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An Analysis and Survey of the Theology of American Lutheranism Based Upon the Definite Platform of Samuel Simon Schmucker

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AN ANALYSIS AND SURVEY OF THE
THEOLOGY OF "AMERICAN LUTHERANISM"
BASED UPON THE DEFINITE PLATFORM OF
SAMUEL SIMON SCHMUCKER

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Systematic Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

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June 1954

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"American Lutheranism" was a movement which sprang up from within the General Synod about the middle of the last century. And although the theology of the movement was not formally delineated until about 1850, the roots of its theology can be traced back to the era of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg. Muhlenberg ushered in a period of inter-communication and fellowship with many of the churches on the American scene. Since most of these churches were from the Reformed tradition, the inroads on Lutheran theology were largely the inroads made by the Reformed tradition.

The movement culminated in 1855 when S. S. Schmucker published anonymously The Definite Platform. The Platform immediately raised a storm of protest, and ignited a controversy that raged for several years. The movement was a product of the times, and had Schmucker and his associates formulated their doctrine about ten years sooner, it no doubt would not have raised the storm of protest that it did. In fact, it probably would have been heartily agreed with and accepted. However, by this time, 1855, a new wave of Confessional Lutheranism had swept over the country, and was sweeping into the General Synod. "American Lutheranism" is an antithesis to this swing toward a renewed interest in the Confessions.

The movement has always been closely associated with Dr. Samuel Simon Schmucker who to a large degree was its

prime mover and leader. In fact the movement is almost always identified with the man. Therefore, in this paper, we use the life, development and environment of Schmucker to typify the entire movement of "American Lutheranism," fully conscious of the fact that the man was not the entire movement; but his spirit, his life and work are typical of the men who went to make up the movement as a whole.

Schmucker's theology was almost completely Reformed. His attitude on the sacraments bear out this conclusion forcefully. Gone from the sacraments entirely are the characteristic Lutheran traits which distinguish them from the Calvinists.

The Definite Platform forms the basis of the discussion in this paper. It is in The Platform that Schmucker sets forth clearly and concisely just what the tenets of "American Lutheranism" are. The terms "essential" and "non-essential" associated with the doctrines discussed are used in Schmucker's sense of the terms, and are defined in the body of the text, as they occur.

For sources used in this paper, I have confined myself to the texts available in Pritzlaff Memorial Library, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, except for two works used primarily for background material and obtained from the library of Gettysburg Seminary, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

The scope of this paper is to attempt to show the source of the theology of the movement, "American Lutheranism." Beyond that it does not pretend to make an

exhaustive study of the field or related fields. It does show two things, however: first, that crossing denominational lines for fellowship involves a compromise with your own theology, often the sacrifice of truth on your part; second, that the theology of the movement was thoroughly Reformed and not Lutheran at all as Schmucker insisted it was. The paper further does not purpose to criticize unjustly, either Schmucker or the movement, but to set forth plainly the objective stated; to determine the source of the theology of the movement "American Lutheranism".

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Samuel Simon Schmucker was born February 28, 1799, into a period during which the Lutheran Church in America was marked by a high degree of confessional laxity, a laxity that threatened to obliterate the historic traits which had been characteristic of the church for almost three centuries. Primarily the church was exposed to the insidious danger of unionism,¹ which had seeped into the church and to which danger even the patriarch Henry Melchior Muhlenberg had succumbed.²

Muhlenberg's unionism had free intercourse and intimate fellowship with the Reformed, Episcopalians, Methodists and other denominations, with the natural result that the confession of Lutheran truth over and against Reformed error was weakened and almost nullified.³

The condition of the church is further indicated by the fact that in 1787 Franklin College was founded in Lancaster, Pennsylvania under the joint sponsorship of the Lutheran and Reformed Churches, with the express purpose of training

¹Abdell Ross Wentz, The Lutheran Church in American History (Philadelphia: The United Lutheran Publication House, c.1923), p. 83.

²Franz Bente, American Lutheranism (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1919), I, 85.

³Ibid., p. 84.

men for the ministry in the Lutheran and Reformed Churches as well as for other sects.⁴

At the turn of the century this unionistic tendency was still mounting to its climax. This is illustrated by the following two incidents cited here. First, in 1817 the North Carolina Synod approved and resolved to publish a book by G. Schober in spite of the fact that in it he denied characteristic Lutheran doctrines, among which were the doctrine of the Lord's Supper and Absolution.⁵ The second happened two years before Schmucker was licensed to preach, 1820, when the Pennsylvania Ministerium adopted a liturgy which included a formula for the distribution of the Lord's Supper which was identical with that of the Reformed Church.⁶

In general, it can be said of the religious life of this period that it was one marked everywhere by the development of "American Self-consciousness," complete tolerance and good will, and culminating in the growth of the spirit of cooperation in common Christian tasks.⁷

Besides unionism, however, this also is the period when Rationalism, primarily French and largely the result of America's close contact with the French during the Revolutionary War, but also German Rationalism and English Deism,

⁴Ibid., p. 90.

⁵Ibid., p. 121.

⁶Abdell Ross Wentz, "The Work of Samuel Simon Schmucker," The Lutheran Quarterly (January, 1927), p. 74.

⁷Wentz, The Lutheran Church In American History, p. 79.

was being imported in liberal quantities.⁸ This movement influenced not only theological thinking, but also the political and philosophic thinking, thus forming a potent factor in the mind and thinking of all who lived and moved in its aura.

Theologically the Lutheran Church in America was at this time particularly influenced by the theologians of Halle, Germany, primarily through Muhlenberg. The church thus inherited a characteristic trait of the Halle School, namely an affinity toward Pietism, a pietism which has been described as "truly Lutheran piety, a warm hearted, devout, practical Lutheranism."⁹

It is into this intellectual and existential climate that Schmucker was born. Moreover, it remained the environment in which he spent his formative years, and also throughout the years of his education. From his very youth he was exposed to pietism, a pietism which found favor in his parental home, and which also flourished at Princeton, where he gained his seminary training.¹⁰ He matriculated also at the University of Pennsylvania and there, as well as at Princeton, was exposed to the thought currents of the day. It was

⁸Wentz, The Lutheran Quarterly, p. 11.

⁹Bente, op. cit., p. 12.

¹⁰Vergilius Fern, The Crisis in American Lutheran Theology (New York: The Century Co., c.1927). p. 71.

also at Princeton that Schmucker gained an attitude of tolerance and also a spirit of ecumenical fraternity which so characterized his life and effort.¹¹

Yet Schmucker was a Lutheran, and fused in and with these other theological thoughts and movements was a Lutheran consciousness. He also had an acquaintanceship with the Lutheran Confessions, gained largely through his contact with Dr. Helmuth while he attended the University of Pennsylvania.¹²

Fuse into one man the influence of Rationalism, Pietism, Unionism, Reformed Theology, as it obtained at Princeton, and Confessional Lutheranism, as it obtained in his day, and we can readily understand how Schmucker could come to believe in pulpit and altar fellowship, deny Baptismal Regeneration, and reject also the doctrine of the Real Presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, and still be considered and consider himself to be a Lutheran.¹³ For while Schmucker had a Lutheran consciousness and a zeal for his own church which predominated Puritanism, Methodism, Presbyterianism and other factors in the environment of his early youth, however, all made contributions to his intellectual and personal make-up, and influenced his thinking

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., p. 72.

