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The Confessions and the Mission of the Church

With special emphasis upon the ecumenical movement

Introduction

WHAT IS THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH according to the Lutheran Confessions? One is surprised to find that this question, when phrased in this particular manner, is not answered in our Confessions. Nor do our Confessions even speak of mission work in the sense usually understood by that term.¹ Since our Confessions do not speak of a single or multiple "mission" of the church we must direct a slightly different question to our Confessions. We therefore query: What is the church and how does it function according to our Symbols? What has it been commissioned to do? What is its activity? It is in this sense that we shall use the word "mission."

The idea may strike us that our Confessions cannot really answer our modern question concerning "mission," certainly not for missionaries in the many fields today, and not for a church which senses its mission to the "whole man" in our modern sense (whatever that may mean).² Here certainly the Confessions are conditioned to a day of absolute monarchy and semi-feudal society. What could the Confessions, written under somewhat Erastian conditions, say to us in a democratic society today? This query could, of course, be dismissed by replying that our Symbols, which see themselves as the exposition of Scripture, must be relevant wherever they speak, if they reflect a Biblical theology -- unless we wish to imply that the Scriptures themselves, because of radical changes in society and *Zeitgeist* during the last two millennia, have nothing much to offer by way of definite and formative direction and prescription for the work and activity of the church today. In such a case we should be compelled to content ourselves with a radical "translation" (in the method of the New Hermeneutic) of the Biblical commissions, injunctions, commands, *paraklesis*, etc. But I should prefer to take the query seriously as sincere and pertinent. In this case, one's own predilections and assumptions concerning the mission of the church will tend to answer the question of the relevance of the Confessions on this point. For instance, one who believes that the church's priority or even secondary mission is to act out some sort of "social gospel" today will have trouble "translating" the New Testament into meaningful counsel and will find little or nothing of value in our Confessions.

With this frank introduction we now ask the question: How do our Confessions understand the mission, or work, of the church? This question can be answered under two inclusive headings: A) the church is a proclaiming church, and B) the church is a serving church. By subsuming everything under these two rubrics we find that our Confessions say a great deal about the church's mission. In fact, the entire Reformation is an answer to this question: What is the church supposed to be doing?

A. THE CHURCH IS A PROCLAIMING CHURCH

This fact is seen in the very nature of our Symbols as proclamation, confession. How typical of our Confessions are introductory formulae such as the following, "Our churches teach with great unanimity (*Ecclesiae magno consensu apud nos docent*)," "they also teach" (AC 1, 1; II, 1; III, 1, 4), "We believe, teach and confess (*Wir glauben, lehren und bekennen*)" (FC, Epit. I, 2, 3). And we must not forget the *negativa*: "They condemn," "We reject" (e.g., AC I, 5; FC, Epit. I, 11). The very title "Protestant" which the Reformers adopted for themselves shows that they see the church as a witnessing church. The great emphasis upon doctrine in our Confessions, on the truth of the *doctrina evangelii*, its continual relevance throughout all history (Ap. XII, 53, 73) brings out this same fact that the church has a message to proclaim. Specifically several motifs from our Confessions emphasize this activity of the Church.

1. The Church as a Fellowship

The Lutheran Symbols define the church as the assembly of saints or believers (*congregatio sanctorum, Versammlung aller Glaubigen*) in which the Gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly (AC VII, 1). The activity of the church is fellowship, sharing. This is the case whether the *communio sanctorum* of our Creed is taken as the fellowship of the saints, as Luther understood the phrase (*Gemeinde, congregation, LC II, 47ff.*), or as the fellowship in the sacraments. In this community or fellowship the prime activity centers in the obtaining of the forgiveness of sins (LC II, 55) through the means of Word and Sacraments. It consists also of sanctification which in this life is never complete (LC II, 67) and is wrought also through the Word of forgiveness. Such activity is brought about and made possible by the Spirit of God -- this is His work (*Amt und Werk*) -- who works in and through the church by means of the Word of the Gospel (LC II, 59).

The clear implication of what we have said is that the work of the church is the work of the Spirit; and anything which is not clearly the Spirit's work is not the work of the church. Luther likens the church to "the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God." This is the work of the church. But Luther goes on immediately to say, "The Holy Spirit reveals and preaches that Word, and by it He illumines and kindles hearts so that they grasp and accept it, cling to it, and persevere in it" (LC II, 42; Ap. IV, 132). Needless to say the preaching of Christ is fundamental to the Spirit's (and church's) activity (ibid. 45; FC, SD 56). Luther is most explicit on this point: that the church as community, as fellowship, is both the creation of the Spirit and His locus for activity, and that His activity in and through the church is the only activity worthy of the church.

This, then, is the article which must always remain in force. Creation is past and redemption is accomplished, but the Holy Spirit carries on his work unceasingly until the last day. For this purpose he has appointed a community

Which lie speaks and does all his work. For lie has not yet gathered together all his Christian people, nor has he completed the granting of forgiveness. Therefore we believe in him who daily brings us into this community through the same Word and the forgiveness of sins. Then when his work has been finished and we abide in it, having died to the world and all evil, he will finally make us perfectly and eternally holy. We now wait in faith for this to be accomplished through the Word (LC II, 61-62; cf. A.C XVIII, 2; FC, SD 35-40)

How far are we to press this statement of Luther's? Not a word about social action here, building hospitals, schools, etc., etc. Is such action, then, not the work of the Spirit, and therefore of the church, for Luther? It would appear not, in the present context.³ Once we see the church in fellowship and action as the vehicle of the Spirit's activity we perceive why the church as a fellowship lives by and extends the means of grace that is, works the works of the Spirit, indulges in soteriological pursuits and is completely involved in this activity. The church, then, is a spiritual fellowship, held together through the proclamation of the Word and administration of the sacraments. Gospel and sacraments are the external means whereby Christ exercises His spiritual dominion -- and they reveal where the church is (Ap. VII, 10 *passim*). In this sense the church is the *regnuzn Christi* (Ap. VII, 26).

2. The Ministry

The doctrine in our Confessions concerning the ministry sheds much light on what our Symbols consider to be the mission of the church. The key passage in our Confessions to speak of the ministry of the church is AC V:

In order that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and the sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given, and the Holy Spirit produces faith, where and when it pleases God, in those who hear the Gospel.

Notice that in this passage no mention of the office of pastor is made, no mention of man, of rank, of *ordo*. Rather an activity is spoken of, a function, a preaching activity (*ministerium docendi evangelii*). This is the means whereby faith is created and nourished, the means whereby the church is born and nourished. And thus this ministry becomes the essential work of the church. Notice the prominent place given this ministry by Melanchthon. The article on this ministry of the Word follows directly upon his presentation of the work of Christ and justification by faith, and it precedes the articles on the new obedience and the church (Art. VI-VIII), for there can be no new obedience or church without this ministry.

