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CONCORDIA SEMINARY

A LUTHERAN VIEW OF VATICAN II  
ON LITURGY AND SCRIPTURE

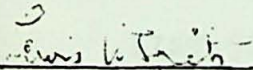
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CONCORDIA SEMINARY, ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI,  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF SACRED THEOLOGY

BY  
RAYMOND A. MUELLER

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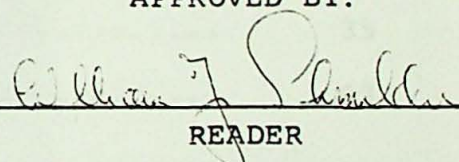
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with regard to this precis.)

APPROVED BY:



ADVISOR

APPROVED BY:



READER

NOTA BENE

This precis is presented in lieu of the final draft of a thesis with the same title. After the advisor and the reader had approved the semi-final draft of the thesis with suggestions for minor improvements, the writer, who served as pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Bremen, Indiana, accepted a call to become pastor at Holy Cross Lutheran Church, St. Louis, Missouri. On the day of the move to St. Louis, all copies of the thesis and all note cards and bibliography cards, together with various books and papers connected with the thesis, were lost or stolen within the 'attache' case in which they were packed. After strenuous efforts were made to locate them, all to no avail, the Academic Council of Concordia Seminary graciously decided to ask the writer to prepare an extended precis which was to replace the required final draft of the thesis. Herewith the writer offers the requested precis.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

It is the considered opinion of many, such as Roman Catholic theologian L.G.M. Alting von Geusau, that the Second Vatican Council marks the end of one period in the history of the Roman Catholic Church and the beginning of another. Von Geusau, like the Lutheran liturgiologist, Ernest B. Koenker, traces the roots of this development back to the liturgical movement within Roman Catholicism. Significantly, the first product of the Second Vatican Council promulgated by Pope Paul VI was the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, and thus it set the tone and direction of this epoch-making conclave. Anyone, therefore, who is committed to the Lutheran Confessions would find it necessary to begin his post-conciliar re-evaluation of the Roman Catholic Church by comparing this constitution with his own doctrinal commitment.

Yet a Lutheran does not begin with external forms of worship. He begins with the message of God to man identified as Holy Scripture. Therefore, a truly Lutheran evaluation of Vatican II must decidedly include an examination of the Council's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation. Has the Roman Catholic Church changed in its stance toward Scripture, Tradition, and the authority of the papacy and the hierarchy to stipulate teachings and dogma apart from Scripture? How must Scripture be interpreted in post-Vatican II Roman Catholicism?

The fact that the Second Vatican Council has brought vast change into the Roman Catholic Church is obvious. But was the sum of these changes beneficial for its own members and sufficient to remove the walls erected between Rome and historic Lutheranism back in the 16th Century? What, actually, is the direction in which the Roman Church is now headed after Vatican II? This study is an attempt to find answers to these questions.

Certain limitations, of course, must be set in a study of this nature. On the Roman Catholic side this study will confine itself to an examination of the two Constitutions of Vatican II on the Sacred Liturgy and on Divine Revelation. We shall, of necessity, omit comment in any detailed form on other documents of Vatican II. On the Lutheran side, we shall review the position of Martin Luther and of the Lutheran Confessions with regard to their respective doctrinal stances vis-a-vis worship and Scripture. When such an examination of both sides is completed, we shall attempt a comparative analysis of the two Roman Catholic constitutions over against the corresponding position of Luther and the Lutheran Confessions. Thus we hope to arrive at a Lutheran view of Vatican II on liturgy and Scripture and a glimpse at the resultant direction in which the Roman Catholic Church is now heading in matters of faith, doctrine, and the care of souls.

## CHAPTER II

### DOCTRINAL PRINCIPLES IN THE CONSTITUTION

#### ON THE SACRED LITURGY

At the outset it must be stated that the Second Vatican Council was rather different from all other councils of the Church, with the probable exception of that conclave, the proceedings of which are recorded in the New Testament itself (Acts 15). Other councils met to deal primarily with issues which are now studied in the theological or systematics departments of modern seminaries. The Council of Jerusalem and Vatican II both began from a starting point well within the fields of what we now call the practical and the exegetical departments. Vatican II dealt with its issues and its material almost entirely from a pastoral point of view rather than a dogmatic standpoint. Already in Paragraph I of *de Liturgia* we learn that the goals of Vatican II are to strengthen and deepen the Christian life of the faithful (by updating whatever can be adapted to modernity), to reach out toward those believers who are now outside the Church, and to strengthen the Church's appeal to all mankind. Thus we see that Vatican II was, like the Jerusalem Council, primarily concerned with the cure and care of souls, i.e., the pastoral and missionary aspects of the work of the Christian Church. There is no doubt that the pastoral heart of Pope John XXIII, who called the Second Vatican Council into existence, strongly influenced the entire direction and pur-

pose of this 20th Century council.

Vatican II could have taken its cue from the general Protestant thrust in worship and doctrine, i.e., a sort of individualistic approach to such matters. But it was still clearly a Roman Catholic council. Therefore it avoided such an approach and, instead, attempted to reorganize the entire church for the care of souls. The result is that the accent is more on the community in worship than ever before.

Yet, Vatican II moved away from Rome's former ecclesiasticism by laying a very heavy emphasis on the intelligible and willing responses of the faithful in worship. Faith must know what it believes and give sincere assent to it. This seems to be the true starting point of Vatican II in its movement toward the goal of the renewal of the spiritual life of the church community.

This means that the Mass must be changed. It must include intelligible Scripture readings which have some semblance of rational continuity in their selection. These readings must also be expounded and applied to the faithful. The entire liturgy, including the sacraments, is instructional and educative and must, therefore, be renewed so that the proper instruction is given to the faithful.

Therefore, de Liturgia comes out most emphatically against the traditional pre-Vatican II ex opere operato concept of the value of religious and worship activities.

This calls for an emphasis on the Word in worship. The Word must be clearly united with the sacraments, since it is in-



structional and will help the faithful to move away from an ex opere operato impression of the manner in which blessings of the sacraments are received.

However, the word can even stand by itself. That is why Vatican II approved of so-called "Bible services," which have been attempted quite successfully in Germany and France.

As a logical corollary of the new emphases on intelligible assent, on upgrading of Scripture, and on genuine personal piety in the lives of the laity, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy comes very near to promulgating what may be called a sort of doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. The community at worship includes the active participation of the laity as well as the clergy. The "Bible Services" previously mentioned may be conducted where no priest is available, as long as the leader of such services is duly authorized by the bishop.