¹³Luke Schmucker, *The Schmucker Family and the Lutheran Church in America* (n.p., 1937), p. 38.

more than he cared to admit.¹⁴

It is only in the light of these facts that we can at least partially understand Schmucker and the strange paradox which he presents. On the one hand, being a "Confession" Lutheran, and on the other, denying the very characteristic doctrines of the historic Lutheran Church; to have, on the one hand, a passion for union--but only among Protestant Churches--and on the other hand, to have a strong antipathy for the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁵

This then is largely the background of Schmucker and also the men that went to make up the movement called "American Lutheranism." It remains yet to show Schmucker's influence.

When Schmucker entered the ministry the Lutheran Church was in sad need of conservation. Some have even gone so far as to say that its very life was threatened.¹⁶ It is to Schmucker's credit then, when in 1823 the life of the General Synod was at stake with the withdrawal of the Pennsylvania Ministerium, that he through an "heroic effort" saved the General Synod from dissolution.¹⁷ From this time on and for the next few decades Schmucker assumes the leadership of the

¹⁴Wentz, The Lutheran Quarterly, p. 83.

¹⁵Schmucker, op. cit., p. 38.

¹⁶Wentz, The Lutheran Quarterly, pp. 73 f.

¹⁷Ferm, op. cit., p. 72.

General Synod. It was largely through his efforts that the first Lutheran Theological Seminary was founded in America, for in 1826 Gettysburg Seminary was founded by Schmucker, who then became professor and served in that capacity, much of the time alone, for nearly forty years.¹⁸

It became evident, however, in 1850 that the General Synod was tending away from following Schmucker's leadership. It was in this year that Schmucker, who had been appointed as head of a committee to frame a "clear and concise view of the doctrines and practices of the American Lutheran Church," made the report of the committee and presented a modified "American Lutheranism," omitting in this report all the distinctive Lutheran teachings. The report was decisively defeated. This helped to indicate the trend that Schmucker was losing his position as leader of the General Synod.¹⁹

The pendulum had already started to swing back in 1823 when Schmucker saved the General Synod. It is necessary to remember why the Pennsylvania Ministerium withdrew. We see unfolding in the history of the Lutheran Church in America a remarkable revival of the study of church history, particularly of denominational history, with the net result that denominational loyalties were beginning once more to

¹⁸Henry E. Jacobs, The Lutherans in America (New York: J. A. Hill & Co., c.1889), p. 345.

¹⁹Wentz, The Lutheran Quarterly, p. 19.

become a virtue. Particularly in the Lutheran Church loyalties to one's own church became a virtue. Thus unionism approached the end of its course and "slowly the pendulum swung across to dogmatism in religion and ethics."²⁰ Once again the rising generation began to study anew the confessional writings of the Lutheran Church and ponder with pride the heritage of the Church.²¹ This swing came swiftly, so swiftly that Schmucker refused to adjust himself to the change of ecclesiastical climate which had taken place; and, being accustomed to leading all his life, he found it difficult to become a follower.²²

In antithesis to this onrushing tide, Schmucker tried to maintain his leadership by banding together a group which he termed "American Lutheranism." This group followed the doctrinal and confessional lines that had been prevalent in the foregoing generation and which had been the environment in which these men had grown up and flourished. The culmination--but also the end--of Schmucker's leadership in the General Synod, and also as head of the Gettysburg Seminary, came down with a thundering crash when in 1855 he published anonymously the Definite Platform. In the Platform Schmucker set forth a concise view of the tenets of "American Lutheranism," proposing in its doctrinal portion a form of

²⁰Op. cit., p. 81.

²¹Ibid., p. 82.

²²Ibid., p. 83.

the Augsburg Confession which strips the Symbol of its Lutheran characteristics and substitutes tenets peculiar to the Reformed Church.²³ In The Recension of the Augsburg Confession, Schmucker says:

In this revision not a single sentence has been added to the Augsburg Confession whilst those special aspects of doctrine have been omitted, which have long since been regarded by the great mass of our churches as unscriptural, and as remnants of Romish error.²⁴

The net result of the Platform was a controversy that waxed hot, and, as is usually the case, the fire provided more heat than light. It was the "Hyper-symbolists" against "reckless and shallow-brained innovators."²⁵ In the final analysis, however, the theologians poured oil on the waters and housed both factions in one house. "Thus as far as the leading theologians were concerned, the commotion caused by the Platform ended in an agreement to disagree."²⁶

It is against this background that this discussion proceeds with an analysis and survey of the Theology of "American Lutheranism."

²³Bente, American Lutheranism, II, 69.

²⁴Samuel Simon Schmucker, Definite Platform, Doctrinal and Disciplinarian (Second edition; Philadelphia: Miller & Burlock, 1856), pp. 4-5.

²⁵Ferm, op. cit., p. 255.

²⁶Bente, American Lutheranism, I, 111.

CHAPTER III

ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

The Definite Platform was a union document designed to settle a dispute between two opposing schools within the General Synod.¹ It made the effort once and for all to standardize the interpretation of the General Synod's doctrinal basis.² Thus it is that Schmucker sets down the minimum requirements, or doctrines, and calls these doctrines "essential." For Schmucker no one could be admitted to fellowship who held: 1. The Ceremonies of the Mass, 2. The Rite of Exorcism, 3. Private Confession and Absolution. These doctrines for him are considered essential.³ It may at first seem strange that these be classified as essentials, until we consider that for Schmucker all three were remnants of "Romish superstition."⁴ And in so rejecting these ceremonies, and making their rejection essential for fellowship, Schmucker seems to reflect the Reformed view which looked

¹Vergilius Fern, The Crisis in American Lutheran Theology (New York: The Century Co., c.1927), p. 334.

²Abdell Ross Wentz, "The Work of Samuel Simon Schmucker," The Lutheran Quarterly (January, 1927), p. 85.

³S. S. Schmucker, Definite Platform; Doctrinal and Disciplinary (Second edition; Philadelphia: Miller & Burlock, 1856), p. 5.

⁴Ibid., pp. 21 f.

upon "Protestantism" as an antithesis of "Catholicism."⁵ This view assumed by Schmucker is in direct contrast to the Lutheran viewpoint which stresses that the only real way to fellowship is to have a "real consensus de doctrina evangelii et de administratione sacramentorum."⁶

These rites were placed by the Lutheran Confessors in the realm of adiaphora. The churches were given the right to establish or to abolish in their Christian liberty.⁷ But here again, strictly speaking, there was for Zwingli no such thing as adiaphora, and this principle was followed largely by Calvin and his principle, "whatever is not commanded in the Scriptures must go."⁸

Because Lutheranism retained in many areas the cultus of the ancient church, though in purified form, Calvin and the Reformed Churches regarded Lutheranism as a part of the evangelical church which had only halfway proceeded out of Catholicism and which needed to be boosted the rest of the way by the Geneva Reformation.⁹ In the Reformed mind,

⁵Hermann Sasse, Here We Stand: Nature and Character of the Lutheran Faith, translated by Theodore G. Tappert (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, c.1946), p. 102.

⁶Ibid., p. 108.

⁷"Formula of Concord," Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Ev. Lutheran Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), p. 831.

⁸"Zwingli and Bullinger," Library of Christian Classics, translated and edited by G. W. Bromely (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943), XXIV, 25 f.

⁹Sasse, op. cit., p. 8.

Lutheranism has kept too much of the "superstition" and "idolatry" of the Roman Church and has not made a sufficient break, with the result that the Reformation in the Lutheran Church has not been completed.¹⁰ Thus, when the Lutheran Confessions say that no church should condemn another because it has more or less of these outward forms, and emphasize "Dissonantia ieiunii non dissolvit consonantiam,"¹¹ the Reformed man

. . . cannot but hope that this false conservatism or traditionalism will be overcome by a deeper consideration of God's will revealed in the Scriptures, and that, by a stricter obedience to God's word, the Reformation might also be completed in the Lutheran Church.¹²

Accordingly Sasse says, "Lutheranism has been an incomprehensible phenomenon for the Reformed."¹³

Schmucker's placing of these rites, Ceremonies of the Mass, Exorcism, and Private Confession, in the realm of essentials and not in the realm of adiaphora would seem to indicate his following the Reformed line of thinking and viewpoint, as contrasted to the Lutheran view in the Confessions.

