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A BRIEF STATEMENT
OF THE
DOCTRINAL POSITION OF THE MISSOURI SYNOD.

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(Translated from the German by W. H. T. D.)

The doctrine taught and professed by our Synod has been repeatedly called *new*. Such has been the experience of the fathers and founders of our Synod, and such is still our own experience at the present time. However, our doctrine is not new, neither wholly, nor in part, but is as old as the Revelation of the Holy Scriptures. Our doctrine is none other than that which God has revealed in the writings of the apostles and prophets, and which the Lutheran church in her public Confessions professes from, and in accordance with, the Scriptures. This fact is attested by every sermon which is preached on Sundays from the pulpits of our congregations. It can also be observed in our periodicals and in other publications of our Synod. Still, it may not be improper, on the occasion of the semi-centennial of our Synod, to present on the following pages a brief statement of our faith and confession, embracing the leading points of doctrine, which we profess over against ancient and modern error.

LUTHERANISM AND AMERICANISM.

We Lutherans annually celebrate the festival of the Reformation. It is right and meet that we do so, for we are children of the Reformation. We are Lutherans, and we both should and would publicly confess it. Nowhere are we ashamed of this name, for it denotes something great, yea, the greatest thing in the world. The crown of a king is a mere pittance by comparison. And, if asked what constitutes the greatness of Lutheranism, we reply: The liberty, the spiritual liberty, wherewith Christ hath made us free, Gal. 5, 1, which the Son of God purchased for us with His blood and which He declares and offers to us in the Gospel.

This spiritual liberty is something wonderfully great and glorious. It consists in freedom from sin, its guilt as well as punishment; for Christ was made to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. It consists in freedom from an evil conscience, which has been silenced by the remission of sins in the blood of Christ. It is freedom from all demands and threats of the Law, since Christ fulfilled the Law for us. It is freedom from the devil, the cruel tyrant, who frightens us with the terrors of death and the torments of hell; for Christ has bruised the head of Satan, has taken the sting out of death, and wrested the victory from hell. It is freedom, also, from all the commandments of men and statutes of the Church, freedom from all tyrants, pope and bishop and priest, who make God's grace and eternal salvation dependent upon obedience to their demands.

This wonderful liberty which makes of a slave of Satan a blissful child of God constitutes the greatness of Lutheranism. True, it was not Luther but Christ, and Christ alone, that acquired this liberty for us. But the pope had robbed the Christians of it, and Luther gave it back to them. Through Luther's services we, too, have acquired

possession of this liberty. Before the Reformation Christendom languished in the bonds of Antichrist and of his tools. The pope had defrauded the church of the Gospel, of salvation solely by faith in Christ. He had led Christendom back into its former thralldom—of sin, the Law, the devil, death, and hell. The children of God the Antichrist had made the slaves of himself and Satan. The pope with his hierarchy had forced himself in between Christ and the Christians. Without his laws and statutes, yea, without his abominations and idolatries he would suffer no man to be saved. Then came the Angel of the Reformation with the everlasting Gospel and the declaration of Christian liberty, and millions were blessed with this, the greatest of all blessings. It is the possession of this liberty that makes a man a Lutheran.

We are Lutherans. But we are also Americans. Proceeding from Saxony, the Reformation first spread through Germany. The first spiritually free Lutherans were Germans. We are Americans, Americans of German, Scandinavian, and English tongues, respectively. Nor is *this* a thing we deplore or feel as a defect. Nowhere in the wide world are we ashamed, or need we be ashamed, that we are Americans. For with this name, again, we designate a blessing for which we owe a special debt of gratitude to God. And if asked what constitutes the distinguishing feature of Americanism, we point to the glorious liberty enjoyed in America in things political as well as religious.

A great deal has been said and written about Americanism and the American spirit. The sects deem it their special allotted task to "Americanize" the "foreigners" and "aliens." And when asked wherein the "Americanism" consists to which they would win over the "foreigners" and "aliens," they name, as its all-important ingredients, Sabbath observance and abstinence. In their view these are the fundamental articles of Christianity and Americanism alike. Also Archbishop Ireland and other

Roman Catholic dignitaries parade themselves on every possible occasion as the very embodiment of Americanism and are loud in singing its praises. But as Puritanism, imported from Great Britain, is the sectarian, so the Roman Catholic conception of Americanism is popery pure and simple: the very opposite of true Americanism.

The real essence of Americanism is the liberty which our country grants to every one of its citizens: personal, political, national, and, above all, religious liberty. In our country the citizens are not encumbered with many unnecessary and superfluous laws. Absolute personal liberty, indeed, exists nowhere, not even in America. But what the American citizen does enjoy is a measure of personal liberty such as can be found in no other part of the world. Then there is our political liberty. The American people are not, as is the case in many other countries, divided into two classes: rulers and subjects, the former being above, the latter under the law. Our president is no less subject to the law than is the most humble citizen. In America, moreover, the people are not vested with the mere honor of obeying; they frame and administer the laws. All citizens have equal rights and duties, and the votes of the poor and humble count just as much as the ballots of the rich and eminent. Universal political liberty and equality is an important part of the content of Americanism. The same is true of our national liberty, which consists in our nation's independence of other world powers. We are not subject, as, for example, the Boers now are, to British decrees. Ours is a sovereign land with respect to all foreign powers. And this our national liberty and independence, for which our fathers struggled and bled, we regard as a great and noble blessing, without which all other American liberties could not stand.

