God getting things done. In fact when someone asked him how he was able to accomplish so much he replied: "Well, actually Melancthon and I sat and drank our beer, while God's Word wrecked the Pope." (This is not an admonition to "Go and do thou likewise".) But Luther did put a great reliance on the ability of God's Word to accomplish that which God promised it would accomplish. Today, evangelical evangelism must rely on the same promise of God, that His Word "Shall not return void." We must advance God's Kingdom with that Word.

Of course, this does not mean that there are no deeds to go along with that Word. Actions, and activities, and the personality of the evangelist are tremendously important. In his book, *Evangelism And The Sovereignty Of God*, J. I. Packard says: "You cannot speak God's Word effectively to a man until you have established a relationship with him in which he feels that you respect him, and are concerned about him, and are treating him as a human being, and not just as some kind of case." The evangelist is concerned about the whole man. He remembers that the same God who said "GO" also said "GIVE." He also remembers that the Lord who said "SHARE" also said "SPEAK." Evangelism is not done in a vacuum. It is done only in an atmosphere of genuine love. The evangelical evangelist must project an image of total concern.

You can go and talk to a man about Jesus Christ, about his need for the Savior, but in our society that man knowing that you represent the church (St. Luke's, St. Mark's, Trinity) is going to look over your shoulder at your church. He is going to look at the Missouri Synod, at the ALC, at the LCA, and at the Christian Church in general; if he doesn't like what he hears or sees, he isn't going to pay much attention to what you say about Jesus Christ. On the other hand, if he likes what he hears, and likes what he sees, then he is going to pay more attention to the Word you bring him about Christ. Image is important.

The Apostle Paul recognized this. He tells us again and again that the Christian should have godly love, that he should be sober, and honest, "so as to give our enemies no chance of speaking evil of us." Anyone who communicates the Gospel, therefore, must be concerned about his deeds and his actions and his love to the world. The evangelist must do good, he must show "brotherly love to all men." This means not only putting off the sins of the flesh, but it means letting the Spirit develop His fruit in your life — the fruit of joy, peace, gentleness, and so forth.

Having a winsome spirit is important. Alice Twilly in her book, *That Ye May Have Love*, tells of a certain lady who was always evangelizing, always going about telling people of the Lord. She says this lady had an impeccable character, so to speak. For instance, she was never known to swear — but she was the kind of person who makes everyone else swear. So personality, actions, attitudes are important for the effective communication of the Gospel. Basically, however, we must rely on God's Word as the primary tool in evangelism, because it is that Word and the proclamation of that Word that brings a man to faith, because it is that Word that has the power to convert.

It is definitely the "Sword of the Lord" that cuts into the heart of man. It is *His* instrument for advancing *His* kingdom in the World.

"THE GOOD WORD"

Evangelism is done with "Good News," not just the Word, but the "GOOD Word." The truth of God's Word is absolute, but truth is not always "Good" news. The Word of God brings an absolute message, but it is not always a message of good news, because news can be classified as "good" only in the light of a "bad" situation, or in contrast to news that has been "bad." The statement that God forgives sin through the blood of Christ is an absolute truth. However, this is good news only to the man who is suffering from guilt. It is good news only to the man who is agonizing for forgiveness. To others it may simply be news, news that is interesting, news that is provocative. but not necessarily *good* news.

Jesus said: "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." God's Word, and the Confessions of the Church, tell us just how sick man really is. The first five chapters of Isaiah describe the horrible sickness of God's people in those days. Romans 1 and 2 describe how sick, morally sick, man is without God. The Confessions make it clear that all humans are born in original sin. They are born without any love for God, and without any fear of God, and the naturally consequence of this is that man is totally corrupt and is therefore condemned to eternal death. That's a pretty bad picture, a very gloomy picture, and it is a picture we must paint of man. Into this dark picture, into this gloomy scene comes the good news of God's love. "Herein is the love of God made manifest, that even though we were sinners, Christ died for us." God has a word, a good word for the world, that tells us there is a wonderful healing, a marvelous cure for the sickness He diagnoses in another part of the Scriptures. So it is, that our Lutheran Confessions have always insisted that the Law, and the preaching of sin as sin is necessary. Man cannot see any need for a Savior, he cannot realize his need for Christ, and the Cross, and the Blood until he recognizes his lostness. So we have to present the bad picture, as well as the good picture. There must be Bad news in our proclamation as well as Good news.

The liberal theologian doesn't see it that way. He has a message of good news for the world alright, but it is good news that announces, "Don't worry, things are not as bad as you have heard they are." The liberal believes, "There is no such thing as original sin. Man is, of course, not perfect, but with a little effort he can improve himself. He is on his way to becoming fully human. And the world will get better and better, if we work at it hard enough." He also says: "There is no judgment of God to come after death," "There is no hell," and "No being is lost for eternity." Why does he say that? He says it because he believes man can only know God through experience. If man can know God only as God acts, and man observes those acts of God and experiences Him through His actions, then the way for man to be drawn to God is through pleasant experiences. Negative experiences would only drive man away from God. "You can draw more flies with honey than with vinegar," he feels.

So the liberal theologian theorizes that if we want man to know God, we must help man to experience only the positive, only the pleasant. Talk of repentance, or sorrow for sin, or obedience, or believing the absolutes of Scripture, is simply unthinkable, because all of these are unpleasant experiences that call for a change of heart, a change of mind, surrender to God, and submission of the whole being to God. So we cannot ask man to think about being converted, or to change his way of thinking or his way of life, because to ask him to do that is painful. As much as possible, the liberal theologian avoids asking man to change to meet God's absolutes, instead he adjusts the absolutes of God so that man will have an easier time accepting them.

God's Word calls for a change in man, but people resist that change. They are like the young Air Force lieutenant I talked to one time. I asked him, "What church do you go to?" He answered by saying, "I don't go to any."

"Why not?" I asked. "Well," he said, "I guess it is because I haven't found a religion that fits into my life." I responded by saying, "But, Lieutenant, you have it all wrong. You are not to fit religion into your life. You are to fit your life into religion." That wasn't good news for that man, because it required a change in his heart and life, and he didn't want to make that change.

Liberal theology would say to him: "Listen, we have some good news for you. We've adjusted Christianity to that you can easily put it into your life. We have adjusted the Scriptures, and we have adjusted God. We have whittled away at them, and chopped away at them so that you can fit them into your scheme of things without any discomfort at all."

So liberal theology, which claims that man experiences God only through pleasant events, seeks to give man a message that is very acceptable. It doesn't ask that painful question, "Are you saved?"; instead it pleasantly inquires, "Did you know that you are saved?" It makes adjustments in the Word so that it can be acceptable to all.

Scripture says, "There is now, therefore, no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Liberal theology says, "There is now, therefore, no condemnation." Period. Scripture says, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Liberal theology simply says: "God so loved the World." To confront men with the need for Christ to escape condemnation, or to believe in order to have everlasting life, is to confront them with a distressing thought. So that distressing thought is eliminated. Man is told there is nothing to worry about. The future is rosy and bright, and salvation is assured. There is no need to undergo any painful soul searching about sin, or condemnation before God. The good news is "Relax, man, no need to get uptight. You've got it made."

This is the type of message to which Brother Weber made reference in his opening devotion when he talked about the danger of preaching designed simply to appeal to men. This is the type of "evangelism" that liberal theology produces.

Those of us who are conservative in our theology, who believe the whole counsel of God, must paint the picture darkly. We cannot promise man that this world is going to get better and better year by year. For the pall of sin hangs upon all of creation — "The whole creation groans and travails in pain" until now. 1970 — September the 2nd. But we also have the Word of Hope. The Good News. Out of the darkness a light has shined, Jesus Christ brings salvation, not the salvation of this world, but salvation for a world to come.

This is the message of "GOOD News." The task of the evangelist is to proclaim that Good News. He sees man, and all the world looking into darkness, with no joy, no hope. He doesn't go to him and say, "Things aren't really as bad as they look." Really the evangelist says in honesty, "Things are bad, but there is a Hope. A Savior. His name is Jesus Christ." He points the world to that Hope.

The task of evangelism is symbolized by a situation that happened to me at a Bible camp some years ago. Every evening we wanted to end our day with a different type of devotion. Someone had given the camp one of Thorvaldsen's statues of the Savior, where Jesus stands with His hands out, inviting, "Come unto Me." One of the pastors suggested that we take this statue out into the darkest part of the woods, and ring it about with electric torches, and leave them off until we gathered all the campers in a circle about the statue. Then we would turn on the lights to illuminate the image of Jesus, and then sing "Beautiful Savior." I had the task of taking a group of 8 or 10 to the devotion site. It was a very dark night, and we could not see our hands in front of our faces. As we stood there looking into blackness, suddenly we heard singing, "Beautiful Savior, King of Creation." We, however, had nothing to sing about for all we could see was gloom. Confusion reigned in our hearts and minds until suddenly someone whispered, "Turn around,

take a look." We did, and we saw this lovely image of our Savior. Then we too were able to sing, "Beautiful Savior."

Before we turned around, we had nothing to sing about. There was no joy, no gladness. But what a difference that turning about made, and we saw the image of our Savior. How thankful we were for the word, "Turn around. Take a look."

This is the task of evangelism. Go to the world looking on gloom, darkness, hopelessness, confusion, despair, and asking that world simply to "Turn around"; "Take A Look" at the only hope man has. If we can do that, we will indeed be bearers of good news, and we will fulfill that mission given us long ago.

15. God's Harmony and Man's Discordant Notes and Missions

Psalm 67 tells us:

Elmer Reimnitz, M.S.T.

"God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause His face to shine upon us. Selah.

That thy way may be known upon the earth, thy saving health among all nations.

Let the people praise Thee, O God; let all the people praise Thee.

O let the nations be glad and sing for joy; for Thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon the earth. Selah.

Let the people praise Thee, O God; let all the people praise Thee.

Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us.

God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him."

MISSIONS — GOD'S IMPERATIVE

God, in His mercy, planned for the salvation of sinful mankind. His plan, the master plan is a plan that shows its harmony throughout the Bible. There is no discordant note in God's plan for the salvation of mankind. God sent His Son, Christ Jesus, into the world to save mankind. Christ suffered and died for us on the cross, and He rose again to gain the victory for us over sin, death and the devil. God offers this complete salvation to man, but, in foolish pride too many men resist the Spirit of God. Man brings his discordant notes into the mission work that God wants man to do.

God has given man his marching orders: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The only reason the church exists is because Christ wants His children, His disciples, to bring souls to Him, teaching them the way of eternal life. But the world is still the same sinful world and has not changed for the better in spite of all the great discoveries of modern man. When we read books such as "The Stranger" by Albert Camus, we see and feel the struggle going on in the hearts and minds of those who want to be above religion. They don't want to worry about life and death. After all, God is dead, and what is there left for us in this world? From the viewpoint of sinful mankind, we see them wondering where to look for hope and for help. Where do they find peace, security, and hope? Terrorism, kidnappings, and murder of ambassadors take place in a number of countries. Where is the hope for peace and security? Even in America you find the resistance against authority. Man is rushing down the road to anarchy.

Perhaps the churches, with their emphasis on man's intelligence, man's social progress without spiritual growth are partly to blame for much of what is happening throughout the world. Too many have forgotten the true mission of the church. They have brought discordant notes into the harmony God planned for mission work.

God's plan is for us to go and preach the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the mission work, the harmony of God's plan. Tell the story of Jesus.

Belief in missions and belief in Christ stand and fall together. "The concern for world evangelization is not something to be tacked on to a man's personal Christianity, which he may take or leave as he chooses . . . It can never be the province of a few enthusiasts, a sideline or specialty of those who happen to have a bent that way. It is the distinctive mark of being a Christian. To accept Christ is to enlist under a missionary banner . . . In fact, here is the surest test whether we have truly grasped what Christ was doing by His life and death and resurrection or whether we have failed even to begin to understand the Gospel that He brought. James Denny once heard a distinguished missionary say, 'Some people do not believe in missions. They do not have a right to believe in missions: they do not believe in Christ.' My friends, if we have really encountered the Lord in the innermost part of our souls, if we are truly sons and daughters of our heavenly Father, we will never rest until the new life we have found in Christ is the conscious possession of all sinful mankind. It must be with us as it was with Paul at Damascus, 'Necessity is laid upon me to publish this to the ends of the earth.' It is said that when the Rabbi Duncan was dying, someone told him that there was a man in the infirmary, a foreign seaman, whose language no one could speak. 'I will learn it,' cried the scholar saint, 'I will learn it that I may tell him of his Saviour.' When the everlasting mercy of Christ broke like a sudden dawn upon Saul Kane in Masefield's poem, it gave him his task in life:

I knew that Christ had given me birth
to Brother all the souls on earth."¹

PHILOSOPHIES OF MISSIONS

Finding the lost and bringing them back to the Father's house is the chief and irreplaceable purpose of missions throughout the world. However, man has succeeded in changing the philosophy of missions. Other items are given equal weight and even priority over this irreplaceable purpose of God's. In his book, "How Churches Grow," Dr. Donald McGavran points out that today there exists three categories of philosophies about missions:

- "1. The Pauline Philosophy. This holds that the central continuing purpose of the world mission is winning men and women, tribes and nations, to Jesus Christ and multiplying churches. There are no other chief ends of mission, though man may be healed and kind deeds done as in the case of the cripple of Lystra. These, however, never form the purpose of mission . . . It is not the business of the church in Antioch to do charity in Antioch, but rather to establish churches there which will overflow with Christian neighborliness and abound in all the loving service and good works mentioned by Christ in His account of the last judgment.
- "2. The Parallel Philosophy. This says that the world mission consists in great parallel thrusts — of service in the name of Christ, witness to Christ, prosecution of great causes, enlightenment of other religions and cultures, contributions of life and money, and evangelization; that the world mission is as broad as the physical, mental, social and spiritual needs of man and includes his economic, industrial and political life . . . a mission to teach men how to double their rice crop has equal weightage — with a second, to teach them to read and a third — to lead them to Christ. . .
- "3. The Temporal-Eternal Philosophy. This holds that while the acceptance of the Evangel by the whole world is, indeed, the long range chief goal, in the shifting scene which faces us, other ends must sometimes share the stage as equals with church multiplication . . . Christians, says this philosophy, are simultaneously working toward the evangelization of the world and living a Christian life in a needy world. . . . With the tremendous resources of the Church today, it should be possible to do both all the disciplining that can be done and all the good deeds the world needs. However, when resources prove insufficient and the choice has to be made, the eternal has a clear priority with us as it had with our Lord."¹

The second and third philosophies are taking over most of the mission fields today. Both appeal to the love for our neighbor and have great emo-

tional appeal. We should prove that we love our neighbor, we are living in the richest land in the world and out of gratitude to God should show our love and our interest in those poor people who are hungry, illiterate, sick, etc. Would to God that the members of the church would be able to solve all of the problems of misery in this world. However, we know that this will never happen. We know that what actually happens in the mission field is "Practically both conservatives and liberals faced with many human needs, often defeated by resistant populations, always bound by previous patterns of action, cumbered by institutionalism in advance of the church, burdened with cultural overhang, which leads them to proclaim Christ in Western Ways, committed to a non-Biblical individualism, not understanding multi-individual accession as a normal way men come to Christ, and deceived by their own promotional efforts (whatever our missions do is so wonderful), constantly overemphasize and betray these truths."²

"Both liberals and conservatives too frequently are content to carry on 'splendid mission work.' Bitter experience teaches them to entertain small expectations of church growth, and they spend most of their budget, time and missionaries for other things."² We can't accept the entire indictment made by Dr. McGavran, but much is true in his statement.

The Frankfurt Declaration tells us: "Today, however, organized Christian world missions is shaken by a fundamental crisis. Outer opposition and the weakening spiritual power of our churches and our missionary societies are not solely to blame. More dangerous is the displacement of their primary tasks by means of an insidious falsification of their motives and goals." There are many discordant notes brought into mission work by man.

UNIVERSALISM — SYNCRETISM — *Religion in General.*

Universalism is one of the loudest discordant notes in mission work, for if the beliefs of universalism is true, we no longer need to do mission work. We could even forget about churches and Christ. The Wheaton Declaration explains universalism in a few words: "The teaching of universalism, which we reject, states that, because Christ died for all, He will sovereignly and out of love bring all men to salvation. It proclaims the essential and final unity of the human race, which will never be broken . . . those who have met Christ have an advantage above those who have not, but it is a difference in degree, not in principle. If men do not believe the Gospel in this life — even if they reject it — their guilt and punishment will ultimately be removed. They are simply not conscious of the riches they possess."³

The Frankfurt Declaration of 1970 states: "We therefore oppose the universalistic idea that in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ all men of all times are already born again and already have peace with him, irrespective of their knowledge of the historical saving activity of God or belief in it. Through such a misconception the evangelizing commission loses both its full authoritative power and its urgency. Unconverted men are thereby lulled into a fateful sense of security about their eternal destiny."

These words are underscored by statements in Dr. Martin Marty's book, "Youth Considers 'Do It Yourself' Religion," in which there are five statements made by those who profess a religion-in-general that shows universalism:

- "1. Well, after all, in matters of religion the people of different faiths are just in different boats heading for the same shore.
2. It does not make any difference what anybody believes, so long as he believes.
3. I may not agree with his religion, but he's so sincere. That's all that matters.
4. I don't really belong to the church, but I am very religious.
5. I don't have a clear idea of Christian beliefs, but I am a Christian and I'm sure I believe in its main principles, such as the Sermon on the Mount and the Golden Rule and the Ten Commandments."⁴

How often have we heard statements such as this, not only in the United States, but also throughout the world. If these statements were the truth, we would have no reason to be doing mission work. We could close down our mission fields, shut our churches here at home, and think only of doing good.