Ceremonies of the Mass

For Schmucker the Ceremonies of the Mass, as already

¹⁰Ibid., p. 98.

¹¹"Formula of Concord," op. cit., p. 831.

¹²Sasse, op. cit., p. 98.

¹³Ibid., p. 97.

indicated, were a remnant of Roman Catholicism's superstition and idolatry. He concludes that because the Reformers, even though they qualified it, retained the Ceremonies of the Mass in the Augsburg Confession, this is sufficient reason why the Augsburg Confession cannot be subscribed to.¹⁴

Schmucker substantiates his view by citing the Smalcald Articles, which he claims indicate an advanced view of the Reformers, and in which the Mass is called, " a most horrible abomination;" "Pure invention of men;" "fabricated without the will of God."¹⁵ These are clearly the statements of the Smalcald Articles.

In the Augsburg Confession we read that the Mass is not abolished, but "celebrated with highest reverence" and it further contends that because the Mass has been abused this is not sufficient reason in itself to abrogate it.¹⁶

It must be concluded then that either the Confessions contradict each other, or that the term "Mass" is used in a different sense in the two confessions. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession indicates that the term "Mass" used there and in the Augsburg Confession was used for an expression of the entire service, the sermon, lections and prayers, etc.¹⁷ In the Smalcald Articles the term "Mass" is equated with the

¹⁴Schmucker, op. cit., p. 21.

¹⁵Triglot Concordia, p. 463.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 65.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 397.

the propitiatory sacrifices, which is condemned along with the abuses which it brought: Private Mass, indulgences, purgatory, pilgrimages, and anything else which clouded the fundamental doctrine that justification is by faith alone through Christ Jesus. This use of the Mass is condemned in the Smalcaid Articles,¹⁸ and also in the Apology.¹⁹ Although the Lutheran Reformers retained the rich liturgical heritage of the church in a purified form,²⁰ they condemned the idea that the Mass was in any way a propitiatory sacrifice.

This was a basic distinction between the Zwinglian Reformation and the Lutheran Reformation. Under Zwingli the Mass was completely stripped, readings and prophesyings were put into the place of the old liturgy, organs were either sold or destroyed²¹ and as early as 1525 Zwingli had replaced the Mass, the canon and distribution, with a Communion.²² Calvin identified the term "Mass" with the propitiatory sacrifice. He calls it, "a work of the Anti-Christ," "an intolerable blasphemy and insult to Christ," "It obliterates from memory the true and alone work of Jesus Christ."²³

¹⁸Ibid., p. 463.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 389 f.

²⁰Sasse, op. cit., p. 20.

²¹Zwingli and Bullinger, " op. cit., p. 27.

²²Ibid.

²³John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, translated by John Allen (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, n.d.), pp. 585 f.

And the Heidelberg Catechism says, "Hence the Mass is at bottom nothing by a denial of the unique sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ, and is an accursed idolatry."²⁴ It seems all to hearken back to the "insufferable contradictions" which the Reformed Church cannot understand. They cannot understand how the Lutherans can call the Pope anti-Christ, that the mass be criticized, and yet that the Mass should not be replaced by an entirely new service.²⁵ Hence they conclude that the Lutheran Church is still wanting and not "completely reformed."²⁶

The Rite of Exorcism

The fact that Schmucker looks upon the Exorcistic rite as Romish superstition, unscriptural and highly objectionable under the most favorable interpretation,²⁷ indicates again that his term "essential" cannot be divorced from his antipathy toward Roman Catholicism. Schmucker's concept of Exorcism has been the tenor of Reformed thought also. Zwingli and Calvin both rejected it, and from the beginning the Reformed Church has been inclined against it.²⁸ Even though Calvin acknowledged and recognized its historic

²⁴Sasse, op. cit., p. 78.

²⁵Ibid., p. 97. ²⁶Ibid., p. 100.

²⁷Schmucker, op. cit., pp. 23 f.

²⁸"Exorcism," Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature, edited by John M'Clintock and James Strong (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, c.1870), III, 418.

origin and usage of the exorcistic rite, Calvin insisted that he could reject anything that is not expressly commanded by Christ.²⁹

Luther retained it, although in a modified form. This is indicated in the Taufbuechlein. He, however, never considered it essential, but rather a good thing to remind the people earnestly of the power of sin and the devil.³⁰ Even though Exorcism for a time became a test question between the Lutherans and the Reformed in the "Crypto-Calvinistic Controversy,"³¹ the Lutheran dogmaticians placed the Rite of Exorcism in the realm of adiaphora.³²

Exorcism never became a universal thing in the Lutheran Church. And more important, it never became an article of faith, but was placed among the ceremonies and externals. In any event it could never be called without qualification a "Lutheran usage."³³ Where it has been retained in the Lutheran Church the warning has been raised that care should be taken not to refer to any bodily obsession, but to the Spiritual thralldom which Satan exercises over all men by

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

³³Charles Porterfield Krauth, The Conservative Reformation and its Theology (Philadelphia: The United Lutheran Publication House, c.1913), p. 136.

nature.³⁴ Gradually the rite was deleted from Lutheran service books until it has no place in Protestantism.³⁵

Yet traces of The Rite of Exorcism still are found in the Lutheran service of baptism in which a goodly portion of Luther's Taufbechlein has been incorporated. The sign of the Cross on the forehead and on the breast,³⁶ the praying of the Lord's Prayer with the hand upon the person's head,³⁷ the formula "The Lord preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, etc.,"³⁸ the questions addressed to the child,³⁹ all these have been retained, from the Taufbuechlein, and have been incorporated in the Lutheran Agenda for the administration of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.⁴⁰ Although the adjuration, and the casting out of the devil is not practiced, it is only in this light that

³⁴J. Theodore Mueller, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1934), p. 501.

³⁵"Exorcism," The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, edited by Samuel Macauley Jackson (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1950), p. 250.

³⁶Martin Luther, "The Order of Baptism Newly Revised," Works of Martin Luther (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1943), VI, 197.

³⁷Ibid., p. 200.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰"The Order of Holy Baptism: The Baptism of Infants (with Sponsors)," The Lutheran Agenda (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.), pp. 2 f.

the asking of questions of the child, e.g. "Dost thou renounce the devil in all his works and all his ways?"⁴¹ as in the Agenda, has relevance.

Private Confession and Absolution

The last of Schmucker's essential doctrines is^s Private Confession and Absolution, considered by Schmucker to be dangerous to the doctrine of Justification by Grace. Schmucker cannot conceive of the ministry as having the power to forgive sins. He insists that John 20.23, "Whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained," refers only to a general power given to the ministry of all ages to announce generally the conditions of forgiveness but not to announce forgiveness itself. For Schmucker the ministry has no authority to apply the promise of forgiveness as is done in Private Confession. In general Schmucker's attitude can be summed up in these words: only the regenerate receive forgiveness anyway, so what is the use and sense of Private Confession and Absolution.⁴²

The view of Schmucker is in harmony with the Reformed tradition. A. A. Hodge expressly states that the power of absolution is not communicable. The disciples were only empowered to convey the conditions under which God would

⁴¹Ibid., p. 6.