It is important to note the functional, non-institutional, nature of this ministry. Melanchthon is simply speaking here, as elsewhere, of the preaching of the Gospel Word, or of the work of the Gospel

Word.⁴ This fact is illustrated clearly in the Schwabach Articles VII as they speak on this point, "To obtain this faith, or to bestow it upon us men God has instituted the ministry or the oral word [*Predigambt oder inundlich Wort*], namely, the Gospel through which He causes this faith and its power and use and fruit to be proclaimed, and through it as through means He gives us faith along with the Holy Spirit, as and where He wills. Apart from this there is neither means nor way, neither mode nor manner to receive faith.⁵ There can be no doubt that this article, like AC V, describes the work of the church, or more properly, God's work through the church in causing His kingdom to come. This conforms to the Confessional notion that God is the author of baptism and of the Sacrament of the Altar. The church's mission, or ministry, is God's mission through the church. And it is a ministry with a completely soteriological and eschatological goal. The kingdom of power (creation, preservation, providence, civil government) is totally in the service of the kingdom of grace, namely, God's Gospel claim upon men.

The Lutheran Confessions see this ministry as the work of the whole church in contrast to a *ministerium leviticum* which still dominated the hierarchical notion of the Romish church (Tr. 26). This functional view of ministry destroys all ranks (Tr. 7-13). What, then, is the office of the pastor? He is simply the public servant of the church, rightly called to teach and preach publicly and administer the sacraments (AC XIV). The pastor does nothing that the church is not commissioned to do. The ministry of the Word today is seen as the continuation of the apostolic ministry which in turn was the continuation of Christ's ministry (Tr. 9), Christ's *opus proprium*, which is to proclaim the Gospel. Fagerberg says,⁶ "The Lutheran Confessions present a functional understanding of the ministry. The pastors and bishops of the Church have no other duty than to proclaim the Word of Christ as preserved in Scripture. It is through this Word that God becomes present among men. The Church cannot set forth any new words; it has the one task of mediating the living Word of Christ." The church's ministry, then, is to continue Christ's office of proclaiming the forgiving Word. Again Fagerberg says,⁷ "In all the functions of the ministry God's own voice is to be heard and His will done." And God's will is known through His Word. Fagerberg does not speak too strongly or exclusively. According to our Confessions the church's ministry (mission) is confined to the proclamation of the Word of God. This point is made clear in the Apology as it speaks of ecclesiastical power (Ap. XXVIII). In discussing ecclesiastical power the Roman Confutation had maintained that bishops have the power not only of the ministry of the Word but also of ruling and coercive correction in the political and social realm—for salutary ends, of course.⁸ Melancthon replies that bishops have no power to involve themselves in civil government (AC XXVIII, 2). Nor can they impose secular punishment (AC XXVIII, 19-20). Authority in such realms has nothing to do with the office of the Gospel ("*... and gehet das Ambt des Evangeliums gar nichts an*"). They have not even the power to judge in secular cases of marriage (AC XXVIII, 29).

It is clear from the foregoing, in the light of the sharp distinction in our Confessions between the secular and the spiritual realms (a subject to which we shall have occasion to return), that the ministry of the church and pastor is definitely limited. It is a spiritual function and ministry which the church has, the ministry of preaching the Word and administering the sacraments. It is the power of the keys, no more and no less. "Our teachers hold that according to the Gospel the power of the keys or the power of bishops is a power or command of God to preach the Gospel, to remit and retain sins, and to administer the sacraments.... This power is exercised only [*tantum*] by teaching or preaching the Gospel and by administering the sacraments either to many or to individuals, depending on one's calling. For it is not bodily things that are thus given, but rather such eternal things as eternal righteousness, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life. These things cannot come about except through the ministry of the Word and sacraments" (AC XXVIII, 5, 8, 9. Cf. 21; Ap. XXVIII, 19, 9). The means of grace and salvation, the proclamation of the Gospel and administration of the sacraments: these are the power through which the Spirit of Christ creates the church, these are the marks which identify the church and unify it, and these are the *ministerium* which occupy the church in mission. And it is to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments that pastors are called.

3. The Gospel.

As a fellowship of believers in Christ, the church shares and ministers with the Gospel. This is the central theme and concern of our Confessions. It is essential therefore that we understand precisely what our Confessions mean by the Gospel. The term "Gospel" is used in our Confessions in both a broad and a narrow sense. And our Confessions recognize this fact (FC, SD V, 5). In the broad and loose sense the term may refer to the New Testament, to parts of the New Testament, to the content of Scripture, or even to the Scripture itself (AC XXVIII, 5; Tr. 60; LC 1, 65, 182, 276, 285; Ap. XI, 4).⁹ At times the term is used interchangeably with Scripture: Melancthon may say either *scriptura docet* (Ap. XII, 157) or *evangelium docet* (Ap. XV, 5). The term is even used synonymously with doctrine (Ap. VII, 8).

Our concern, however, is with the meaning of the term "Gospel" in the narrow, or proper, sense. In its form the Gospel is an external, oral proclamation (LC IV, 30; SA III, IV). Often the Gospel is simply called "the promises" (*promissiones, Verheissung Gottes, Zusage*). The promises are concerning free remission of sin and concerning reconciliation through faith in Christ (Ap. IV, 188. See also Ap. IV, 60, 388; XII, 53; SA III, 3, 4). The Gospel offers us God's own promises that He will be gracious to us and justify us for Christ's sake (Ap. IV, 43), or that He will no longer be angry with us (*Deum nobis propitium esse*) for Christ's sake (Ap. IV, 345), so that He forgives us for Christ's sake (Ap. VII, 35).

So there is a very explicit and definite content to this Gospel proclamation. Throughout our Confessions (especially in Ap. IV and FC V and SA 11, I) we observe the burning desire to retain and proclaim

this Gospel content unimpaired and unadulterated. Perhaps the best definition of the Gospel content is found in FC, SD V, 21:

The content of the Gospel is this, that the Son of God, Christ our Lord, himself assumed and bore the curse of the law and expiated and paid for all our sins, that through him alone we re-enter the good graces of God, obtain forgiveness of sins through faith, are freed from death and all the punishments of sin, and are saved eternally [cf. FC, Epit. V, 5].

One easily perceives the Christological burden in the Gospel content. The Gospel proclamation centers on the saving work of Christ and in the results of this saving work for the world and the individual. As Melancthon says, the Gospel compels us to make use of Christ. It teaches that through Him we have access to God, reconciliation with God, and victory over sin and death (Ap. IV, 291). And the Formula tells us that the Gospel "directs" sinners "solely to the merit of Christ, and raises them up again by the delightful proclamation of God's grace and favor acquired through the merits of Christ" (FC, Epit. V, 7).