“As a further step of development in the concept of ‘Church mission’ it can then be held that the reconciling acts of God may be found in all religions. Dr. Niles asserts, ‘But what of those who already have faith to whom this declaration is made? Are there not those who have not consciously accepted God in Christ, but who nevertheless in some measure respond truly to God’s action on them? Are there not those who, being outside the Christian faith, still do the truth? (John 3:21). The answer is yes.’ From this position it is then but a short step to a new universalism of all religions and faiths — a veritable syncretism of universalistic Christianity, and of other ethnic faiths and animistic religious beliefs.

“It is here then that this particular meaning of the mission of the church comes to full universalistic syncretistic flower. There is no necessity to challenge men to flee to the Lord Jesus Christ from the city of destruction. There is no ‘Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel.’ There is no wishing one’s self accursed for his kinsmen’s sake because they are lost! Instead we find a concept of love and service which depends on dialogue with the various faiths and practices of the world to introduce them to what they already are by the grace of God and that they will be whether they accept it in this life or not! Thus the call to harvest fields is muffled, volunteers dwindle away, and the spirit of evangelism in the Great Commission is no longer one of urgency.”⁵

The Frankfurt Declaration gives us a very clear statement on syncretism: “We recognize and declare: The offer of salvation in Christ is directed without exception to all men who are not yet bound to him in conscious faith. The adherents to the nonchristian religions and world views can receive this salvation only through participation in faith. They must be freed from their former ties and false hopes in order to be admitted by belief into the body of Christ, . . . We, therefore, reject the false teaching that the non-christian religions and world views are also ways of salvation similar to belief in Christ. We refute the idea that Christian presence among the adherents to the world religions and a give-and-take dialogue with them are substitutes for a proclamation of the Gospel which aims at conversion. Such dialogues simply establish good points of contact for missionary communication.”

Universalism and syncretism are some of the loudest discordant notes in mission work throughout the world. Too many have entered their ranks as they substitute for the true Law and Gospel a vague talk of the love of God. We must remind them that Christ taught eternal punishment as well as eternal life. There is a heaven, and there is also a hell. There are the saved, and there are also the lost. Scriptures give us no alternative; we must take seriously all it says of the wrath and judgments of our God. “Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from ye, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels, . . . And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (Mt. 25:41, 46). “And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:47 ff.). “And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom . . . And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from hence” (Luke 16:23, 26). “And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power” (II Thess. 1:7-9). In true loyalty to the Holy Scriptures we will continue to

reject the devilish teaching of universalism, for we know and believe and teach what the Scriptures teach. Salvation is through faith in Christ alone.

The Lutheran Confessions clearly show us the Christological burden in the Gospel content. Perhaps the best definition of the Gospel Content is found in FC, SD V, 21:

“The content of the Gospel is this, that the Son of God, Christ our Lord, Himself assumed and bore the curse of the Law and expiated and paid for all our sins, and that through Him alone we re-enter the good graces of God, obtain forgiveness of sins through faith, are freed from death and all the punishments of sin, and are saved eternally.” (Cf. FC, Epit. V, 5).

As Melancthon says, the Gospel compels us to make use of Christ. It teaches that through Him we have access to God, reconciliation with God and victory over sin and death (Ap. IV, 291). The Formula tells us that the Gospel ‘directs’ sinners solely to the merit of Christ, and raises them up again by the delightful proclamation of God’s grace and favor acquired through the merits of Christ” (FC Epit. V, 7). The Confessions see and recognize this doctrine and article as one that must be held fast at all costs: “Nothing in this article can be given up or compromised, even if heaven and earth and things temporal should be destroyed. For as St. Peter says, ‘There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved’ (Acts 4:12). ‘And with his stripes we are healed’ (Is. 53:5). On this article rests all that we teach and practice against the pope, the devil, and the world. Therefore we must be quite certain and have no doubts about it. Otherwise all is lost, and the pope, the devil, and all our adversaries will gain the victory” (SA II, I, 5).

FALSE ECUMENISM

We are living in the so-called modern age. We have come to the point where many feel the pressure of society and the need to conform. It is an age in which propaganda over the radio, television stations, and newspapers have come to exercise such a profound influence on the lives and thoughts of men, that it is much easier to conform and to flow with the stream than to hold fast to so-called outmoded convictions. Especially since John XXIII shook the Christian world with the convocation of the II Vatican Council, giving it a strong ecumenical character, the hosts of those who are fighting for the ecumenical *movement* have grown considerably. In a short time the climate of relationships between the Protestants and the Roman Catholic church has changed much and has become a climate of dialogue between separated brethren. Many are ready to return to the ‘Holy Father’ and forget that the Roman Catholic Church has not changed a single one of its fundamental doctrines. Ecumenism has become, as we call it in Brazil, the “coqueluche do dia,” (the church fad of the day). The Wheaton Declaration diagnoses the problem as it states: “Contemporary Protestant movements that boldly contend for the non-existence of the Gospel revealed by God, that propagate a neo-universalism denying eternal condemnation, that substitute inter-church reconciling service for aggressive evangelism, that blur the biblical distinction between ‘church’ and ‘mission’ between Romanism and Protestantism, and that create ecclesiastical organizations moving in the direction of a worldwide religious monopoly, likewise demand a careful assessment and response.”⁶ Dr. Robert Preus, analyzing the implications and studying the ecumenical movement, writes: “We can at least help to determine our stance toward this movement today by examining briefly the modern ecumenical attitude toward the mission of the church, specifically as seen in the Report “Renewal in Mission,” adopted by the WCC assembly in Uppsala in 1968. An analysis of this report which is the result of years of study and preparation (since the WCC assembly in New Delhi) by theologians and member churches of the WCC reveals that the WCC in its official statement has virtually missed and passed over the great evangelical themes and concerns which dominated the Reformation and our historic Lutheran Confessions. The Report has little in common with either the New Testament teaching on the church’s mission or that of our

Confessions. . . . The Report scarcely touches the great soteriological and eschatological themes so fundamental to historic Christianity and to our Lutheran Confessions as they lay a background for the ministry of the Church. . . . can the very content of the Gospel, the great themes of salvation, reconciliation, justification, the work of Christ, to say nothing of the eschatological themes of Christ's return, judgment, resurrection and eternal life — can the content of the Gospel be ignored when Christians band together to speak of the mission of the church? The urgency for proclaiming the Gospel is not apparent in the Uppsala report. And this is inexcusable. . . . What then, can be our relation today as Lutherans who have a Lutheran and Biblical doctrine of the church's ministry to the ecumenical movement? To identify with a great movement which so tragically buries the Gospel and misses the crucial mission of the church would constitute a compromise and denial of our understanding of the Gospel and the work of Christ's church."⁷

Heaven and earth would rejoice if the goal of unity among the churches could be achieved here on earth. However, this goal dare not be achieved at the expense of doctrinal confession. We enter into dialogue with other churches, we will bear witness to Scriptural truths, but we will not compromise the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. Professor Osvaldo Schueler clearly diagnosed the entire ecumenical movement when he wrote for the *Mensagem Luterano*: "The churches which unite only for outward motives and forget about doctrine will finally be united and not know what they are united about."⁸

Prof. Arnaldo Schueler in his essay "Let Unity be Unity," points out one of the major arguments for ecumenism and the fallacy of the argument: "There are three things which must not be confounded: 1) What is strictly necessary for faith to be created in the heart; 2) What does it mean to preach the Gospel correctly; 3) What are the conditions necessary for two church bodies to declare external fellowship."⁹ Many of us will remember how a young man stood up at our convention in Denver and claimed: Christ decided the issue of ecumenism over 1900 years ago. WE are brothers — a fundamental error in distinguishing between the visible and invisible church. Thank God that there are many true children of God in other church bodies in spite of doctrinal errors, but for true unity we must have the right basis. The basis for uniting the Lutherans is clearly expressed in the Formula of Concord: "Thus the churches will not condemn one another because of dissimilarity of ceremonies, when, in Christian liberty, one has less or more of them, provided they are otherwise agreed with one another in the doctrine and all its articles, also in the right use of the Holy Sacraments" (FC, SD, 31). Formula Concordia, Solida Declaratio, Rule and Norm, 1: "The primary requirement for the basic and permanent concord within the church is a summary formula and pattern, unanimously approved, in which the summarized doctrine commonly confessed by the churches of the pure Christian religion is drawn from out of the Word of God."¹⁰

To this last statement Dr. R. Preus comments in a recent article: "What a remarkable statement! Here is not the cynical despairing of the possibility of doctrinal unity, so common to our relativistic age! Not the sneering rejection of doctrinal unanimity as something inimical to man's freedom and autonomy. Now here is a statement of confidence in the unifying power of the Word and the Spirit of God. These old Lutherans were convinced that doctrinal controversies were an offense and doctrinal aborrations pernicious to believers and unbelievers alike."¹¹

SOCIAL GOSPEL

Hand in hand with universalism and the ecumenical movement we find an over-emphasis on social work. We are told that we must dedicate our efforts to help the "whole man." True, we must help the poor, the hungry, the sick, but above all we must help these come to the knowledge of the Saviour. Too often evangelical social action is just social action while the witness to Christ is missing. It becomes a type of self-redemption of man. Dr.

Schoehne writes: "This kind of self-redemption is offered today by those theologians, whose theology has shrunk to social ethics and who transform the need for salvation into a need for society's improvement. In this conception human activity replaces the grace of God. For example, let me quote from the Credo of Dorothee Soelle: 'I believe in God, who . . . wants the alteration of all conditions by our work, by our politics . . . I believe in Jesus Christ, who arises into our life that we may become free from prejudice and arrogance, from fear and hatred, and promote his revolution toward his kingdom: I believe . . . in our responsibility for what will become of this earth: a vale of tears, hunger, and violence, or the city of God.' No wonder, that a prayer composed under Mrs. Soelle's authority, ends with these words: 'Come, Lord Jesus, and let us bring up your future.'¹²

It is a sorry thing that many ecumenical conferences, including Lutheran conferences, do not give a clear confessional witness to Christ and His infallible Word. Too often Lutheran gatherings and councils have not heard such valid and honest criticism which was voiced properly recently at the end of an Inter-Lutheran gathering of campus pastors: "We sat here for four days and we have scarcely heard the name of Jesus and the Gospel. What are we doing here?" We can ill afford a continuation of sharing our weaknesses and reaching the least common denominator, when the Saviour requests us to edify and strengthen one another through His precious Word.

Fortunately there are young churches today that still hold fast to confessional loyalty rather than false ecumenical breadth. It is commendable that Dr. A. A. Carino, the president of the Evangelical Lutheran church of the Philippines recently told Lutherans from all over the world in a meeting in St. Louis: "The LCP President as guardian of doctrine and Scriptural practice suspended the resolution (he was referring to a resolution of a district of his church) and its implementation by citing the Confessions on the matter. . . . it is not those who subscribe to the Confessions and are loyal to them who divide the Church. It is those who disregard the fellowship and go their own way."¹³

Such statements are especially heartening in this day when the Lutheran World Federations in its assembly in July of this year went on record to change the name of its Commission on World Mission to the Commission on Church Cooperation. Missions in the Gospel sense among the ecumenical forces is receiving less and less attention. True ecumenism is God pleasing, the right ecumenism fights for the unity of the church on the basis of the Scriptures and the Confessions. Unfortunately, the ecumenical movement has hurt aggressive evangelism and mission outreach rather than helped it. Too much time and effort, and too many funds are funneled to this movement while the mission work of the church, the real work of Christ, is sidetracked.

Man has his duty to be a good Samaritan, and our churches should do all they can to help the needy. However, we dare not place the emphasis of the church's work in the wrong place. "Finding the lost and bringing them back to the Father's house is a chief and irreplaceable purpose of American missions to Africa, Latin America, and Asia where tremendous numbers are living and dying without Christ. Men have multitudinous needs of body and mind to meet which is thoroughly Christian. The Church is properly engaged in relief of suffering, pushing back the barrier of ignorance, and increasing productivity. But such activities must be carried out *in proportion*. They must never be substituted for finding the lost. Christians must never be guilty of turning from the Spirit to the flesh or of mocking men with false securities."¹⁴

It is not the duty of the church, but of the State, to create a social and political order . . . The Church, based on revelation, has no revealed political or social programme, nor, as a Church, has it the means to put such a programme into effect, even if it had one . . . The Church's only instruments are Christian witness and brotherly love, and these overcome all selfishness, self-importance and legalism."¹⁵ "The church's business is creating new lives,

not new lobbies. If the church becomes merely one more reform bloc it will inevitably be classed only as a social movement representing a phase of opinion rather than as the people of God empowered by a spiritual dynamic. Christians should affect the social structure in which they live, but nowhere in the Bible are missions equated with social reform apart from the regeneration of the individual . . . the church must always remember that 'the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal' (II Cor. 4: 18)."¹⁶

In his message to the LWF assembly Dr. Visvaldis V. Klive writes: "There is a contemporary tendency among many Christians to de-emphasize theological problems. This is unfortunate as the history of the Church suggests that theological clarity and comprehensiveness can be decisive. A number of failures on the part of the Church can be attributed precisely to the absence of sufficiently well-founded and definite theological perspective. This means the avoidance of the identification of the church with any secular movement, regardless how good and noble are its intentions and origins. Every time that the Church has identified its interests with those of some social, political, cultural, or economic structure, the christian community has turned out to be the loser."¹⁷ The church dare not let the social gospel take the place of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

It is the activity of the church to be a serving church. But what is the meaning of the idea of serving in our confessions?

Our Confessions clearly show us that the service of works, that acts of love, is the fruit of faith through the Gospel and is the true service of Christians. Melancton tells us, "After we have been justified and regenerated by faith, therefore, we begin to fear and love God, to pray and expect help from him, to thank and praise him, and to submit to him in our affliction. Then also we begin to love our neighbor because our hearts have spiritual and holy impulses" (Ap. IV, 111. Cf. 129, 270). The child of God, living a life of faith will produce love and good works, not only because works are commanded as a testimony of our faith (Ap. IV, 184, 189), not only because our works glorify Christ (Ap. IV, 269, 189), but because the Spirit has transformed us by bringing us to faith, and "faith is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, so that it is impossible for it not to be constantly doing what is good" (FC, SD IV, 10). So Gospel faith is joined inseparably to the service of good works in Lutheran theology. Listen to Melancton: "We are justified for this very purpose, that, being righteous, we might begin to do good works and obey God's law. For this purpose we are reborn and receive the Holy Spirit, that this new life might have new works, new impulses, the fear and love of God, hatred of lust, etc." (Ap. IV, 348-9).¹⁸

The true Christian church will continue to bring the Gospel message to the whole man and urge its faithful to express their social concern. The children of God must be concerned for the needs of the whole man, they will continue to help in obedience to Christ's command to help those who are hungry, sick, alone, etc., but above all the church will remember that the salvation of the whole man has priority and will bring the man the sweetest story ever told, the message of salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

DEAD ORTHODOXY-INDIFFERENCE

Another bad discordant note that man brings to God's harmony in mission work is dead orthodoxy, indifference. Are some of the attacks leveled at the Lutheran Church justified, even though their suggested solution is just as unjustified? The Hungarians sent a message to the LWF assembly and among other things we read: "The Christian does not view the events of the world with an impassionate self-righteousness as the Lutheran pietists and the orthodox did and still do, but he is out to look for the footprint of God, entering into the events and accepting solidarity with them. Just as God loved and still loves the world (John 3:16), the church, too, must love the world and, with this love, must accept her solidarity with all the problems of the world . . . From God whom we know in Christ we learn that Christian

love knows no limitations or barriers. It is not obstructed by the existence of the various religions and ideologies, and bypasses the pious forms of traditional religiosity. Measured by the love of Jesus, there is but one impiety and that is inhumanity. Jesus loved people and did not push abstract turth (Luke 9.56). He sat at one table with the publicans and sinners. He prayed for his enemies and broke the Sabbath law to heal the sick. The pious of his age also preached love among themselves, but they hated their enemies. Christians of our time are also exposed to the temptation to love themselves and turn a cold shoulder on the outsiders."¹⁹

When I think of the actual evangelism work of the members of our churches, when I consider the offerings for missions of our churches, I wonder if the Hungarians haven't hit a weak spot in our lives. I would like to ask you whether you have dedicated some time every week to lead a soul to Jesus. Have you prayed for someone who does not believe? Have you been an instrument of the Lord in bringing someone to Christ during this year? You know that the Holy Spirit works through you and through me to bring souls to Christ. Have you been satisfied with the fact that you and your family have the pure Gospel? That you and your children know the way to heaven? What have you done to bring others to Christ? What have you done to wake up all the members of your congregation to the most important task in this world, bringing souls to Jesus?

