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THE ROLE OF LUTHERAN THEOLOGY IN INDIA TODAY

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
Master of Sacred Theology

by

James Canjanam Gamaliel

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. THE LUTHERAN CHURCHES IN INDIA	8
III. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH TODAY.	18
IV. THE DOCTRINE OF THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL	27
V. THE DOCTRINE OF THE TWO KINGDOMS	42
VI. THE DOCTRINE OF THE WORD OF GOD.	52
VII. PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION.	64
VIII. MARCHING FORWARD	82
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	96

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"Is there a role for the Lutheran Church and the Lutheran theology in India today?" This question has been asked with increasing vehemence since 1947, the year the Church of South India* was formed by the merger of the Anglican, the Congregationalist, the Methodist, and the Presbyterian Churches of South India. The same year negotiations for church union were begun between the C. S. I. and the Lutheran Churches.

Some put forth theological reasons for church union. "Church union is the will of God." "The Church must manifest its visible unity." "There is no such thing as an invisible church." Such arguments were propagated in sermons and books. Bishop Newbigin was the most prominent theologian of church union. "That We May Be One," caught the imagination of many.

Some arguments for church union were practical in nature. Will not the united witness of a stronger church be more effective? Is not the fragmented body of Christ an offense? Is there not much waste in duplication in personnel and institutions? Christians constitute only 2.6% of the 600 million people of India of whom 453 million are Hindus and 61 million Muslims. Christians number 20 million, of whom 10 million are Roman Catholics. Of the 10 million Protestants, only 800,000 are Lutherans. In this context will not the Lutherans be

*Hereafter the Church of South India will be referred to as C. S. I.

doing a service to the other churches by joining them and in turn be benefited by the other Christians? Will not a bigger church be more effective in evangelism?

Persuaded by such arguments, leaders of the C. S. I. and the Lutheran Churches held joint theological discussions and agreed doctrinal statements were published. A joint catechism for instruction both in the C. S. I. and the Lutheran Churches was accepted. Finally a constitution for the union church of the C. S. I. and the Lutheran Church was prepared. Union seemed imminent.

Then suddenly negotiations came to a standstill. Enthusiasm waned. Although the C. S. I. was hailed as a miracle of the century, all the optimistic predictions did not seem to come true. It still remained a loose federation and the envisaged integration did not happen. Missions continued to support their former constituencies. Evangelism and outreach was at a low ebb: Of the sixteen dioceses, membership was declining in fourteen dioceses. The Federation of the Evangelical Lutheran Churches suggested a union among Lutherans before union with the C. S. I. could be pushed. So the church union proposal was shelved.

In the 1970s joint theological training received a new boost. Its supporters were more the missionaries and mission boards than national leaders of the Church. The Lutheran World Federation and the Theological Education Fund threw their strength, influence, and money into forming joint theological institutions.

The old Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church seminary of Pasumala was merged with the C. S. I. seminary of Tirumarayur in a new site in Madura. The Arcot Lutheran Church joined them. It runs both B.Th. and B.D. courses.

The Gurukul Theological College and Research Institute, which was started in 1954 under the auspices of the Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India with a B.D. and M.Th. program designed to train pastors of a higher cadre for the nine Lutheran Church bodies of India was merged with the United Theological College, Bangalore, in 1969. Gurukul was reduced to a training institute. But even after four years they do not have a program worthy of the name.

The Lutherans and the Baptists closed their respective seminaries in Andhra and opened a new theological college in a new site.

Ardent supporters of church union and joint theological training on the one hand and skeptics on these issues on the other leave the ministers and members of the Lutheran churches confused. Pastors and members ask the question, what is right, what is expedient, what is helpful to growth of the churches. More fundamental than that, they ask themselves whether Lutheranism has a role today. Is there something distinct about the Lutheran theology to be cherished and retained? In meeting the great challenges of the resurgent world religions and the many new theological schools does Lutheran theology have a role to play? Does it make no difference whether you follow scholastic, Calvinistic, Barthian, or Lutheran theologies? Would merging into a big church body help the growth of the church? Such questions haunt the ministers and laity of the Lutheran Churches of India.

The debate at the ecumenical level adds to this confusion. The Assembly of the World Council of Churches at New Delhi in 1961 brought into sharp focus the difference between the evangelical and the conciliar churches. Uppsala sharply divided them into two camps. The

Wheaton Declaration and the Frankfurt Declaration of 1970 defined the position of the evangelicals. The Bangkok Conference of 1973 convened by the World Council of Churches made humanization the chief goal of mission. The evangelicals strongly reacted to this stand. The Congress of World Evangelism in Lausanne will further clarify the position of the evangelicals, and it may bring them into a solid organization. Move towards world evangelism may become a reality. The fervor of the student movement of the days of the early decades of the century may be recaptured.

It is in this context, with several forces at work on the local, denominational, national, and international levels that we ask the question with the 800,000 Lutherans of the 9 Lutheran church bodies of India, "What is the role of Lutheran theology in India today?" In answering this question one has to concede two things at the outset.

First, the task of the church in India is not to transplant Lutheran theology of the sixteenth century into India, but to develop an Indian theology to meet the quests of 600 million people of India, manifest in Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, and in cults like Vaishnavism, Saivism, and the many modern sects. While developing a theological expression in the thought forms and tenets of the people of India, some abiding principles and doctrines of Lutheran theology provide light and guidance. They provide the framework applicable to all times, cultures, religions, and peoples. I wish to deal with five of these doctrines in this thesis--doctrines highly significant to the Indian scene: justification by faith, the Law and the Gospel, the doctrine of the two kingdoms, the doctrine of the Word

of God and the principles of biblical interpretation. While discussing these doctrines in the Indian context, we will constantly ask the question how these doctrines help the Indian church to understand other religions, to interpret the Christian faith to people of other cultures, to define the role of the church in a secular state, to establish criteria of ministry, and to define Christian freedom on the one hand and restraints on the other.

Second, when we consider the question of the Lutheran contribution to the Indian situation we do not imply that other theologies do not have insights from which Indian theology and church life may benefit. What the Lutheran churches can learn from other churches will be dealt with in the last chapter. In the first chapter we will briefly survey the history of the Lutheran churches in India.

I have had occasion to ponder over this theme for several years. In 1951, when I began my ministry in Ernakulam, a port city, I came into contact with the Orthodox Syrian Church, the Mar Thoma Church, and the Anglican Church. In 1954-1955 I studied at the School of Research attached to a Methodist seminary in Jabalpur. In 1955-1956 I studied closely the Gossner Lutheran Church and the Anglican Church in Ranchi. From 1956 to 1962, when I was pastor in Bombay, a city of 4 million, the Bombay Christian Conference brought the various churches together. I was also the secretary of that conference for two years. From 1963 to 1969, when I served a village parish, I had occasion to move closely with the C. S. I. In 1966-1967, at the School of World Mission, Pasadena, California, I came into contact with about a hundred missionaries of thirty denominations. Again in 1973-1974, at the same

school, I studied with over a hundred and fifty missionaries and nationals representing over fifty denominations and forty countries.

These contacts and confrontations have convinced me that while there are many things Lutherans can and should learn from others, Lutheran theology has some definite and distinct contributions to make in India today.

In 1967, while attending summer courses at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, I asked Dr. Martin Scharlemann what the distinctive doctrines of the Lutheran Church were today in this age of ecumenism. He mentioned the doctrine of the Law and the Gospel, justification by faith, and the doctrine of the two kingdoms. I have been pondering over that statement ever since. When I had the privilege to take some more courses in Lutheran theology at Concordia again in the summer and fall of 1973, ideas began to crystallize. When I wrote a dissertation at the School of World Mission in 1973-1974 on "The Evangelical Stance Toward Non-Christian Religions," based on the Law-Gospel doctrine and received the advice of Dr. Robert Preus and Professor Charles Manske, the issues began to take still clearer shape. Finally, while taking courses in Lutheran theology under Dr. Robert Preus and Dr. Richard Klann this summer the urge to attempt this subject, the contribution of Lutheran theology in India today, brought me to this thesis.