Because the Gospel centers "in those articles which pertain to the office and work of Jesus Christ, or to our redemption" (SA II, intro.), it is considered throughout our Confessions to be "the first [in the sense of priority] and chief article" (*der ersteu und Hauptartikel*) of the Christian faith (SA II, I, 1).

Nothing in this article can be given up or compromised, even if heaven and earth and things temporal should be destroyed. For as St. Peter says, "There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). "And with his stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:5).

On this article rests all that we teach and practice against the pope, the devil, and the world. "Therefore we must be quite certain and have no doubts about it. Otherwise all is lost, and the pope, the devil, and all our adversaries will gain the victory (SA 11, 1, 5).

The Gospel voice not only tells us all that Christ has done for us but how we may appropriate reconciliation and justification through His death and blood, namely, by faith. And this is the *res maxima* and the *praecipuus locus* which becomes the very reason for the existence of the Confessions themselves.

Therefore Melancthon at times will call the article of forgiveness the most important point of the Gospel (*praecipuus evangelic locus*) or he will call the article of justification the fundamental theme of Christian doctrine (*praecipuus locus doctrinae Christianae*), for this is the result of Christ's office and work.

The Gospel as the proclamation of Christ's saving work is a divine dynamic; it has a function, an office, an activity.¹⁰ It effectively teaches me concerning Christ (LC II, 38), creates faith in my heart, brings me the Holy Spirit and comforts me with the treasure of salvation (AC V, 2; Ap. IV, 73; LC III, 38). It also functions to open up to me an understanding and appreciation of all the articles

of faith. It powerfully teaches me to make use of Christ as mediator and propitiator (Ap. IV, 299) and to set Him against the wrath of God (Ap. IV, 291). It offers and confers consolation and continual forgiveness (SA III, III, 8). Without this divine power, therefore, all is lost: there is no Christ, no Holy Spirit, no Christian Church (LC II, 44-45; Ap. II, 10; IV, 298). And so it is Christ's *opus proprium* and the church's *opus proprium* (LC II, 31-33; Ap. XII, 50ff.). Our Confessions see this Gospel as preached to the whole world (SA III, IV). And the fundamental office of the church is to propagate this Word "that alone brings salvation" (Preface to the Book of Concord, Tappert, p. 13).

We must bear in mind that the Gospel as understood by our Confessions is more than a mere divine dynamic. It is a cognitive, dianoetic message, a doctrine. The entire fourth article of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession struggles to articulate this Gospel of justification. True, the Gospel is no mere theoretical statement, but it is a true cognitive doctrine, nevertheless. Thus our Confessions speak of the *ministerium docendi evangelii* (AC V, 1). The church whose burden is to preach the Gospel is a *teaching church*: *Ecclesiae magno consensu apud nos docent* (AC I, 1). The church *teaches* the Gospel of Christ (Ap. IV, 400). The marks of the church are the *pure doctrine of the Gospel* (*pura evangelii doctrina*) and administration of the Sacraments (Ap. VII, 5). And so the church is called the pillar of truth (1 Tim.3:15) because it retains the "pure Gospel" (Ap.VII, 20). Without the true doctrine (*die reine Lehre*) concerning Christ and the righteousness of faith there can be no church at all (Ap. IV, 377 German). Doctrine is stressed all through the Confessions; and the church of the Lutheran Confession with its burden to proclaim Christ's Gospel believes, teaches (*lehren*), and confesses the true doctrine (*Lehre*). In fact, the Gospel is doctrine (Ap. XII, 10); the *doctrina evangelii* is the *doctrina apostolorum* (Ap. VII, 38).¹¹ And so he who teaches opinions contrary to the Gospel teaches contrary to the truth and to the church (Ap. IV, 400).¹²

B. THE CHURCH AS A SERVING CHURCH:

The Church's Ministration of Works

It is the activity (or mission) of the church to be a serving church. What is the meaning of this idea in our Confessions, the basis, nature, and scope of the church's service? In a crucial passage in the Apology, Melanchthon speaks of the two-fold service or worship in the church of Christ (Ap. IV, 310):

Thus the service and worship of the Gospel [*cultus et latreia evangelii*] is to receive good things from God, while the worship of the law is to offer and present our goods to God. We cannot offer anything to God unless we have first been reconciled and reborn. The greatest possible comfort comes from this doctrine that the highest worship in the Gospel is the desire to receive forgiveness of sins, grace, and righteousness (cf. Ap. IV, 49, 154; AC XXI, 3).

This statement of Melanchthon's offers the proper perspective for understanding the church's ministration of works. What does Melanchthon mean by a *cultus legis* whereby we offer and present our goods to God? He is obviously referring to the good works of Christians, the fruits of faith, which is the burden of the entire second part of his discussion in Apology IV (entitled, "Love and the Keeping of the Law," cf. AC VI). There are many points which we must bear in mind if we wish to understand the church's ministration of good works as the matter is understood and presented in our Confessions.

1. *It is a service only of those who have been reconciled and reborn*, as Melanchthon's statement put it. It is never called a ministry (*ministerium*). The ministry of the church, strictly speaking, has to do with the Spirit's work in the church through the means of salvation. It is a *cultus*, a service, an activity of response to the Gospel, an activity which is made possible only by the power of the Gospel.

Our Confessions never tire of maintaining that the service of works, acts of love, is the fruit of faith in the Gospel and is therefore unique to Christians. Melanchthon says, "After we have been justified and regenerated by faith, therefore, we begin to fear and love God, to pray and expect help from him, to thank and praise him, and to submit to him in our afflictions. Then also we begin to love our neighbor because our hearts have spiritual and holy impulses" (Ap. IV, 111. Cf. 129, 270). Before faith there can be no true obedience to the law by which we serve God and men (Ap. IV, 128-9). Certain *civilia opera* can be managed; but this does not please God and often does not get very far. It is the righteousness of the heart which bears the fruits of righteousness which please God and are the proper office of the Christian (Ap. IV, 375). And these fruits please God only because of faith and the mediator Christ (*propter fidem et mediatorum Christum*). Here is the right use of the *propter fidem*. (See Ap. IV, 166, 172, 181, 355, 177: *Inchoata impletio legis placeat propter fidem.*)

Faith always produces love and good works, according to our Confessions. It absolutely must do so (Ap. IV, 141; FC, SD 8). Not only because it is never the Christian's option not to do good works (FC, SD IV, 20). Not only because works are commanded as a testimony of our faith (Ap. IV, 184, 189). Not only because our works glorify Christ (Ap. IV, 269, 189). But because the Spirit has transformed us by bringing us to faith, and "faith is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, so that it is impossible for it not to be constantly doing what is good" (FC, SD IV, 10). And so faith in the Gospel is joined inseparably to the service of good works in Lutheran theology. Listen to Melanchthon: "We are justified for this very purpose, that, being righteous, we might begin to do good works and obey God's law. For this purpose we are reborn and receive the Holy Spirit, that this new life might have new works, new impulses, the fear and love of God, hatred of lust, etc." (Ap. IV, 348-9).

