

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)."¹¹

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 . . ."2 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 the 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 acquiescence 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 apostasy 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 CONFSSIONAL 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. 1, 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, 1963).

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