As I write, I have in mind the pastors and lay leaders of the nine Lutheran Churches of India. The topics treated in this thesis will be useful for group discussions in congregations so that the people and the pastors will realize the heritage of the Lutheran Church. How the five doctrines chosen are crucial in facing the specific problems and opportunities the church in India is facing will be shown in each

chapter. In evaluating the contribution of Lutheran theology, the doctrines promulgated by the Second Vatican Council and some Roman Catholic scholars will also, when relevant, be referred to.

To be able to discern the real issues through the labyrinth of scholastic reasoning and humanistic philosophizing is a big need for Lutheran ministers today. Also an enlightened laity, who are sure of the implications of their faith in this age of theological confusion, is imperative. The Lutheran Churches in India should be sure of what they believe and also why they believe and how important those doctrines are today. That is the purpose of this thesis. The churches must grow from strength to strength. Theology is basic for that.

The statistics of the non-Roman Catholic Churches around 1966 were as follows:

Number of churches and missions at work in India	101
Places of regular worship	30,639
Communicant members	2,087,927
Total Christian community	5,303,107
Ordained national workers	7,833
Unordained national workers	12,489
Women workers	4,857
Ordained foreign missionaries	2,166
Unordained foreign missionaries	1,348
Theological schools and colleges	57 ¹

Today in India there are 29 non-Roman Catholic seminaries with 1,247 students. The 1973 statistics give 25 seminaries with 1,585 students.

The number of candidates for the ministry has been increasing steadily.

Ordinands in 1943	395
Ordinands in 1970	1,247
Ordinands in 1973	1,585 ²

¹H. Wakelin Coxill and Kenneth Grubb. World Christian Handbook (London: Lutterworth Press, 1968), p. 155.

²V. T. Kurien, "A Strategy for Theological Education in an Era of Ecumenism," The Indian Journal of Theology, XXII (April-June 1973), 59.

Lutheran Churches in India

Churches	Places of Worship	Communicants	Community	National Workers Ordained	Workers		Missionaries	
					Lay	Women	Ordained	Lay
Andhra E.L.C.	2,133	123,591	284,998	167	378	264	18	35
Arcot L.C.	104	8,152	15,182	19	516			8
Madhya Pradesh	22	3,129	5,738	17	243		2	117
Gossner E.L.C.	978	111,947	215,805	121	1,043	261	2	8
I.E.L.C.	289	13,755	35,079	114	81		10	
Jeypore E.L.C.	412	19,616	43,658	34	104	10	3	6
Northern E.L.C.	284	17,255	43,018	60	156	133	16	49
Calcutta L.C.	2	79	144	2	2	2	1	2
South Andhra L.C.	252	6,545	14,235	23	35	11	7	
Tamil E.L.C.	1,172	26,275	62,540	72	94	40	6	16
Totals	5,748	330,344	718,197	609	1,652	721	65	141³

³Coxill and Grubb, pp. 151-155.

Thus the 6,000 congregations and the 800,000 members of the Lutheran churches in India are, under the grace of God, the result of the sweat, tears, and prayers of missionaries and laymen and lay women of many countries and races over two hundred years. Most interesting and instructive are the stories of the founding and the growth of the different missions and churches. The Gossner Church had to suffer during the great Sepoy Mutiny and also during the First World War when all her missionaries were interned. Other churches had to undergo the same suffering.

The unique power of the Gospel has been manifested in villages, towns, and cities. With other churches and missions, Lutheran missions pioneered in opening schools, hospitals, industrial schools, printing presses, and other institutions. The one great single factor for the awakening and progress of India has undoubtedly been the Protestant missions. Doctor A. Aiyappan, a Hindu and the head of the Department of Anthropology of the University of Utkal, Orissa says:

The political historian would describe the changes as due to governmental action, but the social legislation against untouchability, the temple entry act, and the tenancy acts were the culmination of a long process which really started with the beginnings of westernization of India and the impact of Protestant Christianity.⁴

A detailed study of the different Lutheran churches is not within the scope of this thesis. Still the story of the first Lutheran missionary and the founding, growth, and also the death of the first Lutheran Mission would be appropriate. The death of that flourishing mission has a message for the churches and missions in India.

⁴A. Aiyappan. Social Revolution in a Kerala Village (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1965) p. 8.

The Founding, Growth, and Death
of the First Lutheran Mission in India

On the 29th of November 1705 A.D., Henry Plutschau and Barthalomew Ziegenbalg, left Copenhagen for the East Indies, according to the command of His Majesty King Frederick IV of Denmark and Norway, in order to preach the Gospel of Christ to the people of India.

Tranquebar, on the east coast of India, was founded as a colony by the Dutch East India Company in 1620. When the Church of Denmark decided to send missionaries to India they had to find candidates from Halle of Germany: Barthalomew Ziegenbalg (born 1683) and Henry Plutschau (born 1676).

They landed in Tranquebar on July 9, 1706, a memorable day for Protestant missions in India. They began to learn Portuguese and Tamil. Plutschau took care of the Portuguese, and Ziegenbalg devoted his attention to the Tamilians. After less than one year (May 1707) the first Portuguese were baptized. A small church, "The New Jerusalem Church," was built (June-August 1707), and a month later the first Indians were baptized. The same year two schools were established, one for the Portuguese and the other for the Indian children.

With great zest Ziegenbalg continued the study of the Tamil language. He engaged a number of writers to copy Tamil writings. He bought books from Brahmin widows for a cheap price. He aimed at a thorough knowledge, not only of the Tamil language, but also of Hindu religion and thought, and therefore, he read not only theological but also historical, philosophical, medical and philological books, and poetry. A native poet was with him to explain difficult and obscure passages. A writer was engaged to compile words and idioms. This

was the beginning of the Tamil dictionary which Ziegenbalg published later. He prepared a Tamil grammar and a lexicon with more than sixty thousand words. Already after two years he was able to send to Halle an account of the contents of 150 Tamil classical books which he had studied. He realized that a missionary must be thoroughly conversant with the religion of the people to whom he preached the Gospel.

He talked with Hindus to learn about their religion. He carried on an extensive correspondence with learned Hindus of many types in matters concerning religion. These studies resulted in several research works in Hindu religion, the best known of which is Die Genealogie der malabarischen Götter. This book which contained very valuable observations regarding South Indian religions, customs, and traditions, was sent home to Halle for publication; but August Hermann Francke, a leader of the pietist movement who had instilled the missionary zeal in Ziegenbalg, refused to have it printed, declaring that he had sent the missionaries in order to destroy heathen superstition, not to spread it in Europe. This book was not printed until 1867, when it was published by Dr. W. Germann of the Leipsig Mission.

But these studies were only preparation for his real work: evangelisation, catechisation, preaching, instruction, and translation into Tamil of Christian books. After less than one year of studies he undertook the translation of Luther's Small Catechism and in the following year he began to translate the New Testament. In three years he finished the translation and then turned to the Old Testament. However, he was able to finish only up to the Book of Ruth. These and other books were printed in 1712, when the missionaries got two printing presses, one with Latin letters (for the Portuguese

congregation), from friends in England, and one with Tamil letters made in Halle. In a report to Halle the same year Ziegenbalg mentions 38 printed books in Tamil, written by him. Among them was a hymn book containing 48 hymns translated from German into Tamil.

In 1715 he sailed to Europe. After his return to Tranquebar he started a seminary for the training of Indian helpers. In regard to caste, which has been a problem in the Indian church, Ziegenbalg held that it was a social institution, which could be tolerated to a certain extent, at least as long as it did not come in direct conflict with Christian principles. This attitude was followed by the Lutheran churches whereas the Anglicans followed a more legalistic attitude, which adversely affected the growth of the church.