2. This service of works which marks the "new life" of every true Christian is not a dumb and blind service, normed by some vague and

says Melanchthon (*ibid.*). Good works are only those which have been commanded by God (AC VI, 1). And God's "immutable will according to which man is to conduct himself in this life" (FC, SD VI, 15) is found epitomized in the Decalogue (Ap. IV, 22; FC, SD VI, 12). The Ten Commandments are the norm for our life, the only norm for our service to God or our neighbor; they are the fountain through which all good works must spring, and apart from these Commandments no deed is pleasing to God, no matter how precious it may be in the eyes of the world (LC I, 311).¹³ And the Commandments are set forth and applied most beautifully in the Scriptures. Therefore no one will serve God or man with his works without support in God's Word (Ap. XV, 14, 17, 29). And the Christian in his behavior in the world and in relation to the world seeks guidance from the Scriptures.

3. As the Christian seeks to live a life of service in good works he discovers that his activities often correspond to those of unbelievers or of the state. This leads us to the notion of civil righteousness (*justitia rationis, opera rationis, justitia civilis, justitia philosophica, civilia opera, justitia legis, justitia propria, iusserliche Fromrnigkeit*) so often mentioned in our Confessions. This is the outward obedience to natural law (*ex naturae*).¹⁴ The concept of civil righteousness in our Confessions is a difficult but important concept. It is a righteousness, to be sure, and yet it does not really serve God because it is wrought by those who are carnal and cannot serve God (Ap. IV, 35). In fact it is sin in God's eyes, even though it may be most praiseworthy according to human judgment. Dialectically, then, it is *a justitia* and at the same time sin. Why? Because it is done without Christ and the Holy Spirit (Ap. IV, 124, 130, 181).

And yet the correspondence exists between the good works of Christians and the *justitia civilis* (mere outward good works: Ap. II, 43; IV, 12ff.) of the world. Both are normed by natural law and both promote and are able to achieve some order in society and improvement of human relationships. Is the Christian's ministry of works, then, simply to do what others do, but perhaps better and from totally different motives? According to Fagerberg, there is in this sense no necessity for speaking of a unique Christian ethic.¹⁵ And Melanchthon appears to support him, for he says that the commandments of the second table "contain the civil righteousness that reason understands" (Ap. IV, 34; cf. also XVIII, 4).

4. All this would certainly imply that *the Christian in the world will work in and with the secular realm and will thus serve according to his calling* (AC XVI; LC I, 150-154; SC IX, 4-5). Melanchthon's understanding of civil righteousness and his strong emphasis upon its importance in the secular and civil realm would suggest, moreover, that the Christian will not only support the works of civil righteousness where in good conscience he can do so, but that the works of civil righteousness supported by Christians will actually accomplish the optimum of justice and order in the civil realm (*Regiment, officia*; see AC XXVIII, 12, 18).

To clarify the nature of Christian service in the present context two observations must be made from our Confessions. First, we must

bear in mind the rather strong emphasis in Luther and the Confessions on the notion of vocation. This notion was developed in opposition to the Roman view which confined vocation to the clergy only. The Lutheran position was that the individual Christian serves by doing good works according to the Ten Commandments (Ap. XII, 174 German), each obeying according to his station or calling (LC I, 120). Parents have one station, children another; rulers one station, subjects another, etc. The commands are not the same to all, and so the service of the different Christians in their various offices will vary (SC V, 20), as Luther's table of duties makes clear (SC IX). This service which each Christian carries out in his own vocation is not merely the response to a command but is directed according to the very creation and order of God (*creatio et ordinatio Dei, Gottes Geschiff f and Ordnung*; AC XXVII, 20). God's commands are the commands of Him who is the preserver of nature, and that is a reason why they are so important as we carry out our different vocations. The rationale behind this concept is that we receive everything from God (LC 1, 26) and we are the channels through which God bestows blessings. 'Therefore as His means we take and give only as He has commanded. In practice this means carrying out our calling where God has placed us and serving people in our calling. Doing this and practicing all the virtues of Christian piety will keep us more than busy (LC I, 311-314).

The second corollary observation is that the service or ministration to which we have been referring is, according to our Confessions, always the ministration of the individual Christians in their several callings, not the service of the church as such. There is no mention and, it would seem, no place for corporate ecclesiastical action in the sphere of civil and secular affairs (*weltlich Regiment, politica administratio*, AC XXVIII, 11 *passim*). Why is this so? We might speculate that such action was impossible when our Confessions were written. Church and civil government were so merged in many ways that the very idea of corporate ecclesiastical action in social and civil matters, which today seems so fundamental to some, could not even have been envisaged, even though the Lutherans clearly distinguished between the spiritual and civil realms. Such an answer would, however, be superficial and not entirely true. There are several *theological* reasons why our Confessions do not and really could not advocate corporate, institutional, ecclesiastical activity in the sphere of social and civil affairs, what we today would call social or political action.

First, the clear distinction between the two authorities (*regnum Christi et regnum civilis*, Ap. XXVIII, 2) definitely limits the church in its labors and functions. "Therefore, ecclesiastical and civil power are not to be confused" (AC XXVIII, 12). "Let it [the ecclesiastical power, the church] not invade the other's function, nor transfer the kingdoms of the world, nor abrogate the laws of civil rulers, nor abolish lawful obedience, nor interfere with judgments concerning any civil ordinances or contracts, nor prescribe to civil rulers laws about the forms of government that should be established" (*ibid.* 13). The spiritual kingdom (*regnum spiritualis*) does not change civil or world government (*status civilis, Weltregiment*), but there is government

redress for righting various wrongs (cf. Ap. XVI, 7; cf. also 2, 3, 6). As representatives of the church, bishops and pastors are to exercise only a spiritual function to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments (AC XXVIII, 2, 3; Tr. 31; Ap. XXVIII, 19; Ap. XIII, 9). And this is the one function also of the church of Christ itself (AC XXVIII, 9; Ap. VII, 28).