This calls for redefinition of hierarchy and church. There are not two levels--Christ as Highpriest and under Him the hierarchy, with the laity as mere passive objects and onlookers in worship, but to Christ and the hierarchy is added the laity as a third level of priestly activity in worship.

This, of course, calls for emphasis on simplicity and on the educatory values of worship and the sacraments. Hence, revisions are needed in seminary curricula, the daily hours, etc. Decisions on liturgical wording, translations, and other reforms in worship will be more decentralized.

This, in turn, introduces a large element of pluralism in

worship forms. But Vatican II decided that such pluralism was acceptable because the unity of the Church does not require wooden uniformity in worship practices. As evidence of this fact, the Uniate Churches of the Middle East were cited. Therefore, local customs and color can be worked into worship in "mission lands," and many of the customs of the "separated brethren" may also be acceptable. Monolithic uniformity and ritualistic conformity are not imposed any longer in matters which do not involve the faith or the good of the whole community of the faithful.

The use of the vernacular in worship seems to be the tie which binds all these reforms into one package, for it promotes, strengthens, and applies the underlying principle of Vatican II, namely, the pastoral care of souls.

It does this in various ways. First, it agrees with the principle of "adaptation" to the needs of the faithful wherever and whenever they live. Second, it enables the laity to become active participants in worship, thus fostering the concept of the "lay apostolate," which approximates the Biblical concept of the priesthood of all believers. (Incidentally, such lay participation tends to undermine both clericism and anticlericalism at the same time.) Third, it liberates the Church from its ossified past. Fourth, it makes possible the vastly important transition from worship ex opere operato to the worship of intelligent, informed, and willing faith and thus lays a much greater emphasis on the personal appropriation of the blessings

of the Word and sacraments through genuine, personal faith.

In addition, the use of the vernacular changes the church from a spectator sport to a genuine fellowship in Word and sacrament, strengthens the interest of both clergy and laity in Scripture and in its application to daily life, empowers the laity to lead in certain parts of worship and in the "Bible services" mentioned above, influences the Church in mission lands, and strongly fosters contacts with non-Catholic Christians, thereby taking several large steps toward the promotion of the reunification of Christendom.

All the changes we have thus far gleaned from the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy have served to emphasize the chief thrust of Vatican II, namely, the total renewal of the Roman Catholic Church's method of caring for souls, whether they are members of the Roman Church, of other Christian communions, or of the non-Christian masses. But there were also other concerns in this Constitution. The Council Fathers sat back, as it were, and having looked at all the changes they were bringing into the Church and its worship, asked whether such reforms could be made without severing the thread of tradition. In other words, how could the Church renew the impact of the liturgy (and the many other facets of the Church) through the adoption of various changes and reforms without, at the same time, detaching itself from its historical moorings?

The answer is given in the principle that the moorings must remain essentially the same while their function is changed. There-

fore, as von Galli puts it, "the nearer to the spring, the clearer the water." In different situations which have confronted the Church through the course of history, certain adjustments had to be made in the liturgy to accommodate the changing times. Modifications were therefore not only permissible but also necessary. The same holds true in the present century.

However, in order that the moorings may still remain the same, much research is needed into other eras (patristics, etc.) and other traditions (Greek, Maronites, etc.) for the purpose of discovering traditions which can be useful in the development of doctrine and modern forms of worship.

Yet the renewal of the Roman Church is to maintain a conservative character. The Constitution cautions against the introductions of "innovations" by setting up two requirements: it must be clear that contemplated changes are truly required for the good of the Church, and they must "grow organically from forms already existing." Also, "notable differences between the rites used in adjacent regions are to be carefully avoided." Certain brakes are applied against radical innovations in music, art, etc. Historical honesty is required in honoring the various saints, i.e., no imaginary saints, miracles, or works are to be allowed in the liturgy or piety of the Church from henceforth. Faithfulness to the moorings also requires historical genuineness, even if such faithfulness runs contrary to the cherished folk piety of many in the Church.

A final accent in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy is that of irenics in relation to the non-Roman communions within

Christendom. Certain red-flag terms were avoided with studied care. Extreme Unction, in full agreement with the principles of remaining with "the moorings," is changed to a rite which is very much like the corresponding sacrament in the Greek Church in both name and function. It is now called "Anointing of the Sick," and is recommended not only for the last moments before death but also for any time of grievous illness. Another example of irenics toward the Greek Church as well as Protestantism is the Constitution's stated willingness to set a fixed date for Easter in conjunction with "the separated brethren."

To summarize, in this Constitution the Council Fathers sincerely attempted to map out the renewal of the entire worship life of the Church by emphasizing pastoral concern for souls, integrity of mind and spirit, and reconciliation with those segments of the world and of Christendom from which the Roman Catholic Church had become estranged through the centuries.

### CHAPTER III

#### A BRIEF LOOK AT LUTHER'S APPROACH TO WORSHIP

Martin Luther, as is well known, began his public work of reformation purely from the motive of concern for the souls of his contemporaries. He wrote his famous Ninety-Five Theses not merely as an exercise in academic debate but because some of the members of the Wittenberg parish were, in his view, being dangerously misled into false trust in their own powers to gain the approval of God through the purchase of papal indulgences.

Luther, therefore, was not concerned about rubrics and external ceremonies as such, but only about the care and cure of souls. In his Concerning the Order of Public Worship he charges the Roman pope with allowing three abuses to continue in worship: the silencing of the Word of God, the introduction of "a host of un-Christian fables and lies, in legends, hymns, and sermons" and the promotion of the disastrously false idea that worship was a human "work whereby God's grace and salvation might be won." What was so disastrous about these abuses was that saving, justifying faith disappeared because of them. Thus, Luther's approach to worship is purely a pastoral one, based entirely on his concern for the salvation of souls through faith in Christ alone.

Such care for souls, therefore, could never begin from sinful man's side but only from God's side, namely, God's Word. This Word is the only way God has chosen to reach down to sinners to

care for them and render them acceptable to Him. Therefore, sinners are saved by grace alone through faith alone on account of Christ alone. Besides, this whole plan for saving sinners is not an idea invented by wise and religious men, not even the church's men; it could originate only in God and be executed only by Him. In addition, the news of this plan and its execution has come from God to men in the only errorless and reliable Word He has given to mankind, i.e., the Holy Scriptures. Since the Scriptures are therefore the only absolutely reliable source of the news of God's plan of salvation and its execution by God in space and time, the Scriptures alone (sola Scriptura) are the judge and norm of all matters on which they speak, including doctrine, life, and worship.