"A noted, gifted infidel had this to say of soul-winning: 'Were I a religionist, did I truly, firmly, consciously believe, as millions SAY they do, that the knowledge and practice of religion in this life influences destiny in another, religion should be everything to me. I would esteem one soul for heaven worth a life of suffering. There should be neither wordly prudence nor calculating circumspection in my engrossing zeal. Earthly consequences should never stay my hand nor seal my lips. I would strive to look but on Eternity and on the immortal souls around me, soon to be everlastingly miserable or everlastingly happy."²⁰

Thousands and millions who call themselves Christians go on their way day after day, giving our all for this life here on earth. It couldn't mean less to them that every minute of the day, souls are dying and going to eternal hell-fire. Some are interested only in giving all of their attention to having the pure doctrine in the church. We must do this, without the loyalty to Scriptures and the Confessions, we soon won't have a message to bring to sinful mankind. But we can't only fight for the pure doctrine. We must combine the pure doctrine with our zeal to do mission work. Dead orthodoxy will spell the death of the church. A church that does not place emphasis on mission work will die.

My friends, if we believe there is an eternal hell, could our eyes be dry and our hearts undisturbed when we see so many sinners blindly drifting to an eternal doom?

Why, oh why, are we doing so little for the salvation of blood-bought souls? God be praised that we do have fellow Lutherans who are afire with zeal for missions, but when we consider the average life of our average Lutheran, we must admit that we are too indifferent toward our fellow-men: too many are too satisfied with the church as it is. May our heavenly Father haunt us with the spectre of millions of our fellowmen who do not know the Saviour.

My fellow Lutherans, as I stand before you during this Congress for loyalty to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, I would like to remind you of the words of the angel to the church in Philadelphia: "I know thy works: behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and has kept my word, and hast not denied my name" (Rev. 3:8). God has put an open door before the Lutherans throughout the world. This open door has been kept open in spite of our failure to enter. God knows that we are weak, that we have little strength, but no man can shut the door, God will keep it open and will strengthen us.

Disturbing secular forces are at work in the hearts of Christians and many turn deaf ears to appeals for costly advance. We need honest self-criticism, and we must examine the motives of our hearts in the light of Holy Scripture. The needs of our day demand deep renewal of our commitment to Christ and His mission throughout the world.

"Protestantism is afflicted with doctrinal uncertainty, theological novel-ties, and outright apostasy. Satan is active, sowing tares among the wheat, energizing false witnesses to propagate doubt and destroying true faith. Christians need the will and ability to 'discern the spirits whether they be of God.' The Church needs the courage to implement the New Testament disci-plinary process to guard its purity, its peace and its unity. God's people need the prophetic voice, calling for a separation from sin and error."²¹

We realize the shortcomings of our service to our God. We must pledge loyalty to God's Holy Word and to the Confessions of our church. Under the guidance of God's Holy Spirit we must confess our failures and we must affirm our confidence in His mission. God is sovereign in all times. We be-lieve in Him, and in His triumph in history. In spite of man's discordant notes in missions, God will work His harmony and will bring the elect to His eternal home.

May God grant us wisdom, courage, and missionary zeal so that we will pray and give for His work. I am not pleading for the missions in my country, Brazil, but I am pleading for those who need your help throughout the world, and in a special way my fellow-Lutherans, that we all will grow in love and Christian service and will avoid the discordant notes in missions. I wish all of you could have the opportunity to meet some of the many in mission fields who have come to the Saviour through your help, but I know that this is im-possible here on earth. However, one day you will meet these people with our Savior in heaven, where together we and they will sing songs of praise to Him who saved us all by His grace.

FOOTNOTES

¹Stewart, J. S., *Thine is the Kingdom* (New York: Scribner's, 1956), pp. 14-17.

²Donald Anderson McGavran, *How Churches Grow* (New York: Friendship Press, 1966), pp. 70, 71.

³Wheaton Declaration, The Congress on the Church's Worldwide Mission, Wheaton, Ill., April 9-16, 1966, Evangelical Missions Information Service, Washington, D.C.

⁴Martin Marty, *Youth Considers "Do It Yourself" Religion*, (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1965), pp. 71, 72.

⁵Arthur M. A. Climenhaga, "Manifestation of the New Universalism," *One Race, One Gospel, One Task, Vol. II*, edited by Carl F. H. Henry and W. Stanley Moonnyham (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1966), p. 187.

⁶Wheaton Declaration, op. cit. p. 8.

⁷Robert Preus, *The Lutheran Confessions and the Mission of the Church*. Delivered at the International Lutheran Theological Conference, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, July 9-11, 1970, pp. 24-27.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Oswaldo Schueler, *Concilio Vaticano II, Mensageiro Luterano*, Vol. 50, Porto Alegre, Brazil: Casa Publicadora Concordia, Março 1967.

¹⁰Arnaldo Schueler, *Let Unity be Unity*, delivered at the Lutheran Free Conference, Rockford, Illinois, July 14-16, 1970, p. 5.

¹¹Ibid., p. 10.

¹²Jobst Schoene, *The Confessions as Opportunity*, delivered at the International Lutheran Theological Conference, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, July 9-11, 1970, p. 13.

¹³Alvaro A. Carino, *The Confessions as Proclamation*, delivered at the International Lutheran Theological Conference, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, July 9-11, 1970, p. 8.

¹⁴D. A. McGavran, op. cit.

¹⁵Peter Beyerhaus and Henry Lefever, *The Responsible Church and the Foreign Mission* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1964), pp. 146, 147.

¹⁶M. C. Tenney, *Facing Facts in Modern Missions* (Chicago, Ill.: Moody Press, 1963), pp. 20, 21.

¹⁷Visvaldis V. Klive, *Sent in the World — Where and How?* Published by the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church, Columbus, Ohio, p. 2.

¹⁸Robert Preus, op. cit., pp. 12, 13.

¹⁹Kaldy Zoltan, *Our Commitment in The World*, Magyarorszagi Evngelikus Egyhaz Sajtoosztalya, Buda-pest, 1970, p. 80.

²⁰Isaac H. A. Abadio, *Compassion in Personal Evangelism (One Race, One Gospel, One Task*, Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1967), pp. 391, 392.

16. The Gospel Imperative — A Call for World Missions

Eugene R. Bertermann, Ph.D., LL.D

Under the theme "God's Harmony and Man's Discordant Notes" the Reverend Elmer Reimnitz has set forth various aspects of the disharmony which natural man has injected into the missionary endeavor as the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ addresses itself to the task of world-wide evangelization. On the basis of God's Word and the Lutheran Confessions Reimnitz has rightly rejected the errors of universalism, syncretism, false ecumenism, indifference, social Gospel, naturalism, materialism, secularism, rationalism, and relativism.

Against this background I should like to speak to you on the theme: "*The Gospel Imperative — A Call For World Missions.*"

The Statement of Purpose of this Lutheran Congress, emphasizing "loyalty to the Scriptures and Confessions," and constituting "a forum for strengthening Scriptural and Confessional Christianity in Lutheran Churches," has declared: "In worship of the Triune God and in obedience to His infallible Word for effective proclamation of the saving Gospel, the Congress seeks: . . .

"To motivate and involve all Lutherans in keeping truly faithful to their Gospel heritage and relate it to the entire task of missions, its message and methods.

"To activate all loyal members for effective and constructive involvement in the decision-making processes to strengthen and unify us all in our only and infallible source of Christian knowledge, Holy Scriptures — and to send us on our mission aggressively to take the Gospel to all people in the world."

In keeping, therefore, with the purpose to "relate" the Gospel heritage" to the entire task of missions, "its message and methods"; and "to send us on our mission aggressively to take the Gospel to all people in the world," I should like to speak to you on the theme:

"THE GOSPEL IMPERATIVE — A CALL FOR WORLD MISSIONS"

I. The Imperative Of Our Savior's Great Missionary Command

It seems not only appropriate but indispensable that we should be concerned with the Great Missionary Command which Christ our Lord has given us. We engage in mission work today, not because we want to, or because we choose to, or because we like to, but because we have been told to. The Church is under orders. The risen Lord has commanded us to "go," to "preach," to "make disciples," and that is enough for us. Inactivity in missions is disobedience. It is, therefore, right for us to go back to the very beginning and reexamine our marching orders.

The so-called "Great Commission" or "Great Missionary Command" occurs five times in our Bibles, at the end of each of the four Gospels, and once at the beginning of the Book of Acts. These need not necessarily be regarded as five versions of a single occasion. It is quite likely that, during the forty days which elapsed between our Savior's resurrection and His ascension, our Lord repeated the same Commission various times, with different words and different emphases.

Perhaps the best known version of the Great Missionary Command is set forth in the well known words of Matt. 28: 16-20: "*Then the eleven disciples*

went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

Some time had passed since the first Easter Day. The disciples of Jesus had returned north to Galilee. And there on the mountain, and by appointment, Jesus met them again. It was probably the occasion also mentioned by Saint Paul when Jesus appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time. (I Cor. 15: 6)

When they saw, at first evidently some distance away, their reactions varied between extremes of adoration and of unbelief. Some "worshiped Him," but "some doubted." Jesus then came to them and spoke to them. First, He made an announcement (v. 18). Next, He issued a command (verses 19 and 20a). Lastly, He gave them a promise (v. 20b).

1. The Announcement

"All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth," our risen Savior declared. It is of more than passing significance that this affirmation precedes the Great Missionary Command to "go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature."

We note that the "power" was "all authority in heaven and on earth." Different prepositions are used, as if deliberately to distinguish the two spheres, the earthly and the heavenly, over which authority is extended.

Our Savior has authority first of all "on earth." And since He has authority on earth, He has authority over us. His total authority extends over the lives of His servants. He has authority to say to anyone, "Go!"

Since Christ has all authority "on earth," it extends to all nations to whom He sends us. This fact asserts unequivocally that the religion of Jesus is not Palestinian or Jewish, Semitic or Asiatic, let alone "western," but a world religion, indeed the world religion intended to embrace all the nations then in existence and those that might yet be. It transcends all barriers of language and culture, nationality and color, race and rank.

Christ, however, declared that He has been given all authority "in heaven" as well. No doubt this means, in part, that the authority which our Savior claimed on earth was recognized in heaven, and that the disciples won on earth accordingly would be acknowledged and accepted in heaven.

But it also involves much more. It signifies that Jesus Christ has supreme authority also in those "heavenly places" in which evil "principalities and powers" still operate and wage war. Writing to the Ephesians, Saint Paul declares: "What is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand and in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." (Eph. 1: 19-21) The authority of Jesus Christ thus extends over all creatures, whether human or super-human, over the church, over the nations, over the devil and all his works.

It is significant to note, too, that the power "is given," has been given as an accomplished fact. For it was at our Savior's ascension that "God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

The fundamental basis of all Christian missionary enterprise, therefore, is the universal authority of Jesus Christ "in heaven and on earth." Because

Christ holds in His hands all authority on earth, we dare to go to all nations. Because Christ holds in His hands all authority in heaven, we have the open promise of success. It must have seemed ridiculous in the tiny nucleus of disciples to win the world for Christ. Today, too, Christ's Church is hopelessly outnumbered by the hundreds of millions who neither know or acknowledge Him. The task is equally gigantic.

2. *The Command*

The announcement of Christ's universal authority was an essential preliminary to the Great Commission. The imperative "Go ye therefore!" immediately followed the indicative statement, "All power is given unto Me."

We "go" because we are ourselves under authority. We go to "all nations" because they are under authority also. The Commission is no longer to seek "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Saint Matthew 10: 6), but to make disciples of "all the Gentiles."

As we go, we have precise instructions to fulfill. Christ used three verbs: "Make disciples," "baptize," and "teach."

a. We are to make disciples. The New English Bible renders this passage, "Make all nations My disciples." The addition of the possessive "My" brings out the sense. One cannot "*make disciples*" in the abstract, for there can be no disciples without a teacher whose disciples they are. To "make disciples of all nations" means to win disciples for Jesus Christ out of all the nations on earth.

Other versions of the Great Commission make plain how this is to be done. It is to be done by preaching the Gospel. For in preaching the Gospel, we preach Christ, so that men are converted to Him through the Holy Spirit's power and become His disciples.

b. We are to baptize. Converts who have become disciples of Jesus are to be baptized "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." The theological implications of this statement are plain: Discipleship to Jesus Christ involves relationship to the Father, and to the Holy Spirit as well. Although the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are distinct persons, they possess but one name into which disciples are baptized.

Christian baptism is conducted not just in the name, but into the name of the Trinity. It signifies union with God, the God who has revealed Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

c. We are to teach. People are not only to be disciplined and baptized; they must also be taught. A life-time of learning and obeying follows conversion, until disciples are conformed to the image of their Lord.

The substance of such teaching is given in these words, "All things whatsoever I have commanded you." We are to teach converts not what they may want to hear, nor what we may want to say, but what Christ Himself has taught. And these teachings they are to "keep," that is, to believe and to obey.

Such teaching of Jesus Christ includes the Old Testament (for He set a seal upon its truth and its authority), the Gospels (in which His own words are recorded), and the balance of the New Testament (which contains the teaching of the Apostles through whom He continued to speak, in order to complete His revelation).

Such is the risen Lord's concept of mission: Jesus sent His followers forth to make disciples, to baptize, and to teach. It is important that converts from the very beginning understand that the Bible teaching is Christ's teaching. Converts have become disciples of Christ; they have been baptized into Christ; and are to be taught what Christ commanded. They must learn to submit their minds to all, not just to some, of Christ's teachings. They may not pick and choose from His teachings, selecting what they like, rejecting what they dislike. They are not at liberty to disagree with Jesus, or to disobey Him, for Jesus is their Teacher and Lord, and they are under His authority and His instruction.

3. *The Promise*

Our Savior concluded: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." We should never isolate the Great Commission from its context. The Great Missionary Command is preceded by the announcement of Christ's authority, and followed by the promise of Christ's presence. Without these we would hesitate to obey Christ's Commission. How could we go forth to make disciples for Christ, to baptize them and teach them, if we did not have the assurance of His authority behind us and the assurance of His presence beside us?

Earlier in the same Gospel (18: 20) Christ had undertaken to be in the midst of the disciples when only two or three were gathered in His name. Now, as He repeats the promise of His presence, He attaches it to their witness, rather than to their worship. It is not only when we meet in His name, but when we go in His name, that He promises to be with us. The emphatic "I" who pledges His presence, is the One who has universal authority and who sends forth His people.

To those who go into the world as Christ came into the world, who sacrifice their ease, comfort and independence, to them the living Christ promises His presence. He is with them "*all the days,*" in days of safety and of peril, of failure and of success, of freedom to preach and restriction and persecution, of peace and of conflict in war. And Christ's promise continues "*even unto the end of the world.*"

We note the comprehensive sweep of the Great Commission: *First*, Christ claimed to have been given *all* authority in heaven and on earth; *second*, therefore He sends us to make disciples of *all* the nations; *third*, He bids us transmit to these disciples *all* His teaching. Finally, *fourth*, He promises to be with us *all* the days, even "*unto the end of the world.*"

II. The Imperative Of The World's Need

Our nation and world stand on the threshold of a new decade, hailed by some as "the soaring seventies." At the same time, however, we are confronted by a time of terrifying tension, an era of unrest, a century of crises as ominous and foreboding as ever before in all of human history.

First, we are confronted by the challenge of crisis internationally. When the astronauts of Apollo XIII looked down upon our world from deep and outer space, they beheld a planet which had shrunk into a global neighborhood, without becoming a brotherhood; a world united as never before by technology, but divided as never before by ideology. Great barriers stand between nation and nation: a Berlin Wall, a Thirty-eighth Parallel, a Seventeenth Parallel, a Jordan River, a Suez Canal.

The war in Viet Nam drags on. However, conflict in Indo China may prove to be only a side-show compared to what is building up in the Middle East. The real confrontation which could trigger World War III is in danger of taking place there.

Second, we are confronted by the challenge of crisis racially. A decade ago it seemed that integration was "just around the corner" in the United States; but in the past five years polarization between racial extremists has been such that some feel the issue now is not, "Can we end racial segregation?", but "Can we avert racial war?"

Third, we are confronted by the challenge of crisis ecologically. Ecology has to do with the balance within nature; and man has already seriously dis-balanced the processes of life to such an extent that, if we continue what we are doing, our physical environment will soon make this planet uninhabitable for man.

The new Jeremiahs of our day are the ecologists who are pronouncing judgment upon the technological age that has gone mad with greed. They tell us that we can no longer count on earth's dwindling resources to sustain its exploding population. We can go to any large metropolitan area and see

the smog which hovers over the city and the ill effects it creates in the life of mankind, as well as in plant and animal life. The explosion of atomic bombs in the atmosphere disperses radiation. The use of pesticides, like D.D.T., destroys the balance of nature, described eloquently in Rachel Carson's book, *The Silent Spring*.

We have exploited and raped nature. We have poisoned our lakes, our rivers and our streams. We have destroyed marine life. We have extinguished animal and bird life. Now even the air that we breathe, the water we drink and the food that we eat is no longer safe. All this violates the mandate of God in the Book of Genesis. Man was given the privilege, as well as the responsibility and the obligation, of subduing nature. We have not only subdued, but corrupted it, and if we continue at the rate we are going, the planet will be uninhabitable. One pessimistic Californian placed by the Pacific Ocean a tombstone engraved: **CREATED BY GOD; KILLED BY MAN, 1970.**

Fourthly, our nation and world are confronted by the challenge of crisis morally. There have always been those who have rebelled against moral standards. Pornography, sexual freedom, fornication, adultery, homosexuality, rape, prostitution abound everywhere. The real moral crisis of our day is not pot or pornography; it is the widespread assumption that no moral standard is really binding. Wickedness and sinfulness often characterize the motion pictures, the legitimate theatre, certain magazines and books. The abnormal and illegitimate are depicted as representing freedom of expression, thus becoming legitimate and normal. They seek to herald a "new morality," which is immoral, under the banner of an undefined and content-less law.