Second, the very nature of the church precludes corporate ecclesiastical invasion of the social and political realm. For the church as the *regnum Christi* (Ap. VII, 16, 17) is not a mere association of outward rites like other political entities (*aliae politiae*), but is an association of faith and the Holy Spirit in men's hearts (*ibid.* 5), a "fellowship of saints who share the association of the same Gospel or teaching and of the same Holy Spirit, who renews, consecrates, and governs their hearts" (*ibid.* 8). As the *regnum Christi*, ruled by the Spirit of Christ, the church's activity is spiritual, always linked with the Spirit's work in and through the church. In Luther's beautiful description of the Spirit's work in the Large Catechism all the church's life and activity is centered in what the Spirit accomplishes spiritually through the Word and Sacraments (LC II). "Where He does not cause the Word to be preached and does not awaken understanding in the heart all is lost" (LC II, 43). Where the Spirit is not present with the Word there is no Christian church (LC II, 44), "for where Christ is not preached, there is no Holy Spirit to create, call, and gather the Christian church, and outside it no one can come to the Lord Christ" (LC II, 45). Neither in this discussion of Luther's which is a sort of epitome of the Spirit's and the church's work and mission nor anywhere in our Confessions do we find any mention of the ministry or function of the church as church to engage in purely social or civil activities -- this is the activity of the individual Christian in his calling.

All this does not imply that the church does not have a deep interest and stake in affairs of the social order. Not only does the church pray for the civil order and honor it and urge the Christians to support and obey it (AC XXVIII, 18; LC I, 141; III, 7 5), but the church also expresses itself on matters (like education) which affect both church and state and encourages its young to prepare for service in the secular government (*weltlichem Regiment*) and other occupations (SA II, III, 1). Nor does the church hesitate to advise the highest rulers of state concerning their responsibilities and duties (Ap. XXI, 44). However it is as members of the church (*praecipua membra ecclesiae*) who have their specific calling that rulers are given such counsel (Tr. 54).

We are now prepared to answer this question: What **is** the church's mission? According to all the evidence offered above, it is the single ministry of being the Spirit's instrument in proclaiming the Gospel and administering the sacraments. Meanwhile every Christian in his calling has the "ministry" of service both in the church and in the world. That the church's mission is single and confined to the proclamation of the Gospel and administration of the sacraments is clear from three great emphases in our Confessions, and these must

be mentioned to improve our perspective to see how fundamental this mission is and must be for the church.

1. *Soteriology*. Werner Elert speaks often of the notion of "Heilsegoismus," the personal concern for one's salvation, which is typified by the "for me" in Luther's works and in our Confessions. This notion, so often cast into the teeth of Lutheranism, is of the very essence of the evangelical faith, according to Elert. For it is a result of the soteriological burden of Lutheranism, a burden made clear in our Confessions with their stress upon the centrality of the Gospel in the church's theology and worship and life (Ap. IV, 3-10). Structurally the Augsburg Confession is built around Articles III and IV on Christology and justification through faith. The same is true of the Smalcald Articles. The whole purpose of the Confessions was to set forth and confess the Gospel in its purity, and this in order that troubled consciences could have peace and forgiveness and salvation (FC, SD V, 9, 12, 20; cf. also Preface to the Book of Concord, Tappert, pp. 5, 13). And Melancthon in his great discussion of justification by faith constantly urges the Christian as he lives out his life of faith to "make use" of Christ who is the content of the Gospel and the only mediator and propitiator against God's wrath (Ap. IV, 40, 45, 46, 80, 154, 213, 214, 221, 222, 291, 299, 300). This alone offers the believer hope against the monster of uncertainty (Ap. IV, 346, 118). The soteriological concern dominates and pervades our Lutheran Confessions. This is true even when the most peripheral concerns are discussed (see, e.g., SA II, II, III, IV). Thus, we see our Symbols as an act of confession carrying out the mission of the church to proclaim the Gospel.

2. *Eschatology*. There is no special article on eschatology in our Symbols except for the brief presentation in Augustana XVII on Christ's return to judgment (which interestingly follows the article on civil government). And this article merely sums up what was found in the catholic creeds. But eschatology, too, permeates our Confessions. The Confessions were written consciously and deliberately in anticipation of Christ's imminent return to judge and to vindicate (Ap. Preface, 19; SA II, IV, 15). The subscribers of the Book of Concord preface their confession with these words, "By the help of God's grace we, too, intend to persist in this confession until our blessed end and to appear before the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ with joyful and fearless hearts and consciences" (Preface to the Book of Concord, p. 9). And the last words of the Formula of Concord repeat that confident declaration (FC, SD XII, 40, 6). Such is the certainty of Christ's return and of victory in Him which marks the Lutheran fathers as they confess the Gospel in their day and for all posterity.

The Confessions reflect the conviction that we live in the last times.

Antichrist is raging and all the signs of the end time are revealed. Meanwhile our life here has the goal of eternal life. Our regeneration and justification through faith make us partakers now of that life (Ap. IV, 352). And the Gospel brings us all the eternal, eschatological blessings of God (Ap. VII, 15; SC VI, 6; LC II, 31; LC III, 53-4). The Christian has eternal life now. And so our life

here is lived in anticipation of the eternal life to come (LC II, 6162). This is what the central soteriological emphasis of our Confessions is all about (see, e.g., Ap. IV, 291; LC II, 28-32; FC, Epit. VI, 5): as justification and faith belong together, so faith and eternal life belong together (*Sicut auteni iustificatio ad fidein pertinet, ita pertinet ad fidem vita aeterna*, Ap. IV, 354). One can easily perceive how such a dominant eschatology will effect the church as it engages in its ministry. All is done *sub specie aeternitatis*, with the urgency of eternity about it.

3. *Satanology*. The eschatological emphasis is intensified by the Satanology in our Confessions. The realistic demonology of our Confessions is linked with the teaching concerning the two kingdoms¹⁷ and is extremely important in seeing the work of the church according to the Confessions and the apparent lack of "social concern." The devil's reign in Lutheran theology is not some vague demonic "un-authentic existence," a sort of theology of failure or discontinuity in a Tillichian sense, but a 11011-Illythical, real kingdom governed in direct enmity against God. The reign of Christ in turn is not a sort of beachhead for ultimately conquering the world (note how chiliasm is rejected in AC XVII, 5) by reforming it or changing it. It is rather a fellowship with Christ the Lord (SC II, 4), a spiritual kingdom of righteousness in the heart and the gift of the Spirit (Ap. VII, 13, 18; XXVII, 27). The two kingdoms are not static, but in constant opposition with no neutral ground between them. All men are by nature slaves of the devil and his prisoners (Ap. II, 47) and can be brought into Christ's kingdom only by a gracious act of the Spirit (SC II, 4; LC II, 27). Thus, the church's work is not to "reform" the devil's kingdom which is the fallen world, but to call men out of darkness. And Christ will destroy that kingdom at His coming. The intensity of the conflict between the two kingdoms is portrayed in most graphic detail by our Confessions. The devil is God's enemy on earth (AC XX, 25). He badgers the church from all sides and tears us from faith, hope and love, inspires false security in our hearts and draws us into unbelief and abominable sins. We spend our lives striving against his darts (LC III, 104). It is always against the church that lie lies and fumes day and night. And we must count on this. "For where God's Word is preached, accepted and believed, and bears fruit, there the blessed holy cross will not be far away" (LC III, 65). The devil's whole purpose is to take from us what we have received from God (LC III, 80). He not only obstructs and overthrows spiritual order, but also "prevents and hinders the establishment of any kind of government or honorable and peaceful relations on earth." This means that the devil reigns on earth. Luther blames everything on him: war, sedition, injustice, crop failure, even air pollution (*die Luft zu vergiften*). If it were in his power, and our prayers did not restrain him, we should not have a straw in the field, a penny in the house, or even our lives (LC III, 82; cf. Ap. IV, 47ff.). World history shows the power of the devil's rule. Blasphemy and wicked doctrines fill the world. Only the church which follows Christ, who is Lord and Victor, can win the victory over Satan. And she does so with the weapons of the Spirit which He has given her