Anything, therefore, that tends to weaken these solas (i.e., grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone, and Scripture alone) is to be rejected out of hand as dangerous to souls. Anything that could serve to strengthen the sinner's hold on these solas is acceptable from the point of view of the care of souls and is therefore pastorally useful. Hence, no guidance, no tradition, and no directives from popes or councils are to be accepted unless they are in full agreement with the Holy Scriptures.

Luther, therefore, had to decide what to do with the doctrines and practices involved in worship which the Sixteenth Century church had inherited from its past. Christian freedom under the Scriptures alone produced five principles by which Luther measured the value of each part of the liturgical heritage of the Church.

These principles were: (1) Has God commanded it in the Scriptures? If so, the Christian gladly includes it. (2) Does it have Gospel value for justifying faith or for increasing faith's fruitfulness in the worshiper? If so, use it gratefully, even if God has not clearly commanded it. (3) Is it prohibited in Scripture? If so, no one dares to use it in any form. (4) Even though God has not clearly prohibited it, does it tend to teach false doctrine, especially the natural man's notion that he has, or can have, merit or righteousness of his own in God's eyes? Then don't use it. (5) Can it be salvaged from whatever false connotations it may have had through the years? If so, preserve and use it in a changed and purified form. This approach has been termed Luther's "Conservative Reformation," since it respected but did not worship the past.

Luther maintained from Scripture that all works of men are tainted with sin, including all forms of worship of God. Therefore, faith alone is really the only way man can worship God. Faith merely receives from God. Hence, Luther rejected the entire concept of the Mass as a sacrifice, with the exception of the purely eucharistic response which resulted in man's heart from God's grace and forgiveness given him freely in the Lord's Supper. The Sacrament is always a beneficium of God given freely to man, never a sacrificium offered by man to God. The Mass viewed as a sacrifice is, therefore, nothing but blasphemy, since it reverses the roles of God and man. Therefore, Luther rejected the entire canon of the Mass. Also rejected were sacerdotalism,



purgatory, pilgrimages, indulgences of all kinds, private Masses for the living or the dead, invocation of saints, the belief that their oversupply of merits can be utilized by others, relics, etc. All of these rejected items were dangerous to faith and to the glory of Christ as Savior of men.

Yet, Luther was not a Gospel-reductionist, for he rejected also those items in worship which could have been salvaged without seriously affecting the three solas of justification but were contrary to the Bible. For example, he rejected transubstantiation and the administration of Holy Communion in one kind simply because they disagreed with Scripture.

But the one absolute requirement for all spiritual life and faith is the Word of God. Every external form of worship is, eo ipso, in the category of law if it includes no Word of God. Where there is no Word there can be no faith in Christ, and hence no Christians, no Christian Church, no sacraments, and no salvation. The people must hear the Word, sing it in hymns and liturgy, use their lay talents to spread it, and cling to it in all circumstances and situations of life.

Sacraments without the Word are not sacraments at all. Hence, the Words of Institution must be made to stand out loudly for all to hear, and no one should be given any reason to receive the impression that they are part of man's word to God (i.e., eucharistic prayer or any other form of sacrificium) as in the Roman canon. Therefore, Luther excized the entire canon of the Mass and left only the loud, clear Words of Institution which he realized

was purest Gospel.

The sermon had to be seized as a wonderful opportunity in the worship service for presenting and directly applying the Word of God to the people. Like the Words of Institution and other sacrificial elements of worship, the sermon could be utilized by the Holy Spirit to incite faith in the heart of the hearer. It must, therefore, be included in worship and must convey the plain sense of Scripture rather than mere stories of saints, relics, etc.

Therefore, also the vernacular had to replace Latin wherever the latter was not understood. Since the Word of God created Christians and God counted all Christians as priests (the priesthood of all believers), lay participation was necessary in worship. Statues, crucifixes, church buildings, paintings, and the like are neither to be worshipped nor rejected as idols but, as long as there were no connotations of merit in their use, utilized as effective instructional aids for the laity. No tinge of the Roman doctrine of merit, whether connected with the idea of opus operatum or not, was to be permitted in truly Christian forms of worship.

In everything, Martin Luther was absolutely bound by Scripture alone, for Scripture is the ius divinum, the divine authority, which is to direct all things in the church of the true God. Human reason, because it is part of the fallen nature of man, dare never be used as master of Scripture in grasping its meaning. Such magisterial use of reason was, according to Luther, the ultimate root of all problems in the church, especially the soul damning concept of man's ability to contribute something of his own toward his

salvation.

Yet reason must be used in the role of a servant of Scripture, i.e., ministerially, because God has deigned to reach His blessings down to man through human language. That is the basis of Luther's many volumes in which he expounds the meaning of Scripture for the lives and faith of his readers. But he cautions strongly that the simple and clear sense of Scripture is the sense in which its true Author, the Holy Spirit, intends it to be understood and believed, for, as he points out, no one could ever speak more plainly than the Holy Spirit. Hence, Luther insisted on what is now termed the historical-grammatical method of Biblical hermeneutics with all its corollaries for Scriptural interpretation.

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## CHAPTER IV

### DOCTRINAL PRINCIPLES CONNECTED WITH WORSHIP IN

### THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS

The theology of the Lutheran Confessions is not on the one hand, directed toward any particular pattern or form of worship. But, on the other hand, it is totally and essentially pastoral, in the deepest sense of that term. The entire aim of the Confessions is to care for souls, for the root of the whole Lutheran Confessional corpus is justification of the sinner by faith alone. All teachings, forms of worship, works, ecclesiastical arrangements, methods used in interpreting Scripture, and attitudes and stances toward the past, the present, and the future of either the world or the church must either properly lead up to or correctly proceed from, that soul-saving principle. According to the Lutherans, their own Reformation movement would have been unnecessary had it not been for the fact that the justification of sinners by simple faith in Christ was being called into question by wrong or misleading doctrines, forms, ceremonies, rules, Biblical hermeneutics, traditions, customs, and stances toward works, ecclesiastical arrangements, and matters of history.

Faith itself justifies, and therefore faith is both the root and the highest form of all true worship of God. For it is the very nature of God, as Melanchthon writes in the Apology IV

228 (Latin), that He "wants us to believe Him and to accept blessings from Him; this He declares to be true worship."