The most precious jewel, however, in Americanism, is its religious liberty. In Turkey, in Russia, and in many Catholic countries, intolerance and religious persecution

rule supreme. In Spain and Italy Protestantism is tolerated as one will suffer an evil which he cannot uproot. Germany, England, and Canada enjoy religious liberty, but not religious equality. The state church is the established and privileged religion: in Prussia the United, in England the Episcopal Church; and in Quebec and Ontario the Catholic Church is the most favored religion. Not so in the United States. Here every man may serve his God according to the dictates of his own conscience, and all religions and churches are on a basis of perfect equality before the law. Here the Jew has the same rights as the Christian, and the Protestant enjoys no prerogatives as compared with the Catholic, nor does the largest religious body as compared with the smallest. In America Church and State are completely separated. In our federal constitution and in the constitutions and statutes of the several states no church organization enjoys any special privileges. The complete separation of Church and State and the consequent religious liberty and equality of all religions and denominations is not a mere characteristic of Americanism but its very essence: the innermost soul and life of the American spirit. He that impugns and curtails this liberty attacks the heart of Americanism. And if Catholics or Puritans should ever succeed in getting this liberty eliminated, Americanism itself would thereby be destroyed.

Lutheranism and Americanism—both are great, and the greatness in both is liberty. Yet the two are not the same. Each differs from the other *toto genere*. Lutheranism is concerned about man's proper relation to God, while Americanism is concerned about the citizen's place in the commonwealth and his relation to the government. Thus the two are wholly diverse. And for this very reason they never conflict. Lutheranism does not set aside Americanism, and Americanism does not preclude Lutheranism nor any of its parts. If Luther were to appear in St. Louis, he could cheerfully and without violating his conscience

become an American citizen. He could swear to uphold the American liberties without surrendering one jot or tittle of his Lutheranism. Even in its final consequences Lutheranism does not conflict with Americanism. And whenever a consistent American desires to become a Lutheran he is not required to sacrifice one particle of his Americanism. Consistent Lutheranism and consistent Americanism are never and nowhere at variance.¹⁾

It is wrong, therefore, to suppose that a Lutheran, in order to become a full-fledged American, must adapt himself more or less to the ways of the sects, as even many Lutherans still seem to think. The truth is, that there is a glaring contrast between the Puritan and the American spirit. As popery is the opposite of Americanism, because it breeds a priest-ridden people of bondsmen, so also in Calvinism, Zwinglianism, Episcopalianism, and Presbyterianism there are elements which, if consistently carried out, are destructive of the very essence of American liberty. A Calvinist, a Presbyterian, an Episcopalian, a Reformedist, must suspend some of his religious tenets when he becomes an American citizen. For all these denominations teach and confess in their creeds that it is the sacred duty of the State to provide for the establishment of the right religion and for the rooting out of heresy. This error, firmly rooted, as it is, in the very principles of the papacy and sectarianism, is a standing menace to the American spirit of our Catholic and sectarian fellow citizens. And in many of them the spirit of popery and Puritanism has already vanquished the spirit of Americanism. This is evidenced on the one hand by the constant efforts of the papists to introduce their religion into the public schools, and to obtain public endowments for their Catholic schools and institutions; and on the other hand by the enmity of

1) See THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY, vol. VI, p. 148 ff., on the Lutheran and Reformed doctrines respecting religious liberty and the relation of state and church.

the sects against parochial schools and by their untiring zeal to introduce the Bible and religious instruction into the public schools. While thus Americanism and consistent sectarianism are utterly incompatible with each other Lutheranism and Americanism dwell in perfect harmony, and, other things being equal, a Lutheran makes the best American: the consistent representative of American liberty.

True, the liberty to ravage and ruin, to murder and slay, and to commit other abominable deeds and acts of violence, for which the peasants, for instance, were banded together in 1525,—the liberty to avenge one's self and take the law into one's own hands, which is encouraged by the anarchists, Socialists, and lynchers, and which unions frequently resort to,—the liberty to oppress the laboring classes and the poor, claimed and practiced by many trusts and employers,—the liberty to do violence, especially religious violence, which the papists thirst after, in order to drive the Protestants back into the fold of the Catholic church,—the liberty of the fanatics who seek, with the aid of the government, to coerce their fellow citizens into Sabbath observance and abstinence, who strive to inculcate in the public schools their religious teachings and hymns upon Catholics and Jews, and who attempt to force Lutheran children out of Christian schools into the public schools,—*this* liberty, where a citizen arrogates to himself the right to do violence to his fellow citizens and to rob them of their liberties, is a shameful abuse of liberty, yea, bald tyranny, and absolutely incompatible with both Lutheran and American liberty. He that uses this liberty to oppress and to do violence forfeits his spiritual liberty, which will not serve as a cloak for maliciousness. And to all that is truly great in Americanism the growing tendency to indulge in this spurious liberty is likewise a standing menace.