The work of the church flourished, but Ziegenbalg's health, which had never been good, declined. This had a special cause. This was the unrealistic and unChristian policy introduced by the Mission Board. Secretary Chr. Wendt of the Collegium at Copenhagen was possessed by a supposed "Apostolic" mission ideal. In a letter to Ziegenbalg, he mentioned many severe and unjust criticisms of his work and outlined his own idea of a proper mission. This letter contained many strange ideas:

Europe ought not send money for churches, food, or drink to Asia . . . for if the missionaries do not create, through the Gospel, a spirit of self-support and self-sacrifice in their congregations no good purpose will be served by their work . . . What will be the result? A westernized Christianity, which chooses earth instead of heaven.

Wendt's criticisms were unfair, and his suggestions impractical. His idea was that missionaries should have no stations, build no churches, schools, hostels, and the like, but simply travel about in

the country preaching the Gospel. It is strange how exotic ideas can blind people. Wendt was able to persuade the Mission Board not to send any money to the growing mission of Tranquebar. Ziegenbalg was in a dilemma: the great challenges and opportunities on the one hand and the unrealistic and foolish idealism on the other. Ziegenbalg, the pioneer missionary, grieved with no one to comfort or encourage him. His health, already precarious, broke down completely. In 1719 Ziegenbalg died at the age of 36--in the prime of life a broken man. John Ernst Gruendler, his colleague, also became sick and another hard letter from Collegium broke him, too. After a year his life also ended. These tragedies opened the eyes of the leaders in Norway. Wendt was removed from the Collegium, and a new policy was introduced. But unfortunately they were too late.

Other missionaries were sent out, and the work progressed. The last and most notable missionary was Christian Friedrich Schwartz. When he died in 1798 the mission was already in decline--on the way to extinction. The real cause of the death of the mission is not to be found in the wars and in the political confusion of the time, nor in the cooperation of the Lutherans and the Anglicans, which now and then had caused some confessional controversies, but in the faith and theology of the home churches.

Although called into existence by Danish initiative, the Tranquebar mission had never been embraced with real interest by the Danish Church. The heart of the mission was Halle. There the missionaries, with a few exceptions, were selected and trained. And the Franckes, father and son, were for some time the real leaders of the mission. But Halle was the center of the pietistic movement. The German

development that had taken place that A. F. Caemmerer, the last of the Tranquebar missionaries, handed over to the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge in 1820, 1,300 Christians, 11 catechists, and 11 small churches--along with their property.⁵

The life and death of the first Lutheran Mission of India has a message for today. What is the mission of the church today? Are the churches true to the Great Commission? Or is humanization the goal of mission? Are rationalism and relativism in the approach to non-Christian religions becoming strong? What is the role of theology, particularly Lutheran theology today: the Law-Gospel doctrine, justification by faith, and the two kingdoms?

⁵Clarence H. Swavely, editor, The Lutheran Enterprise in India (Madras: Federation of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in India, 1952); Fred J. Fender, History of the Tranquebar Mission (Madras: M. E. Press, 1906).

churches took little interest in the mission, and even though the "orthodox" criticism gradually disappeared, the churches remained, on the whole, indifferent.

More important still, towards the close of the eighteenth century, the old ardent spirit of pietism was dying out. The leaders at Halle at that time no doubt were pious men, but the "first love" was lost. At the same time rationalism entered the church, and it undermined faith and the urge for missions. The natural corollary to rationalism was relativism, which placed all religions on the same par. If all religions are equally true and good, then where is the incentive for preaching and converting people to the Christian faith? The leaders at Halle complained that it became more and more difficult to find young men who were willing to go out as missionaries. In Copenhagen the mission was ridiculed, and the secretary of the Collegium expressed his definite objection to conversion of Hindus to Christianity. The only kind of "mission" which was tolerated was the spread of "useful knowledge" among the Indians. The great commission was forgotten. The apostolic message and preaching were ignored. The missionaries spent their time in humanitarian activities. They devoted themselves to educational work and to research in natural sciences, which were so highly esteemed at that time. Rotter's herbarium, John's collection of shells, and Klein's insect collection made their owners famous in the learned societies of Europe, but this was of no help in leading men to Christ or in planting churches.

But God raises other men and nations to do his work. As interest dwindled in Germany and Denmark, a great awakening of missionary spirit happened in England. It was therefore only in consequence of the

CHAPTER III

THE IMPORTANCE OF

THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH TODAY

The doctrine of justification by faith was central at the time of the Reformation. What is its role today? Is it outmoded, or does it continue to be the central message of the Christian faith? That is the question to be answered in this chapter. We will consider how Luther discovered this doctrine. We will note the teachings of recent Roman Catholic writers and of the Humanists and examine whether in the context of these teachings, the doctrine of justification has a place.

Luther's Discovery

George L. Mosse in The Reformation describes Luther's discovery as follows:

"Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement, 'The righteous shall live by faith.' Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise." Thus Martin Luther arrived at salvation through faith alone; his quest for spiritual certainty had been solved. Faith is not an achievement; it is a gift which comes to man through the hearing and the study of the Word. Luther had studied the Bible for his lectures and had come to see the solution to his spiritual problems. Faith justifies man before God, and it is part of that faith to trust God, to believe that he is, through Christ, constantly striving to save mankind. This insight was to be the motivating force of Luther's life and work. All else was but a commentary upon it.¹

¹George L. Mosse, The Reformation (New York: Holt, 1953), p. 25.

Harold H. Lentz in Reformation Crossroads describes the doctrine of justification by faith as discovered by Luther.² It may be summarized as follows.

Luther taught the depravity of man and his total inability to save himself. He came to the discovery of the doctrine of justification by faith after a great struggle. The "righteousness of God" filled him with fear and hatred. It was to escape from this fear that he entered the monastery. After a long struggle he emerged victorious and joyful, when suddenly he learned from the Word of God that peace with God could be had only through faith in Christ. The entire Bible looked different to him. He saw God as a gracious father who forgives and empowers to be His children.

Luther believed that he had uncovered a Gospel truth long obscured and hidden from the people. He realized that his theory of Justification by Faith was the rock foundation of Christian doctrine. Therefore, the Apology to the Augsburg Confession speaks of Justification as "the chief topic of Christian doctrine which is of especial service for the clear, correct understanding of the entire Holy Scriptures, and alone shows the way to the unspeakable treasure and right knowledge of Christ, and alone opens the door to the entire Bible." Further, the Smalcald Articles say of justification that "nothing can be yielded or surrendered, even if heaven and earth and all things sink to ruin." Again the Formula of Concord quotes Luther with the statement: "If only this article is kept pure, the Christian Church also remains pure and is harmonious and

²Harold H. Lentz, Reformation Crossroads (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1958).

without all sects; but if it does not remain pure, it is not possible to resist any error or fanatical spirit."

Whereas the medieval church viewed Justification as something dispensed by the church and through the channels of its vast organization, Luther taught a priesthood of all believers, wherein the church is not a mediating factor but rather each man, through faith, lays hold on the justification of Christ for himself.

The teaching of the Roman church was that a man attained justification by penance, confession and good works dictated by the priest, including prayer, almsgiving, and maceration. Luther taught that a person could go through all these processes and still not be certain of forgiveness. On the other hand a forgiven sinner is empowered to do what is pleasing to God. Faith will be active in love.

This new teaching brought solace to human hearts seeking for peace and assurance. The Reformation spread. The Protestant movement became strong. Later many denominations came into existence.

The nineteenth century saw the rise of many missions. They established churches throughout the world. As the missionaries confronted non-Christian religions, the doctrine of the justification by faith received a new significance, because the non-Christian religions taught salvation by works. Many books were published on non-Christian religions and it was shown how they taught salvation by work-righteousness. Much apologetic literature was published in the first quarter of the twentieth century.