All parts or forms of worship which tend to promote faith, i.e., the receiving of God's proffered blessings in Christ, are most profitable and acceptable to those who hold to the Lutheran Confessions. On the other hand, any part or form of worship which tends to warp or weaken this soul-saving doctrine must be either rejected out of hand or changed thoroughly enough that there is no danger to the promotion of this doctrine. The approach to worship is clearly expressed in all sections of the Confessions. For example, Melanchthon clearly states in the Apology IV 310, that

The service and worship of the Gospel 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 re-born. 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.

It is clear, then, that the Lutheran Confessions are most earnest in their goal of keeping every activity and every part of the church's doctrine and life directed toward the ultimate purpose of the care of souls, i.e., their final salvation.

However, this care of souls must always deal in realities. To care for a soul means to nudge it ever so earnestly away from the total unreality of trusting in its own power to obey the Law or to substitute an imaginary, man-made law for God's real Law (that is, in order that it may seem possible for that soul to trust its own power to obey that law), over to the realm of reality, namely, that in which the soul renounces all trust in self and en-

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trusts itself instead to the one, real God, who promises and bestows free and genuine grace and life eternal. The chief aim of the Lutheran Book of Concord is, therefore, to be totally realistic about the relationship between man, the sinner, and God, the just Redeemer. All trust in one's own merits is fantasy of the purest kind, since man--in reality--is totally depraved and incapable of producing anything which can be counted as good in the eyes of the righteous God (Ap IV 28-42; FC SC IV 8). Therefore, only that care of souls is truly pastoral which deals with the realities of the one, real God (LC I 17, 21; II 66; Ap I 2; XIII 20-21; AC I 1; and the Athanasian Creed).

This means God must first come to man, not man to God. And God has done just this in both Christ and the Holy Scriptures (FC Ep 1-2). The principles of sola Scriptura and solum Christum, found so clearly and emphatically throughout the Lutheran symbols, are the guarantee of the objectivity of man's real relationship with the one, real God. These two principles also guarantee that man's salvation is by the pure grace of God (sola gratia) for it is not man's imagined merit or worthiness which has called down the revelation of God in Christ or in Scripture, but God gave both His only Son and His written Word out of His own good grace and mercy alone.

Our response to God's pure grace must also be genuine; it must, therefore, in no way be feigned. Faith as the receptacle for God's gift of Christ's righteousness must be a genuine receiving instrument, never a giving instrument, as if man could give

anything to God to contribute toward his own salvation. Therefore, no mere opus operatum can be permitted in true worship. Man's response to God's grace must be the kind that allows God, the real God, to be and remain the God that He really is, namely, the "Good Giver of all good gifts." This kind of response excludes all works, even man's acts of worship. Hence, also in matters of worship the Confessions stand firmly on the last principle of the Reformation; sola fide. Furthermore, such justifying faith is awakened in the heart not by what man can do but purely by God through His Word. Luther clearly realized that no one can be wafted into faith without God's external means appointed by Him in the Scriptures and utilized by Him for this purpose.

Hence, true worship must always walk a tight-rope between overemphasizing either its subjective or its objective elements. The objective Word of God (to which nothing human can be added) must be proclaimed. Subjective faith (fiducia) must receive God's objective gifts in His Word. The means of grace, i.e., the Word and the sacraments, must therefore be offered objectively and received subjectively. The former, by the working of the Holy Spirit, produces the latter. They are two sides of the same coin.

However, the Lutheran Confessions are well aware of the danger for souls in the very use of the Word and sacraments; for if either the objective reality of God's grace in Christ or the subjective appropriation of it is weakened or eliminated, the soul winds up again trusting in something other than the one, real God.

On the objective side, the Confessions, therefore, stress that it is not the church but God in His Word alone who validates both the contents and the blessings offered in the proclaimed Word and administered sacraments. Neither the faith of the minister nor that of the recipient can produce such validation of the means of grace.

Furthermore, it is for this reason, among others, that Luther rejected the entire Canon of the Mass and retained only the Scriptural narrative of the Words of Institution and the Lord's Prayer. Since only Christ can validate the contents and blessings of the Sacrament, it would tend to mislead the communicant if he were led by a long eucharistic prayer to imagine that man's praying is necessary as a causative agent in Holy Communion. Again, reality must dictate a change in the liturgy so that souls (i.e., people) may be cured and cared for.

Still on the objective side, the Lutheran Confessors were compelled also to reject Zwingli's and Calvin's doctrines of the "real absence" of Christ's body and blood in the Lord's Supper, for it is not man's faith that creates the true contents of the Sacrament but the clear and simple words of Christ, "This is my body," and "This is my blood." Likewise also to be rejected is the Roman doctrine that required holy orders and the right intention of priest before the sacraments are valid, as well as the four or five extra sacraments invented by Rome (i.e., by man, not by God).

On the subjective side, to be rejected vehemently is the



entire concept of propitiatory sacrifices for sins of the living and the dead, for this is all pure human imagination as it is invented by depraved man's heart which constantly believes he can offer something to God to render himself approved in His eyes. Luther had to reject many other items in the Roman Mass, since they, like the concept of propitiatory sacrifices, smacked of salvation by works. Many other parts of the Mass had to be carefully examined for weaknesses in the meaning they conveyed to the common worshipper, since they fell into the category of human ceremonies and adiaphora.

In addition, the Confessions declared that communicants were to be examined before partaking of the Sacrament in order to establish, as far as pastors of souls could do so, their readiness to receive Christ's forgiveness with the hand of genuine repentance and faith. Both kinds must be administered to all communicants simply because that is Christ's command, for it is obviously the product of unreality for man to countermand the clear words of the Lord of lords. When a mere man assumes for himself the authority to deny the cup to the laity, he not only treats himself as God but also rejects the reality behind the sola Scriptura principle by rewriting, as it were, the direct command of the one, real God.

The Lutheran Confessions, therefore, were consciously historic and conservative, for they earnestly sought to retain the traditions and rites which they inherited, as long as each specific item of liturgy could be retained without compromising evangelical truth. Their guideline was the Holy Scriptures, which states,

"Test everything, hold fast what is good" (1 Thess. 5:21).