⁴²Schmucker, op. cit., pp. 26 f.

forgive sin and not to pronounce the absolution.⁴³ Furthermore, Charles Hodge says that the forgiveness of sin is the exclusive prerogative of God. He insists that no one has any more right to forgive sins than another. He concludes that even the apostles never claimed that they had the power to forgive sins.⁴⁴

Contrasted to this view, Luther saw in Private Confession a good opportunity for the penitent to sense the individuality of the Gospel promises of forgiveness.⁴⁵ Hence the Augsburg Confession states that Private Confession ought to be retained⁴⁶ and emphasized, as the Confessions do, that Private Confession centers around the person of the sinner, rather than about the sin. It further emphasized the fact that the value of Private Confession lies not in the Confession itself, but in the fact that through the confession the sinner is turned to Christ and to His promises. One dare never trust in the confession, nor in the act of confession, but only in the gracious promises of God through Christ Jesus.⁴⁷ In this way absolution becomes the true voice of the Gospel,

⁴³ Archibald A. Hodge, Outlines of Theology (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1868), III, 380.

⁴⁴ Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology (New York: Charles Scribner & Co., 1873), pp. 764 f.

⁴⁵ Granger E. Westberg, "Private Confession in the Lutheran Church," The Augustana Quarterly (April, 1945), p. 141.

⁴⁶ Triglot Concordia, p. 47.

⁴⁷ Westberg, op. cit., pp. 140 f.

Was ist die Absolution anders denn das Evangelium einem einzelnen Menschen gesagt, der ueber seine bekannte Suende Trost dadurch empfahe?⁴⁸

Absolution is nothing more nor less than the Gospel individualized.⁴⁹

Because the promises of God depend not on any worthiness in man but solely on God's grace in Christ, unto him who has a contrite heart and has faith in these promises the forgiveness of sin is not merely invoked or announced but actually conferred, just as is done in the Gospel in general.⁵⁰ The Apology of the Augsburg Confession says, "We should believe the Absolution and regard it as certain as though Christ Himself has spoken the words of Absolution."⁵¹

Although the Lutheran Church has always had a form of Private Confession and Absolution, the emphasis on the voluntary nature gradually led to its disuse in general practice.⁵² The people largely came to the conclusion that because they received the same benefits in the general confession with the congregation, there wasn't too much value in going to Private Confession.⁵³

⁴⁸Mueller, op. cit., p. 459.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 460 f.

⁵¹Triglot Concordia, p. 249.

⁵²Westberg, op. cit., p. 147.

⁵³Ibid., p. 145.

The practice of Communion announcements still carried on in many churches is a remnant of this practice of Private Confession.⁵⁴ This practice could form the basis of the reference which Schmucker has to that group which still carries on the practice of Private Confession, which group he terms "The Lutheran Synod of Missouri."⁵⁵

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 147 f.

⁵⁵Schmucker, op. cit., p. 25.

CHAPTER IV

NON-ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

In considering the non-essential doctrines of Schmucker, it is apparent that here, too, Schmucker does not allow liberty. Even as it is a "must" to reject the doctrines discussed under the head of "Essential," so it is that if you profess any of the non-essential doctrines you must consider them non-essential for fellowship, and be willing to cooperate with any who reject them.¹ This has overtones, it would seem, of the legalism of Calvin's reform in Geneva.² In any event it is strange to the Lutheran mind to consider such things as Baptismal Regeneration and the doctrine of the Real Presence in the Lord's Supper as non-essential.

The Divine Obligation of the Sabbath

The first of the doctrines, which Schmucker considered non-essential, is the doctrine of the Divine Obligation of the Sabbath. For Schmucker the example of the apostolic Christians in celebrating and commemorating the day of the

¹S. S. Schmucker, Definite Platform, Doctrinal and Disciplinary (Second edition; Philadelphia: Miller & Burlock, 1856), p. 5.

²Theodore Hoyer, "Church History IV," mimeographed class notes at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Mimeo Co., n.d.), p. 2.

Lord's resurrection, changed by good authority from the traditional Sabbath, is an inspired example which is obligatory on Christians of all ages.³ Schmucker claims that the American Churches believe that the fourth commandment is morally obligatory on all nations, not only the Jews.⁴ Furthermore, he insists that the abrogation of the Mosaic ritual can at most repeal only the ceremonial additions which the ritual made, but it must leave the original Sabbath as it found it.⁵

It is significant to note that in substantiating his view Schmucker quotes Hengstenberg, Baumgarten and Paley,⁶ exactly the same sources which Charles Hodge the Reformed dogmatician does.⁷ Hence it is not surprising to find that Schmucker's view on the Divine Obligation of the Sabbath is that of the Reformed tradition. Hodge insists that it is fair to argue the divine origin of the Sabbath because of its supreme importance.⁸ He contends that the creation of the material universe was kept in perpetual memory by the origin of the Sabbath, how much more should the new creation, secured

³Schmucker, op. cit., pp. 27 f.

⁴Ibid., p. 27.

⁵Ibid.

⁶S. S. Schmucker, American Lutheranism Vindicated (Baltimore: T. Newton Kurtz, 1856), p. 107.

⁷Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology (New York: Charles Scribner and Co., 1873), p. 326.

⁸Ibid., p. 331.

by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, be kept in perpetual remembrance.⁹ The Reformed view is summarized in the following,

It appears, therefore, from the nature of this commandment as moral, and not positive or ceremonial, that it is original and universal in its obligation.¹⁰

Contrasted to this view, although they retained Sunday, for the sake of love and tranquillity that all things may be done in order and without confusion,¹¹ and that the laity might be able to come and hear God's Word,¹² the Lutheran position has always been one of Christian liberty. Sunday, as stated in the Augsburg Confession, was chosen to show that the keeping of the Sabbath or any other day was not necessary, but a matter of liberty for the Christian.¹³ For as Luther said, "A Christian man is perfectly free lord of all, subject to none."¹⁴

⁹Ibid., p. 330.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 323.

¹¹"Augsburg Confession," Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Ev. Lutheran Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), p. 91.

¹²Martin Luther, "Treatise on Good Works," Works of Martin Luther (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1943), I, 241.

¹³Triglot Concordia, pp. 91 f.

¹⁴Martin Luther, "A Treatise on Christian Liberty," Works of Martin Luther (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1943), II, 312.

Hence the Augsburg Confession states they do err who say that the observance of the Lord's Day, in place of the Sabbath, is necessary. The Augustana insists the Sabbath has been abrogated.¹⁵ However, as intimated above, the Lord's Day has always been observed out of love and, as Luther says, because a Christian man is also a dutiful man, "servant of all, subject to all."¹⁶ It is best summed up by the words of Luther, who here speaks of good works, but applicable to this situation also:

Why should I not therefore freely, joyfully, with all my heart, and with an eager will, do all things which I know are pleasing and acceptable to such a Father, Who has overwhelmed me with His inestimable riches.¹⁷

Thus the Confessions stand upon a motivation of love, not of obligation. This follows Luther's characteristic emphasis on the liberty of the Christian man; liberty, but also his obligation as a servant, out of love, to all.

Baptismal Regeneration

It might be well, before discussing the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, that a discussion of Schmucker's attitude of the sacraments in general would form the basis of the discussion. In general it might be said that for

¹⁶Luther, "A Treatise on Christian Liberty," II, 312.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 337.