The twentieth century is marked by ecumenism. Church union has been happening all around the world. Dialogue between the Roman Catholics and Protestants also takes place at many levels. In this context

sometimes Lutherans wonder what the place of the doctrine of justification is.

An examination of some of the statements by Roman Catholic theologians and of the World Council of Churches will bring to light the importance of the doctrine of justification by faith even for today.

Introducing the decree on The Attitude of the Church Towards Non-Christian Religions, at the Second Vatican Council in 1964, Cardinal Bea said:

It concerns those--more than a thousand million people--who have not yet come to the knowledge of Christ and of His work of redemption, or do not acknowledge them. Nevertheless they can be saved if they obey the command of their conscience. . . For those who live according to the command of their conscience are united to Christ and His mystical body through implicit faith.³

Vatican II reintroduces scholasticism and the doctrine of work-righteousness. Man can save himself by following the dictates of his conscience, is the doctrine that comes out both in some of the documents of Vatican II and in some of the subsequent writings of Roman Catholic theologians as opposed to the doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus Christ.

In section 16 of the Vatican Documents, salvation by good works is spoken of:

But the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator. In the first place among these are the Moslems, who, professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us adore the one merciful God, who on the last day will judge mankind. Nor is God Himself far distant from those who in shadows and images seek the unknown God, for it is He who gives to all men life and breath and every

³ Joseph Neuner, editor, Christian Revelation and World Religions (London: Burns & Oates, 1967), p. 7.

other gift (cf. Acts 17:25-28), and who as Saviour wills that all men be saved (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4). Those also can attain to everlasting salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and, moved by grace, strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience. Nor does divine Providence deny the help necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God, but who strive to live a good life, thanks to His grace.⁴

Again the Second Vatican Council asserts:

Those who through no fault of theirs are still ignorant of the Gospel of Christ and of His Church yet sincerely seek God and, with the help of divine grace, strive to do His will as known to them through the voice of their conscience, those men can attain to eternal salvation.⁵

This is the old speculation and scholasticism of the medieval age.

Hans Kung says:

The world religions are, though in error, proclaiming God's truth . . . The grace of the true God can witness to itself even through false gods . . . The grace of the true God is able to transform the mere service of idols into concealed worship of God, and merely erroneous, confused and superstitious belief or unbelief into hidden faith.

As against the "extraordinary" way of salvation which is the Church, the world religions can be called--if this is rightly understood--the "ordinary" way of salvation for non-Christian humanity.

The world religions teach the truth of Christ, even when in their error they do not recognize Him for what he really is: the Truth.

Every human being is under God's grace and can be saved . . . Every human being can be saved; and we may hope that everyone

⁴Walter M. Abbot, editor, The Document of Vatican II (Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), p. 35

⁵Ibid.

is. Every religion can be a way of salvation and we hope that they all are.⁶

Thomas Mumpira, a Roman Catholic scholar writing in the book

Unique and Universal, speaks thus of salvation:

for an ordinary Hindu or Muslim or Buddhist in the street, in the market place immersed in the tiresome ordeal of everyday life, his own religion becomes the common way by which he receives contact with Christ through the Spirit, he attains salvation. It follows, therefore, that by positively encouraging the non-Christians to come close to God within their own authentic religious traditions we shall be leading them to an encounter with God in Christ and not away from him.⁷

Christian Revelation and Non-Christian Religions was published in 1967. It contained papers presented at the Conference held in Bombay under the auspices of the Eucharistic Congress in 1964. The paper quoted previously by Hans Kung was presented at that conference. Other papers by Neuner, Fransen, and Raymond Panikkar, all show universalistic tendencies. Ultimately it is work-righteousness which they support. A good deal of speculation is also found in those papers.

Over against the scholastic reasoning and the doctrine of work-righteousness, the doctrine of justification by faith has an important message today. From the documents mentioned above it is obvious that the Roman Church stresses again scholasticism and salvation by works. Over against that the justification by faith has to be preached for the peace of conscience of people.

⁶Neuner, p. 56.

⁷Chethimattam, editor, Unique and Universal (Bangalore: Dharmaram College, 1972), p. 141.

Salvation in the World Council of Churches Documents

In the Uppsala Report of 1968, salvation came to be defined in terms of social, economic, and political terms.⁸ Radicalising human society was defined as the goal of mission. Humanization has become the watchword. Everything has to be made human. Industry, management, labor relations and all inter-relationships of man are to be made more human. Oppression and exploitation have to be resisted, and a new humanity has to be given birth to. That is the goal of the mission of the church.

The World Council of Churches, after defining salvation, helped countries and nations to fight oppression. Action in the social, political, and economic fields was given more importance. They based their argument for revolution and humanization on selected portions of Scripture, for example, they quoted the call of some of the prophets for social justice. The call of the prophets to the people to turn to God was slurred over. From the Gospels they present the Christ who healed the sick and fed the hungry.

This is humanistic theology. It hopes to build the Kingdom of God on earth. That Utopean dream is behind its endeavours. This humanistic theology has close parallels with the theology of Erasmus. To him human nature had some flaws, which could be rectified--some damages which could be repaired. So he believed in the power of

⁸ Norman Goodall, The Uppsala Report (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1968).

human reason and free will. Man can earn his own salvation; this was the gist of what Erasmus taught.

Luther opposed Erasmus. To Luther human nature is corrupt, and man cannot earn his own salvation. He is a slave under the bondage of Satan, sin, and death. Man is completely helpless. Only Christ can save him from his helpless plight.

According to Luther, man's biggest problem is sin and his biggest need is the assurance of the forgiveness of sin. That assurance is available to man only through faith in the vicarious death of Christ on the cross. Through faith in Christ one is justified and reconciled with the triune God. That is eternal life, which is consummated in eternity. Still it is a present-day reality and experience.

Justification as the Key to Social Ethics

Advocates of "humanization" may criticize Luther in that he does not stress good works. Far from it. Of course Luther did teach, and rightly so, that one cannot earn eternal life through good works. There he was opposing the medieval theology. On that basis it is not right to say that Luther did not teach about good works. He did teach about it and gave the right foundation for it.

One is saved by faith, Luther taught, according to the Bible. And faith is an active force. It is dynamic, living. As a living organism is active, faith will be also active. Faith will produce fruits of good works. A good tree produces good fruits. Similarly, a heart made good by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit will produce good deeds. As a corollary it may be stated that a bad tree can produce only bad fruit. So Luther stressed that first of all

man must be regenerated as a child of God through faith in Christ. Then good works are bound to follow. His whole life will be devoted to glorifying God and serving man. The glory of God and welfare of his neighbor will be the guiding motto of his life.

Thus justification by faith is the basis for a true and lasting ethics. A Christian is active at the family level, at the level of the local group, at the national level and international level. The Christian faith is the most powerful force in the world and the Christian ethics will continue to be the light to the world.

Thus the doctrine of justification by faith has a great role in India today where the Church is facing the revival of Scholastic and Humanistic theologies on the one hand and the confusion of social ethics on the other. If the nine Lutheran Church bodies will start with the basics, say Luther's Small and Large Catechisms and the Augsburg Confession and make sure that they understand the significance of the doctrine of justification by faith, the Church will become strong and they in turn will be able to help strengthen the other churches of India. The Lutheran Churches and Lutheran theology have a great role to play in the present day India.

CHAPTER IV

THE DOCTRINE OF THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL

Confusion of the Law and the Gospel was the cause for the convening of the first synod, the Apostolic Council in Jerusalem, described in Acts 15. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Council distinguished Law from the Gospel and saved the church from becoming a legalistic institution. During the Reformation times the Gospel was almost lost sight of and the church taught salvation by works or by Law.