Someone has said: "If God doesn't judge America, He will have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah."

Fifthly, mankind is confronted by the challenge of crisis scientifically. Never before in the history of the world has man known so much. Within the next twenty years we will double all the knowledge which men have acquired across the centuries of existence.

Yet vast and extensive knowledge has not brought peace and security. Rather, it has brought fear and peril in its wake.

Sometimes the net effect of our scientific advance has been over-kill. Our scientists have produced chemicals, a drop of which upon any part of the human flesh results in death. One of our lethal gases was accidentally loosed in the western parts of the United States; winds carried it over a flock of sheep; and all those sheep died. Not only were these hundreds of sheep killed, but the sheep were so contaminated that if human beings had touched them after their death, they also would have become contaminated and died. In our laboratory we have created a vast array of chemical and biological agents of destruction.

And, as if all this were not enough, we have used biology to alter the human species. They tell us that we have reached the place where we can create the Superman, a scientific monster with a man's brain power, great physical strength and beauty, but with the mind structure and spiritual stature of an idiot. Yes, science has made vast advances; but science has also brought us to a challenge of crises.

Sixthly, mankind is confronted by the challenge of crisis medically. This is the age of the pill. We have aspirins, we have vitamins, we have pain pills, we have sleeping pills, we have birth control pills, we have energy pills. We have pills to stunt growth, we have pills to produce growth, we have pills to control cancer. The world is pill-happy.

We are, of course, grateful to Almighty God for all curative medicine. On the positive side, we have powerful drugs which can cure pneumonia, eradicate poliomyelitis, and knock out many of man's worst maladies. We have heart transplants, kidney transplants, and the use of artificial organs.

On the other hand, however, we have powerful drugs which are claimed

to give meaning to life. We have pep pills when we feel downcast. We have marijuana; and, if you want to "take a trip," we have LSD.

We are able to extend life with medicine, but have brought with it nothing worth living for. In the paradise of socialist Sweden, for example, the state is able to take care of physical man from the womb to the tomb. In this "paradise," however, there is an alarming rise of juvenile crime, widespread alcoholism, increased drug addiction, a high suicide rate, more homosexuality and murder. And at the same time fewer and fewer people go to church; and, more and more, God becomes irrelevant.

Seventhly, our nation and world are confronted by a challenge of crisis theologically. Some churches today have lost their message; others have lost their audience. Some pulpits proclaim a humanism which has no power to redeem; other pulpits present an orthodoxy that is not relevant to life. While the world cries out in the classic question of the Philippian jailer: "What must we do to be saved?", the Church stutters and stammers, and seems to have lost its way.

In many places God is regarded as dead, or He might just as well be. In the anti-theism of the hour, ours is rapidly becoming a homocentric universe in which the measure of everything is the measure of man, not the measure of God. We are told that every religion is a roadway that leads to the celestial city. All we need to do is create the new religion by syncretizing all the good things from all the religions. Even though one teaching contradicts another, we can mesh all of the contradictory elements and march together to the celestial gate. People are affirming that everyone is going to heaven; that it doesn't make any difference who you are, or what you believe. Paul Tillich is quoted as asserting: "Even those who deny God are, by that fact, affirming God and are justified." Here is the paradox of a God who will save everybody — even those who refuse to be saved!

III. The Imperative Of Our Growing Missionary Task

From a percentage point of view, the Church of Jesus Christ is losing ground rapidly. Two-thirds of the world's people live in countries where less than five per cent of the population claims to be Christian. In view of current and foreseeable trends in population, our best efforts represent, perhaps, only a token beginning of Christian presence after all.

By contrast with the rest of the world, the United States appears to be truly "a city upon a hill."

From the deck of the little 350-ton *Arbella*, plowing westward through the angry Atlantic to the Massachusetts Coast in 1630, John Winthrop preached a sermon that struck the theme of what America in all its future years would seek to be. "We shall be," Winthrop prophesied, "as a city upon a hill; the eyes of all people are upon us; so that if we shall deal falsely with out God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause Him to withdraw His present help from us, we shall be made a story and a byword through the world."

In the eyes of the rest of the world America may well constitute "a city upon a hill."

Let our world of 3.5 billion persons be represented by a small town of 3500. And let our small town be a miniature of our world today. Its population has increased 50 per cent in only thirty years.

In our town of 3500:

200 of us live high on a hill, called the United States overlooking the town.

3300 are on the rocky bottomland called the rest of the world.

The fortunate 200 in the United States have:

over 50 per cent of the wealth of the whole town;

over half of the rooms in the town with two rooms per person.

The 3300 people have fewer than half of the rooms with five persons to a room.

According to the best estimates, the people on the hill have:

- 80 per cent of all the bath tubs of the whole town,
- 75 per cent of all the automobiles,
- 79 per cent of all the radios and TV sets,
- 50 per cent of all the telephones,
- an average income per person of \$3,159 per year.

The rest of the town gets an average of about \$200 per year per person, most of them only \$100 or less.

How does the fortunate group use its incredible wealth? Well, per family it spends:

- \$850 per year to protect itself from some of the other people in town,
- \$83.50 on gambling,
- \$55.50 on alcoholic beverages,
- \$33.30 on instant lung cancer.
- \$1.63 per year per person to share its knowledge of Jesus Christ with the rest of the town."

IV. The Imperative Of Man's Lost Condition Without Christ

On the threshold of the seventies, *Business Week* Magazine devoted 130 pages to a special feature describing "the super seventies" — without a word about the world of religion! *Look* Magazine in its issue for the new year featured an article by John Poppy purporting to demonstrate "why we need a new religion" — not a religion of divine revelation, but a religion characterized by "no more talk about a Lord, an almighty, heavenly Father, who sits in judgment (loving or not) somewhere above and aloof."

The Gospel still proclaims that "there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 2:5). We proclaim "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4: 5-6).

By the grace of God we will continue to be earnestly dedicated to the proclamation of the saving Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, crucified, risen, and coming again. Through the Holy Spirit's power we will declare: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," but the precious, saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts 4: 12) Again, "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 3: 11). With Simon Peter we declare in tones of ringing assurance: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6: 68-69).

V. The Imperative Of Modern Media Of Mass Communication

As it enters into the "soaring seventies," the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ has at its disposal powerful modern media of mass communication, the twin electronic miracles of radio and television. Their phenomenal growth and development fall virtually entirely within the present twentieth-century.

1. Radio and Television in the United States

Radio and television were in more United States homes than ever before.

Television — A total of 57.5 million homes, or 96.9% of all United States homes (excluding Alaska and Hawaii), were TV-equipped as of September, 1968, according to the A. C. Nielsen Company. The American Research Bureau estimated the total would be 57,522,300 homes (excluding Alaska) as of August, 1969.

Color TV — Homes equipped with color TV sets totaled 17,450,000 as of October 1, 1968, a gain of 41% in twelve months, according to estimates by NBC.

Radio — The Radio Advertising Bureau estimated that 58.5 million United States homes, or about 98.6%, were radio-equipped in 1968.

Radio Sets — The number of working-order radio sets in the United States would be 300 million as of January 1, 1969, according to preliminary

industry estimates. The estimates anticipated this distribution: 216 million in homes, 74 million in automobiles, 10 million in public places. The new total would represent a gain of 33 million, or 12%, over the 267 million estimated for January 1, 1968.

Broadcasting Stations on the Air

671 commercial TV stations
169 non-commercial TV stations
840 total TV stations
4,235 AM radio stations
2,276 FM radio stations
7,351 total broadcasting stations

Total Time Sales, 1966

\$1,840,000,000 for all TV stations and networks
937,075,000 for all radio stations and networks
2,777,975,000 total radio-TV time sales

The Radio-Television Audience

57,522,300 U.S. TV homes
58,500,000 U.S. radio homes
17,450,000 color TV homes
6 hours, 38 minutes, total TV viewing per home per day.

During the year 1968 color became the dominant medium for television with three networks using it almost exclusively. Almost all stations, even those in the smallest markets, had color capability. In October an estimated 17 million homes, 30% of all television homes, had color sets. Color sets, for the first time, were outselling black-and-white. The Electronics Industries Association reported in mid-October that color set sales for 1968 to that point totalled 4,351,681 color receivers and 4,343,243 black-and-white.

Mr. Vincent T. Wasilewski, President of the National Association of Broadcasters, in an address entitled "Broadcasting: A Challenge to Youth," delivered before the N.A.B.'s fall conferences, summarized the distribution of radio and television in the United States as follows: "Ninety-seven per cent of our people have one or more radios, ninety-five per cent have one or more television sets. Every day an estimated hundred million people listen to the radio, a hundred million people watch television. No other communication medium in the history of man can come close to those figures. Newspapers can't touch them. Magazines aren't even in the running. All the books published in a year don't touch a fraction of the people we reach in one day. Broadcasting stands as the most successful and universally accepted business enterprise in history."

2. *Radio and Television in the World*

The rapid growth rates of television and radio world-wide began to decelerate in 1968 as opportunities for further expansion became more and more limited. With television in operation in more than 100 countries, and radio in more than 200, it appeared likely that the costs of setting up new systems would keep future growth rates at more moderate levels than in the past. The latest official report, compiled by the United States Information Agency in 1964, estimated that 162 million television sets and more than 500 million radio sets were in use throughout the world. Private broadcasting industry sources estimated that the totals had reached 213 million television sets and 595 million radio sets by late 1968.

More than one-third, or about 78 million, of the TV-sets were in the United States. The U.S.S.R. had approximately 25 million, Japan 20.5 million, West Germany 19 million, France 10 million, Italy 8.2 million, Canada 6.2 million, Poland 2.5 million and Australia 2.4 million, according to estimates compiled by *Broadcasting* magazine and *Broadcasting Yearbook* in late 1968.

Television stations operating or under construction throughout the world numbered approximately 5,520 in 1968. Western Europe had about 2,000,

the Far East 1,300, the United States, 1,030, Eastern Europe 900, South America 165, and Africa 30.

About 12,250 radio stations were in operation or under construction. Most of these were amplitude modulation (AM) radio stations, but the total also included frequency modulation (FM) stations and the relay or booster operations used in many countries to carry radio programming into remote areas. More than half of the 12,250 radio stations, or 6,828, were in the United States, and more than one-third, or 2,499, of the United States total were FM, according to records compiled by *Broadcasting* in November, 1968. Approximately half of the world's 595 million radio sets, or about 300 million, also were in the United States, with the rest distributed among the world's countries in proportions ranging from less than one set per 100 population to more than one set for every two persons.

Marshall McLuhan of Toronto has declared: "We are today as far into the electronic age as the Elizabethans had advanced into the typographic and mechanical age. And we are experiencing the same confusion and indecisions which they had felt when living simultaneously in two contrasting forms of society and experience." And Brigadier General David Sarnoff, Chairman of the Board of RCA, in the thirty-fifth anniversary issue of the *Hollywood Reporter*, remarked: "Developments are too radical in their nature, and the pace at which they come is too swift, for the past to serve as any effective prelude to the communicating future. We must look for entirely new procedures attuned to the realities of the space age."

Addressing the Convention of the National Association of Broadcasters in Washington, D. C., in March, 1969, Commissioner H. Rex Lee of the Federal Communications Commission declared: "The vast potential of television, radio, film, computers, and communications satellites for helping to solve our problem lies largely untapped." Asserting that there is "no valid reason" for this waste, he stated: "Never before has man had so many tools and methods . . . for improving the quality of life. And yet, man still refuses fully to utilize them."

If a member of the Federal Communications Commission can make this assertion regarding radio and television for commercial or educational purposes, what shall representatives of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ say with reference to the utilization of television as a medium for the proclamation of Christ's Gospel? It must be evident to all that they have hardly begun to scratch the surface, and that "the vast potential" of television for Gospel broadcasting "lies largely untapped."

Conclusion — A Call For World Missions

Because we are motivated by:

the imperative of our Savior's great Missionary Command;

the imperative of the world's need;

the imperative of our growing missionary tasks;

the imperative of man's lost condition without Christ; and

the imperative of modern media of mass communication, therefore we call for a reconsecration and rededication.

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature!" — that is the "call for world missions" which our risen and ascending Savior addresses to everyone of us down through the centuries of Christian history.

It is "the Gospel" which is to be proclaimed, the glorious "Good News" that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." (2 Cor. 5:19)

The Gospel, in its strict or proper sense (*evangelium proprie acceptum*), is defined by the Formula of Concord as "such a doctrine as teaches what man who has not observed the Law and therefore is condemned by it is to believe, namely, that Christ has expiated, and made satisfaction for, all sins and has obtained and acquired for him, without any merit of his, . . . forgive-

ness of sins, righteousness that avails before God, and eternal life." (Epitome, V. 5.)

The distinction between the Law and the Gospel is clear and Scriptural, so that we may describe as divine Law everything in Scripture that demands of man perfect obedience to God, Gal. 3: 12, pronounces His curse upon all transgressors, Gal. 3: 10, renders all the world guilty before God, Rom. 3: 19, and mediates knowledge of sin, Rom. 3: 20; and as Gospel everything that offers grace, peace, and salvation to the sinner, Rom. 1: 16. 17; 10: 15; Acts 20: 24; Eph. 6: 15; 1: 13.

It is true, both terms (Law and Gospel) are used in Scripture also in a wider sense, so that the term Law denotes the entire revelation of God as this is set forth in His Word, Ps. 1: 2; Is. 2: 3, and the term Gospel the entire divine doctrine, Mark 1: 1. This is done by way of synecdoche, so that the whole is named after a part (Gerhard: "ut ex parte digniori et potiori totum intelligatur").

This peculiar use of the term Gospel is recognized also by our Lutheran Confessions; for we read in the *Formula of Concord* (Thor. Decl., V, 3 ff.): "The term Gospel is not always employed and understood by it the entire doctrine of Christ, our Lord. . . . Furthermore the term Gospel is employed in another, namely, in its proper sense, by which it comprises . . . only the preaching of the grace of God."

"A call for world missions," therefore, calls for renewed reconsecration and rededication to the glorious task of making known throughout the length and breadth of our globe the glorious "name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2: 9-11). on earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess

In the name of the Triune God we, therefore, proclaim not the Christ of present-day compromise and concession, not the Christ of twentieth-century indifference and indecision, not the Christ of modern doubt and denial, who has been exalted in His humanity only to be robbed of His deity, but (above all the evasion and distortion, the rank unbelief of our day) the Christ of the Cross. We dedicate ourselves to the preaching of that Cross, — not as a memorial to martyrdom, a glorified symbol of an unselfish ideal, but as "the accursed tree," the cruel, heart-breaking gibbet on which the Savior died the blackest death of all history. That crucified Christ, Son of God, yet Son of Man, offering the eternal mercies of forgiven sins as the free gift of His boundless grace; strengthening our faltering souls with His never-failing Spirit; guiding those who trust in Him from the sorrows of this life to the glories of the next; the Savior for every sin and for every sinner, the unfailing Friend for every moment and for every path; the Christ for our hearts, our homes, our churches, our nation, — this all-sufficient Savior, and Him alone, we offer with the pledge:

"NOTHING . . . SAVE JESUS CHRIST, AND HIM CRUCIFIED."

17. Lutheran World Federation Report

Martim Warth, M.S.T.

This report should be presented by a theologian who attended the meetings of the V Assembly of The Lutheran World Federation in Evian. Through the presidency of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, we received an invitation to attend these meetings as an observer. But, since the leaders of the LWF refused to hold them in Porto Alegre, Brazil as scheduled, the Brazilians refused to attend the sessions at Evian, France. For this reason this report can be based only on documents which were distributed in advance and the reports given by the official LWF information bureau. This implies that this examination of the policies and actions of the LWF is of necessity not complete. But, since it is based on reliable sources, it touches on some of the major problems which were involved.

One certainly may speak of the positive sides of such a meeting as well as of the positive intentions of the LWF. They are known and thus need no special commentary. We are concerned with a critical examination of some of their actions and pre-supposition to realize the importance of the direction which this association of Lutheran churches is taking. Since The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod still holds an invitation to join the LWF as a member church, it is necessary to see clearly the implications of such membership.

When a Brazilian provides this analysis it should not be interpreted as being made out of nationalistic feelings even though the LWF leaders have offended the country and the government of Brazil through their action and affirmations concerning Brazil. It is known that the V Assembly was called off in Porto Alegre and transferred to Evian in view of political and social conditions which allegedly would imply compromises of the LWF. However, these conditions already existed at the time the invitation to meet in Brazil was formulated and accepted. At that time Brazil already had the revolutionary government with its exceptional laws, and had even more social problems than it has today since the new government has certainly made every effort to improve the conditions of the Brazilian people.

It is certainly not the political system as such to which the LWF could possibly object, since they had invited themselves to meet in Weimar, in the German Democratic Republic, where the socialist government did not even allow them to meet. Brazilian news commentators interpreted the opposition of the LWF to the Brazilian government as being against the philosophy of the government, which is outspokenly anti-communist. Since the LWF was willing to meet in a communist country and was not willing to meet in a rightist country, it is to be expected that some concluded that the philosophy of the LWF was in the line of a "theology of revolution."

The press in Brazil based their conclusions on the report received concerning the meeting of the World Encounter of Lutheran Youth in Thonon, France, some days prior to the V Assembly. Since the assembly of the LWF did not criticize the youth meeting and the orientation which the Lutheran youth received on this occasion, the newsmen in Brazil concluded that the LWF was following along the line of the leftist speakers at the Youth encounter.