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Schmucker the sacraments are works of men, This may be gained from his mnemonic concept of the nature of the Sacrament of the Altar, as well as from his terming the Sacrament a confessional act. In harmony with this, Schmucker also denies that the sacrament has any sin-forgiving power whatsoever.¹⁸ He consistently follows the line that baptism is a sign and only a sign, a symbol, he says, whereby the converted may make "a public profession of the fact" that they are converted, and also receive a pledge of divine favor and are thus admitted into the visible church. He also insists that only faith makes a sacrament valid. Indicating again the tendency to make the sacrament a work of man.¹⁹

The Reformed Church since Zwingli's "Dux autem vel vehiculum Spiritui non est necessarium"²⁰ has denied the fact that the sacraments are an act of God, and have thus placed the validity of the sacrament upon the initiative of man, and not the power of God. The Reformed tradition insists that faith makes the sacrament valid.²¹ Heinrich Bullinger sums it up in these words:

Denn Gott allein wirkt durch seinen Geist, und wenn er sich der Sacramente, als Mittel, bedient, so gieszt er darun doch nicht seine Kraft in sie, noch

¹⁸Schmucker, Definite Platform, p. 38.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 29.

²⁰J. Theodore Mueller, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1934), p. 245.

²¹Op. cit. p., 528.

vermindert er die Wirksamkeit seines Geistes, sondern er gebraucht sie nach unsrer Beschränkung als Hülfsmittel so, dass ganze Vermögen ihm allein beiwohnt.²²

The sacraments were signs and symbols for Luther also. However, the sign for him is understood as God's seal of His promises, not a mere figurative expression but a real move on God's part into man's life. The symbol does not merely symbolize an ideal of imitation, but it "signifies" an act of God which cannot and will not be avoided.²³ In fact the sacraments can be called an "epiphany" of God, a term applied by Luther to the Sacrament of the Altar, but applicable to his conception of the sacraments in general.²⁴ This is applicable because for Luther the promise and content of both sacraments is Christ Himself.²⁵ Thus Luther firmly believed, what made a sacrament a sacrament is that it carried the promise of the gift of God Himself. Therefore, Luther concludes that in the sacraments we must expect to meet none other than the living Christ as the gift of God.²⁶

The Sacraments thus for Luther are no mere ritual acts of memorial performed by men, but they are opera Dei, works

²²Heinrich Bullinger, "Die Zuericher Uebereinkunft," Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-reformirten Kirche (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1847), p. 179.

²³Regin Prenter, Spiritus Creator, translated by John M. Jensen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1954), p. 145.

²⁴Philip Watson, Let God Be God (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1949), p. 161.

²⁵Prenter, op. cit., p. 141.

²⁶Ibid., p. 142.

of the living God and Christ.²⁷ They are not constituted by any willing or doing of men, nor do they receive their validity by the faith of man, "but the Word spoken by the incarnate God, present among us in the fullness of His redeeming grace."²⁸ Even when Luther stresses the necessity of faith, "non sacramentum, sed fides sacramenti iustificat,"²⁹ it has the purpose of emphasizing the sacrament as a divine act;³⁰ for faith is not an act of man, or man's work, but it is "an indispensable part in the act of God."³¹

Thus the validity of the sacrament rests not on faith in man, nor in the material sign itself, but in the Word which accompanies it and gives it significance.³² The words are in the sacrament no hearsay, or traditional report, but are res viventes which give life to those who hear and believe them.³³ For where the Word is proclaimed Christ is present; where it is not, He is not.³⁴ Hence the sacraments are for Luther and the Confessions the work of God not man.

With a general orientation of Schmucker's concept of the

²⁷Watson, op. cit., p. 162.

²⁸Ibid., p. 165.

²⁹Prenter, op. cit., p. 132.

³⁰Ibid., p. 134.

³¹Ibid., p. 133.

³²Watson, op. cit., p. 161.

³³Ibid., pp. 161 f.

³⁴Ibid., p. 162.

sacraments in mind it is not strange when he says that Baptismal Regeneration is a doctrine not taught in the Scriptures.³⁵ He says that baptism in adults requires previous faith; destitute of this faith they are damned notwithstanding their baptism. Schmucker insists baptism is not and never was "a converting ordinance in adults and does not necessarily effect or secure their regeneration."³⁶ It would seem, however, that Schmucker uses the term "regeneration" in a different sense than do the Confessions. Schmucker believes that regeneration is perfection in works. Hence he concludes that the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration is harmful to preaching because if all the members are regenerate you cannot preach repentance to them, which is serious since some of the so-called regenerate people, those who have been baptized, give no evidence of piety in their lives. Furthermore, he concludes, we cannot pray that those who are dead in trespasses and sin might have a new heart and spirit, because they already have that as regenerate persons, if the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration is allowed to stand.³⁷ Schmucker seemingly has no concept of the simul justus et peccator condition of the Christian. The Confessions are aware of the multi-usage of the word "regeneration." Hence in the Formula of Concord various definitions of the term

³⁵ Schmucker, Definite Platform, p. 31.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 29.

³⁷ Schmucker, American Lutheranism Vindicated, pp. 14 f.

are given. Regeneration can mean "justification," or "vivification," or it can mean the renewal which the Holy Ghost works in man as a result of his justification. In any event the Formula stresses that the various definitions and usage dare not be confused.³⁸

Although Schmucker denies regeneration, he does not deny the possibility of certain benefits.³⁹ For him it is a rite whereby those who have already consecrated themselves to Christ or have been converted, make public profession of it, and receive the divine favor of forgiveness of sins, "and were admitted to membership in the visible church."⁴⁰

It follows then for Schmucker, when considering Infant Baptism, that since baptism is not a converting ordinance in adults, it cannot be in infants.⁴¹ Furthermore, Schmucker concludes that infants are incapable of regeneration.⁴² Infants, he says, are not in any need of regeneration for they have no guilt, nor any sinful habits, for infants have no sin prior to "moral agency."⁴³ This seems to be an inconsistency in Schmucker, because he subscribes to the Second

³⁸Triglot Concordia, p. 921.

³⁹S. S. Schmucker, The American Lutheran Church (Philadelphia: E. W. Miller, Ranstead Place, 1852), p. 176.

⁴⁰Schmucker, Definite Platform, p. 29.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 30.

⁴²Ibid., p. 30.

⁴³Schmucker, American Lutheranism Vindicated, p. 145.

Article of the Augsburg Confession on original sin;⁴⁴ yet his contention that infants have no sin before moral agency would tend to indicate a perfectionism which says that only that can be called sin which is consciously and deliberately committed.⁴⁵

Because infants have no guilt it would seem that Schmucker has no theological basis for infant baptism. Yet he insists that infants should be baptized, for, as he says, it is a "pledge of the bestowments of those things purchased by Christ for all."⁴⁶ Perhaps this quote from Schmucker best sums up his view. Speaking of infant baptism he says:

these blessings are forgiveness of sins, or exemption from the penal consequences of natural depravity, (which would at least be exclusion from heaven on account of moral disqualification for admission) reception into the visible church of Christ, grace to help in every time of need, and special provisions for the nurture and admonition in the Lord, to which parents pledge themselves.⁴⁷

The source of Schmucker's denial of the regenerative power of baptism could well be the Reformed tradition, for it too denies that baptism is a means of regeneration.⁴⁸ Zwingli insists that baptism cannot cleanse from sin; for him

⁴⁴Schmucker, Definite Platform, p. 8.

⁴⁵Muller, op. cit., p. 399.

⁴⁶Schmucker, Definite Platform, p. 31.

⁴⁷Schmucker, American Lutheranism Vindicated, p. 146.