In the Documents of Vatican II and the Roman Catholic theologians quoted in the last chapter, it is evident that they confuse the Law and the Gospel. When they teach that one can attain salvation by following the dictates of conscience, they teach salvation by works or the Law. They ignore the depth of sin, the inability of man to save himself from sin and also they ignore the meaning of the sufferings and death of Christ, the Son of God, on the cursed cross. Universalism, which pervades the writings of many modern theologians like Hans Kung, Raymond Panikkar, Parrinder, and others confuse the ministers and laymen of India. Bishop Lesslie Newbigin's criticism of Raymond Panikkar would apply to others too:

"The Son of Man must suffer," said Jesus; if general salvation is a logical deduction from the character of God, why the terrible necessity of the Cross? I do not want to defend unchristian conceptions of the character of God which often lie behind traditional doctrines about the fate of the non-Christian world. But the Gospel story, centred in the story of the Cross, opens our eyes to the terrible reality of Man's estrangement from God in a way which, it would seem, must forever exclude any easy deduction of the

salvation of all men of good will from the revealed character of God.¹

The Scholastics and the Humanists do not distinguish between the general revelation by the Law and the saving special revelation by the Gospel. Reformation theology has always insisted on the Biblical teaching that there is salvation only through the Gospel and not by the Law. Edmund Schlink summarizes the Lutheran position as follows:

"Man possesses some measure of freedom of the will which enables him to live an outwardly honourable life and to make choices among the things that reason comprehends. But without the grace, help, and activity of the Holy Spirit man is not capable of making himself acceptable to God, of reaching God and believing in God with his whole heart, or of expelling inborn evil lusts from his heart." (A.D. XVIII, 1 f.) The human will is able to "obey rulers and parents. Externally, it can choose to keep hands from murder, adultery, or theft." Thus in some measure our free will is capable of living honorably or dishonorably, and this is what Holy Scripture calls the righteousness of the law or of the flesh. (Ap. XVIII, 4 f.) But as a result of man's evil lust and the devil's temptations this civil righteousness is much rarer and much more imperfect than is commonly supposed. Above all, however, because of the lack of obedience to the First Commandment, it is not only imperfect, but altogether sin.

This does not exclude the fact that in the area of civil righteousness good and evil, obedient and disobedient, honourable and dishonourable may be distinguished. Yet disobedient and obedient, evil and good, dishonourable, civil disorder and civil righteousness are at the same time sin in the presence of God. Through political righteousness and civil decency God preserves man in sin and in guilt and under the spell of death. The justicia civilis of which man is capable is, in the sight of God, neither good nor a cause for pardon.²

¹ Lesslie Newbigin, The Finality of Christ (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1969), p. 42.

² Edmund Schlink, Theology of Lutheran Confessions (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960), p. 77.

This leads us to the definition of the Law and the Gospel, a fundamental doctrine in Lutheran theology. Understanding and distinguishing these two concepts is of the utmost importance in India today. The theology of Paul as well as that of Luther revolve around these concepts, which are real forces at work in the heart of people and in the world.

The Solid Declaration defines the Law and the Gospel as follows:

The law is a divine doctrine which reveals the righteousness and immutable will of God, shows how man ought to be disposed in his nature, thoughts, words, and deeds in order to be pleasing and acceptable to God, and threatens the transgressors of the law with God's wrath and temporal and eternal punishment. For, as Luther says against the nomoclasts, "Everything that rebukes sin is and belongs to the law, the proper function of which is to condemn sin and to lead to a knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20; 7:7).

The content of the Gospel is this, that the Son of God, Christ our Lord, himself assumed and bore the curse of the law and expiated and paid for all our sins, that through him alone we re-enter the good graces of God, obtain forgiveness of sins through faith, are freed from death and all the punishments of sin, and are saved eternally. For everything which comforts and which offers the mercy and grace of God to transgressors of the law strictly speaking is, and is called, the Gospel, a good and joyful message that God wills not to punish sins but to forgive them for Christ's sake.

. . . Thus the law is . . . an office which kills through the letter and is a "dispensation of condemnation," but the Gospel is "the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith," "a dispensation of righteousness" and "of the Spirit."

Dr. Luther very diligently urged this distinction in nearly all his writings and showed in detail that there is a vast difference between the knowledge of God which comes from the Gospel and that which is taught by and learned from the law, since from the natural law even the heathen had to some extent a knowledge of God,

although they neither understood nor honored him rightly (Rom. 1:21).³

Some of the modern theologians in India confuse the natural law for the Gospel. As a result they equate the Gospel with the teachings in other religions. They do not realise that ethical code or commandments about a good life is not equivalent to the Gospel.

Raymond Panikkar may be quoted as an example:

Even what is sometimes called specifically the Christian moral doctrine of universal love for our enemies, returning a blessing for a curse and recognizing everywhere human-superman dignity is to be found in many other religions, with almost the same wording as the Gospel, and that at least five centuries before Christ.⁴

The basic and fundamental mistake Panikkar makes is in saying that "the moral doctrine of universal love . . . found in other religions, with almost the same wording as in the Gospel." He should have said "with almost the same wording as in the Law found in the Bible."

The Law must be distinguished from the Gospel. From the natural law all men have some knowledge of the Law of God. That knowledge must be distinguished from the saving knowledge of God which is found only in Christ. This distinction between the general knowledge of God from nature and the saving knowledge of God which comes through the Gospel must be maintained. Confusion between these two concepts leads one to universalism. Raymond Panikkar says:

³Theodore G. Tappert, The Book of Concord (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 561.

⁴Raymond Panikkar, The Relation of Christians to their Non-Christian Surroundings, in Christian Revelation and World Religions, edited by Joseph Neuner (London: Burns & Oates, 1967), p. 145.

If we take seriously the dictates of conscience, the light of our reason, and the doctrine of God's universal saving will (1 Tim. 2:4, etc.), we cannot doubt for a moment that salvation is offered to every man who comes into the world. (John 1:9)⁵

While Panikkar confuses the Law and the Gospel, Watson gives a true picture of the natural law in operation.

Although the gentiles did not receive the written law of Moses, yet they received the spiritual law . . . which is impressed upon all, both Jews and Gentiles, to which also all are under obligation. The essence of this law is contained in the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12): for men naturally judge that a man ought to do unto another as he would another do unto him. Here the entire meaning of the traditional law is summed up: it is nothing else but "this natural law" of which none can be ignorant. Hence Luther can claim that the Ten Commandments themselves, at least in their essential significance, are written on the hearts of all men.

Man's natural knowledge of the Law of God, it is true, is very weak, for it is obscured by sin. That is why the Law has had to be given and taught in the Commandments. Yet some measure of the natural knowledge must exist, Luther maintains, or no amount of teaching and commanding would be of any avail. It is certain (he says) that the Law might be preached to a hundred years in vain if it were not written on our hearts so that when we are admonished we instantly say: yes, that is so . . .

At the same time, we must beware of exaggerating the value Luther attaches to man's natural knowledge of God. The possession of it undoubtedly be conceived as furnishing a necessary point in man for the Christian message.⁶

In dealing with the doctrine of the Law and the Gospel, some Christians think that the Old Testament is Law and that the New Testament is the Gospel. So they are not able to appreciate Luther's distinction of the Law and the Gospel. To Luther the Law and the

⁵Ibid., p. 147.

⁶Philip Watson, Let God be God (London: Epworth Press, 1947), p. 86.

Gospel are two doctrines which run through the entire Bible--Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament the Gospel appears as the promise of the Messiah. Commandments and promise, punishment and forgiveness, guilt and grace, Law and Gospel run throughout the Bible. The Law condemns. The Gospel forgives. They are real forces in the life of the individual, of families, and of nations. God judges and forgives.

