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The Means of Grace.

With Special Reference to Modernism.

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Introduction.

"The true treasure of the Church is the holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God." That is the statement made by Luther in Thesis 62 of the Ninety-five Theses. It shows that the great Reformer, as early as 1517, had reached a clear and definite conviction concerning the most important treasure which God gave to His Church on earth. It is not in subjective and mystical experiences of an individual that the strength of the Church lies nor in similar conceptions held by a group of individuals, but in the objective acceptance of the gift of redemption wrought by the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ. No amount of contemplation will give a person the possession of the reconciliation effected by Christ, and all the excessive religiousness of our days will not take the place of the simple belief in the truth of Scriptures which is demanded by the Lord as the first step in the proper relationship to Him. It was our Lord Jesus Himself who began His public ministry with the call: "Repent ye and believe the Gospel." Mark 1, 15. And the same call goes forth throughout the Scriptures, as when Paul in Rom. 10, 16 and 2 Thess. 1, 8 demands obedience to the Gospel, just as he writes, Eph. 1, 13: "In whom [Christ] ye also trusted, after that ye heard the Word of Truth, the Gospel of your salvation; in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise."

For that reason the topic which is to be treated in the present essay and in its discussion is of vital, of fundamental importance in the life and work of the Church. When the Ephraimites had been defeated by the Gileadites under the command of Jephthah, as we read in Judges 12, the Gileadites took the passages, that is, the fords of Jordan, before the Ephraimites, challenging every man who wanted to pass over to pronounce the word *Shibboleth*. Since

THE THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER.

Why This Aloofness?—The editor of the *Lutheran Church Herald* said last June: “It is to be regretted that the Synodical Conference is not represented at the Free World Conference in Copenhagen. Believing, as they do, that they have the whole truth, why not be there and testify and help the conservative forces of the Lutheran Church to stand by its confession? Can anything be gained by isolation? Are the Lutherans meeting at Copenhagen unworthy and unfit to meet with even in a free conference?”

In making a brief reply, we would assure the editor of the

Lutheran Church Herald that it is not a feeling of superiority which is keeping us away from these conferences. We wish members of other Lutheran synods would once for all bury the notion that our refusal to attend such meetings is due to a low view taken by us of the moral and spiritual character of other Lutherans. Concerning isolation, we are convinced that often something can be gained by it. Frequently it is the most emphatic way of testifying that one is not in agreement with prevailing tendencies. The chief reason, however, why Missouri is not represented in Copenhagen is the wish not to become guilty of upholding errorists, which class, as will be granted by most conservative Lutherans in America, was largely represented in Copenhagen. The subject of unionism, which we consider the burning question of the day in Lutheran circles, must be given prayerful consideration by all who love our Lutheran Zion. A.

Promoting the Unity of the Lutheran Church. — Among the resolutions adopted by the Second Lutheran World Convention, the following, quoted in the *Lutheran Church Herald* (July 30, 1929), is perhaps the most important and far-reaching: "Since the Lutheran World Convention regards the existing unity in faith and confession as the only right ground for the fellowship of the different Lutheran churches, and since it regards the living testimony concerning this common faith as the most important and, in fact, the only active means to further the consciousness of this unity, it is recommended that the executive committee adopt measures through which the different church-bodies may more intimately learn of the faith, life, and conditions of other Lutheran bodies, that personal testimony may be employed for common instruction and admonition. As such measures have been mentioned: exchange of visits of leaders in the respective churches and organized activity for information through the Lutheran Press Bureau and through literature, as well as support for Lutheran theological students of minority churches for further theological studies in other Lutheran centers."

This resolution is, as we have said, a most important one. To the outsider its importance consists, in the main, in revealing the unionistic drift of the World Convention. The resolution takes it for granted that "unity in faith and confession" exists, for it speaks of the "existing unity in faith and confession." However, is not this assumption absolutely unfounded? Are we to believe, for instance, that unity in faith and confession exists between Liberalists like Soederblom and the American representatives of the convention? Is not the gap between the Modernistic groups of Germany and the Scandinavian countries, on the one hand, and the confessional groups of some of the American synods, on the other, enormous? We looked for a clear and complete declaration of faith, but the Confessional Declaration, reaffirmed at Copenhagen, allows a wide latitude of religious opinion. It reads: "The Lutheran World Convention acknowledges the Holy Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the only source and infallible norm of all church doctrine and practise and sees in the Confessions of the Lutheran Church, especially in the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small