⁴⁸Mueller, op. cit., p. 494.

baptism is simply a covenant sign.⁴⁹ For Calvin it is a sign of initiation by which a person is admitted into the society of the church.⁵⁰ Similarly the significance of infant baptism is the same.⁵¹

The Reformed Churches have for the most part maintained infant baptism. Zwingli defended it⁵² even though he fails to give adequate theological grounds for it, since he does not admit any possibility of guilt in infants, nor does he admit of the possibility of real faith in infants.⁵³ Zwingli did however, allow an "inherited frailty" of nature which inevitably gives rise to sin, but he attaches no guilt to that frailty.⁵⁴ For Calvin also, original sin is "pravity and corruption of our nature," but by baptism believers are certified that this condemnation is removed from them since the Lord promises us by this sign that the full and entire remission is granted both of the guilt and of the punishment

⁴⁹"Zwingli and Bullinger," The Library of Christian Classics, translated and edited by G. W. Bromely (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943), XXIV, 122.

⁵⁰John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, translated by John Allen (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, n.d.), II, 477.

⁵¹John Calvin, A Compend of the Institutes of the Christian Religion, edited by Hugh Thomas Kerr (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 1939), p. 194.

⁵²"Zwingli and Bullinger," op. cit., p. 119.

⁵³Ibid., p. 126

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 124.

on account of that guilt.⁵⁵

On the other hand the view of the Lutheran confessions has simply been, as the Smalcald Articles say, that baptism is nothing else than the Word of God in the water.⁵⁶ The Large Catechism simply states that because God has promised to work through baptism, that is all we need to know.⁵⁷

Thus for the confessors baptism is a means of washing away original sin, and sealing of the pardon of actual sin, as well as a means whereby the Holy Ghost is imparted to us.⁵⁸ For it is the Confessions' consistent view that what is wrought in the Sacrament of Baptism is wrought by the Holy Ghost through the Word with the water.⁵⁹ Hence whatever may be predicated of the Word, as a means of the Spirit, may also be predicated of baptism, the working of faith and securing its justifying, regenerating, sanctifying, and saving effects.⁶⁰ The content of the promise in the sacrament is God's gift of Christ to us; synonyms for this are none other than salvation, the forgiveness of sins or regen-

⁵⁵Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, p. 483.

⁵⁶Triglot Concordia, p. 491.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 747.

⁵⁸F. W. Conrad, "The Lutheran Doctrine of Baptism," The Quarterly Review (October, 1874), p. 497.

⁵⁹Charles P. Krauth, The Conservative Reformation and its Theology (Philadelphia: The United Lutheran Publication House, c.1913), p. 559.

⁶⁰Conrad, op. cit., p. 499.

eration.⁶¹ Therefore Luther can say,

Therefore, I will not base baptism upon my faith, but my faith again shall base and build upon baptism.⁶²

Baptism then is an act of God, and in the case of the infant it is a prevenient movement of God toward the child through which God makes a gift of grace and takes the child into His family.⁶³ Because it is an act of God, baptism does not become invalid, even though it might be wrongly received or employed, since its validity lies not on personal faith but on the Word of God.⁶⁴ Nor does the validity of the sacrament depend on the worthiness of the subject, but solely on the basis of the command of God and His institution. The sacrament is complete and perfect in itself.⁶⁵ On this basis it can be concluded that faith is wrought by the Holy Spirit through the Sacrament itself,⁶⁶ even in the infant of whom Mueller says concerning the possibility of faith:

Luther rightly argues that we can be more certain of the faith of infants than that of adults because the latter may wilfully resist, which

⁶¹Prenter, op. cit., p. 147.

⁶²D. H. Geissinger, "Baptism and Regeneration," The Lutheran Church Review (July, 1885), p. 224.

⁶³Conrad, op. cit., p. 503.

⁶⁴"Large Catechism," Triglot Concordia, p. 745.

⁶⁵Geissinger, op. cit., p. 225.

⁶⁶Ibid.

willful resistance is not found in little children.⁶⁷

Grace, however, always remains resistible. Thus the Confessions do not teach that baptism is inevitably attended by spiritual regeneration. A person may be baptized and remain then and forever in sin and iniquity.⁶⁸ To those who are destitute of faith baptism remains a fruitless sign, and imparts no blessing. Those who disavow their baptism by unrighteous living fall into a state of condemnation. They have grieved the Holy Spirit.⁶⁹

In view of all, baptism is truly putting off the old man to death in us, and raising a new man; it is in this way that God fulfills His promise in us and truly gives us salvation in Christ.⁷⁰

The Mode of Baptism

In considering the doctrine of the Mode of Baptism, we come to a section in which Schmucker, the Reformed tradition and the Lutheran tradition to a large extent agree. Schmucker rejects the Lutheran view because in the Large Catechism Luther has a statement which says that in the work of art of baptism the person should be "sunk" into the water.⁷¹

⁶⁷Mueller, op. cit., p. 502.

⁶⁸Krauth, op. cit., p. 561.

⁶⁹Conrad, op. cit., p. 556.

⁷⁰Prenter, op. cit., p. 147.

⁷¹Schmucker, Definite Platform, pp. 34 f.

Schmucker contends that the Greek word signifies various ways of applying water, and any mode of application of the water will meet the import of the New Testament command.⁷²

The question of the mode of baptism was considered by Luther and others as of comparatively little importance. The question for Schmucker, however, is whether or not the Scriptures enjoin immersion, to which he takes the view that immersion is not commanded by Scripture, and therefore the validity of the sacrament does not depend upon it.⁷³

The Reformed tradition, as represented by Charles Hodge, has followed a similar line. Hodge says that so far as the New Testament is concerned there is not a single case where baptism necessarily implies immersion.⁷⁴ Hence he concludes that baptism may be done by immersion, affusion or sprinkling. The command to baptize is simply a command to wash with water.⁷⁵

Similarly the Lutheran tradition as held that when Christ instituted baptism He did not specify what mode should be used.⁷⁶ And although Luther himself spoke favorably con-

⁷²Ibid., p. 34.

⁷³Ibid., pp. 33 f.

⁷⁴Krauth, op. cit., p. 536.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 526.

⁷⁶Walter A. Baepler, "The Mode of Baptism," Concordia Theological Monthly (August, 1939), p. 562.

cerning immersion for reasons of symbolism, he nevertheless emphasized that immersion was not essential to a valid baptism. Thus in the Large Catechism Luther defines the mode as pouring, immersion or sprinkling.⁷⁷ In any event, in the Lutheran tradition the purpose of baptism is not the "putting away of the filth of the flesh," but the cleansing from sin. Neither is the power of baptism in the water itself. Therefore, the particular mode which may be adopted has no effect upon the validity of the baptism, so long as the water is applied in the name of the triune God. For the validity of baptism depends only on the use of water and the Word with that water.⁷⁸

The Two Natures of Christ

The concept that God and man could be united in the person of Christ is for Schmucker unscriptural and unreasonable.⁷⁹ The idea that the Virgin Mary bore and brought forth the Son of God is for Schmucker in the light of common sense a "preposterous" view.⁸⁰ In fact, the very idea that God and man could be united in the person of Jesus Christ and communicate attributes leads to the "apotheosis of hereso, and

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 570.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Schmucker, Definite Platform, p. 35.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 36.

the pagan worship of inferior deities in general as well as to the Romish worship of the Virgin Mary."⁸¹

Schmucker's view seems to reflect the view of Zwingli, according to whom only the human was born of the Virgin Mary. For Zwingli, the Virgin only carried Christ's humanity in this present time.⁸² Zwingli insists that according to His divine nature Christ never left the right hand of the Father, for as he put it, "He is one with the Father."⁸³ Thus the Reformed tradition has held a view of the incarnation whereby Christ was indeed incarnate man, but in such a way that His divinity remained in heaven.⁸⁴ Perhaps this is best expressed in the philosophical terms of "finitum non capax infiniti" which has been the consistent view of the Reformed Church.⁸⁵ Consequently, like Zwingli, the Reformed tradition has always tended to divide Christ. It is not, "Christ did this, Christ did that," the total Christ, but it is, "this is done by the humanity, this by the divinity." How else, Zwingli insists, could Christ have called out, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"⁸⁶ Hence Pieper concludes that Reformed theology is offering the church a human sub-

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²"Zwingli and Bullinger," op. cit., p. 212.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Hermann Sasse, Here We Stand: Nature and Character of the Lutheran Faith, translated by Theodore G. Tappert (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, c.1946), p.144.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 145.