Hence, we find the following principles which are based on the stance of the Confessions toward rites and ceremonies:

1. External ceremonies instituted by men are not, in themselves, worship, and they are to be viewed and used as adiaphora, which can be changed according to circumstances, FC Ep X 3-4, SD X 8.
2. Since mutual agreement in doctrine is the essential thing, one church should not condemn another because it has more or fewer man-instituted ceremonies in public worship or church order, AC VII 2, XXVI 44; FC Ep X 7.
3. External ceremonies and arrangements, being instituted by men, need not be uniform from one locality to another, AC VII 3, XXVI 42-45; Ap VII 10, 30-46.
4. The attempt to offer man-made external ceremonies to God as works of merit by which to earn forgiveness of sins or to propitiate His wrath in even the smallest degree is the purest expression of soul-damning unbelief, AC XV 3-4, XX 3, XXVIII; Ap XII 8, XV 4, 18, 19, VI 46-48, XXIV 22-24, 52-60; SA III XV 1.
5. Nevertheless, when such ceremonies are clearly explained and correctly understood, Ap XXIV 5, they can have much value, AC XXIV 3 German; Ap VII 5, XV 13, XXIV 3. In fact, they become necessary adjuncts to the effective use of God's Word in divine worship, since man's activities necessarily have an external aspect as well as an internal one, LC I 94. Thus, true worship always includes faith and most often also faith's exter-

nal exercizes and signs, AC XXVII 49-50; Ap III 34, 69, XXIV 27.

6. There are four benefits and purposes for external ceremonies: the preservation of good order, the setting of times and places at which to gather for worship, the exemplifying of the manner in which God wishes His people to live, namely, decently and in order and love, and the instruction of the laity in the Gospel with all that pertains to it, Ap XV 20.

7. All ceremonies must be carefully analyzed and evaluated so that whatever can be adopted or adapted may be preserved for use by the present and future generations of the faithful, while that which is contrary either to the Gospel or to good order may be eliminated or replaced, AC XV 1, Epilog to XXI 3-4; XXIV 2 German, XXVI 40, Epilog to XXVIII 5; Ap XV 20-21, 38-39, 49-52, XXIV 1, XXVIII 17; LC I 85.

8. Sacramentals may be acceptable as aids for instruction in the Gospel but totally unacceptable when treated as if they have any objective spiritual value of their own, LC I 73-74.

9. Saints may be remembered as examples of how they received God's unearned grace not by their good works but by faith alone and how they glorified the Lord by their works, each in his own calling. But they are never to be invoked for aid in trouble, since Scripture neither commands this nor gives any examples of it, and especially since this would make them mediators alongside of Christ, AC XXI 4; Ap XXI 10, 12; Ap XXI; SA II II 26, 29.

10. The Christian Church is the Versammlung (assembly) of all believers and becomes apparent to the human eye through its

activities of preaching the Word, administrating the Sacraments, the use of the power of the Keys, and the mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren, SA III IV.

11. The use of the vernacular and congregational singing and participation in the liturgy is vital to the expression of the mutual edification and corporate character of the believing community, FC SD X 9; Ap XXIV 1.

12. Although the doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers is not expressly mentioned in the Lutheran Confessions, yet it is clearly in the background of their thinking, Ap XXII 9; Treatise 67-72; SC ("in the form in which the head of the family shall teach them to his household").

13. External agreement between churches in forms of worship and church order is to be promoted when such agreement honestly exhibits a genuine inner unity of faith and doctrine. However, when such unity does not in fact exist, intrinsically indifferent external ceremonies can become misleading and therefore, by expressing a unity that does not actually exist, be hypocritical and sinful, FC Ep X 2,6,11; SD X.

Thus, a genuinely pastoral concern for sincere faith in Christ alone runs like a golden thread through the entire Book of Concord of 1580. In fact, this is the very foundation of the Lutheran Confessional writings, and all that they have to say, whether expressed or implied, with regard to Christian worship grows out of this loving concern for the final and objective salvation of sinners.

## CHAPTER V

### A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE ABOVE DOCTRINAL IMPLICATIONS ON BOTH ROMAN AND LUTHERAN SIDES

We have now reached the point at which we are able to set the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy and the position of historical Lutheranism side by side to discover their various similarities and dissimilarities. Was there a genuine decrease in the distance between the two communions? If differences remain, can they be overcome easily, or do they tower still as mountains in the path that leads toward reunification?

To begin, let us state that the goals of de Liturgia and the historic Lutheran position are indeed the same, for they are both thoroughly interested in the pastoral aim of saving souls, as we have now seen.

However, the methods and motives of the two communions are entirely different. Vatican II begins with a set of regulative statements designed to control and direct the external manifestations of the Church's life, worship, and theology, whereas the Lutheran Confessions begin by seeking the answer to the question, What does God's Word say about how the sinner can be justified in His eyes? Only after this question is answered do the Confessions even begin to draw any conclusions regarding worship and practical

theology. Vatican II was only attempting to relieve certain external pressures and tensions which had been building up over the past several centuries, and especially the past three or four decades, while the Confessions re-examined the Holy Scriptures and the entire body of dogma and doctrine which had accumulated over nearly one and a half millenia.

The reader will, therefore, immediately see that, whereas the Constitution treats symptoms, the Confessions treat the disease itself.

This is illustrated quite clearly by the fact that there really is no attempt in the Constitution ever to arrive at a definition of worship, whereas the Confessions define it very clearly and simply, namely, the receiving of what God freely offers in Christ Jesus. Again, the Constitution sets about its task by laying down rules and laws for the Church's liturgical life, while the Confessions never do this. Furthermore, the Constitution, when speaking of faith, is always referring to a body of material to be accepted as true (fides quae creditur), while the Confessions usually mean the receptacle for receiving the saving grace of God in Christ (fides qua creditur) by that word. The Constitution, therefore, leaves the doctrine of justification precisely where it lay after Trent, namely, God's grace infused into man, enabling him to earn God's acceptances by his own good works or sufferings, with the result that God is moved by such merits to accept the sinner. The Confessions put it as the Scriptures do: Christ has come and redeemed the world objectively out of pure grace, the news of this

objective redemption is brought to individuals through the Word and Sacraments, the sinner is moved by God's power operating through the Word and Sacraments to believe in Christ and His redemption (i.e., to appropriate the objective work of Christ for himself), God then declares the sinner just on account of Christ's redemption, and the believing sinner then sincerely endeavors to express his love for, and thanks to, God and Christ by doing the sort of works God wishes him to do, all to the glory of God.

Yet, the Constitution did lead the way toward a re-orientation of the Roman Church toward pastoral and mission concerns. However, this interest is strongly pragmatic in its purpose, namely, to update the Church in such a way that modern pressures for change could be relieved and the Church's worship could attract more people to its fold. Luther and the Confessions, on the other hand, did not try to "update" the Church but rather to center its message once more in man's need (law) and God's gift in Christ which fully satisfies that need (Gospel). The latter was deemed sufficient for any pastoral or mission purpose, since there is no other approach to men's souls that is Scriptural, i.e., grounded in reality.