The Lutheran Church in India has the duty and task to clearly teach the distinction between the Law and the Gospel, lest the doctrine of salvation be watered down and become universalistic as is seen in the teachings of many scholars.

Life Under the Law and the Gospel as Two Aeons

Life under the Law and under grace are two aeons. Life under Law is pictured in Romans as life under sin, the wrath of God and darkness. Man has some knowledge of God and of the Law. But instead of worshipping and honouring God the Creator, men worship the creatures--even animals and reptiles--as God. They have some moral codes. But they become the victims of the most demonic forces and lead a life of lawlessness. Man has his reason. But reason invents new philosophies which glorify man instead of God. Men get entangled in the meshes of their own thinking. The mind is perverted. Thus life under the Law is bondage, darkness, idolatry. Man cannot save himself from this miserable plight.

To these people lost in darkness, slavery, and bondage comes Christ the good shepherd. He rescues them, translates them to the kingdom of light, of freedom, and of grace. That is a new aeon, a new

state. Life in the Kingdom of God is a life in the forgiving love of God, in fellowship with the triune God in peace, security, and the constant assurance of forgiveness. Salvation is a state as life under sin is a state. In this state of forgiveness the redeemed person glorifies God and lives a life worthy of his call to the heavenly kingdom. He is guided by the Spirit of God. He sees everything from the perspective of God, though he is constantly attacked by Satan and the forces of sin. To build the kingdom of God becomes his dominant passion. To call men from under the curse of Law to the glory of grace is the highest privilege of the Christian. To call men to the glorious life in the Kingdom of God, the Law provides the point of contact. The Law accuses man and drives him to the Saviour. Thus the Law acts as a pedagogue.

The Positive Role of Law in Hinduism

W. H. T. Dau, in his introduction to Walther's book The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel, describes how the unwritten moral law operates:

The unwritten law in men's hearts and the conscience have revealed their existence in the efforts of natural man to do right, to lead an upright life, to serve his fellowmen and his country, to practice the virtue of religiousness and the domestic and civil virtues. The laws of nations, the ethical codes of society, are emanations and manifestations of the ineradicable notion of right and wrong implanted in man's heart, or of the natural Moral Law.⁷

⁷C. F. W. Walther, Law and Gospel, edited by W. H. T. Dau (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1928), p. iv.

How is this moral law found operating in Hinduism? A brief survey of the 3,500 years of the history of Hinduism would be interesting. In different ages the moral law was in operation in different ways.

In the Vedas, the earliest literature of Hinduism, conduct in society is controlled by the concept of Rita. Rita is the cosmic order. Right and good life has to be in conformity to the Rita. Gods are not prominent in determining the conduct of men. The only ethical god who forgives sin is Varuna. But he fades out in the latter period of the Vedas. Life in harmony with Rita meant material blessings. Such a man gets sons, cattle, and a rich harvest.

While the Vedas were hymns of praise to the personified forces of nature, the Upanishads which followed were speculations about the nature of the Brahman, the Supreme Spirit. The relation between the individual soul and the supreme soul, jivatma and paramatma becomes the dominant theme. In such discourses there could be little room for ethical principles. The world is unreal. Life negation is the supreme virtue. Still the doctrine of karma comes to the rescue and it becomes an inexorable force giving rise to the doctrine of transmigration.

While the Upanishads were a reaction against the blood sacrifices and sacerdotalism of the Vedas from an orthodox perspective, the heterodox reaction in the sixth century B.C. gave rise to Buddhism and Jainism. In both religions ethics were scrupulously defined and enforced. The doctrine of karma and transmigration were taken over from Hinduism. Along with that they developed a meticulous code of ethics covering every aspect of life and conduct. There is no reference to any god. Life is conduct; conduct is life. Both in Buddhism and

Jainism there is a strong note of scepticism. Cessation of desire is the way to moksha, release, because desire is the cause of all misery. Escape from misery is salvation. These codes of ethics emphasized "non-attachment," and it had its positive value. It tended to restrain avarice, greed, and other crimes externally; it could not, of course, assure man of forgiveness.

As Buddhism and Jainism moved to monasticism and asceticism, orthodox Hinduism developed the Ithihasas, Epics, and Puranas. They taught ethics through stories.

The Ramayana idolizes Sita as the true and loyal wife who chooses to follow her husband to the forest in exile. Rama is the ideal son who chooses to rescue his father from the oath he had taken. Obedience is the keynote of Rama's life. Laxman is the ideal younger brother. Hanuman, the monkey god is the ideal servant. Even today the Ramayana is read in millions of homes. The story is sung and acted in the villages. Its ideals permeate the Indian home and society. It is the light of law as the code of conduct.

The Mahabharata, the longest poem in the world, with a hundred thousand verses, was compiled over centuries. It depicts a world in action--kings, their wives, jealousies, and plots of the royal court, honour as opposed to wickedness, crime and punishment, friendship and reconciliation, curse and the concept of forgiveness. In short, it is the moral law in operation. It abounds in maxims of the good life. The Mahabharata also introduces the concept of Avatar which will have great significance in later Hinduism.

The Bhagavad Gita, which forms part of the Mahabharata, teaches the duty that each person must follow his Dharma. That is the essence of religion. Dharma is law.

The Puranas must also be mentioned. They consist of stories about gods. Amidst all the amorous stories of gods and goddesses, one sees the law of retribution at work. Gods sin; they are punished. They do penance. After years of penance they are restored. A goddess does not pay attention to the discourse her husband god is giving. The husband becomes angry and curses his wife. Down she goes to earth from heaven. There as a peacock she does penance. Today there is a temple on that spot.

The modern religious movements began with Raja Ram Mohan Roy who started the Brahma Samaj. The Arya Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Rama Krishna Mission and other movements followed. All stressed monotheism, social service, and educational institutions. They took the ethical teachings of Christianity.

Vivekananda, the modern apostle of Hinduism, popularized the idea that Hinduism was the "Sanathana dharma," the religion of eternal laws. That is true. Hinduism is the religion of the Law. It is to those people who are under the bondage of the Law that the freedom of the Gospel has to be preached.

The law in religion, society, or culture acts as coercive or restrictive force. Thus it has a positive role. People are "kept under the law." But for these restraining forces men would become extinct by mutual annihilation. About the positive role of law, Forell quotes Luther and comments:

Many good men, even among the pagans, as Xenophon, Aristides, Fabius, Cicero, Pomponius, Atticus, and others performed deeds of the Law and did notable works. Cicero suffered death valiantly in a good and just cause. Pomponius was a truthful and reliable man who did not lie nor tolerate lying in others. These men were gifted with heroic virtues, ruled their countries well, and in the interest of the common good. Obviously, even the pagan law expressed the underlying structure of the divine will for the preservation of men. But while Luther says, "The books of the pagans teach virtue, justice, and wisdom for temporal welfare," he never advocated merely a return to these books.⁸

Law as found in Hinduism and other religions has a positive role in preserving society, and providing some guidance to people in moral conduct.

The Negative Role of Law

In spite of some positive functions that natural law performs, it also has some negative functions.

Law accuses. Man is conscious of his breaking the Law. He is oppressed with a feeling of guilt. Then he devises ways and means of getting rid of the load of guilt. Temples, festivals, pilgrimages, sacrifices, fasting, penance, and many other things come into vogue. All kinds of philosophies arise. Man goes on the endless search for peace--for assurance of forgiveness.

Watson summarizes Luther's idea as to how natural religion degenerates itself.