with baptism (SC IV, 6; LC IV, 41, 83) and the Word (LC Preface 10; 1, 100; FC, SD XI, 76).

Such a demonology will certainly support an eschatological viewpoint and recall the church constantly to her true ministry. But does such a theology, such preoccupation with salvation and victory over sin and Satan, such emphatic hope in the life to come imply an escape from this life, from love of life, appreciation for God's created world, and social concern? Our brief studies above concerning the emphasis in our Confessions upon the home, civil government, the Christian life, love and good works, and also the great appreciation for God's creation which we observe in Luther's catechisms would indicate that Lutheran theology is not escapist and unconcerned about the issues of life in this world. It is just that our theology is balanced, and realistic. Lutheranism knows that the church on earth is a militant church, engaged in a dreadful and deadly battle. At the same time she believes and lives by the words of Jesus, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). And as she lives in a hostile world and awaits ultimate victory at the coming of her Lord she knows what are the weapons of her warfare: truth, the Gospel, faith, salvation, the Holy Spirit (Eph. 6:10; cf. 1 Pet. 5:6-11). All this is reflected in our Lutheran Confessions. And we as Lutherans today will do well to emulate this spirit of our great Confessions which are truly missionary affirmations also for our day.

Two questions remain to be answered, questions which must be broached in any contemporary study of the mission of the church in confessional Lutheran theology.

1. Do historic Lutheranism and our Lutheran Confessions support the sending of missionaries throughout the world? Put more strongly, is the sending of missionaries an imperative of the Lutheran understanding of the Gospel and the ministry of the church? In spite of the many failures of the Lutheran churches throughout the years to respond to the need and challenge of sending missionaries into foreign lands, Werner Elert and others have responded to our question with a resounding yes. The lack of specific directives in our Confessions for the sending of foreign missionaries is due not to any truncated doctrine of the Gospel or the mission of the church but to the situation in which our Confessions were written and to which they responded.¹⁸ In this regard we must bear in mind that there was at the time of the Reformation no distinction between foreign and home missions. Whether the apostolic message sweeps through the ancient heathen world or the same message of the Reformation sweeps through its world, the same ministry and mission of the church is in operation. That the Reformation came for the most part to lands and people who were nominally Christian does not negate its missionary character. After all, freeing the Gospel from works is opening the door for all missions. And moving the church and its ministry away from being on one level with Caesar's realm is freeing it for mission in the true sense, not with the sword, but with the Word of the Holy Spirit. The passion for the Gospel is the passion for souls, and this is the essence of the spirit of mission. Therefore we have in

our Lutheran Confessions with their burden for the teaching and proclamation of the Gospel the authentic Lutheran mission affirmations.

2. What implications do our findings concerning the ministry of the church in the Lutheran Confessions have for our relation to the ecumenical movement today? Our relations to the modern ecumenical movement, and specifically the World Council of Churches, must be determined by a large number of concerns with which our Confessions deal and not by the Confessional position on the church's ministry alone. However, we can at least help to determine our stance toward this movement today by examining briefly the modern ecumenical attitude toward the mission of the church, specifically as seen in the "Report on Renewal in Mission," adopted by the WCC assembly in Uppsala in 1968.¹⁹ An analysis of this Report, which is the result of years of study and preparation (since the WCC assembly in New Delhi) by theologians and member churches of the WCC, reveals that the WCC in its official statement has virtually missed and passed over the great evangelical themes and concerns which dominated the Reformation and our historic Lutheran Confessions. The Report has little in common with either the New Testament teaching on the church's mission or that of our Confessions. This severe judgment is not Irvine only but that of practically all those many evangelical Lutherans and Christian theologians who were present at the assembly and who struggled to understand and grapple critically with the contents of the Report and who publicly aired their views.²⁰ It is a well known fact that both Scandinavian and German substitute drafts, both of which were far more Biblical and evangelical than the Report, were submitted to the assembly. In one case a committee from the Norwegian Mission Society from the Church of Norway could not accept the Uppsala draft and considered it so poor and unbiblical that, if accepted by the assembly, it recommended that "the Church of Norway seek new instruments for its continued ecumenical engagements."²¹ The changes between the draft and final Report were not very many or formative. Specifically and in the light of our present study from the Lutheran Confessions the following must be said by way of comment and criticism of the "Report on Renewal and Mission."

a. The Report scarcely touches the great soteriological and eschatological themes so fundamental to historic Christianity and to our Lutheran Confessions as they lay a background for the ministry of the church. One might perhaps respond that such criticism is picayunish and such themes are taken for granted in the Report. One very favorable commentator says just this and then strangely commends the document for presenting a structure that is "classical and comprehensive."²² But can the very content of the Gospel, the great themes of salvation, reconciliation, justification, the work of Christ, to say nothing of the eschatological themes of Christ's return, judgment, resurrection and eternal life-can the content of the Gospel be ignored when Christians band together to speak of the mission of the church? The urgency for proclaiming the Gospel is simply not apparent in the Uppsala Report. And this is inexcusable.²³

b. The Report makes the goal of the church's mission not reconciliation with God, not conversion in the New Testament sense, but a vague humanization, "the new humanity." This serious fault has been criticized more than any other by Lutheran and evangelical theologians.²⁴ Not a word about repentance, faith, salvation, rescue from sin and the wrath of God as the great object and goal of mission work. Rather the few vague allusions to this great soteriological burden of the New Testament are turned into a mere sort of *terminus a quo* for the church's mission in community (social action) toward the proximate goal of "justice, freedom and dignity as a part of the restoration of true manhood in Christ." These goals which are humanitarian and not specifically Christian become the means for humanization. Thus the mission of the church has been secularized. This fact is illustrated by a later statement in the Report which suggests revolution against injustice in the struggle "for a just society without which the new humanity cannot fully come."

c. The Report confuses or fuses the ministry of the church, the ministry of proclaiming the Gospel and administering the sacraments, with the service of Christians (*cultis legis*, good works). The Gospel in the narrow, proper sense cannot be confused with good works which are the fruit of the Gospel. Any such confusion results in a disastrous commingling of Law and Gospel and prevents the church from carrying out its mission.

d. The Report does not offer any Biblical basis for its conclusions regarding renewal in mission. One might respond that here, too, a Biblical basis is taken for granted. But this would beg the question. For the confusion and gaps in this study concerning the basis, nature, and goal of the church's mission reveal the Report to be glaringly unbiblical.