The tone set at the youth encounter was clearly that of leftist activism and revolutionary indoctrination. One issue called special attention to the commentators, namely the fact that Mr. Paulo Freire, a Brazilian who is

considered a leftist and has on his record revolutionary activity in North-east Brazil, was scheduled to speak to the Lutheran youth at this meeting, also that he is on the official staff of the World Council of Churches in Geneva. The LWF agrees that they work in close relationship with the WCC. This gave evidence to the news commentators in Brazil that the LWF was also influenced by this leftist leader from Brazil.

Another feature which justified the formation of the public opinion of the Brazilian against the LWF is the official approval of the name of Archbishop Helder Camara as a candidate for the Nobel Prize for Peace. Helder Camara is known in Brazil for his opportunism. Monsenhor Alvaro Negromonte accuses Mr. Camara even of leftist connections. He says that Mr. Camara uses the social problems to project his own personality, rather than to really work with the government to improve the social conditions of the suffering people, especially those of the Northeast. It is very clear to the public opinion in Brazil that other Catholic bishops have done more for the improvement of social peace than Mr. Camara. For this reason the news commentators expressed their concern about the real intention of the LWF when they honored Bishop Camara with this special distinction.

One of the reasons advocated for the cancellation of the meeting of the V Assembly in Porto Alegre was the overemphasis given to the cases of torture in Brazil. Although the government declared officially that it was ready to punish all those who tortured prisoners, and did so where this procedure was proven to exist, the LWF decided in its meetings to tell the Brazilian government that torture should not be practiced. One of the hilarious aspects of the big story about tortures in Brazil is the fact published on August 25 in Brazilian newspapers which showed pictures of tortured soldiers, pictures which were published in Paris as being proof that the torture procedures had existed in Brazil.

The real fact of the matter is that those soldiers had made torture exercises so that they would be able to resist should they fall into the hands of terrorists, which are the ones who really torture the Brazilian people. Unfortunately the LWF did not make any effort to investigate the real situation in Brazil. That much has to be done is clear to everyone. The LWF lost a very important occasion to help Brazil on the real issues. The only result which they may credit is the repulsion of those who analyzed the causes and the actions of the LWF during the already famous Brazil affair.

Although the political involvement of the LWF destroyed the image of this association of Lutheran churches and so made the people in Brazil look critically to the name Lutheran, the ecumenical involvement of the LWF is even more disturbing. Since the meeting in Evian the LWF has received official recognition for its "active role as independent partner in the ecumenical dialog." This means that the LWF has developed into such an ecclesiastical structure that it speaks for world Lutheranism and interprets the Lutheran stance even without the consent of the affiliated Lutheran churches and certainly without the acknowledgment of those churches who have not affiliated with the organization.

To engage effectively in ecumenical dialog means to have a clear set stance by which the dialogical meaningfulness may be measured. For Lutherans the standard for ecumenical dialog has always been Scripture and the Confessions. One wonders whether there has been a unanimous consent on this stance in the LWF and whether this stance will guide the ecumenical dialog of the LWF as an independent partner.

MORE THAN UNITY OF CHURCHES

One has to agree that the theological stance of the LWF is certainly set by its Commission on Theology. It would therefore be rewarding to examine a document of this Commission on Theology which was presented by its president, Dr. Mikko Juva, to the V Assembly to stimulate the discussion on church unity. The document which we shall endeavor to analyze briefly is entitled "*More Than Unity of Churches*," and was received with approval by Section II of the V Assembly. It is in the light of this document that the ecumenical endeavor of the LWF has to be examined.

The document operates with statements which are not always univocal. It seems to be in the light of the concept of freedom when assertions are made which are true but which do not cover the whole issue. Starting from the principle that theology, as given by God, is univocal, the church is not permitted to make unclear statements which may be used according to the need of ecumenical accommodation. This may not be the intention of the writers of the document, but their statements are open to misinterpretations.

The general thesis of the document offers such an occasion for misinterpretation. It asserts that "Jesus came to save the lost and to unite people." This certainly is true; but if taken as an absolute proposition it is totally misleading. The argument which can be introduced is the following. Since Jesus came to unite people it is necessary for the church to tear down all divisions, even the confessional, for the sake of unity. This conclusion seems to lie at the bottom of the whole paper, as will be seen. It is true that the document allows the possibility of divisions, but only as "a tragic necessity required by loyalty to the commission given by Jesus", which may again be interpreted in the sense that only those who do not want to be united according to the fundamental intention of Jesus, have to be considered as separated. One has to ask whether this unity is presupposed on the basis of the ideal of a unified society of people, since, as the document says, "the world (is) desiring and struggling for unity," which would set the Melancthonian concept of society as the standard of Christian ethics, or whether the unity of men would come into being through the unity with Christ through faith.

The document takes up the question of reconciliation. But this concept is not univocal again, since it does not qualify this reconciliation. Scripture knows of one essential reconciliation, namely the one between God and men, effected through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the one uniform and immutable message of the Christian Church. But the document must have another reconciliation in mind when the authors say: "The gospel of reconciliation is directed toward all races and all peoples. It is meant for men of all times and of every social class. For this reason the message of reconciliation which the church has been commissioned to proclaim is never uniform or immutable. It must be proclaimed in diverse and constantly changing forms." One certainly has the right to ask whether this is meant to introduce the whole range of theological existentialist reinterpretation of the Christian message, or whether this is simply to mean that the Word of God has to be applied to the individual sinner throughout the world, as it is done in the sermon and in the area of pastoral care.

The document appears to aim at other goals than the reaffirmation of the traditional Lutheran stance. This becomes evident when the authors affirm that the church has to consider "new problems," and mention as examples "the problem of revelation in the scriptures, (and) the relationship of faith to autonomous reason." Being recognized as "problems" these new trends in theology which, according to the document, cut across the existing confessional groupings, receive a relevance which they could never have among those who are committed to the Lutheran Confessions. One is led to conclude that the Commission on Theology of the LWF itself is struggling with these so-called "problems."

But, according to the document, the question which lies at the heart of the whole issue is that to the Commission on Theology the Confessional and Scriptural writings became subject to historical evaluation. The authors affirm that "the theological problems and statements of the period in which the confessional churches came into being seem to be largely outdated." This means that the theological affirmations of the Confessions, even the Lutheran Confessions, are no longer relevant to the modern age. They may be accepted only as historical formulation of the Church, that means, as historical expressions of the faith of the confessors, but not as valid truth for the present age. It would seem to indicate that each new generation has to express its faith in terms of its own self-understanding, and not according to the one God-given theology.

One wonders about the ease with which the Commission on Theology of the LWF discards the authority of the Lutheran Confessions to follow the line of modern subjective theologizing. The whole line of modern syncretistic universalism seems to claim a right in the line of thought of the Commission on Theology when they state that "the historical mode of thought . . . allows us to recognize the historical relativity of biblical assertions as well as of ecclesiastical confessions." This affirmation is at least univocal. It declares that Scripture and Confessions are no reliable sources for an ecumenical dialog. There is even no dialog necessary on this basis, since they continue to declare that there will never be a valid standard for theological affirmations.

The document declares that even "a new formulation of the truth of the gospel . . . cannot claim timeless value for itself." God's immutable revelation is so relativized that no truth at all remains. In this line of thought not even the initial affirmation of the authors, which says that "nothing other than Christ the one Lord and Reconciler" may serve as basis for the unity of the Church, may stand as a timeless truth. Modern history of theology has already shown how easily one may substitute Jesus Christ by other names or ideas which could bring about the reconciliation of man with himself and with others and so to be reconciled with the idea of God.

The document supports the movement of the "younger generations against every form of establishment and institutionalism." Instead of evaluating this movement of the younger generations as their natural desire to change and improve existing situations, the Commission on Theology of the LWF evaluates this movement in such a way that it may serve to "press the churches to surrender every kind of provincialism, including the confessional type." According to this statement, the document is advocating free play for the LWF as an independent partner in the ecumenical dialog. No confessional provincialism should hinder the efforts in favor of a universalistic unity of the Churches. And since there may never be any valid truth, this trend justifies the philosophical principle of Ernst Bloch, who affirms that "what is cannot be true," calling for a continual change in order to discover within the change the true humanity in which God may be found. This is the principle of the "theology of revolution."

One wonders about the inconsistency which is apparent in the document. At the one side one finds the affirmation that the Confessions do not provide formulations of timeless truth about the Gospel, and at the other side, the document appeals to a specific formulation of Augustana VII, where it says the agreement on the gospel and the sacraments are the true marks for the unity of the church. But the document is not univocal concerning the meaning of the term "gospel." When the document interprets "gospel" to mean that "men receive the assurance that sinners are justified through grace alone for Christ's sake," it says something very important, but it does not say what it means. The authors know that this affirmation requires a series of other statements which are considered problematical in modern theology, as the identification of the God of grace, the identification of Christ as the Son of God who died for the sins of the world, the identification of the sinner in a qualified sense. It is clear that their statement was not

intended to be univocal, since they affirm that "the differences which still exist . . . are no longer valid reasons for dividing the churches." One certainly has the right to ask how it is possible to proclaim the gospel jointly with all other churches if one does not even know what that gospel really is.

That here one has to do with a completely new understanding of the term "gospel" becomes evident from the fact that the document says that the purity of the gospel has to be measured on the effect of its proclamation and not on the revelation of God. The document states that "the proclamation of the gospel shows itself pure and right only when it declares justification to sinners." This affirmation becomes wholly problematical when the document states very clearly that "there needs to be an openness to the possibility that the gospel may be described in other terms than the Pauline concepts and formulations, or the traditional Reformation doctrine of justification."

No wonder that it was impossible for the Helsinki assembly of the LWF to formulate a doctrine of justification for the LWF. The later formulation of this doctrine of justification, provided by the Commission on Theology, gives evidence of the fact that the traditional Reformation doctrine of justification suffered a reinterpretation which can no longer be recognized as Lutheran, since it speaks of a justification of sinners, where sinners are no longer qualified, nor Jesus is recognized as the divine Savior. Jesus is only the earthly man who justified sinners in their natural conditions, without a change effected by supernatural interference of God.

If it is no longer possible to speak of the gospel and of justification in terms of the Pauline understanding, which is in the line of revelation of the whole Scripture, where may one find a valid interpretation of the gospel and of justification? The recurrence to anthropological standards has been tried by theologians of the past and the present. But this does not mean that any human formulation is able to identify God as He identifies Himself in Scripture. Lutheran theology is affirmed from the point of view that there is a revealed theology given by God Himself in Scripture. There are no Pauline formulations, but there is revealed theology in Scripture, which is standard for faith and life of the Christian.

The document states that confessionalism is one of the dangers "to the proper understanding of the gospel." It speaks of a confessionalist envelopment of the gospel" which should be torn down. It calls for freedom from the "traditional confessional formulas" and says that "here we are free and for the sake of unity are summoned to tolerate differences, respect diversity, retain what we have in common, accept what is new, change what already exists, or surrender traditions." This means that the LWF does no longer care about the confessional paragraph in its constitution. And the fact that not all Lutheran churches have accepted the Formula of Concord is used as an argument to indicate "that agreement here is not necessary for church unity. Hence we are free, on the basis of agreement on the right proclamation of the gospel, to enjoy full fellowship even with churches of *other* historical confessions."

This very clearly means that the LWF does no longer care to be a Lutheran federation, but intends to transform itself into a universalistic and syncretistic association. The document states very clearly that "not only missionary, diaconic and social cooperation and joint action, but also participation at regular and special worship services and joint ministerial acts . . . and even the occasional common celebration of the eucharist" are completely in order. Although this is supposed to be provisional, it is a practical declaration of pulpit and altar fellowship with all and with any of the so-called "Christian" churches.

One wonders why the LWF has gone this careless way. It can only be understood in the light of a "theology of revolution," where everything becomes fluctuating. Rigid formulations, as those of Scripture, are explosive and create tensions to the natural man. To avoid this one has to encounter

man in his natural anxieties and reconcile him with himself and with his fellowman. For this reason the idea of a God of love should supersede man's natural tensions. Maybe it is for this reason that the document of the Commission on Theology recommends the "surrender of confessional complacency and the respect for the convictions of others" to attain one goal, namely, to "help to diminish the explosiveness of human and social conflicts." For the sake of the social reconciliation of all men the authors of the document are ready to "reformulate the truth of the gospel" and to eliminate the "confessionalistic envelopment of the gospel."

INDEPENDENT STANCE

It is certain that the Commission on Theology of the LWF does not speak for the churches which form the federation, but, since the LWF assumed the stance of an independent partner in ecumenical dialog, the document represents the stance of the LWF as a whole. Instead of bringing all churches together into one unity, this independent stance of the LWF will add a new theology to the already existing multiplicity of theological formulations. Instead of uniting the Lutheran churches it will divide them even more, since it speaks in favor of an everchanging reformulation of the gospel, according to the needs of man in his ever-changing social environment.

One of the Pentecostal leaders in Brazil, Mr. Manuel de Mello, expressed his concerns about the situation of the LWF by saying that he feels sorry for the Lutherans in the world. And certainly one is able to appreciate this feeling in view of the fact that the LWF wants to advocate the establishment of a Lutheranism without any theological security. Faith should be based on faith and nothing else, according to such thinking; where not only the Confessional standards should fall, but also Scripture itself may no longer be regarded as the basis for faith. The attack on the Pauline formulation of the Gospel is clear evidence of this new stance taken by the LWF in the document on "More Than Unity of Churches."

According to reports received from Geneva the V Assembly approved the engagement of the LWF in what is called the "secular ecumenism". It is said to be "an expression of the disillusionment of younger as well as older people over the results of ecumenical activity to the present time" and "a conscious awakening to the need for common action on urgent world problems in which Christians find themselves beside non-Christians as never before." Although one recognized the danger "that the church may fall into a secularist ideology" one is willing to "cooperate with all men of good will . . . so that the love of God may be transmitted" through the changed structures and mechanism of society. The report of Section II says that "the credibility of the Christian witness is at stake if theological reflection on the meaning of the Gospel is not combined with earnest attention to social and political problems." This means that the effectiveness of the preaching of the gospel is no longer dependent on the supernatural action of the Holy Spirit through the Word, but is directly proportional to the social and political activity of the church.

Where the political activity of the church may lead one has seen in the LWF affair in Brazil. It certainly did not help the Brazilian people to find the gospel more acceptable when preached by Lutherans who get involved in political activities. The Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession, which was to be the host of the V Assembly in Brazil, promoted an evangelism program after the cancellation of the assembly in Porto Alegre. It happened that, instead of advertising it as a Lutheran program of evangelism, they announced it as a program of the Evangelical Church. One certainly may feel sorry for the Lutherans of the world!

18. A Protestant Evangelical Speaks to His Lutheran Friends in a Day of Theological Crisis

Francis A. Schaeffer, D.D.

Born-again Christians, whether from the Lutheran tradition, the Presbyterian tradition or those with other distinctives, have certain basic things in common. One of these is certainly this task: to exhibit simultaneously the holiness of God and the love of God.

In the book *The Mark of the Christian* I have expressed and developed this notion in a slightly different way. There I have written about the need simultaneously to practice two biblical principles. The first is the principle of the practice of the purity of the visible church (not the invisible church we join when by God's grace we cast ourselves upon Christ, but the visible church). It seems to me that it is very plain in Scripture that we are called upon to practice the purity of the visible church. I am not just speaking about *talking* about the purity of the visible church, but about the *practice* of the purity of the visible church. The second principle is the practice of an observable love and oneness among all *true* Christians. The emphasis here is upon *true* Christians. *The Mark of the Christian* stresses from John 13:34-35 that, according to Jesus himself, the world has the right to decide whether we are true Christians, true disciples of Christ, on the basis of the love we show to all true Christians. John 17:21 provides something even more sobering in that here Jesus gives the world the right to judge whether the Father has sent the Son on the basis of whether the world sees love among all true Christians.

In a new book entitled *The Church at the End of the Twentieth Century*, I emphasize another related parallelism: the call of God to simultaneously practice the orthodoxy of doctrine and the orthodoxy of community. The latter of these we have all too often all but forgotten. But one cannot explain the explosive dynamite, the dynamis, that was involved in the early church apart from the fact that they practiced two things simultaneously: orthodoxy of doctrine and orthodoxy of community in the midst of the visible church, a community which the world could see. By the grace of God the church must be known simultaneously for its purity of doctrine and the reality of its community. Our churches have so often been only preaching points with very little emphasis upon community. But an exhibition of the love of God in practice is beautiful and it must be there.

The heart of this is to show forth the love of God and the holiness of God simultaneously. If we show either of these without the other we do not exhibit the character of God, but a caricature of God for the world to see. If we stress the love of God without the holiness of God, it turns out only to be compromise. If, on the other hand, we stress the holiness of God without the love of God, we practice something that is hard, something that lacks beauty. And beauty is an important thing to show forth before a lost world, before our generation.

All too often young people have been right in saying that the church is ugly. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ we are called upon to show to a watching world and to our own young people that the church is something beautiful.

Several years ago I wrestled with the question of what was wrong with much of the church that stood for purity. I came to the conclusion that in the flesh we can stress purity without love or we can stress the love of God without purity. But it is not possible in the flesh to stress both simultaneously. In order to stress and exhibit both simultaneously we must look moment by moment to the work of Christ, to the work of the Holy Spirit.