In the hands of the natural man, the natural knowledge of God rises, not to true religion, but to "all idolatry which without the knowledge of the divinity could never come into the world" . . . Real idolatry, then is not a matter of

⁸George W. Forell, Luther and Culture (Decorah, Iowa: Luther College Press, 1960), p. 15.

outward observance, but of the heart and mind; and Luther's constant complaint is that instead of the true God, men worship the figment of their own imagination.⁹

The anthropocentric religion of the natural man, based on his natural knowledge of God, is false religion, with a false conception of God and a false relationship to Him . . . [these] doctrines and practices express and encourage the egocentricity of the natural man . . . detract from the glory that belongs to God alone (as the one who does, gives, and has all things); for the natural man is a faithful reproduction of his prototype, Adam, who "stole the glory and took it for himself" . . .¹⁰

It is to these people oppressed by the Law, seeking for peace of conscience and the assurance of forgiveness that the Gospel has to be preached. The Law accuses and condemns; the Gospel pardons and acquits. The Law punishes and kills; the Gospel frees and makes alive.

Nor would it be possible for any saint, however great and exalted he is, to remain and stand his ground against the accusations of divine law, against the terror of death, and finally against despair and the anguish of hell, if he would not grasp the divine promises of the Gospel, as a tree or branch in the great flood, in the strong, violent stream, amidst the waves and billows of the anguish of death; if he did by faith cling to the Word which proclaims grace, and thus obtain eternal life without any works, without the law, from pure grace.¹¹

Living under the Law is a curse, a burden, and an oppression. There is no certainty of forgiveness, or eternal life. To all who live under the Law we announce the life of freedom and peace and joy to be obtained by faith in the Gospel. Repentance, conversion, and faith

⁹ Philip Watson, Let God Be God (London: Epworth Press, 1947), p. 86.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 92.

¹¹ Edmund Schlink, Theology of Lutheran Confessions (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960), p. 77.

in the Gospel mean freedom from the bondage of sin, the devil, and death. That message has to be preached with a spirit of urgency. That is the need in India today.

The Role of the Law in the Christian's Life

The new creation in Christ--that is the result of conversion. One who is born anew sees everything in a new light. As a child of God, as a member of the Kingdom of God, he is guided by the Spirit of God and the Word of God. Even the Law is seen in a different light.

If before conversion, Law only condemned and accused, it now shows what the will of God is, to be obeyed with the help of the Holy Spirit. Christians are not under the Law, but under grace. Where grace is, there forgiveness is and also the power to do good works according to the will of God revealed in the Law.

The Solid Declaration describes the role of the Law in the Christian's life.

Those who have been born anew through the Holy Spirit, who have been converted to the Lord and from whom the veil of Moses has been taken away, learn from the law to live and walk in the law . . . (F. C. VI 1)

When a person is born anew by the Spirit of God and is liberated from the law, he lives according to the immutable will of God as it is comprehended in the law and, insofar as he is born anew, he does everything from a free and merry spirit. These works are, strictly speaking, not works of the law but works and fruits of the Spirit, or, as St. Paul calls them, the law of the mind and the law of Christ. According to St. Paul, such people are no longer under the law but under grace. (Rom. 6:14; 8:2). Since however, believers are not fully renewed in this life but the Old Adam clings to them down to the grave, the conflict between spirit and flesh continues in them . . . (F. C. VI 17).

A Christian is not under the Law but under grace. Still as long as he is in the flesh and subject to all temptations, the Law has its role showing the Christian God's will.

The place of the Law in the Christian's life is an important subject. The antithesis between the Law and the Gospel could not be so overdrawn, that the Law is finally written off, as is done by some people. That would result in anti-nomism. Christians plagued with antinomism become worse than pagans. The pagans have at least the natural law and the conscience. They pay heed to the family and social laws, too. These forces impose great restraints in the non-Christian.

The Christian antinomist is freed from the old restraining laws and mores of society. And he willfully denies the restraints of the Law of the Bible. The result is that he acts as a man without any point of reference. His own whims and fancies, his own selfishness and situations dictate a queer kind of conduct. He becomes unpredictable and unreliable. He is his own law. This is a very pathetic situation.

Though the Law does not help a man to attain salvation, the Christian realizes the Law is the mind of God. Law cannot save, not because Law is not good, but because man is not good. God's Law is perfect and good. Christ did not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it. Christ fulfilled it for the mankind who have broken it by thought, word and deed.

The redeemed Christian seeks to know the mind and will of God. As a child of God, he finds delight in fulfilling God's will, the Law,

aided by the Spirit of God. In fear, trust and love, as Luther says in the explanation of the commandments, a Christian glorifies God by obeying His will.

CHAPTER V.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TWO KINGDOMS

Distinguishing the role and function of the Kingdom of God on the one hand and the kingdoms or state governments on the other is very important. If they are confused, the church will ultimately lose its identity and function and will become just another political party, one among many others.

Since the Assembly of the World Council of Churches in New Delhi in 1961, the confusion of church and state is becoming more and more a problem in India. The slogan "the problems of the world constitute the agenda of the Church" has drawn the church more and more into politics and social action. The Assembly in Uppsala in 1968 and the Bangkok Conference of 1973 made "humanization" and the "new humanity" the goal of mission. "Social justice," "economic development," "freedom from oppression," "making human the industrial relationship," and similar programs have assumed priority. In India "the theology of development" has been engaging the attention of theologians. The National Council Review and Religion and Society have been carrying articles on these issues.

The main theme of the Fourteenth Session of the Synod of the Church of South India, the largest church body in India, which met in January 1974, was "The Church in the Struggle for a Just Society." The Church of South India has about a million members. Some 239 delegates--bishops, presbyters, and laity--attended the Synod meeting.

Some portions of the report of the Synod which appeared in The South India Churchman in February 1974 may be quoted.

Talking about "The Church in the Struggle for a Just Society" which was the main theme of the conference, the Moderator (Rt. Rev. Anandarao Samuel) directed attention to the rôle which the Church is called upon to play in dealing with the enormous problems which India is facing. Unfortunately the Church has often come to be regarded as an ally of the oppressors and the capitalists. Christ's earthly ministry included the secular needs of the people. The urgent duty of the leaders of the Church is to educate our people towards concern for the total needs of a person.

The Church has to be with the oppressed, which in turn may call for a political revolution. The primary role of the Church is to create self-awareness among the people so that they become conscious of themselves as individual persons and thus release their energies for action. The hearts of the people have to be changed; so also the existing structures have to be broken. The emphasis in our ministry must be on people and not on projects. Projects and plans have to proceed, beginning with real concern for people. Church members must be aware of their responsibility for meeting the total needs of others. We have to learn to work with people of all faiths in the establishment of social justice. The basis of action towards social justice should be love and non-violence. All these have to be rooted in our faith in Jesus Christ as central to our life and action.

Dr. Russell Chandran presented the main address, namely, "The Church in the Struggle for a Just Society--Theological Basis." Declaring that both in the Bible and in the history of the Church faith becomes evident in the context of man's struggle for a meaningful life, he gave instances of this emphasis both from the Bible and from Church history. He also pointed out the betrayal of this principle by the Church at many points whenever it dogmatically affirmed a particular formulation, irrespective of the reality and the experience implied in the formulation. The World Council of Churches sharpened the economical concern for humanization as a key to justice, which in other words may be described as a theological anthropology. Transcending the barriers brought about by racial, economic, social, religious, and moral differences, Jesus called people to accept one another in an inclusiveness of life. Through baptism we receive Christ into our lives and through his indwelling in us we represent him and communicate to him and serve others as instruments of his love. He who came and identified himself with the oppressed, continues that solidarity and therefore we are called to discern his presence in

the cry of the oppressed for justice and spontaneously respond with the demands of love. The most important dimension in the struggle for justice in India is the economic one. In India the proclamation of Jesus Christ as good news should become challenging and meaningful and inspire action which will promote the struggle. This demands reformation of our theology. Such a reformation would demand our identification with Christ and with the nation in its struggle to achieve the national goals of integration and justice. Finally the Church is to be identified with the oppressed who are victims of injustice and exploitation . . .