Major differences on the disputed articles of the Augustana therefore still remain. For example, on the question, Who is the Church?, the Confessions simply reply, "All true believers in Christ," while the Constitution, though it has somewhat softened the pre-Vatican II stand, still answers, "All the 'faithful,' but especially the hierarchy." Legalism in worship is still very strong

in Rome, even though it appears to have gone "underground" in some of its applications to liturgical uniformity. For the Confessions, however, all the practical and external arrangements for worship, although necessary, must be treated only as a fruit of faith and never as a cause of salvation.

With regard to the use of the means of grace, a major advance was made by Vatican II when it, for all practical purposes, nearly laid to rest the concept of automatic effectiveness of the Sacraments (ex opere operato). (This could turn out to be the one spot where fruitful dialog could begin again between those who hold to historic Lutheranism and those who hold to the Pre-Vatican II position of Rome.)

For the Constitution it was a major step forward when the Council fathers almost made the Word the eighth sacrament; however, it is still not the basic means of grace as in Luther and the Lutheran Confessions. Yet, the Word can now stand alone without the Sacraments in Roman Catholic "Bible services" and it must now be included in all celebrations of the seven traditional Sacraments.

Both kinds in the Mass are now tolerated on occasion. Sacerdotalism has been slightly weakened by the fact that laymen can now do certain things, like leading in Bible services if given approval by the bishop, which previously only clergymen were allowed to do. Transubstantiation, though still officially taught by Rome, is now greatly played down and often rejected openly. The concept of propitiatory sacrifices in the Mass has also been



softened (though by no means eliminated) in post-Vatican II worship. Some Roman Catholic theologians are seeking ways to synthesize the propitiatory elements with the eucharistic aspects within the Mass and have suggested that "propitiatory" can be taken to mean merely "advantageous to the communicant." This, of course, would destroy the doctrine of the vicarious satisfaction, which is central to Christian faith and to the entire Christian way of salvation, and such a re-interpretation would only raise a whole new range of mountains in the path to reunification.

As for matters of somewhat lesser importance, saints are still being invoked in Roman worship, and Mariolatry is still clearly and unmistakably inculcated in the hearts and minds of the faithful, despite a certain movement away from such anti-Scriptural practices in the Constitution.

With regard to the entire syndrome of post-Vatican II Roman worship involving the sacrificial aspects of the Mass, and other related problems, it would perhaps be helpful that the following questions be put to Rome:

1. In the Mass, what, precisely, is being sacrificed?
2. To whom, specifically, is the sacrifice being presented or offered?
3. Has this sacrifice itself ever been presented or offered before?
4. Precisely for what purpose is this sacrifice being presented or offered?
5. Precisely of what does the sacrifice on the altar consist?

This writer feels sure that the answers to these questions would serve to point up the remaining differences between the historic Lutheran position on the one hand and the new Roman Catholic (and recent "Lutheran") liturgical viewpoints on the other.

One more significant divergence between historic Lutheranism and the position of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy should be noted, namely, their stances toward ecumenism. Luther and the Confessions sincerely attempt to emphasize the fact that what they are teaching is what is true not only for Lutherans but also for all people everywhere, because it is what God has revealed for all men to believe in the Holy Scriptures. This is ecumenism in faith's content. The Constitution, however, is ecumenical only in external ways, namely, in its irenic approach to non-Catholics and non-Christians (e.g., its avoidance of certain red-flag words and expressions), in its willingness to sidestep certain deep differences and damnamuses of Trent and Vatican I, and in its willingness to discuss with other Christians the possibility of setting a new and mutually agreeable date for Easter.

In sum, although both the Constitution and the Confessions sincerely aim at the pastoral care of souls, the former attempts to carry out this aim merely by relieving accumulated tension on the horizontal (man-to-man) plane, whereas the latter seeks to care for souls by digging down to the solid rock of reality through its emphasis on the soul's vertical relationship (God-to-man) which is established purely by God's grace in Christ alone and received by faith alone, as it is clearly taught in Scripture alone.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE STATUS OF SCRIPTURE

#### WITHIN POST-VATICAN II

#### ROMAN CATHOLICISM

Since this study is a Lutheran view of Vatican II on worship and liturgy, it must also take at least a short look at what is happening in the Roman Catholic Church after Vatican II in the area of Scripture and its interpretation. Will the edicts of the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (18 November 1965) undergird and help to facilitate the closing of the gap between Rome and Wittenberg? Or are new and even more forbidding miles being opened up between the two historic communions by the new approaches to Scripture permitted and encouraged by Vatican II? Not only the whole Lutheran approach to worship but also the entire Lutheran stance toward every facet of Christian faith, doctrine, and life is determined by Scripture alone. Hence this chapter on the status of Scripture with the Roman Church after it adopted its new constitution on Divine Revelation at Vatican II is necessary.

It can be safely stated that the post-Vatican II Roman Catholic Church has suddenly found itself to possess an almost unbelievable interest in the Bible. There are Bible study groups of all descriptions springing up within among the faithful, a new three-year cycle of lessons has been appointed for liturgical cele-

brations, and priests are not only to study Scripture anew but also to expound it in sermons and homilies.

Yet, this is bringing Rome to the brink of a grave crisis. The underlying issues in the past history of Christendom have been Christological (Nicea, etc.) and soteriological (Anselm, Reformation). But the overriding issue in Christendom at present is epistemological, that is, how can one arrive at truth in Christian faith and doctrine and how is truth itself to be defined?

Within the Roman communion the issue is no longer merely between Scripture and tradition as it was in Luther's time and in the three following centuries. The issue now centers in the question of the facticity and interpretation of Scripture itself. In 1943 the doors were opened to a cautious use of the historical-critical method by Pope Pius XII in his well-known encyclical, Divino Afflante Spiritu. The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation has completed this move, and although Pope Paul VI has attempted to set certain brakes upon the use of the historical-critical method of interpreting Scripture by insisting that the words and deeds of Jesus as presented in the four Gospels are indeed factually true, hundreds of books and periodicals have been published by Roman Catholic scholars which take the presuppositions of the historical-critical methodology for granted.