Catechism, a pure exposition of the Word of God." This declaration is certainly inadequate. It is so worded that even Liberalists like Soederblom may subscribe to it without altering an iota of their modernistic views. So, too, the measure suggested for bringing about a greater unity in faith and confession are woefully inadequate. In fact, they may result in the very opposite of "unity in faith and confession." For example, theological students of "minority churches" frequenting, "for further studies," *Liberal* "Lutheran centers" may easily make shipwreck of the faith which by the grace of God they had acquired in confessional Lutheran circles and may thus increase the confusion which invariably follows in the wake of Liberalism. In short, the mistake of the Second World Convention seems obvious. It has taken for granted that "unity in faith and confession" exists, whereas, in reality, it does not exist, as every one knows. Does this explain the unionism which marked the convention? Or was the spirit of unionism so potent from the start that the existing differences in faith and confession were wilfully overlooked by the leaders and all who saw them and wished to testify to them were hushed into silence?

MUELLER.

A New Theological Seminary. — *The Sunday-school Times* (August 3) reports the following on a subject briefly referred to in our last issue: "Representatives of four large presbyteries met in Philadelphia on July 18 to consider the founding of a new theological seminary. The group included former directors, professors, and students of Princeton Seminary as well as ministers and elders. The reason for calling the meeting and its purpose were both made clear in the following resolution, which was unanimously adopted: 'Being convinced that the action of the General Assembly of 1929 establishing a new Board of Control for Princeton Theological Seminary will inevitably make the institution conform to the present doctrinal drift of the Church and so desert the distinctive doctrinal position which it is bound by the most solemn trust obligations to maintain, we believe that immediate steps should be taken for the establishment of a new theological seminary, which shall continue the policy of unswerving loyalty to the Word of God and to the Westminster Standards, for which Princeton Seminary has been so long and so honorably known.' Prof. J. Gresham Machen of Princeton, who made the opening address, said that, in order to conserve the present sound evangelical Presbyterian forces, 'we must have at least one sound source of ministerial supply.' Professor Machen and Prof. Robert Dick Wilson of Princeton, who also spoke, both felt that the new seminary ought to be opened this fall to meet the urgent call for such a school that has come from a large number of Princeton students. It was estimated that \$50,000 will be needed the first year, and \$22,000 was immediately pledged at the meeting in Philadelphia. The chairman was authorized to appoint an organizing committee of fifteen, with Professors Machen, Wilson, and Oswald T. Allis, also of Princeton, as advisory members, to select classrooms, dormitories, and an administration office. Roland K. Armes, 1237 Commercial Trust Building, Philadelphia, was appointed as acting secretary. Christian

people the world over will be saddened by the news that Princeton Seminary, one of the oldest strongholds of the faith in this country, is to be controlled by a new board of thirty-three men of whom a large and influential number are liberal. But it is a cause for thanksgiving that part of the needed funds have been pledged and that a faculty second to none and an adequate student-body are being formed for the new institution. Those who were gathered in Philadelphia feel sure that Bible-loving Christians everywhere will be glad to join them in praying for, and in supporting financially, the new seminary, where the whole Bible will be honored as the inspired Word of God."

MUELLER.

The "Saint" Factory in Operation. — That Rome is clinging to all her old errors in doctrine, even though here and there she is shrewdly adapting herself to changing conditions in some of her practises, is borne out by the beatifying and canonizing which, according to the press, she is even now constantly carrying on. *Time* has an illuminating article on the latest activities pertaining to this sphere in the Roman fold. In spite of its length the article will be read with interest.

"A third of the nineteenth century had slipped by when, one day in Italy, a daughter was born to a man who later became Governor of Rome. At sixteen she was described as 'a beautiful young girl, high-spirited, with the daring recklessness of a lad.' She was called the Countess Annette Bentivoglio. At twenty-six she put away the world and entered the Poor Clare Convent in San Lorenzo. Thereafter she was known as 'Mother Mary Magdalene.' In time she journeyed to the United States and founded a convent in Omaha and one in Evansville, Ind.

"Last week these two cities had solemn occasion to remember Mother Mary Magdalene. For now has begun the secret 'trial' to determine whether she was worthy to be made a saint. After the proceedings and findings of that trial have been reported to the Vatican, the Pope may announce her beatification, then her canonization.

"Catholics in Omaha and Evansville began speculating last week upon the ultimate verdict on the life of Mother Mary Magdalene. Years may pass before they hear it. If the Pope and the cardinals find her life irreproachable, she will receive the title 'Venerable.' Then, for beatification, will come a threefold test: 1) A reputation for sanctity must be established; 2) the heroic quality of virtues must be established; 3) the working of miracles must be proved. When this test has been passed, upon the Venerable is conferred the title 'Blessed.'

"But not yet will she have achieved sainthood. As 'Blessed' she must perform at least two miracles. After these have been recognized and discussed, the Pope may declare her a saint and order her canonization.

