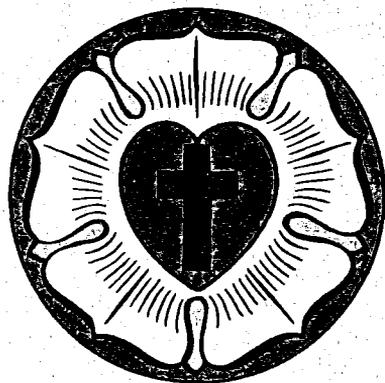


**EVANGELICAL
DIRECTIONS
FOR
THE
LUTHERAN
CHURCH**



EVANGELICAL
DIRECTIONS
FOR THE
LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

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.

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.

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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 betrübten Zeit/Verleih uns, Herr, Beständigkeit/Dass wir dein Wort und Sakrament/Rein behalten bis an

unser End." 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!

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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.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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.

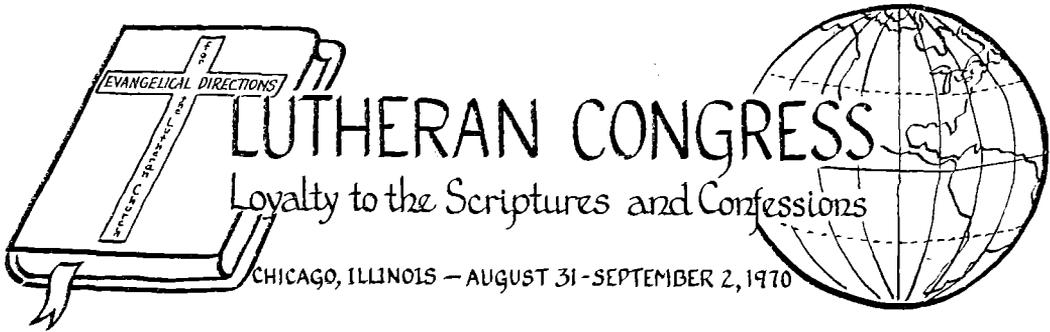
To demonstrate the validity and relevance of Scriptural and Confessional truths for our times, showing the right course for faithful Lutherans.

To evaluate the present condition of Confessionalism and to establish a true and firm Biblical base for work within our churches and for future cooperation.

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.

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.



What shall we do if we face a new humanism, a new theology, and a new hermeneutic parading as permissible options for the Lutheran Church in the 20th 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 Lutheran faith. The essays of the Lutheran Congress published in the book *EVANGELICAL DIRECTIONS FOR THE LUTHERAN CHURCH* were 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.

On one hand, these essays avoid a diversity and understanding and interpretation of the Scriptures which is untenable by Scriptural rules of interpretation. On the other hand, they keep aware that there is a negativism and dead theological orthodoxy, and a "fundamentalism," which is sterile. They show that orthodox theology must go beyond assent to doctrine and add action to belief.

These essays will help those who have never experienced life in the church where God's Word is openly questioned, where eternal truths are relativized, traditional theological terms are emptied of their Biblical meaning, and the process of normal communication between brothers in faith is made difficult.

EVANGELICAL DIRECTIONS FOR THE LUTHERAN CHURCH puts theological crises into proper focus and proposes Biblical answers that will be relevant for years to come.

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Lutheran Congress

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