The argument in general runs as follows: since Scripture and Tradition both "flow from the same well-springs," the so-called "traditions" behind the present form of the Gospels and most other parts of the Bible, along with the Church's canonization of the

various books of the Bible are said to demonstrate that the Church has produced Scripture, not Scripture the Church. The historical-critical method's presupposition that the Bible is the end result of much thinking, discussion, influencing, and re-writing of people, events, and sayings by early Christians and pre-Christian Jews falls easily into the Roman Catholic dogma which maintains that the Church produced the Scriptures and, therefore, has the authority to interpret it as its theologians and hierarchy dictate.

De Revelatione, therefore, allows the use of nearly all strands of the historical-critical method. It allows for Gospel reductionism, errancy of Scripture, errancy of Christ in His human nature (especially since Rome stresses incarnational aspects to an extreme), and a certain concept of what Roman theologians call the sensus plenior. The latter means that the interpreter of Scripture tries to discover what he imagines to be God's intended meaning in a given pericope, a method of interpretation which turns Scripture into what Luther called "a wax nose" which can mean anything the interpreter wants it to mean. It is significant, therefore, that Roman theologians have recently become especially interested in rediscovering Origen's allegorical method of interpreting Scripture, a method which destroys all possibility of arriving at objective truth from Scripture.

Thus it is not difficult to demonstrate that there is a triad of modern philosophies at work in most recognized post-Vatican II Roman Catholic theologians. These three philosophies can be called anti-supernaturalism, existentialism-relativism, and plural-

ism (i.e., "differences really make no difference in the end"). The magisterial use of reason, controlled by these three philosophies and applied to Scripture and its influence in the Church, is now replacing the pre-Vatican II Thomistic scholasticism. It is no surprise, therefore, that most Roman Catholics now accept evolution, reject rectilinear Old Testament prophecy, and opt for "personal encounters" with God (or an imagined god) as the subjective replacement for the old principle of opera operata. Faith in the sense of personal trust in Christ for salvation (fiducia) has been passed by in favor of the "existential experience," which, predictably, has resulted in millions of Roman Catholic laymen and clergy turning to the Charismatic movement in which they have an even greater "experience" of the divine and the spiritual, albeit, without any objective foundation for such experiences. In contrast, Luther condemns such faith in one's own experiences as Schwaemerei and directs the Christian to trust nothing in himself, not even his own feelings or experiences, but only the objective Word of God. The Confessions likewise cling both to the objective facts of God's fulfilled plan of salvation and to faith as man's only way of receiving the benefits of these "wonderful works of God."

Man's innate and sinful tendency to find something within himself to trust in for salvation is here coming to the fore in a new form within Rome. It seems, therefore, that the new view of Scripture in the Roman communion is building another, even higher, range of mountains between historic Lutheranism and the Roman Catholic Church.

## CONCLUSION

The story is told of a town clock in a European village which was so large that its hands weighed hundreds of pounds and its bells could be heard for miles. One day, however, the minute hand became stuck about fifteen minutes past the hour. The town fathers sent workmen to fix the clock, but they had great difficulty because of the size and weight of its parts. They finally gave up the task when the heavy minute hand suddenly came loose and began to swing to and fro from the numeral three to the numeral nine. Had they been able to fix and set the clock at that moment, the minute hand would have been pointing straight down at the numeral six, for the time was eleven-thirty. Instead, the mighty minute hand continued to swing freely from right to left and left to right, constantly going past the center numeral. Only when the clock's hand was finally connected again with the massive control gears of its inner machinery could it help the people of that town once more.

As the reader probably has guessed, this clock is intended to serve as a kind of parable of what has been taking place within the Roman Catholic Church. During the early Middle Ages it began to "stick tight" on the right hand side in both doctrine and practice, including worship. The Council of Trent seems to have welded the Church even more firmly into that legalistic position. In the Reformation there had been an attempt to move the Roman

Church toward the center position where the Holy Scriptures alone would keep it from both legalism on the right and enthusiasm or subjectivism on the left. But at Trent the Church refused to be budged. Such a state of affairs left the Roman Church almost incapable of helping the people of the "City of God." It had simply stopped allowing the controlling machinery of the written Word of God to guide it along the paths of God's good and gracious will in Christ Jesus.

But "Town Father" John XXIII then came to the papacy and sent his "workmen," the fathers of the Second Vatican Council, to repair the Church. They thought they were making much progress when they finally found it possible to loosen the Church from its stuck position on the legalistic right. But the Council did not realize that, once loosened, the Church would be free to swing back and forth past the true Biblical position at the numeral six all the way over to numeral nine, the position of the historical-critical method and its correlatives. From faith in the reasoning and authority of the hierarchy on the right extreme the Church has swung over strongly and almost helplessly toward a new position on the theological left and then back again, to and fro, constantly missing opportunities to settle into gear with Scripture as its only control and Christ its only power.

Because the Roman Catholic Church lacked a genuine and humble commitment to the Bible as the supreme authority over all of man's reason, feeling, experience, and imagination, she began to find herself in a state of turmoil and confusion. Post-Vatican II



problems in the Roman Church developed, for many, into a crisis, and in a large number of cases it was a crisis in basic faith. But when some of the Church's principles point toward a modern, subjectivistic, historicistic, and naturalistic direction, while others point back toward the old legalistic manner of thinking and believing, one can hardly expect anything but chaos, confusion, and crisis. As portions of this study have shown, such is indeed the picture we have before us as we look at the Roman Catholic Church one decade after the close of the Second Vatican Council.

Yet, not all of the picture is chaotic and negative. There are several rather major plusses that have developed out of Vatican II, one or two of which could serve as roots out of which a new, stronger, and truer church could grow. Let us briefly list these positive results of the Council of 1962 to 1965.

The positives are most numerous in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, where there appears to have been a genuine search for reality in worship. Like Luther and the Lutheran Confessions, the Constitution was deeply concerned for souls in a pastoral way, and it was for this reason that we can find at least some common ground between the two sides in certain areas of liturgical principles.

Perhaps this trend toward pastoral reality in the care of souls becomes most visible in the use of the vernacular in worship--with all that worship includes. Very closely connected with the use of the vernacular, however, is a far greater change which

this writer believes could be the foundation upon which many gaps between Rome and Wittenberg could ultimately be bridged, namely, the well nigh total rejection by Vatican II of the principle of gaining merit before God ex opere operato. Were this new emphasis on reality in spiritual life (as opposed to the mere external performance of works of merit) to be drawn to its logical conclusions in the minds of Rome's theologians, and were it possible at the same time to escape the implications of the rising tide of subjectivistic philosophy, many in the Roman Catholic Church would be led to the point to which Luther himself came. They would see how utterly impossible it is for man to do anything to contribute toward his own justification in God's eyes. Perhaps, then, the meaning of justification by grace through faith alone could make great gains in the Roman Church's theology.