Let us consider, then, the exhibition of the holiness of God in relation to the purity of the visible church. Allow me to go back in history. You have asked me to speak as your friend from a different tradition. I come from the Presbyterian tradition. I will go back into the Presbyterian history of the 30's and beg you as Lutherans, especially The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, to learn from our mistakes. In the 1930's almost every large denomination in America came under the controls of liberalism. The Presbyterian Church in the USA is one of the clearest cases of all because it was a very strong doctrinal church, just as the Lutheran Church is a strong creedal church.

I take you back first of all to 1924, one year after the Auburn Affirmation was signed. The Auburn Affirmation was the liberals' public declaration of war upon the historic Presbyterian Christian faith. The Auburn Affirmation had thrown down the gauntlet. The conservatives of the church decided that the way to meet this challenge was to elect a moderator of the General Assembly who would clearly be a Bible-believing man. As a result, 1924 saw elected as the moderator of the Northern Presbyterian Church an orthodox, Bible-believing man, Dr. Clarence Edward Macartney. The conservatives were jubilant, they were filled with joy. The secular newspapers carried the story of the conservative victory, and the conservatives rejoiced. But while all the rejoicing was going on, the liberals simply consolidated their power in the church bureaucracy. And because they were allowed to do so, the election of the conservative moderator proved to mean nothing, not one single thing. By 1936 the liberals were so in control of the Northern Presbyterian Church that they were able to defrock Dr. J. Gresham Machen and put him out of the ministry.

Today, it seems to me there are two major denominations not yet taken over by the liberals which at this present time thirty-five years later, stand in an exactly parallel situation. It seems to me as your friend that The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod is one of them. I urge you to learn from the mistakes in the Presbyterian Church in the '30's: Do not think that merely because a Bible-believing man has been elected as executive officer this will give automatic safety to your denomination. There must be an exhibition of the practice of the purity of the visible church if you are really to dwell in safety. There must be an exhibition of the holiness of God in the midst of ecclesiastical affairs. You must practice truth, not just speak about it, in regard to the purity of the visible church.

It must be understood that the new humanism and new theology have no concept of true truth. Hegelian relativism has triumphed. The Christian, on the other hand, is called upon not only to teach truth but to practice truth in the midst of such relativism. And if we are ever to practice truth, it certainly must be now. The principle of the purity of the visible church must be practiced; including discipline of the true liberals.

A paper of mine is to be handed out tonight entitled "Adultery and Apostasy — The Bride and the Bridegroom Theme" (this is published as an appendix in *The Church at the End of the Twentieth Century*). It points out that the older liberalism and the newer existential type are both unfaithful to the Divine Bridegroom. It talks about the faithfulness or unfaithfulness of the Bride of Christ to the Head, Christ himself. These issues are not small matters, they are not doctrinal abstractions; they carry everything with them if we believe truly that Christianity is truth. We believe Christianity is not just doctrinal truth, but flaming truth, truth to what is there, truth as to the great final environment, the infinite-personal God. We believe that Christian-

ity tells us the truth of who man is, and of the universe. Above everything else, we believe that Christianity tells us that God is there, and that God is the Divine Bridegroom and that the church is to be the Bride. Then we must not forget that liberalism is unfaithfulness, spiritual adultery toward the Divine Bridegroom. As I said in concluding my talk yesterday morning — historic Christianity and the new theology have nothing in common; they are two separate religions. All they have in common is certain terms which are used with totally different meanings. There is simply no use speaking of truth (in the historic concept of truth) unless we practice truth and that involves antithesis and discipline.

We not only believe in the existence of truth, but we believe we have the truth — a truth we can share with the 20th-century world. Do you think our contemporaries will take us seriously if we do not practice truth? Do you think for a moment that the really tough-minded 20th-century youngsters — our own youth as they go off to universities, as they are taught in the fields of sociology, psychology, philosophy, that all is relative — will take us seriously? In an age that does not really believe that truth exists, do you really believe they will take seriously that their fathers are speaking truth, that their fathers will have credibility, if their fathers do not practice truth?

Don't you understand, this is a matter of loyalty, loyalty not only to the creeds, but loyalty to the Scripture. But beyond loyalty to the Scripture it is loyalty to the Divine Bridegroom.

Marshall McLuhan has a theory of hot and cool communication. Hot communication, according to McLuhan, is communication that has content, that appeals to men and moves men through the mind on the basis of content. Cool communication is merely a kind of personal first order experience wherein one is moved but without any content passing through his mind, his reason. It is a manipulation based on electronics. Father Culham, an important man in communications at Forham University, a follower of McLuhan, says this: "Gutenberg came and the Reformation came. Electronics comes and the ecumenical movement comes." He means that the ecumenical movement is rooted for its unity in the midst of a contentless situation, a situation that is completely cool and has nothing to do with doctrinal truth. I feel he is right. I do not believe that the modern ecumenical movement could have been built even in the day of the old liberals. The ecumenical movement is built, I believe, in organizational oneness on the basis of a total lack of content.

Equally, the new existential theologians in our churches live only in the area of cool communication. They have denied content — content is not important to them. An existential, upper-storey experience is separated from all reason and from all that is open either to verification or falsification. T. H. Huxley, as I noted in my first lecture, saw that the day would come when theology would be separated from everything that has anything to do with fact and as such would never be open to challenge. But as I said, of course, that kind of theology doesn't mean anything either.

We, on the other hand, believe completely in hot communication, and as our age cools off more and more in its communication, as content is played down and reason is ploughed under, I believe the historic Christian faith must more and more emphasize content, content, content and then more content. We are brought face to face in a complete antithesis with the existential theologian. If we are to talk truth at all, we must have content on the basis of antithesis and to do this we must have discipline with regard to those who depart from the historic Christian faith. It is thus that we can practice the exhibition of the holiness of God.

At the same time, however, we must show forth the love of God; we must love and show love to those with whom we differ. Thirty-five years ago in the Presbyterian crisis, we forgot that. We did not speak with love about those with whom we differed, and we have been paying a high price for it ever since. We must love the man, even if he is an existential theologian, even if he speaks only with cool communication and has given up content entirely.

We must deal with him as our neighbor because Christ has given us the Second Commandment that we are to love all men as our neighbors.

We must stand clearly for the principles of the purity of the visible church, and we must call for the discipline of those who take a position which is not according to the Scriptures. But at the same time we must visibly love them as we speak and write about them. We must show it before the church and we must show it before the world. And if we want our children to see true Christianity among us, we must show it before our children. We must say that these men are desperately wrong and require discipline but do so in terms that show that it is not merely the flesh speaking. This is beyond us, but it is not beyond the work of the Holy Spirit. I regret that thirty-some years ago we did not do this in the Presbyterian Church, we did not talk of the need of showing love as we stood against liberalism and as the Presbyterian Church was lost, and it has cost us dearly for thirty-five years.

But with prayer it can be done. Several years ago at Roosevelt University Auditorium here in Chicago, I had a dialogue with James Pike. I asked those in L'Abri to pray for one thing: that I would be able to give a clear Christian position to him and to the audience, and at the same time end with a good human relationship with Jim Pike. It was something I could not do in myself, but God answered that prayer. A clear statement was raised, with a clear statement of differences, without the need of destroying him as a human being. At the close, he spoke to me and said, "If you ever come to California, please come and visit me in Santa Barbara." Later, when Edith and I were out in Santa Barbara, we went to his place and were able to carry on further to present a clear testimony to him without one iota of compromise, yet again not destroying him but respecting him as a man. We also talked about the possibility that his belief that he was talking to his son on "the other side" was really a matter of demonology. Jim Pike did not get angry, though he was close to crying. I'll never forget the last time I saw him as I was leaving the Institution for Democratic Studies. He said one of the saddest sentences I have ever heard: "When I turned from being agnostic, I went to Union Theological Seminary, but when I graduated all that it left me was a handful of pebbles."

Who is responsible for the tragedy of Jim Pike? His liberal theological professors who robbed him of everything real and human. We cannot take lightly the fact that the liberal theological professors in any theological school are leaving young men with a handful of pebbles and nothing more. Yet even in the midst of this situation, we must by God's grace do two things together: We must do all that is necessary for the purity of the visible church to exhibit the holiness of God, and yet, no matter how bitter the liberals become or what nasty things they say or what they release to the press, we must show forth the love of God in the midst of the strongest speaking we can do. If we let down one side or the other, we will not bear our testimony to God who is holy and who is love. We must treat the liberal as a human being in the midst of our most strenuous objections that he is taking the young men we are sending to theological seminary and leaving them with only a handful of pebbles.

Let me go back again to the Presbyterian struggles of the 30's when our men did not remember this balance. On the one hand, they waited far too long to exert discipline, and they lost the denomination. On the other hand, they treated the liberals as less than human, and therefore they learned such bad habits that later, when those who separated had minor differences among themselves, they continued to handle each other in bad fashion. Beware of the habits you learn in controversy. Both must appear together: the holiness of God and the love of God exhibited simultaneously by the grace of God. It will not come automatically, it takes prayer. You must write about this in your papers. You must talk about it to your congregations. You must preach sermons pointing out the necessity of standing for the holiness of God and the love of God simultaneously, and you, by your attitude, must exhibit it to your people and your own children.

Let us notice that the wording is important here. The principle of which we are speaking is *not* separation. The principle is that of the practice of the purity of the visible church. That is the principle. It may have to be exhibited in various ways, but that is the principle.

The church belongs to those who by the grace of God are faithful to the Scriptures and hold to the creeds of the church. The liberals should be treated as human beings, but clearly disciplined. The church does not belong to the liberals and so discipline should be the first step in the principle of the practice of the purity of the visible church.

Dr. Briggs was put out of the ministry of the Presbyterian Church in the late 1890's because he was the first man who brought modern liberalism into Union Theological Seminary. By the 1930's the liberals were able to put out Dr. Machen because of his clear stand for the Scriptures and for the gospel. Think: Before 1900 Dr. Briggs could be disciplined. In the 1930's Dr. Machen was disciplined and put out of the ministry. What had happened in the intervening years? Discipline had not been consistently applied until it was too late. The church was able, indeed, to discipline Dr. Briggs but after that there was no more word of discipline. Faithful men waited too long. The men who were faithful to the Scriptures achieved one outstanding victory in the case of Dr. Briggs, and then, after the first burst of discipline, they did nothing until it was far too late. Discipline is not something that can be done in one great burst of enthusiasm, one great conference, one great anything. Men must be treated in love as human beings, but it is a case of continued, moment by moment, "existential" care, for we are not dealing with a merely human "organization," but with the church, the Bride of Christ. Hence, the practice of the purity of the visible church first means discipline to those who do not take a proper position in regard to the teaching of Scripture and to the creeds of the church.

Why is it so unthinkable today to have discipline? Why is it that at least two denominations in this country are now so in the hands of liberals that it is officially and formally no longer possible to have a discipline trial, ever — even in theory? It is because both the world and the liberal church have become Hegelian and caught with synthesis. Because the world and the liberal church no longer believe in truth, any concept of discipline has become unthinkable. It was not unthinkable to our forefathers, because they believed that truth existed. The reason that it is impossible for men to speak of heresy today, the reason they withdraw from the concept of discipline, is that knowing it or not knowing it, they have become infiltrated with Hegelian relativism.

However, if the battle is lost as it was lost in all but three of the major denominations in the thirties, then we must understand that there is a second step to take in regard to the practice of the principle of the purity of the visible church. I believe that all three major denominations which were not lost in the thirties are today in the midst of this battle, and I think The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod is one of these. You have friends throughout the world praying for you, friends who believe that you stand in the place of decision.

When a church today (like the Presbyterian Church 35 years ago) comes to the place where it can no longer exert discipline, then with tears we must face before the Lord the second possibility of the practice of the purity of the visible church. If we must leave our church, it should always be with tears and not with drums playing and flags flying.

We are not practicing separation. Separation is a negative concept and builds a bad mentality. The principle of the practice of the purity of the visible church is a positive concept: It is an affirmation, not a negation.

Still, we must make a previous decision about what price we are willing to pay when the chips are down, or we are not free under Christ. For example, one of the brightest girls I have ever met was a teacher at Oxford Uni-

versity. She and her husband are committed Christians, brilliant, both of them professors. Later she was teaching at another university in the social sciences, where a behaviorist was the head of the department. He told her that she had to either teach her social science from the basis of behaviorism or leave. It was a big decision for this girl, but fortunately she and her husband had already previously prayed about it and made a decision that when the chips were down Christ was first and their academic position was secondary. Is there any other possibility for a Christian who really loves Christ?

If sacrifice is necessary in the case of the young professor in a British university, it is certainly the case in ecclesiology. Before we ever come to the place where this horrible decision has to be made, the issue must be already settled: The church as an organization is not first; Christ is first. Once Christ is no longer King in a church, then that church cannot have our loyalty. As a friend of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod since the days when I knew Dr. Maier when I was a pastor in St. Louis, I pray that you might make your decision ahead of time. If you ever have to come to this second stage of the practice of the principle of the purity of the visible church, I pray that Christ will be first in your decision.

And if unhappily the Christians of a church come to this place, then I would suggest that there are two further lessons from what I have observed as I have worked over many countries. You must also face the fact that if you come to that unhappy moment it will not be a simple situation where all the faithful Christians will come out at the same time, and this sets up an emotional tension among the true Christians. I watched it in the Presbyterian Church as a young man under care of Presbytery in the thirties and I cried. I've watched it in other countries — in Holland and England. Those who have stood side by side for years — suddenly there is a tension between them.

This results in two different tendencies. First, those who come out tend to become hard; they tend to be absolutists even in the lesser points of doctrine. They tend to lose their Christian love for those true Christians who did not come out. Men who have been friends for years suddenly become estranged.

Second, on the other hand, those who stay in have an opposite tendency toward a growing latitudinarianism, and this has happened in evangelical circles in this country. They tend to go from ecclesiastical latitudinarianism to cooperative comprehensiveness. Thus they still talk about truth but tend less and less to practice truth. The next step comes very quickly, say in two generations. If you stay in a denomination that is completely dominated by liberals and you give in to ecclesiastical inclusiveness which becomes a cooperative latitudinarianism, there is a tendency to drift into doctrinal comprehensiveness and especially to let down on a clear view of Scripture.

There is, therefore, a danger for both those who come out and those who stay in. And in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ we must face these dangers ahead of time in order to help each other if or when that unhappy moment comes.

If a division comes, true Christians must not polarize. This must not be allowed to take place. In the Presbyterian Church in 1935, we made this mistake, and we have never fully recovered from it. Most of those who left totally broke off fellowship with brothers in Christ who stayed in.

In 1936 when Dr. Machen was going to be put out of the church, the General Assembly was meeting in Syracuse, New York. The leading conservative Presbyterian pastor in Syracuse, Rev. Walter Watson of the First Ward Presbyterian Church, did something which showed great ecclesiastical courage. The Sunday before the General Assembly acted, he opened his pulpit to Dr. Machen. Dr. Machen preached from that man's pulpit with everyone knowing that before the following Sunday he was going to be defrocked by a liberally controlled General Assembly.

The following week the Philadelphia Bulletin (June 11, 1936) carried an article with a heading *NEW CHURCH GETS UNDER WAY: Presbyterian*

Constitutional Covenant Union Dissolved. Just a headline, but what did it mean? Rev. Walter Watson, who had shown such courage the week before Dr. Machen was defrocked said to those who were leaving the church: You must start a new church, but I plead with you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ not to dissolve the Constitutional Covenant Union. The Constitutional Covenant Union was the organization to which the Bible-believing people within the Presbyterian Church had belonged. The Bulletin article read:

Rev. Watson asked for less haste in dissolving the Union. He pointed out that there were thousands in the established church who had not seen the light yet and the only way we can reach them was through an organization similar to the Covenant Union. I foresee, he said, that for a while at least this new denomination will only be a little one with only a dozen churches, but in five or ten years we can expect several hundred thousand members.

Instead of following his advice those who came out dissolved the Union and largely ceased to have any fellowship with the true brothers in Christ who had stood with them in the battle up to that moment. We have paid a dear price for their decision for thirty-five years.

Let me tell you what happened because we failed in the 30's. Since we broke off fellowship with the true Christians in the established church and had nothing to do with them, the Reformed churches in this country — both in the North and the South — have become more and more liberal. The true Christians who remained in those churches became discouraged by the attitude of those who had already left, and so they remained in the established church. Man after man has talked to me in the last three or four years saying, "Back there I was hurt, I was injured. And because of that I have just stayed where I am, I have been discouraged."

We discourage our brothers in Christ unless consciously and prayerfully ahead of time we are prepared for the situation — ready with a simultaneous clear doctrinal stand and an exhibition of real, observable love among true Christians that the world can see. This must be consciously thought about and prayed about and written about — it does not come automatically. In the moment itself, tensions run high and thus it must be prepared for ahead of time.

I plead with you, therefore, if that moment comes for you (I pray that it may not come to you, but if it does), find some way to show an observable love among *true* Christians before the world. Don't divide into ugly parties. If you do this the world will see an ugliness which will turn it off. And your children will see an ugliness and you will lose some of your sons and daughters. They will hear such harsh things from your lips against men that they know have been your friends that they will rightfully turn away from you. Don't throw your children away, don't throw other people away by forgetting, by God's grace, to practice the two principles simultaneously — showing love and the practice of the purity of the visible church.