What, then, can be our relation today, as Lutherans who have a Lutheran and Biblical doctrine of the church's ministry, to the ecumenical movement? To identify with a great movement which so tragically buries the Gospel and misses the crucial mission of the church would constitute a compromise and denial of our understanding of the Gospel and the work of Christ's church. This is a dogmatic and negative judgment, to be sure, and suggests that the WCC as viewed from its approach to the church's mission must be regarded as unevangelical and even heretical. It is my conviction that just such a judgment must be made against the WCC not merely by those of us who wish to remain loyal to the Lutheran doctrine of the Gospel but by all Christians who desire to keep and spread the Gospel. There is simply no future for a movement such as the present ecumenical movement, if the "Report on Renewal in Mission" is to be its banner and standard for action. We can and we should converse with those Christians and member churches who find themselves in this movement. Many of these Christians are deeply committed to the Gospel and evangelical in their approach to the ministry of the church. But to identify with the movement as such or make common cause with it by aligning ourselves with it, cooperating with it, supporting it, joining it, would constitute a denial of the Gospel.

FOOTNOTES

1. In a definitive article, "What the Symbols Have to Say about the Church," *CTM*, XXVI, 10 (Oct. 1955), p. 721 ff., Arthur Carl Piepkorn points out that many of the categories of which we have learned to think of in reference to the church and its work are not to be found in our Confessions, e.g., the church visible and invisible, the *Kirche-Ortsgemeinde antithesis*, the church militant and the church triumphant. So it is with the term "mission in the church." Martin Kretzmann in a provocative article, "What on Earth Does the Gospel Change?" *Lutheran World*, XVI, 4 (Oct. 1969), p. 307 ff., maintains that the terms "mission" and "missionary" in their modern sense are not always used in the New Testament sense with its emphasis upon the church as having its origin in Christ. If this is the case, then we need not be too squeamish about using the term "mission" in a broader sense than is usually envisaged today.
2. See *The Mission Affirmations*, adopted at the 46th Convention of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, June, 1965 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965). Affirmation V speaks of the church as Christ's mission to the "whole man," but it is not always clear whether the expression means the whole man, body and soul, or merely the body, and whether it refers to the whole man now (does salvation pertain to the body now?) or in eternity.
3. Corporate social action and political concerns have to do with an outward and temporal mode of existence (*ein ausserlich, zeitlich Wesen*) and, according to our Confessions (AC XVI, 4), are the work of the civil government which, like the church, is an institution of God under the category of creation and law (fourth commandment), not Gospel. It is the Creed that distinguishes Christians from Turks and Jews, who can also raise armies, build schools and hospitals, and attain a degree of civil righteousness.
4. This is brought out in other statements from the Symbols. See Ap. XXVII, 22, which speaks of pious men in cloisters "*qui serviunt ministerio verbi*." But the German has simply "*frommen Leuten, welche lesen and studieren*." Tract. 67 speaks of the ministry as the edification of the saints (cf. Eph. 4:12). Ap. XXVIII, 9 uses *ministerium* in the same active sense of carrying out a function. *Ministerium verbi et sacramentorum* is in the German *das Amt der Predig und die Handreichen der heiligen Sacrament*. AC XXVIII, 19, after saying that bishops have the power of the sword only *jure humano*, adds the words: *Haec interim alia functio est quam ministerium evangelic*". Ap. XV, 44 (German text) has the activity of preaching the Gospel when it speaks of the *Predigtamt*. Cf. LC I, 86 where Luther says that the special office (*eigentlich Amt*) of Sunday should be the ministry of preaching (*Predigtamt*) to young, poor, etc.
5. See *Bekennnisschriften*, p. 61.
6. Holsten Fagerberg, *Die Theologie der lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften*. von 1529 bis 1537, ubersetzung von Gerhard Klose (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), p. 32. See also Leiv Grane, *Confessio Augustana*, Infoerelse i den Lutherske Reformations Hovedtanker (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1963), p. 51.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
8. See Michael Reu, *The Augsburg Confession, A Collection of Sources* (Chicago: Wartburg Press, 1930), p. 381.
9. For a thorough discussion of the various nuances in which the term is used see Fagerberg, pp. 90-106. Also Ralph Bohlmann, "Our Commitment to the Gospel, a paper prepared for the Intersynodical Commission of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church, 1969, pp. 1-2, 8.
10. Fagerberg, pp. 99ff.; Edmund Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, trans by Paul F. Koehnke and Herbert J. A. Bouman (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), p. 103.