In addition, there are other plusses, such as the beginning of a type of a decentralizing trend in the exercise of liturgical authority, the partial relaxation of certain external obligations, the new emphasis on fellowship and community among the faithful at worship, and the active participation of the laity in both worship and service. In addition, those who hold to historic Lutheranism will certainly rejoice at the fact that Vatican II has elevated the reading and hearing of the Scriptures by the faithful to a level of importance equal to that of the use of the Sacraments. Heirs of Luther and the Confessions have found themselves in happy agreement, too, with the Constitution's opening the door to the occasional distribution of Communion to the faithful under both kinds.

to the new emphasis on the eucharistic element in the sacrifice of the Mass, to the thoroughly irenic approach taken toward the "separated brethren," and, lastly, to a new search for genuine reality in both the sources of the faith and the liturgical expressions of that faith. In these points one can see the theological minute hand hesitating slightly over the numeral six as it passes to and fro from left to right and back again.

But the minute hand is still loose and swinging, since there remain many divisive aspects which stand as formidable barriers between the Church of Vatican II and the Church of the Augsburg Confession. As the massive minute hand swings to the right side, it still clings to pre-Vatican II, pre-Tridentine, and pre-Reformation legalism. The Lutheran Confessions, for example, begin with the realities of the doctrines of sin and grace, while Vatican II approaches the problem of sin for the most part by avoiding it and without ever really grappling with the underlying doctrinal, i.e., Scriptural, issues. For the Confessions, the crucial point in faith is trust in Christ alone; for Rome, faith is still mere knowledge and assent. The Roman Church still assumes it can depend on the legalistic motivation in worship provided by the Church's rules and external regulatory authority, while Luther and the Confessions seek to motivate believers by means of the Good News of Christ's forgiving love. Historic Lutheranism presents the four solas: sola gratia, sola fide, solum Christum, and sola Scriptura; Rome still has not repudiated the thoroughly negative anathemas of Trent with regard to these deci-

sively important bases of the sinner's hope for justification and salvation from God. Trent is also left basically unscathed with respect to its concepts of hierarchical authority, sacerdotalism, purgatory, merit, indulgences, and the entire legalistic structure of the seven grace-conveying Sacraments, even though Roman Catholic theologians have turned over every leaf in their attempt to find a way to re-interpret what hierarchy, etc. mean, so that they may conform both to Trent and to the pressures of our times. Though the liturgical constitution elevated the Word to a plane equal with the seven Sacraments, it did not make the Word the basic means of grace both in--and independent of--the Sacraments, as do the Lutheran Confessions. Trent's concept of the propitiatory value of the sacrifice of the Mass still remains fundamentally intact, because Vatican II was not yet willing to grapple with the real issue, namely, justification by faith alone. Merits of men and of saints are still presented by the Church as partially responsible for the salvation of sinners, even after Vatican II. Hence, Vatican II, though it improved many conditions in the spiritual life of the faithful, left the Church caring for souls in basically the same way and with the same doctrinal foundations and tools as when it began. The minute hand still swings nearly to numeral three.

But it also swings to the left, as we have seen. Except for certain radicals, however, the left-ward swinging has taken place primarily in the area of revelation, Scripture, and the epistemological foundation for interpreting them. Hence, the point of controversy over the sola Scriptura has changed from pre-Vatican II

and pre-Divino Afflante Spiritu times. The Church (i.e., tradition, papacy, councils, and the fathers) had been the final authority in matters of faith and morals; and the object of faith had, therefore, been the Church. In post-Vatican II Rome, however, it is (in practice, at least) most common to find the sola Scriptura rejected not in favor of the authority of the Church but the "authority" of modern man's philosophy and Weltanschauung, including scientism, humanism, etc., and the historical-critical method which is based upon such a world-view. In this case the object of faith is man's own mind or his own existential experience. Before Vatican II the magisterium had all the answers. Now everything seems to be in flux, with no roots and no true starting point. Some Roman Catholics enjoy this and revel in the "freedom" they feel, others react by hiding in the safety of the edicts of the magisterium, but very many are simply drifting, confused, and bewildered. Hitchcock and McKenzie were right in calling it a crisis of basic faith.

Is it out of line to suggest then that we are faced here with a picture of a church body that is finally maturing? Lutherans would fervently, yet hesitantly, hope so. According to this theory, the "child" phase of Roman Catholicism (pre-Vatican II, basically) was the era in which the people went to the Church for all benefits and all answers to questions of faith and life. But with Vatican II Roman Catholicism entered its "rebellious teen" stage, in which there is the constant vacillation between dependence on Mother Church and independence from her. As true

teenagers, the faithful want to exercise their freedom. This is especially true of the theologians, who are eager to exercise their freedom by use of the historical-critical method, but who also, for the most part, when they seem to be getting into doctrinal hot water (or thin air?), take quick refuge under the official pronouncements of the magisterium.

No one in Roman Catholicism, as we have noted, seems very willing as yet to grow into the maturity of spirit that comes with a consistent use of the principle of sola Scriptura. Of course, such a maturation would change Roman Catholicism infinitely more than Vatican II ever did. But no genuine progress toward unity can be made unless (1) there is epistemological agreement on the sola Scriptura principle and on the interpretation of Scripture according to the ordinary historical-grammatical method, and (2) the issue of justification is confronted squarely and settled Biblically.

Then faith will be in full contact with Reality, and the whole City of God will rejoice and be glad, as the great minute hand begins to tell time once more.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED  
IN CITING  
THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS

AC:	AUGSBURG CONFESSION
Ap:	APOLOGY OF THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION
Ath:	ATHANASIAN CREED
Ep:	EPITOME OF THE FORMULA OF CONCORD
FC:	FORMULA OF CONCORD
LC:	LARGE CATECHISM
SA:	SMALCALD ARTICLES
SC:	SMALL CATECHISM
SD:	SOLID DECLARATION OF THE FORMULA OF CONCORD
Tr:	TREATISE ON THE POWER AND PRIMACY OF THE POPE

Uppercase Roman numerals following the above abbreviations denote article numbers, except in the Smalcald Articles, where the first set of Roman numerals stands for the part and the second set the article within that part. Arabic numerals following Roman numerals identify the specific paragraph or paragraphs cited.