"Mother Mary Magdalene's sainthood candidacy is supported by the Very Rev. Albert Kleber, of St. Meinrad's, Ind. Chosen as 'devil's advocate,' whose duty it is to find flaws in all arguments in her

favor, was the Rev. Peter C. Gannon, editor of the *True Voice*, a Catholic weekly.

"If Mother Mary Magdalene is canonized, she will be the seventh saint created during the pontificate of Pius XI. Others are: *St. John Eudes*, who at the age of fourteen vowed himself to perpetual chastity, preached in Normandy, founded in 1641 the Institute of Our Lady of Charity of the Refuge; *St. John Baptist Vianney* (1786—1859), famed parish priest of the little French village of Ars; *St. Magdalen-Sophy Barat* (1779—1865), foundress of the Society of the Sacred Heart; *St. Mary Magdalen Postel* (1756—1846), foundress of the Sisters of Mercy of Christian Schools; *St. Peter Canisius* (1521 to 1597), who 'saved for the Church of Rome the Catholic Germany of to-day'; *St. Thérèse de Lisieux*, the 'Little Flower' Carmelite nun who became a bride of Christ when she was only fifteen and died when she was twenty-four.

"At present there is only one United States-born candidate for sainthood. She, Ann Elizabeth Seton, was born in Manhattan in 1774 of Protestant parents. Traveling in Italy, she felt drawn toward Catholicism and adopted the Catholic religion in 1805. She founded the Sisters of Charity in the United States. Her 'cause' (candidates for sainthood) was opened in Baltimore in 1911. Its proponent is Cardinal Merry del Val." A.

Troubles for Rome in Poland.—A little item in the *Sunday-school Times* furnishes some light on a secession movement affecting the Roman Catholic Church in Poland. Our contemporary writes as follows:—

"The *Protestantische Rundschau* describes a new reformation among the Poles. The National Church in Poland has now fifteen parishes and a hundred thousand adherents.

"The first synod of the Church was held in Warsaw last June, there being two hundred and fifty present, among them two bishops and three laymen from America. Plans were made for the establishment of a theological seminary, and the statement was issued that the National Church of Poland wished to live on good terms with all Christians who base their teaching on the Gospel. All members of the Church are equal, the women having church franchise.

"If the two Polish Reformed Catholic churches unite, it will mean an important secession from Rome, for the Mariavites number 100,000, with 4 bishops, 30 priests, 500 sisters, and 200 lay brothers. They possess 68 parishes, 7 convents, 80 parish schools, 12 orphanages, and 60 workshops for children, an old people's home in every parish, and a great number of agricultural and industrial enterprises, which support the clergy, the sisters, the charities, and schools. The clergy have no fixed salaries. The institutional developments of this Reformed Catholic Church are evidence of its vitality. In renouncing Rome, they also have renounced spirits and tobacco. They are evangelical, but with certain erratic interpretations." A.

Concerning Protestant Missions in Central and South America. It is interesting to see with what arguments Roman writers are combating the efforts of Protestants endeavoring to bring the Gospel to

the unchurched in Latin America. These writers pay little attention to the circumstance that Protestants, while condemning sheep-stealing or proselytizing, nevertheless can look upon Latin-America as a legitimate field for missionary activity on account of the vast number of natives who have no connection with any Church and are living in an ignorance which is equivalent to that of downright heathenism. The Roman Catholic *Commonweal* says:—

“From Nashville, Tenn., comes the report of an address by the Rev. Dr. James I. Vance, summarizing the work of the recent Spanish Protestant Conference at Havana. It is, in several respects, a most interesting document. Though the Doctor paused by the wayside to see the fountain of perpetual youth, he was generally very strict in attending to business. This was an endeavor to unify the Protestant crusaders in Latin-America, so as to ‘increase their power as a Christian Church.’ No aspect of the situation seemed more promising than that explained by our speaker as follows: ‘Worship means more to the Spanish people than to the Anglo-Saxon people, for they are more humble in their attitude toward their religion and more vivacious and more eloquent in their expression of love for the Church.’ Curiously enough, nobody seems to have been led to wonder how they developed such virtues. It may therefore be worth while recalling the circumstances that Catholic missionaries and teachers struggled during centuries to impress upon the millions in Hispanic America a hunger for the bliss of the obedient soul. If Dr. Vance’s analysis of their achievement is correct, there seems every reason to believe that they should keep right on, without interference—lest the Spaniard become ultimately the spiritual equal of the Anglo-Saxon!”

There is no valid argument presented here against Protestant missions in Latin countries. Does the religious fervor of a part of the population connected with the Church make up for the dense ignorance of those that are on the outside? A.