And finally I would say, don't forget that the world is on fire. We are losing the church and our entire culture as well. We live in the post-Christian world which is under the judgment of God. I believe today we must speak as Jeremiah. Some people think that just because this is the United States of America we will not come under the judgment of God. This is not so. I believe we have had such light as few other countries have ever possessed. The Northern European culture since the Reformation has had light that no one else has had. We have walked upon that light in our culture. Our cinemas, our novels, our art museums scream out as they walk upon that light. And worst of all, modern theology screams out as it walks upon that light. Do you think God will not judge our country simply because we are the United States of America? Do you think that the holy God will not judge?

And if this is so in our moment of history, we need each other. Let us keep our doctrinal distinctives. You are Lutheran, be Lutheran. I am Re-

formed. It is by choice for me from my study of Scripture. Let us keep our distinctives. And let us talk to each other as we keep our distinctives.

But in a day like ours let us keep the hierarchy of things in their proper place. The real chasm is not between the Presbyterians and everybody else; it is not between the Lutherans and everybody else. The real chasm is between those who have bowed to the living God and to the verbal, propositional communication of God's Word, the Scripture, and those who have not.

As a Bible-believing Presbyterian I feel very close to you. I feel no separation in Christ. I come here and I shake your hand and I speak as though I have known you forever. If we got down to certain points of doctrine we would differ, but the things I have spoken are not rooted in Presbyterianism or Lutheranism; they are rooted in historic Christianity and the scriptural faith. I feel close to you as Bible-believing Lutherans, but I have no closeness to those who are non-Bible-believing Presbyterians. This is where the division lies. In a day like ours, when the world is on fire, let us be careful to keep things in proper order. Let us find ways to show the world that while we do not minimize, and we maintain our distinctives, yet that we who have bowed before God's verbalized, propositional communication — the Bible — are brothers in Christ. This we must do in the face of liberal theology.

The oneness does not need to be *organizational*. As a matter of fact, I am sick of organizations trying to bring oneness by organization. Yet there must be an observable and real oneness before God, before the elect angels, before the demonic hosts, before the watching liberals and before the watching world.

And in conclusion let us return to where we began: One of the basic things we have in common as true Christians is the task to exhibit simultaneously the love of God and the holiness of God, and, among other things, the exhibition of the holiness of God means the practice of the principle of the purity of the visible church.

19. Greetings

Herman Sasse, Ph.D., D. Theol.

Dear Brethren:

Since I cannot be with you at your important meeting, I have been asked to send at least a written message. I wish to assure you that my thoughts and my prayers are with you when you think over the situation of the Lutheran Church in your country and throughout the world and discuss the tasks that lie before us.

The first and foremost task is to get a clear picture of the overall situation. Fifty years ago, after the First World War, a rediscovery of the Church — in contrast to a mere private Christianity — was experienced and the slogan of “the century of the Church” was coined. Today we observe everywhere a decline of the churches such as has perhaps never occurred in the two millennia of Christian history. Certainly great catastrophes have happened in the past. But they were limited to certain parts of the world like the breakdown of the church as in the Near East with the rise of Islam, or the vanishing of the faith in the era of European Enlightenment. Today the catastrophe is world-wide. It becomes manifest in the loss of the doctrinal substance of the Christian faith in all denominations of Christendom. A catholic priest with an excellent philosophical and theological education, a man in a high and responsible office in his church asked me: “Do you really believe in the resurrection of Christ?” I replied: “Father, you believe that. You have believed all your life. You will believe it again. But there is a superhuman power that tries to destroy your faith. Fight this power with all your strength remembering the words of St. Paul Ephesians 6 that we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against principalities, and powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against spiritual hosts of wickedness. But remember also what the apostle says about the weapons we need for that fight, the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God, and prayer.” If such sudden loss of faith occurs in a church with the strong discipline of Rome, what will we expect from the weak Protestant churches, also from us Lutherans? The old Lutheran countries of Europe look already very much like the old Christian countries of the Orient. Luther’s prophetic words on the future of the Church in Germany which may have the same destiny (“The Word of God is a faring rainstorm which does not come back to places where it has once been . . .”) seem to have come true, in all Europe. And what about America? I have known old theologians of conservative Lutheran churches in America who had been pillars of orthodoxy in a long ministry but who lost their former convictions and taught the opposite to what they had been teaching. Usually such tragic developments of individuals foreshadow the tragedy of their churches. As by my own reason or strength I cannot believe, but the Holy Spirit must work faith in my soul and preserve me in true faith, so a church has constantly to pray that God the Holy Spirit may preserve it in the faith. It seems sometimes as though we have forgotten what our Catechism teaches about the preservation of the faith. Our Fathers knew it when they sang: “Lord, keep us steadfast in Thy Word.” In the darkest days of the church struggles in Germany in our time the old custom was revived in many parishes that at the toll of the evening bell the Christians, wherever they were, prayed the old hymn: Ach bleib bei uns, Herr Jesu Christ/Weil es nun Abend worden ist/Dein teures Wort, das helle Licht/Lass ja bei uns auslöschen nicht.” “In dieser schwer betäubten Zeit/Verleih uns, Herr, Beständigkeit/Dass wir dein Wort und Sakrament/Rein behalten bis an

unser Ende." It is not a matter of course that a particular church must remain, if it is well organized and its members have the intention to preserve it. "Wir sind es nicht, die die Kirche könnten erhalten, unsere Vorfahren sind es auch nicht gewesen, unsere Nachkommen werden es auch nicht sein, sondern der ists gewesen, der da spricht: Ich bin bei euch bis an der Welt Ende. Wie Hebr. 13 geschrieben steht: Jesus Christus heri et hodie et in saecula und Offb. 1: "Der es war, der es ist, der es sein wird. Ja, so heisst der Mann und soll auch kein anderer heissen." (Luther WA 54, 470). Only if we keep these truths in mind, shall we be free from that self-glorification of one's own church and its orthodoxy. Otherwise it could be that we fall under the judgment of Christ. "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knoweth not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked (Rev. 3:15ff)." This saying of the living Christ contains also the deep truth that a church which is doomed is full of optimism and self-confidence. *No heretic has ever admitted that his doctrine is heresy. He regards it as a new way of proclaiming the old truth. The cancer which destroys churches is in the early stages painless.*

"We have lost the Word of God and cannot find it again." With these words a leader of a modern Protestant Seminary of Reformed background described the situation of his church throughout the world. He said this in deep sadness. It seems to be the sickness of all Protestant churches which once regarded themselves as churches in which the pure Word of God was preached. What has happened to them? The writer of these lines more than forty years ago in America witnessed the great tragedy when the great Presbyterian Church with its center in Princeton broke apart into a Modernist and a Fundamentalist wing, and the heritage of the Reformation of Geneva was lost. Only with deep sympathy one can read today the sermons in which faithful ministers like Prof. Machen of Princeton raised their warning voices and tried to call back their church to the authority of the inspired and inerrant Word of God.

Everywhere you hear a cry for a new confession. Even Rome has its new "Creed of the People of God," proclaimed by the pope in 1968. It claims to be a new formulation of the old doctrine, but actually important doctrines of Trent have been given up. I want to say here nothing of the reformed Churches which, apart from small minorities, have long since abandoned the faith of their fathers. As to the Lutheran churches, many of those which belong to the LWF have abandoned the Formula of Concord and even Luther's Large Catechism. So far none of the Lutheran Churches in America has clearly rejected "Marburg Revisited" and the theses agreed upon in this common enterprise of the Lutherans, including Missouri, and the Presbyterians. It seems that the Lutheran-Reformed union is *ante portas* in America as it is a fact already in the territorial churches of Europe.

The only way I can see is the renewal of the Lutheran Confessions. For these confessions are not only ours, but the confession of our fathers and, if as we believe they are Scriptural, also the confession of the true church of the future. This belongs to the nature of the confession as understood in the Lutheran Church and perhaps in the true church of all ages. It binds together not only the present generation of believers, but also the believers of all ages. There is not only an ecumenicity of space, but also of time. Without this bond the church cannot remain. For the confession is inseparably linked with the Bible. It is our Lord Himself who asks His disciples "Who say you that I am," and his adversaries: "What think you of Christ, whose Son is He?" Him, a living person, very God and very Man, we confess in each article. Whatever we have to say beyond the text of the confessions can be only a clarification of their content. This is why I always recommend to start with the Confessions. Take Article 7 of the Augsburg Confession (which must be read together with the commentary in the Apology). If you have clarified what makes for the true unity of the Church, you must admit that it is the *full* Gospel which is contained in the whole Bible and the rightly administered sacrament which includes the full Biblical doctrine

of the sacraments. The full Gospel contains also the orthodox doctrine of Christ, of the Trinity, of men's sin and the Redemption which we have in Christ.

What can be done? When my generation came back from the First World War, we found a church in full decay. We had lost the theology which we have learned from Harnack and his colleagues. We lived in utmost poverty and had to start our ministry without real help. In this situation groups of pastors were studying again the confessions and the theology of Luther. Luther's mighty belief in the Scriptures as the Word of God helped us to rediscover the authority of the Bible. Out of these groups and brotherhoods arose what constituted a revival. It was not a great revival, not a mighty movement. There were many immature minds. The theological gaps of the war were still conspicuous. But we were able, when Hitler came, to fight for the freedom of the Gospel. Our weapons were the Augsburg Confession and Article 10 of the Form of Concord over against the claims of a political party and the Nazi state. In our ordination we have taken a solemn pledge to teach this doctrine and nothing else. No one was entitled to demand anything else from us. This has saved what was left of the church in Germany until after the Second World War, then men like Bultman and Tillich took over. They could succeed because of whole generations of young theologians who were the mainstay of the confessing church were taken away.

Not restoration, still less revolution can be the program of the church. It must be *renewal*, but renewal not in the superficial sense of the present Roman renewal which shrinks back from a real reformation. It must be a return to the real Reformation of Martin Luther, a return to the Sola Scriptura and Sola Fide (both belong inseparably together).

These are some thoughts which I would like to put before you, dear and esteemed brethren, when you meet for your Congress. What I had to offer is not a solution of the great problem with which we all are wrestling. It is food for thought, a small contribution to the great debate which is going on among all Christians who are concerned about the future of the true Church of Christ. God bless you all!

20. Ordination Vow

Alfred Tessmann

I came by this assignment rather by accident. Some months ago I volunteered a rather simple observation to a member of the committee. I asked him this simple question: "Doesn't the ordination vow required of our pastors and educators, in fact, preclude the possibility of any unqualified persons ever being assigned to a position of authority and responsibility within our church." As a result, I was promptly asked to study the ordination vow and then read it here at the Congress.

As it turned out, it was not quite that simple. The more I studied the vow and the more I read it and related it to the problems which we are facing today, the more I became disturbed.

In the secular world we have a similar situation. As a matter of course, we require people in high office to accept and make a statement of loyalty before we will place them in sensitive positions of responsibility. As I thought about this, I couldn't help but say to myself how much more important then should be the ordination vow which our ministers, teachers, and educators make and by which they are committed to serve their Lord and their church.

I will now simply read in part what is stated in this vow. Most of you have heard it and have read it many times:

Dearly beloved brother: Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ said unto His disciples: Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

And when He had ascended far above all heavens, that He might fill all things, He gave unto His Church some, Apostles, and some, Prophets, and some, Evangelists, and some, pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

Whereas, after due examination, you have been found well versed in Christian doctrine and able to teach others, and have been called to the office of the holy ministry in this congregation, it is meet and right that you should hear and ponder what God, in His holy Word, inculcates upon His ministers concerning the solemn responsibilities of their sacred office.

Thus says St. Paul:

This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desires a good work.

Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman who needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.

Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine.

Speak the things which become sound doctrine, in all things showing yourself a pattern of good works.

Take heed unto yourself and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this you shall both save yourself and them that hear you.

Thus the ministers of Christ are His ambassadors and as such are to preach the Word and administer the Holy Sacraments.

Whereas, dear brother, you have accepted the call extended to you by this congregation and are about to enter on the performance of the duties pertaining to the holy office of the ministry, in accordance with the Word and the will of the Lord Most High, I now ask you in the presence of God and this congregation:

Do you believe the canonical books of the Old and the New Testament to be the inspired Word of God and the only infallible rule of faith and practice?

Do you accept the three Ecumenical Creeds — the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian — as faithful testimonies to the truth of the Holy Scriptures, and do you reject all the errors which they condemn?

Do you believe that the Unaltered Augsburg Confession is a true exposition of the Word of God and a correct exhibition of the doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and that the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the two Catechisms of Martin Luther, the Smalcald Articles, and the Formula of Concord — as contained in the Book of Concord — are also in agreement with this one Scriptural faith?

Do you solemnly promise that you will perform the duties of your office in accordance with these Confessions and that all your teaching and your administration of the Sacraments shall be in conformity with the Holy Scriptures and with the afore-mentioned Confessions?

Will you, finally, adorn the doctrine of our Savior with a holy life and conversation?

To all of the above, our ministers and teachers answer, "I will, the Lord helping me through the power and grace of His Holy Spirit."

The officiant then continues:

I now commit unto you the holy office of the Word and the Sacraments; I ordain and consecrate you a minister of the Church and install you as pastor of this congregation in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. The Lord pour out upon you His Holy Spirit for the office and the work committed to you by the call, that you may be a faithful dispenser of the means of grace. Amen.

Go, then, take heed unto yourself and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost has made you an overseer, to feed the Church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood. Feed the flock of Christ, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lord over God's heritage, but being an example to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away. The Lord bless you from on high and make you a blessing to many, that you may bring forth fruit, and that your fruit may remain to eternal life. Amen.

Complacency

I didn't feel that I could close just by reading this. As a layman, I have a further observation to make. This was touched on in part by previous speakers. It deals with the subject of complacency. I must ask myself the same question and address it to all the laymen, and perhaps even to some of our pastors and teachers. Who is there among us who can truthfully say that we have not become somewhat complacent?

As I see it today in the light of what is happening, those of us who have been indoctrinated all our life in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod seem to have taken our church for granted. As is so often the case, we probably don't fully appreciate what we have until we run the risk of losing it. And this is the problem as I see it.

I must also point a finger at the leaders of our church, at our pastors and teachers. I have done this privately several times in the last few months in the sense that I tried to inform myself more clearly on what is the total background for what has been going on. This is not something which has happened only in the last year or two. After searching I find that some things have been

developing over a period of fifteen to twenty years and perhaps even longer as we heard yesterday was the case in the Presbyterian Church.

I have asked myself and also some pastors: "Why is it that our leaders have not enlightened our laity?" I want you to ask yourselves that question today. I have yet to hear from a minister either publicly or privately in our regular church life that the problems we are facing today actually existed. I think it is incumbent upon our ministers to tell their people exactly what the facts are. Someone touched on this this morning in an indirect way, but I cannot emphasize it too strongly.

In order to attain the results that we are looking for from this Congress, we must have the backing, the help, and the support of our laymen across the country. During the last few months, I have had the opportunity to discuss this subject with laymen. I was appalled that people didn't know what I was talking about. They had little or no conception of the true facts. How can they know them unless someone tells them? How can they act unless they are informed?

So I would like to close my remarks with this one admonition: Tell the people. Give them the facts, and I am sure that you will tap for this cause to conserve pure doctrine a reservoir of strength which has heretofore been unknown!

21. Confirmation Vow

George Mohr

Mr. Tessmann conveyed to you some of the thoughts that went through my mind when I was asked to talk about the confirmation vow. It is quite obvious that there are no degrees behind my name, but there is one thing we all have in common, and that is the fact that God sent His Son to die for us so that we might be saved. We don't have to be ordained to know this; all we have to do is to believe. So I now refer to all people present here as chosen, because God chose each one of us to be His disciples, to go out and share the Word of God.

As I thought about the assignment to speak to you, I became more and more apprehensive as to what I would say. The moment of truth for me to speak is now. But the moment of truth for all of us will be coming for each of us when the Lord calls us home.

The dictionary says the word "confirm" means "to make firm, to agree, to make certain, to be sure, to make valid, to make binding, to strengthen." Confirmation is just putting all these things together and saying this is what we will do.

All of us were confirmed. We may remember this mainly because we got all dressed up. After the service our parents served a big dinner for many guests. At that time all this was very important. But didn't we make God a promise on that day? A promise that we may have forgotten, but let me assure you that God didn't forget this promise. God accepted us at our word. In this vow we said that we would be faithful to God's Word and keep it pure even unto death if need be. It seems that many have forgotten that promise. But we can be sure that God our Father has not forgotten.

If we change our mind as to what we want to believe and what we will accept, this means that we will discard what we cannot understand with our limited knowledge. What we cannot understand we cannot verify in textbooks men have written. We cannot verify them in laboratories.

So, in other words, as long as we cannot understand something in the Word and prove it, we don't have to accept it. Now, if this follows, then it means that the whole Bible is written by man and the words in the Bible are man's words and not God's. I am going to ask you how certain would you be if a man came to you and said, "Your sins are forgiven," or "I have a place for you in heaven," or "I created the mountains." I think you would agree that you wouldn't accept this as true. Doesn't it follow then that if all these things are impossible for man, only someone as great as God in His wisdom could do it?

Implications

In our confirmation vow we said that we would be faithful even unto death. Sometimes I wonder if this vow was really confirmed, or was it as I said before, "to affirm, to strengthen, to stand fast," or was it maybe at that time for us a definite "maybe"? We were certain that we meant it as we were kneeling at the altar, but later as we used our human mind, we may have decided that we may have been wrong. Would it be better in view of this to call the confirmation vow a positive "perhaps"? Can we look at our confirmation vow and only pick out those things that we like to hear and not accept that which also shows us our responsibilities?