⁸⁶"Zwingli and Bullinger," op. cit., p. 213.

stitute for the unio personalis, making of it such a union as keeps the natures and their activities apart.⁸⁷

The Reformed tradition has always taken great pains barely to let touch, in the incarnation, "time and eternity," "finite and infinite," so that they may never become confused. The Lutheran Church, on the other hand, has taught that in the incarnation God really entered humanity and the infinite has actually come down into the finite.⁸⁸ The Confessions have always looked upon Christ Jesus as the total Christ; it is the Son of God that suffered. They make no attempt to separate actions and assign them to particular natures.⁸⁹ The divine and the human natures united in Christ are inseparable. Where the divine is, there the human is also. For the Lutheran confessors this doctrine rests upon the reality and abiding character of the incarnation. "Where Christ is, He is present in the completeness of His personality."⁹⁰ The Confessions simply state that Christ was God and man by virtue of a union, so that you could correctly say, "God is man and man is God." However, they are equally insistent that "humanity is divinity, and divinity is humanity."⁹¹

⁸⁷ Franz Pieper, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1951), II, 102.

⁸⁸ Sasse, op. cit., p. 145.

⁸⁹ "Formula of Concord," Triglot Concordia, p. 821.

⁹⁰ Emil E. Fischer, "The Doctrine of the Real Presence," The Lutheran Church Quarterly (October, 1939), p. 368.

⁹¹ "Catalog of Testimonies," Triglot Concordia, p. 1111.

Aulen seems to comprehend this thought when he says,

The lofty stoops to the lowly without losing its loftiness, the Divine nature unites itself with the human nature, and becomes human, without ceasing to be divine.

Thus when the Virgin conceived in her womb it was at once a union between the human and the logos, so that it can be truly said that she was the "Mother of God."⁹³

The Confessions of the Lutheran Church further emphasize that Christ is and remains to all eternity God and man in one undivided person, which next to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is the highest mystery.⁹⁴ In fact it is as Luther has said impossible to rationalize this mystery of God in man, in the person of Christ Jesus. "How many a man," says Luther, "has become a fool by all this."⁹⁵ Thus we can see that for Luther and also for the Lutheran tradition the union of the two natures of Christ is not a dogma of theoretical explanation, but rather a religious affirmation, the utterance of faith.⁹⁶ For Luther only the Deus incarnatus is the revealed God. Outside and apart from the incarnation God is never more than the "hidden God" of judgment and wrath.⁹⁷

⁹²Gustaf Aulen, Christus Victor (London: S. P. C. K., 1950), p. 62.

⁹³"Christology," Theological Quarterly (January, 1900), pp. 8 f.

⁹⁴"Formula of Concord," Triglot Concordia, p. 823.

⁹⁵Watson, op. cit., p. 126.

⁹⁶Ibid., pp. 126 f.

⁹⁷Sasse, op. cit., p. 146.

Hence for the confessors the union of the two natures is necessary to the complete atonement. God could not have suffered and died sufficiently. The suffering and death of the God-man was both real and sufficient, real because of the human, sufficient because of the divine.⁹⁸ Hence Aulen concludes that for Luther there is no thought that the offering made by Christ was simply made by the man Christ Jesus, in His human nature, but all depends upon the assertion that it is God Himself who in Christ wins the victory.⁹⁹ Luther himself says:

For the humanity would be of no use if the divinity were not in it; yet on the other hand, God will not and cannot be found except through and in this humanity.¹⁰⁰

Thus against the "finitum non capax infiniti", the Lutheran theologians hold firm to the finitum capax infiniti.¹⁰¹

Therefore, Luther can say, "Whenever, you say, 'Here is God,' you must also say, 'Christ the man is here too.'"¹⁰² Perhaps it is best summed up in the following statement of Watson,

The humanity of Christ is essential to the fulfillment of His proper office. Since the conflict between God and the Tyrants takes place in human

⁹⁸"Christology," op. cit., p. 24.

⁹⁹Aulen, op. cit., p. 124.

¹⁰⁰Watson, op. cit., p. 126.

¹⁰¹Sasse, op. cit., p. 145.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 147.

life, where God and His adversaries contend, as it were, for the mastery of Mansoul [sic], it is in human life that the victory must be won, at any rate if it is to effect man's salvation, and if God is to be truly God for man.¹⁰³

The Real Presence in the Lord's Supper

In view of Schmucker's position on the doctrine of the Two Natures of Christ, it is only natural for him to deny the Real Presence in the Sacrament of the Altar. Wentz has termed Schmucker's view as lower than that of Zwingli.¹⁰⁴ Schmucker contends that to believe in the real presence contradicts the clear testimony and observations of all ages, that every body or material substance must occupy a given space at a given time, and thus cannot be at more than one place at a time, or in different places at the same time.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, Schmucker insists that to accept the view of the real presence contradicts the clear testimony of our senses; he concludes that if the real body and blood were received in the sacrament, our senses would be able to perceive it.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, Schmucker concludes that the words of institution must be taken in the figurative sense and in no way are they

¹⁰³Watson, op. cit., p. 127.

¹⁰⁴Abdell Ross Wentz, "The Work of Samuel Simon Schmucker," The Lutheran Quarterly (January, 1927), p. 87.

¹⁰⁵Schmucker, Definite Platform, p. 40.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 39.

to be taken literally.¹⁰⁷ To substantiate this view Schmucker quotes other uses of the figurative by Christ, "I am the door," "I am the bread of life," and other such usages.¹⁰⁸ Schmucker's position is summed up thusly: he concludes

That there is no real or actual presence of the glorified human nature of the Savior either substantial or influential, nor anything mysterious or supernatural in the eucharist. . .¹⁰⁹

Finally Schmucker insists that the doctrine of the Real Presence is a remnant of "Romish error," which the reformers were not able to cleanse.¹¹⁰

The Reformed tradition also refuses to admit the possibility of any real presence. The teaching of the presence of the body and blood of Christ "under the elements of this World" is for them a "false and godless superstition."¹¹¹ The bread and the wine are only symbols from which Christ is absent "as far as the earth is from the highest heavens."¹¹² We quote here Bullinger,

Denn wir halten es fuer eben so ungereimt, Christum in das Brot einzuschliessen, oder mit dem Brots zu vereinigen, als dasz das Brot sich in seinen Leib verwandeln solle.¹¹³

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

¹⁰⁸Schmucker, The American Lutheran Church, p. 152.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., pp. 153 f.

¹¹⁰Schmucker, Definite Platform, p. 40.

¹¹¹Sasse, op. cit., p. 148.

¹¹²Mueller, op. cit., p. 509.

¹¹³Bullinger, op. cit., p. 181.