The Congregationalists Turning to Liturgy.—In the Congregational Church a movement has for some time been on foot to make the services more decorous and solemn. It seems many of these people are getting tired of the emptiness and drabness which by inheritance are outward characteristics of their public worship, and they are looking to ritualism to furnish them relief. Quaint old Nathaniel Burton was a Congregationalist, and in his lectures on preaching he confesses that he found the lack of a ceremonial element unbearable and in his own church introduced a goodly amount of it. His remarks on the ceremony of baptism, though extravagant here and there, are interesting enough to be reproduced here:—

“I once saw a minister baptize a child; and what did he do? Do? As near nothing as possible. I suppose he baptized it, because he sprinkled the little head with water and repeated the customary triune sentence. And he did offer a prayer one minute in length. But he spoke the formula, and he spoke the prayer, in a tone that had no atmosphere about it, it was as bare of suggestiveness and magnetism as the human voice could be when reciting a table of statistics. I say, that minister had not studied the significance of

infant baptism and gone into the subject, so that he could see it from the inside, the vast inside. If he had, he would have swelled a little and vibrated; and not merely would he have personally dilated, but he would have been inclined to swell his ceremony, most likely, by certain quite feasible additions. Supposing he had called upon his choir to chant: 'Suffer little children to come unto Me and forbid them not'; or supposing he had himself read that passage. Supposing he had said a few words to the parents. Supposing he had expanded his curt prayer to include the undeniable terms and ground facts of child baptism. Supposing he had Romanized [?!] the occasion to the extent of half a dozen innocent little particulars which I might name, winding up with a suitable shout from the choir—yes a shout: 'Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost!' For what in all life more deserves to be shouted over than such a scene as that, with its unutterable, tender, and glorious implications." It seems some of us Lutheran pastors could learn from this old Congregationalist to be more appreciative of the good old forms which we have and to use them to better advantage. A.

Glimpses from the Editor's Window.

A severe blow fell upon our brethren in the Wisconsin Synod when one of its prominent theologians, Prof. W. F. Henkel, member of the theological faculty at Wauwatosa, was removed by death. He died July 5 at the age of 61 years and 3 days.

In Sweden a strenuous debate is going on at present on the question whether in the public schools Luther's Catechism should be taught regularly or read only on occasion. A recent order of the Department of Education prescribed the latter course. The *N. L. C. B.* states that a strong movement is going on throughout the nation for the reinstatement of the Catechism.

We may be inclined to think that Japan has almost been Christianized, judging by the remarkable progress made in that nation the last fifty years or so. But we are told by the religious press that this interesting country numbers only 300,000 Christians, which is but one half of one per cent. of the total population. The influence of Christianity in Japan, however, is very strong in spite of the small number of actual converts.

A writer in the *Hibbert Journal* quotes these words of Sir Walter Scott, written to Lockhart: "I would, if called upon, die a martyr for the Christian religion, so completely is its divine origin proved by its beneficial effects on the state of society. Were we but to name the abolition of slavery and polygamy, how much has in these two words been granted to mankind in the lessons of our Savior?" The same writer states that *Ivanhoe* was quite recently translated into Hebrew and published in Jerusalem.

Methodism in Great Britain is a religious force that has to be reckoned with. The three Methodist bodies in England, the Wesleyan, the Primitive Methodists, and the United Methodists, together number 1,389,674 members. These three churches are planning a merger, or perhaps we ought to say, some of their leaders are planning a merger for them.

India, too, is touched by the tendency toward unionism. At a recent conference in Lucknow the following denominations were represented by delegates discussing organic union: Methodist Episcopal, English Baptists, Disciples of Christ of America and Australia, Church of the Brethren, Western Methodists. From the Anglican Church unofficial representatives had come.

“‘Since Newman’s conversion,’ says the *Catholic Citizen*, ‘nearly 800 Anglican clergymen have been received into the [Roman Catholic] Church. The exact figure is said to be 787.’ This statement is made simply as one of fact. The *Catholic Citizen* is not the kind to gloat over it. From Newman’s conversion (in 1845) to the present time is a period of eighty-four years. This, then, gives an average slightly in excess of nine a year. As there are from 25,000 to 30,000 Anglican clergymen, this would seem not a very serious proportion.” — *The Living Church*, quoted in the *N. L. C. B.*

Is present-day science solving the riddles of the universe? This is the question asked by M. Luce, an English writer, who puts it thus: “Has there been any digging down to bed-rock in the department of scientific investigation? I cannot see that there has been. Even the theory of relativity appears to be to some extent reasoning in a circle; the modern atomic theory discloses new forms of energy, but it leaves energy itself as great a mystery as before.”

A.