God has said that with Him nothing is impossible. Jesus said that only through faith in him can we go to heaven. Jesus also told us that the Holy

Spirit would take over when He left us. He would work in us and work in us real hard. Jesus told us to take everything to Him in prayer. If you look at all such statements Jesus made, you will note that they are definite and positive, not "perhaps," not "maybe"!

When we were confirmed, each of us received a memory verse. I went through the catalog and found that I could choose from fifty different memory verses. I should remember mine, but I am ashamed to say I don't. Unfortunately, my confirmation certificate has been lost or misplaced. So I have chosen Luke 12:47-48 to be my memory verse. Verse 48 records that God says: "To him whom much is given, of him will much be required; and of him to whom men commit much they will demand the more." I believe that God has given me much, so He has a right to expect much of me.

My pastor told me that if I have a problem, I should take it to the Lord in prayer. Let me tell you a very personal experience which has just happened to me.

I have a small business of my own with the usual problems in getting qualified help. On Thursday of last week a young man said to me, "Mr. Mohr, I've decided to go back to school. I'm leaving now; I won't be here on Monday." I said, "Wait a minute; at least you can stay until Labor Day." "O.K.," he said, "I'll stay till Labor Day." On Monday he came to me again and said, "I can't stay till Labor Day; today is my last day."

Worrying about coming to this Congress to speak and then having this business worry, I lay in bed that night. My wife knew I was rather disturbed. So she and I prayed for strength for me to be here today. We prayed that the Lord would use me as a tool to His glory. But then I added a personal note and with an apology I said, "I know I haven't the right to say this, God, but only You can do what I'm going to ask. Would it be possible for You to have a man walk in off State Street tomorrow and say, 'I'm looking for a job; I know how to run the lathes you have'?"

My wife commented, "I don't think you have to worry. God will do it in His wisdom."

At 9:30 yesterday morning, I received a telephone call from a man who said, "Mr. Mohr, I'm looking for a job. I'm a lathe operator. Is that job still open?"

At 11:30 this man came in and looked at my shop. We discussed the whole deal. I sent him home to get his tools and safety glasses. At 2 P.M. he was working.

I had chills when I thought of this. I looked at my wife who was sitting in the office. Both of us had tears in our eyes, and I said, "I wonder whom the Lord heard. Did He hear you or did He hear me?" "That's not important. Let's not question the Lord," she answered, "God knows what He's doing."

What We Promised

Now this is what I learned during my confirmation days — to trust God. Today I would like to jog your memory back to your confirmation day. It might be fitting if you would answer these questions:

"Dearly beloved: When you were little children, you were received into God's covenant of grace in Holy Baptism. And now, having learned the meaning of this covenant from your instruction in the Word of God, you are gathered here before God and this Christian congregation publicly to make profession of your faith in the Triune God and to confirm your covenant with Him to dedicate yourselves body and soul for time and for eternity to your God and Lord. Lift up your hearts with me, therefore, to the God of all grace, and cheerfully give answer to what, in the name of the Lord, as a minister of His holy Church, I now shall ask you.

"Do you this day, in the presence of God and of this Christian congregation, confirm the solemn covenant which at your Baptism you made with the Triune God?" At that time you answered, "I do."

“Do you then renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways?” And again, without flinching, you replied, “I do.”

“Do you believe in God the Father?” And you said not just “I do,” but “Yes, I believe in God the Father.”

“Do you believe in God the Son?” And again you answered, “Yes, I believe in Jesus Christ.”

“Do you believe in the Holy Ghost?” “Yes, I believe in the Holy Ghost.”

Then the pastor asked if you desired to become a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and of this congregation, and you said, “I do.”

“Do you hold all the canonical books of the Bible to be the inspired Word of God and the doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church drawn from the Bible as you have learned to know it from Luther’s Small Catechism, to be the true and correct one?” And you said, “I do.”

“Do you also, as a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, intend to continue steadfast in the confession of this Church, and suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it?” And you answered, “I do so intend, with the help of God.”

“Finally, do you intend to faithfully conform all of your life to the rule of the divine Word, to be diligent in the use of the means of grace, to walk as it becomes the Gospel of Christ, and in faith, word, and deed to remain true to the Triune God, even unto death?” And you replied, “I do so intend, by the grace of God.”

Then the minister said to you, “Give your hand at the Lord’s altar as a pledge of your promise, and, kneeling, receive His blessing.”

This I think, fits the description of what the dictionary gives of “confirmation” or “confirm.”

Blessings

Some of the blessings you have heard are these:

“Blessed rather are those who hear the Word of God and keep it.” (Luke 11:28)

The Gospel is full of love but it also speaks of expressing love responsibly. So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in Him, “If you continue in My Word, you are truly My disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” (John 8:31-32)

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them and they follow Me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand.” (John 10:27-28)

How can I just take the fact that I know He hears my voice and be willing to throw the rest of it away? I’ve got to take it all, because this Bible is not a smorgasboard.

Jesus said, “I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father, but by Me.” (John 14:6)

“I am the Vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:15)

Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. Listen, the devil will put you to the test by having some of you thrown into prison. “Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Revelation 2:10)

So I now ask you: When you were confirmed, did you take it as a confirmation vow, or did you take it as a “maybe”? Did you take it as a vow that you would keep as you promised the Lord and He has remembered, or did you take it as a vow with reservations and make it a positive “perhaps”?

My prayer for the Lutheran Church and for all of us here is that what we have learned from the distinguished, learned men who have spent their lives

studying the Word of God, has rubbed off on all of us, that we may go home and speak this Word of God to others.

Get back to the Word of God. Ask God to send His Holy Spirit to work mightily in our hearts so that those of us who may have decided to make our vow a "perhaps" or a "maybe," may see that there is no "perhaps," and no "maybe." We need to pray much about this.

We need to thank God always that He has given us this Bible, His certain Word. So, I ask you, think of your confirmation vow, pray for the church, and ask the Holy Spirit to work as He has never worked before. Share this precious Word of God freely with others and always regard and respect it as God's inspired and certain Word.

22. Go Home Confessing

Wilbert Sohns

An editorial in the Concordia Theological Monthly, September 1969, states that LCMS doctrinal divisions are deep, and it listed three key issues that we have dealt with at this Congress: The Doctrine of the Word, The Nature and the Mission of the People of God, and The Quest for Fellowship. This same editorial recommends a four-point program for the task ahead, as it calls it, regarding these three key issues. First, concerted fraternal endeavor to discover anew and rejoice in our oneness in the Gospel. Secondly, a willingness to recognize a greater variety in theological statements and positions. Thirdly, dedication to the task as spelled out in the Mission Affirmations. And, fourthly, an eagerness to rejoice in the great things which God has done for us in the past, including fellowship with the ALC.

What approach should we adopt? I submit to you in closing what I believe are the three steps which should be our burden at this moment: *Repentance, responsibility, and reaching.*

REPENTANCE

I begin with repentance because I believe that the Denver Convention for us in the Missouri Synod, and in various other situations it has been true for you brethren in the ALC and LCA, have given tears of joy for some victory, or also tears of sorrow because of some defeat. But I believe our tears should be for God to lead us to repentance, and tears of repentance to drive us back to Scripture and to Christ with "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." If we are to help heal the Church and be reconciled, it has to be a call to repentance. If I am to call persons to repentance then I must in all honesty and sincerity repent myself. Not, "God be merciful to the ultra of one kind or another, a sinner." But "God be merciful to *me*, a sinner."

If we are really going to go home confessing, then we'd better begin at this moment in repentance, asking God to change my heart, to make me new. Repent for not heeding the warning signals, for not recognizing a theological split, for not recognizing the polarization that already exists in the church, for *de facto* toleration of error even though it may not have been our desire, for partaking of other men's sins because we condone it by doing nothing, and for being guilty of what we condemn. At times we condemn lousy methods, politics, power plays, and then we become guilty of doing the same thing. I could go on and on in this list, but I need to repent today of what I condemned. For being at each others throats, for not treating the liberal as a human being. And you liberals who are here today, who are true liberals, take me seriously as I say this. We are guilty and need to repent for being embarrassed into silence, for having attitudes of defeatism. We are guilty for being concerned only about structures rather than principles. Yet the Church is going to be healed. If the house divided against itself is going to have unity, then it must have repentance, starting with me. Then I have the responsibility from my Lord Jesus Christ to call other men to repentance. Then I've got the authority, the power, the love, and the mercy from Christ by which I can call the true liberal to repentance. It is not a matter of dialoguing with him or arguing with him. What heals the visible church is repentance.

You save a marriage when there is dissension not by asking the couple to co-exist producing a synthesis and a synthetic marriage. What saves a marriage is repentance. And what saves the visible church is repentance, and calling the erring to repentance. Healing, therefore, is never a political thing

or a co-existence, or bringing the whole middle together into one, but a change of heart — repentance. Before we go home, we should repent, and then seek to be true servants of the Word.

RESPONSIBILITY

From repentance we go to responsibility. Responsibility begins by being sensitive to the need, and looking at the warning signals. The American Cancer Society warns us to be alert, to be alert to cancer's warning signals. Beloved, we have heard spiritual warning signals. Responsibility in the church for both laity and clergy alike is to act promptly on these warning signals.

The second part of responsibility deals with personal commitment. I've had the feeling in the church that we would like to have the church President alone be our watchdog — or, our leaders should give us all the theological answers. But, you are the one who goes home and confesses, you are the one in your own little tower wherever it is, you are God's spokesmen. You are the one God wants committed. Any organization that wins people over, that brings enthusiasm for the cause is to observe personal commitment on the part of the individual. That's real responsibility. It begins with a person who is solution-oriented rather than problem-oriented. We can't win anyone over by talking about what we're against, or talking about problems. We win them over because of personal commitment to the positive, Jesus Christ and His Holy Scripture and His Truth. We must have a positive testimony if we're going to be really responsible servants for Jesus Christ. And it means more than that, it means I don't have to worry about what the liberals think, or the middle-of-the-roader thinks — only what God thinks. Even though I was harrassed somewhat about coming to this great Congress, I didn't care what *they* think. What I care about is what *God* thinks. And if we are to go home with personal responsibility, "go home confessing," it means courage and fearlessness in our service to Christ. Take initiative to devise all kinds of means by which you're going to get your Scriptural testimony out to others. Some of you have already had your gears in motion — how you're going to play tapes for a circuit conference, the friends you're going to talk to, sharing it with your pastor, and your pastor sharing it with the laity. Responsibility doesn't allow us to sit back and let somebody else do it. The the initiative to devise the means, to be a positive catalyst for the Gospel.

Responsibility means sacrifice. Congress Vice-chairman Andrew Anderson in the committee meeting before the Congress started, prayed a prayer that God would grant blessings to this Congress — whatever the cost. The cost — are you willing to be responsible no matter what the cost? Go home confessing and get the Word out. It's going to cost if you are derided or labeled. Some people will misunderstand you. It will take time and energy and love and compassion and mercy and understanding. After rhetoric, what? After words, what? Are we just "concerned"? I hope the Holy Spirit grabs us so much that we stop being "just concerned," but go on to real sacrifice.

REACHING

Now consider *reaching*. How do we the pastors and laity, reach the down-hearted, the uninformed, the indifferent, the conservative, the liberal, the uncommitted? All over this nation there are redeemed people that need to be reached by us.

The book *Walther and the Church* gives a lesson in Christian polemics and how to reach people with content: "The most effectual defense of truth is plain truth itself. Truth is self-authenticating. When it steps upon the field of battle, unpanoplied with the Goliath armament of human cunning, not varnished with the warpaint of the savage, in the dignity of its innate strength, it is unconquerable, like David with his shepherd's sling. It does not have to engage in wordy harangues like the Homeric warriors before they came to blows. To work up the necessary psychoses of aggressive complexes, it needs simply to state: "This is so, this is not so and the battle is won — let the defeated keep on howling as much and as long as they please. Alas that the

spokesmen for the truth have not always remembered in their warfare for Christianity that the weapon alone which they wielded, not anything that they might contribute to the conflict by their own dexterity, ingenuity, or bravery must achieve the victory." It's communicating the *Truth* that counts. Confess in entirety the clear facts of God's Word and the testimony of the Confessions, including the position of Synod and its Constitution, etc.

Reach people evangelically and winsomely and with love. We present our message with vitality, clearly and unequivocally, not using words or phrases that have dual meanings, or coming to inconclusive decisions. A confessing church has a confession to proclaim. It's not the organization but the organism that counts. Encourage members to become committed members of the Body of Christ. I got involved because the Word of God, Jesus Christ, took hold on me. I did not get involved because of some power structure or politics. Another brother gets involved because you're bringing God's Word in an evangelical way. Go home, identifying yourself with Jesus Christ and Holy Scriptures!

If I say, "It's the real thing," most of you would be able to identify what I'm talking about — not 7-Up, but Coke. And if I say: "You've got a lot to live," you should be able to finish it with "Pepsi." And if I say, "You can take Salem out of the country, but . . .," you know where the identification comes in. That communicating, that's reaching. But when you go home, you don't go home with slogans like we just gave you, but you go home with the *Truth*. You go home with commitment. You go home with repentance and responsibility. You will identify your Confessional stand, and Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour.

A concluding statement from the Ecumenical Declaration of Faith says: "This declaration of faith is being made to the glory and praise of our only Saviour, Jesus Christ, in humble gratitude of the free, unmerited grace He has earned for us by His vicarious sacrifice on the cross and has proffered to us by His Word. It is issued in loving obedience to Him Who demands our confessions." Some Bible passages demand us to "Go Home Confessing": "He who confesses Me before man, him will I confess before My Father Who is in heaven." "Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of Me and of My Words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when He cometh in the glory of His Father, with the holy angels."

Let's get out of this hotel, let's go home, and let's "Go Home Confessing" with a personal repentance, with a personal responsibility, and with a personal outreach to all men to whom God allows us to witness and edify.

Prayers

Donald L. Pohlers

Almighty God, at Your Word chaos and darkness took to flight and order and meaning entered the universe. We pray that You would rout the confusion that exists in the Church today. Confound and convict those who utter the vain babblings of their own minds instead of proclaiming clearly Your message revealed in the Scriptures. Restore the Church to complete and faithful commitment to Your Word which points men to Christ and the reliable God. Bless our efforts as we proclaim our acceptance of Your Word to a dying world that through the Scriptures men may know You as the only true God, believe in Your Son, and live by your Spirit. Amen.

O God, our Father, You spoke the divine fiat and worlds came into being which had never existed, and by Your Word all creation is sustained.

O God, our Savior, You calmed the raging seas by a Word of divine power and by another Word offered pardon and peace to the souls of all men.

O God, our Guide and Comforter, You have recreated our souls and by signs attached to Your Word offer us the means of grace to sustain us in the true faith.

Almighty Three in One God, hear the prayers of Your people. Open our eyes to see that in the Scriptures You still speak the Word of life with a living voice. Turn us from the damning human pride which would substitute the folly of men for the wisdom of God, from the rejection of Your infallible Truth to the easy secular compromises of speculation and human philosophy.

Lord, give us the courage to proclaim Your light in a darkened world by pointing men to Your Word about Christ, which is reliable for every age and condition of men. Speak the Word to us which will create the faith we lack and unloose Your power in our witness to men. Inspire us to share the whole counsel of God with this moribund world, that by Your grace dead men may live through Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

Lord, our God, how shall we confess the faith You have called us to believe. We are weak and mortal, and Satan rages at the door of the Church to tear out our throats and silence the very heavens which declare Your glory.

Father, give to the Church a power which it does not have of itself. Speak the Word of life among us that our dry bones may receive the flesh and blood of Your creation and rise to stand before You — a mighty army which none can number.

O God, open our mouths to declare Your action in Christ to one another and to all men. You have created us. You have redeemed us. You have sanctified us. You have placed Your message into our hands. Give us the grace to remain steadfast in Your Word, and bless our confession with the gift of unity and fellowship.

Help us to see the need of men for a message of judgment and grace, and give us the power to proclaim the Word which transforms death into life. Bless our efforts to missionize the world with God's Truth. Without You our best efforts must fail. If You are with us, we shall prevail. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

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LUTHERAN CONGRESS

Loyalty to the Scriptures and Confessions

A FORUM FOR STRENGTHENING SCRIPTURAL AND CONFSSIONAL CHRISTIANITY IN LUTHERAN CHURCHES

Sheraton - Chicago Hotel — Chicago, Illinois

August 31 - September 2, 1970

A Convocation for evangelical Lutherans on Biblical perspectives for the theological issues and crises of our day and to seek evangelical directions for the Seventies.

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In worship of the Triune God and in obedience to His infallible Word for effective proclamation of the saving Gospel, the Congress seeks:

To affirm our commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ in our historic Lutheran faith as known from the verbally inspired and infallible Scriptures as the only authentic, inerrant and completely adequate source and norm of Christian doctrine and life; for the sake of the Gospel to hold loyally to the Bible in its entirety and in all its parts as the Word of God under all circumstances regardless of man's attitude to it.

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To evaluate the present condition of Confessionalism and to establish a true and firm Biblical base for work within our churches and for future co-operation.

To help develop a united front for all loyal Lutherans to be guided honestly by confessional theology and to provide guidance for resolving all critical problems of theology and missions forthrightly.

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS — AUGUST 31-SEPTEMBER 2, 1970



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