It has also been within the Reformed tradition to insist that the words of institution be considered figuratively and symbolically. Zwingli contends that the words are plainly figurative and symbolical; there is no literal identity between the sign and the thing signified,¹¹⁴ Zwingli further contends that the verb "is" means to signify and he points to Christ's usage of the figurative, "I am the door," and other such usages.¹¹⁵ Hence Zwingli may conclude:

The flesh may fume, but the words of Christ stand firm: he sits at the right hand of the Father, He has left the world, he is no longer present with us. And if these words are true, it is impossible to maintain that His flesh and blood are present in the sacrament.¹¹⁶

Calvin, on the other hand, was willing to admit to a spiritual presence with the sacramental elements,¹¹⁷ but it was inconceivable for him to have any real presence of Christ in the Sacrament, he says,

It is essential to a real body to have its particular form and dimension and to be contained within some certain place. Let us hear no more then, of this ridiculous notion which fastens the minds of men and Christ Himself to the bread.¹¹⁸

Consistent with her view of the doctrine of the Personal

¹¹⁴"Zwingli and Bullinger," op. cit., p. 179.

¹¹⁵Mueller, op. cit., p. 515.

¹¹⁶"Zwingli and Bullinger," op. cit., pp. 214 f.

¹¹⁷Calvin, A Compend of the Institutes of the Christian Religion, p. 195.

¹¹⁸Mueller, op. cit., p. 517.

Union, the Lutheran Church maintains in her confessional writings the doctrine of the Real Presence in the Sacrament of the Altar.¹¹⁹ The Lutheran tradition insists this is what the Scriptures teach; and even though this doctrine presents difficulties to mind and to reason, she insists that "facts are not determined by difficulties, but difficulties must be dealt with on the basis of Scriptural facts."¹²⁰ Hence the Lutheran Church can say, "The body of our Lord is sacramentally present when and where it pleases Him."¹²¹

Characteristically Luther was never concerned with the "when or where" of the sacramental presence. He merely said that in the sacrament the person with, "cum," the bread and the wine received the body and the blood of Christ. This takes on significance in the light of the charges of Transubstantiation, and Consubstantiation which have been lodged against the Lutheran view.¹²² It was sufficient for Luther to know that Christ gave assurance that He would be present in the sacrament with the elements. Why should he then concern himself with the "where and the when" this actually takes place?¹²³ Hence Luther concludes that in the Lord's Supper we depart from the Lord's table assured that "the

¹¹⁹Fischer, op. cit., p. 368.

¹²⁰Ibid., p. 367.

¹²¹Ibid., p. 372.

¹²²Ibid., p. 371.

¹²³Ibid.

crucified but living Christ has imparted Himself to us."¹²⁴

Thus for Luther the views of Calvin and Zwingli sprang from a lack of the proper understanding of the incarnation.¹²⁵ For Luther the spiritualistic interpretation of Calvin, and also the allegorical interpretation of Zwingli cannot do justice to St. Paul and St. John who both represent a sacramental realism,¹²⁶ a realism which is for Luther, as Prenter has said:

Christ's real presence is not a momentary religious experience, but a total eschatological, historical act of salvation influencing our whole life.¹²⁷

This is echoed in the Confessions, for they insist that in the sacrament we deal with the totus Christus, the whole Christ, "and we speak of the presence of the living Christ, knowing that death hath no more dominion over Him."¹²⁸

Hence for the Lutheran Church the question is intimately tied up with the doctrine of the Two Natures, but also the doctrine of the Incarnation, and ultimately, therefore, with the doctrine of Justification." Sasse summarizes this,

The Lord's Supper looms up like a towering rock even in the very oldest documents of Christianity, it is already complete in the First Epistle to the Corinthians: it is incapable of further development, and requires none. It mocks every attempt to

¹²⁴Ibid.

¹²⁵Sasse, op. cit., pp. 147 f.

¹²⁶Ibid., p. 151.

¹²⁷Prenter, op. cit., p. 163.

¹²⁸Fischer, op. cit., p. 373.

spiritualize it. If it seriously obstructed the doctrine of Justification, is a question whether Justification would not be smashed by, rather than be capable of, forcing it aside. If it is a real contradiction, it is difficult to understand how the first dogmatician treating the doctrine of Justification, Paul, would not have noticed it.¹²⁹

The Sin-forgiving Power of the Lord's Supper

In considering the sin-forgiving power of the Lord's Supper Schmucker rejects the view that the sacrament has any power whatsoever to forgive sin. He holds that the view is unscriptural, for as he says no one can be justified or pardoned except through faith; therefore, each communicant, if he has faith, has pardon without the sacrament, while if he does not have faith the Sacrament is of no avail anyway.¹³⁰ Thus he concludes that the Pauline interpretation of the purpose of the sacrament is the mnemonic import of the rite, instituted to perpetuate the memory of the Lord's death.¹³¹

The Reformed view of the sin-forgiving power of the sacrament is consistent with their view of the sacraments in general. For Zwingli the inward operation of God is not related in any clear or definite way to the outward sacramental rite.¹³² Calvin seems best to summarize the view of the Reformed tradition, "Coena dominica mortis commemora-

¹²⁹Sasse. op. cit., p. 151.

¹³⁰Schmucker, Definite Platform, p. 37.

¹³¹Schmucker, The American Lutheran Church, p. 150.

¹³²"Zwingli and Bullinger," op. cit., p. 184.

tio est, non peccatorum remissio."¹³³

Contrasted to this and to Schmucker's view, and in the light of her view of the Sacraments and her doctrine of the Real Presence, the Lutheran tradition holds that in the Lord's Supper God offers us His grace, and the Gospel reaches its climax,

All that is promised in the Word is here given in the gift of Christ Himself, the whole Christ, who died for our sins and rose again for our justification. This is the assurance which is ours in the doctrine of the Real Presence.¹³⁴

For in the sacrament the Lutheran idea of the res sacramenti is neither the body and blood divorced from the Word, nor the Word divorced from the body and blood. But "it is the Word, conveying grace through the gift of the body and blood of Christ."¹³⁵ The heavenly gift received in the sacrament is the forgiving grace of God of which the body and the blood communicated with the elements are the pledge and seal.¹³⁶

However, lest it be misunderstood, the Confessions insist that it is not the mere outward eating which gives the forgiveness of sins, but the divine command connected with the eating,¹³⁷ and such faith which believes the promises of the command of God. Indeed the Confessions say

¹³³Mueller, op. cit., p. 537.

¹³⁴Fischer, op. cit., p. 369.

¹³⁵Ibid.

¹³⁶Ibid., p. 366.

¹³⁷"Small Catechism," Triglot Concordia, p. 557.

the body and blood are given to the worthy and the unworthy alike, but faith alone can make one's own the promise of the remission of sin.¹³⁸ This faith rests on a sure promise. For the promise heard in the sacrament is not unfulfilled, but has already been fulfilled in Christ.¹³⁹ Thus it is that the living Christ comes to us with the blessings of life in the sacrament, as Luther says,

Therefore, whoso eateth of this Bread and drinketh of the Cup, firmly believing the word of Christ, dwelleth in Christ, and Christ in him, and hath eternal life.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸Fischer, op. cit., p. 366.

¹³⁹Prenter, op. cit., p. 143.

¹⁴⁰Fischer, op. cit., p. 373.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In conclusion I am reminded of the scripture passage in Proverbs 6:27, "Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned?" It is impossible to hold fellowship, except where the two parties are agreed in doctrine, without eventually sacrificing truth to the altar of indifference. Whenever intercommunion between the Reformed and the Lutheran Churches becomes common it almost always involves the loss of Lutheran truth, or subjects it to serious doubt. The historic incident recorded in the movement "American Lutheranism," gives ample testimony, and serves ample warning to this truth. "He who has ears, let him hear."

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