Americanism and Lutheranism are not at variance with each other. Americanism does, however, bear a certain relation of dependency to Lutheranism, though the reverse

cannot be said. Lutheranism with its spiritual liberty is not dependent upon Americanism with its temporal liberty. Genuine Lutheranism existed prior to Americanism. Lutheranism is conditioned neither positively nor negatively by personal, political, national, or even religious liberty. Lutheranism can exist and survive in a country where it is granted neither equality nor liberty nor tolerance. As Christianity flourished in the first three centuries of imperial Roman intolerance, so also Lutheranism thrived and spread in the sixteenth and seventeenth century of papal Roman persecution, in spite of ban and interdict, in spite of the Inquisition with its dungeons and pyres. Papists could deprive Lutherans of their property and lives, of their children and wives, but the great treasure of Lutheranism, the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, was beyond the reach of the executioner's ax and torch. While we cheerfully admit that the unqualified religious liberty and equality which Lutheranism enjoys in America, and which is not granted it even in Germany, the cradle of Lutheranism, is conducive to a healthy unfolding of Lutheran doctrine and practice, still true Lutheranism with its spiritual liberty is not dependent upon Americanism with its secular liberty.

On the other hand, however, Americanism is hardly conceivable without Lutheranism. Without the Lutheran Reformation there would be an America, indeed, but no free America. Without Luther the pope would still be in full possession of his spiritual and temporal power, of which religious intolerance is an essential part. When Luther appeared there was not in all the wide world a single spot where unqualified religious liberty prevailed, and in all Christendom there was not a single theologian that espoused the cause of universal religious liberty. The Catholic theologians taught then, as they do to this day, that civil government is the servant of the Church to silence heretics and burn them. Nor could Zwingli, Calvin, Beza, John Knox, and other Reformed theologians give to Amer-

ica religious liberty. For they all taught and confessed in their creeds that it is the duty of governments to provide for the establishment of the true, and the rooting out of false, religion. The ideal cherished by the Reformed and Calvinistic theologians was not complete separation of Church and State, combined with universal religious liberty and equality, but the amalgamation of Church and State into state churches or church states, coupled with the oppression and extermination of false teachers. Hereof bear witness the earliest communities, established in America by Puritans, Episcopalians, and the Dutch Reformed, in which Quakers, Baptists, Catholics, and Lutherans were oppressed and cruelly persecuted. Luther stands alone and without a parallel as the prophet not only of spiritual liberty, but of religious liberty as well. Complete separation of Church and State, combined with universal religious liberty as we enjoy it in America, was an ideal which was not realized in Luther's day, but which Luther clung to unto the very last.

Yea, without the spiritual liberty, possessed and proclaimed by Lutherans, secular liberty cannot be fully enjoyed. Spiritual bondage inevitably leads to temporal bondage. And the liberty which our country affords is neither a cure of, nor a safe-guard against, spiritual bondage. Thousands of papists come to America, rejoice in the liberty which they breathe, and yet remain a priest-ridden people. And when the Irish and Poles, tired of tyranny, outwardly break away from Rome, even then they remain inwardly and spiritually bound. In their consciences pope and priest still sit enthroned, and the only thing that can dethrone them is—not Americanism—but the Gospel of the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, the Alpha and Omega of Lutheranism. Priests lord it over their flocks in free America as they do in Italy and Spain. And this renders the full enjoyment of American liberty a thing unattainable to Catholics. The priest will dictate to them what meas-

ures and men they shall vote for, and what they shall do and what not, in matters which the laws of God and the state leave to their own free choice. Even in purely external affairs these sons of bondage remain the slaves of Rome in the midst of free America. And in as far as the Puritan sects are spiritually unfree and regard themselves as still bound by the law of Moses, they, too, come short of the full enjoyment of that liberty which our country would give to them also. Full enjoyment of American liberty is attainable only to him whom Christ has freed, freed also from all commandments of men.

Hence, when we Lutherans stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free and suffer neither papists nor Puritans to entangle us in the yoke of bondage; and when we, out of gratitude to God, are bent on winning over our fellow citizens to the Lutheran liberty, which is fairer and grander than everything else in the world: we at the same time establish and strengthen what is great in Americanism—personal, political, national, and religious liberty.

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Experimental Religion. The Experiences of Christophoros from his Awakening to his Falling Asleep in Jesus. By F. K.: VIRGINIUS. 198 pages. Augusta Publishing Co., Crimora, Va. Price, 75 cents.

According to this allegory Christopher, a young man of the world, happens into a country church, where he is stirred up to a sense of his guilt. In the metropolis he is invited to sinful pleasures, but he declines and begins to read the Bible. He falls in with Rev. Legal and is taught to rid himself of sin by keeping the law; but he finds no peace. His heart is tormented with fears, doubts, and despair, until he hears an Easter sermon on justification by V., the pastor of the country church. Joy and peace enter his heart. His father, however, declares him an enthusiast, and revivalists call him a dead