11. Fagerberg is most insistent that, according to the Confessions, the Gospel Word is based upon the Word of Scripture and normed by it (*op. cit.*, p. 21; cf; SA II, 11, 2; Ap. XII, 173; AC XXVIII, 5; Ap. XV, 16). Fagerberg's thesis is proved most clearly in Ap. IV which operates with the Scripture principle throughout its effort to formulate and defend the nature and function of the Gospel in the life of the church. Fagerberg sees the proclamation of the church, according to the Confessions, as assuming various applications at times, but having a content which is always that of the written Word. Thus, the Bible, as it were, is "brought to life" through preaching. Preaching, in the meantime, must conform to the Scriptures. He says (p. 32): "The spoken Word in no sense becomes a critical authority to be used against the Word of Scripture but it is God's active Word in the present precisely because it is grounded in the Holy Scripture. The Scripture Word, brought to life in preaching and in the administration of the Sacraments, mediates the very activity of God."
12. Since the Gospel is doctrine and the teaching ministry of the church is to propagate and apply and formulate and defend the Gospel, it goes without saying that our Lutheran Symbols never pooh-pooh or depreciate Christian doctrine. A deep concern for the purity of the *doctrina evangelii* is evident throughout the Confessions and was clearly an impetus for the writing of the Confessions. One is therefore alarmed and ashamed to witness modern Lutherans who pledge their loyalty to our Confessions making light of such a concern for pure doctrine and contrasting the Gospel to doctrine. This is the most disappointing feature of a recent article by Martin L. Kretzmann, "What on Earth does the Gospel, Change?" *Lutheran World XVI*, 4 (Oct. 1969), pp. 311, 313, 315, 316, 321. Such an antithesis is never found in our Confessions and would be considered false and a contradiction in terms by the writers of the Confessions.
13. Unlike Melancthon in the Augustana and Apology and the Formula of Concord, Luther never calls God's positive will for our life "law," but rather *Gebot, mandatum, praeceptum*. For Luther, who owed so much to Paul, "law" was too closely related to God's wrath.
14. The concept of natural law in the early Luther, a concept which is fundamental to an appreciation of his treatment of the Ten Commandments in the Large Catechism, is treated by Fagerberg, pp. 69ff. See also Lauri Haikola, *Usus Legis* (Uppsala, A. B. Lundequistska Bokhandeln, 1958), p. 95, *passim*. The best presentation of the matter is by Paul Peters, "Luther on the Form and Scope of Mosaic Law," *Quartalsch.ri f t*, 45, 2 (April, 1948), pp. 98-113
15. Fagerberg, p. 70.
16. *The Structure of Lutheranism*, trans. by Walter A. Hansen (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), p. 68f.
17. Schlink, p. 194.
18. Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*, pp. 385-402. See also Paul Peters, "Luthers Weltweiter Missionssinn," *Lutherischer Rundblick*, XVII, pp. 3-4 (1969), pp. 162-175. Both Elert and Peters bring up numerous examples of mission work in the narrow sense which was carried out by the early Lutherans wherever they had opportunity. They both explain the lack of opportunity for foreign mission work in the case of most Lutherans, except in Lapland and Greenland and similar limited fields. Earlier efforts to bring the Gospel to the Arab world were abortive. But both contend rightly that the impetus and inherent dynamic for foreign mission work are basic to Lutheran theology. And the fervor to go to heathen lands was always explicitly present.
19. See *The Uppsala Report 1968*. Message, *Section Reports and Proceedings of the Assembly* (no place, no date), pp. 27-36. See Appendix
20. See "Discussion of the Report on Renewal in Mission" in *The Uppsala Report 1968*, pp. 25-27, where the remarks of such Lutherans as Per Loenning and K. E. Skydsgaard are noted. More severe is the critique of Haakon Haus, Rektor of the Misjonsskolen in Stavanger, Norway in

21. *Fornyelse i Misjonen*. See *Konsultasjonen "Misjonstenkingen Idag-og Imorgen,"* Stavanger, 1968, no. 17. Cf. *ibid.*, nos. 20, 22. Cf. also "Uppsala 1968" in *Christianity Today*, August 16, 1968, pp. 1067-71; also June 21, 1968, pp. 937-8.
22. *Konsultasjonen*, no. 20, p. 7.
23. Harold Ditmanson, "Doors Opened to a World: a North American Reaction to Uppsala," *Lutheran World*, XVI, (1969), pp. 159f1.
24. Cf. the explicit and warm statement of the Alternative Draft from Scandinavia (*Konsultasjonen*, 22, pp. 5-6) : "We pray that as Christian churches committed to God's mission, we may have the vivifying vision of that unsurpassed gift from God: the sacrifice of His Christ to save the world from all its horrors and all its sinful corruption. In the apostolic proclamation this rings through the world for generations: Christ died for our sins, in accordance with the Scriptures, he was buried, he was raised to life on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and he appeared to his disciples and apostles and was present with them and is present with us always to the end of the world. As ministers of reconciliation we have to be restored to our high calling by a new grasp of that basic truth that God in Christ has reconcile the world unto himself. When anyone is united to Christ, the new creation is here, the old has gone, and the new has already begun. From first to last this has been the work of God, and he has enlisted us in this service entrusting us with the message of reconciliation. We come therefore as Christ's ambassadors, sharing in God's work, participating in His mission." Other modern mission affirmations are equally explicit concerning the content of the Gospel. Cf. the *Wheaton Declaration*, Subscribed by the Delegates to The Congress on the Church's Worldwide Mission, April 9-16, 1966. Cf. also *The Frankfurt Declaration in Christianity Today*, June 19, 1970, pp. 844-846. Cf. also "One Race, One Gospel, One Task," Closing Statement of the World Congress on Evangelism (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1967). All these statements are very explicit on what the Gospel is and on what the soteriological aim of the mission of the church is. In this respect our own Mission Affirmations are disappointing. They come far short of *The Frankfurt Declaration* in its explicit articulation of the Gospel in the language of Scripture. Obfuscation in this urgent matter, such as we observe especially in the Report of the Uppsala Assembly, is never a virtue in a theological declaration of this kind, but a great fault.
24. See *Konsultasjonen*, Summary of Critical Comments to Section II, "Renewal in Mission," no. 22, p. 4: "*Reconciliation* is primarily understood as man's reconciliation, not to God, but to his fellow-man. The horizontal dimension of the Christian life is emphasized at the cost of its vertical dimension. Humanization, not Christianization, it is stated, must be the chief concern of the missionary congregation today. The goal of mission should be the new humanity in Christ, i.e. leading men and women for the sake of greater justice and freedom, etc. Humanization no doubt is a legitimate aim of the church's mission, but as an *aspect* of and a *result* of Christianization, i.e. the reconciliation of man to God through Christ and his church. Christianization (in the sense just indicated) is and must be the dominant purpose of mission, cf. 2 Cor. 5:20; 1 John 2:2, Rev. 1:5; 5:9; 7:13f" (O. G. Myklebust). One gets the impression that Myklebust for similar reasons might object to the strange and weak terminology used in Martin Kretzmann's article mentioned above, "What on Earth Does the Gospel Change?" Kretzmann's contention and refrain is that the Gospel changes "man's self-understanding." Like "humanization," "self-understanding" is a very vague notion which is secular in origin (Martin Heidegger) and ordinarily has no vertical dimension, to use Myklebust's jargon, no reference to God and His work of regeneration and quickening. One wishes that a more Christocentric and soteriological stress might have been made, although one does at times detect this as Kretzmann answers the question posed. Cf. the statement of P. Andre Seumois, pp. 4-5: "Ne peut être accepté tel qu'ici présenté. Le but de l'Eglise reste la christianisation de l'humanité, non

pas directement du moins, son humanisation. L'Eglise cependant est appelée à un rôle indirect dans ce secteur séculier du progrès ou développement humain, ainsi qu'il est dit plus haut. Si l'on veut insister sur ce rôle, il faut alors parler de l'humanisme intégral qui comporte également et avant tout l'aspect du développement religieux et chrétien : le développement matériel des populations doit s'harmoniser avec leur développement spirituel, et c'est ici que s'insère le rôle de l'Eglise

Par ailleurs les chrétiens, en tant qu'appartenant à la société séculière, ont le devoir comme chrétiens, d'être des ardents promoteurs du développement humain; mais le rôle de l'Eglise comme telle reste de caractère directement spirituel, si non on sécularise l'Eglise et la mission du Christ."