Bishop Philipose Mar Chrysostom took the Bible study on the morning of the Synod. A keynote of his theme was that man could only be truly human in an authentic society and that it was the task of the Church to redeem society and enable human personality to develop and find fulfillment in fellowship.

The members of the Synod were divided into 17 groups and studied the following subjects with special emphasis on action to be taken by the Church in the next two-year period. The subjects were:

- (a) Social Action and Social Justice.
- (b) Political Involvement for Social Justice.
- (c) Caste and Social Justice in the Church.
- (d) The Church and the Use of its Resources.
- (e) The Church and its Institutions.¹

This report fairly represents the thinking of the theologians and churches in India today. The influence of Uppsala and Bangkok is quite evident in the Bible study and in the address by Dr. Russell Chandran, the President of the United Theological College, Bangalore, the biggest theological institution in India.

It is against this background that the doctrine of the two kingdoms has to be considered. It is highly necessary that the Church define

¹D. John Alexander and T. S. Garrett, "The Fourteenth Session of the Synod of the Church of South India," The South India Churchman (February 1974), pp. 2-3.

for itself its role in India. In Luther's time the Roman Catholic Church confused the church and the state. Today the World Council of Churches and the churches in different parts of the world again confuse the role of the church and the state. How they confuse and what the remedy is--these questions we shall consider in this chapter.

The Apology of the Augsburg Confession states the differences between Christ's kingdom and a political kingdom (XVI, 2-7).

The writings of our theologians have profitably illumined this whole question of the distinction between Christ's kingdom and a political kingdom. Christ's kingdom is spiritual; it is the knowledge of God in the heart, the fear of God and faith, the beginning of eternal righteousness and eternal life. At the same time it lets us make use of the legitimate political ordinances of the nation in which we live, just as it lets us make use of medicine or architecture, food or drink or air.

The Gospel does not introduce any new laws about the civil estate, but commands us to obey the existing laws, whether they were formulated by heathen or by others, and in this obedience to practice love. It was mad of Carlstadt to try to impose on us the judicial laws of Moses. Our theologians have written extensively on this subject because the monks had broadcast many dangerous ideas through the church. They called it an evangelical state to hold property in common, and they called it an evangelical council not to own property and not to go to court. These ideas seriously obscure the Gospel and the spiritual kingdom; they are also dangerous to the state. For the Gospel does not destroy the state or the family but rather approves them, and it commands us to obey them as divine ordinances not only from fear of punishment but also "for the sake of conscience" (Rom. 13:5) . . . The Gospel does not legislate for the civil estate but is the forgiveness of sins and the beginnings of eternal life in the hearts of believers. It not only approves governments but subjects us to them, just as we are necessarily subjected to the laws of the seasons and to the change of winter and summer as ordinances of God . . . The Gospel forbids private revenge, and Christ stresses this so often lest the Apostles think that they should usurp the government from those who hold it, as in the Jewish dream of the messianic kingdom; instead, he would have them know their duty to teach that the spiritual kingdom does not change the civil government.

The role and function of the Kingdom of God and of the State are different. They are two separate entities. God has instituted governments for the sake of law and order. The function of the government is to preserve justice in the country, to protect the innocent, and to punish the wicked. The state carries the "sword." The kingdom of God, on the other hand, is where the forgiveness of sin is announced.

The church is the visible expression of the Kingdom of God which is really invisible, for the Kingdom of God is in the hearts of people. A person is called to the Kingdom of God through the Spirit of God which works through the Gospel. It is conversion which makes him a member of the Kingdom of God. There he is in fellowship with God and with fellow believers. He prays with them, worships with them, witnesses to the power of the Gospel with them. There is a sharp distinction between the world and the Kingdom of God.

A Christian is also a member of the secular world. He is a citizen of a country. As a citizen he has his rights and also obligations. He may be a member of some political party. He fights for social justice and for economic improvement of the country. He fights against corruption, runs for office, and carries out his responsibilities with integrity and honesty. He will fight for his country and be a patriot on all occasions. Still he makes a distinction between his obligation to the church and to the state.

Here I quote from my dissertation "The Evangelical Stance Toward Non-Christian Religions."

The Church must distinguish between its ministry (1) of the Word and Sacrament, (2) social service, and (3) social action. The first two fall under the domain of the Church. The third comes under the domain of the secular world.

Social action today is associated with liberation and revolution.

Preaching of the Word, administering the Sacrament and thus announcing the forgiveness of sins, the new life with God and fellow believers is the prerogative of the Church alone. There is no other institution or agency in the world which can do that. The State cannot do it. Neither can it interfere with the primary job of the Church. The Church must guard her God-given prerogative at all costs. The Church or her ministers cannot abdicate that right, for it is the exclusive privilege and duty of the Church to absolve the sins of the penitent in the name of Jesus Christ. The Church must be conscious that if she forfeits that right, no one remains who can do it. Hence that is the primary duty of the Church.²

Uppsala and the Bangkok Conference advocate revolution and liberation theology. Liberation and revolution are not in the domain of the Church. A Christian may and should as a citizen take part in politics and work for the welfare of the country. But the two realms should not be mixed together. Humanistic theology mixes up these concepts. It makes no distinction between the spiritual and the temporal.

Luther distinguishes these two kingdoms in his treatise On Temporal Authority.

We must provide a sound basis for the civil law and sword so no one will doubt that it is in the world by God's will and ordinance. The passages which do this are the following: Romans 12 "Let every soul be subject to the governing authority, for there is no authority except from God; the authority which everywhere exists has been ordained by God. He then who resists the governing authority resists the ordinance of God, and he who resists God's ordinance will

²James C. Gamaliel, "The Evangelical Stance Toward Non-Christian Religions" (unpublished Doctor's Thesis, Fuller Seminary, Pasadena, California, 1974), pp. 201-202.

incur judgment." 1 Peter 2:13-14 . . . The law of the temporal sword has existed from the beginning of the world.³

We must divide the children of Adam and all mankind into two classes, the first belonging to the kingdom of God, the second to the kingdom of the world. Those who belong to the kingdom of God are all the true believers who are in Christ and under Christ, for Christ is King and Lord in the kingdom of God, as Psalm 2:6 and all of Scripture says. For this reason he came into the world, that he might begin God's kingdom and establish it in the world. Therefore, he says before Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world, but everyone who is of the truth hears my voice." (John 18:36-37) . . . He also calls the Gospel of the kingdom of God; because it teaches, governs, and upholds God's kingdom.⁴

Among Indian Christian theologians there is much talk about the theology of development, humanization, and liberation. Development and liberation are needs. But it is not the church as church which should strive for these ends. The primary task of the church is different. Development is the task of the secular government. Christians as citizens can and should work with other citizens to achieve these goals. Man has physical needs. Also he has spiritual needs. Only the Gospel can cater to the spiritual needs and quests. The temples, the festivals, sacrifices, pilgrimages, and mortification bear testimony to the spiritual hunger of India. The church must present the Gospel as the answer to these quests.

Thus a distinction between the spiritual and temporal kingdom of God, and the kingdom of the world is a great need.

About the unique contribution of Luther on the doctrine, George Forell says:

³Martin Luther, The Christian in Society, Vol. XLV of Luther's Works, edited by Helmut T. Lehmann (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), p. 85.

⁴Ibid., XLV, 88.

Luther once claimed that since the time of the Apostles the secular sword and secular government have never been so clearly described or highly exalted as by him. Our examination has tended to bear out that claim. In his political writings he did not only speak to his time but also developed certain principles which may help Christians in our time to come to a clearer understanding of their political duties.⁵

William Lazareth in his article "The Church as Advocate of Social Justice" summarizes Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms.

The key points in Luther's position are these: (1) God is the Lord of both kingdoms, although he rules each by different means (law and gospel) for different ends (a just peace and personal piety); (2) every Christian lives in both kingdoms simultaneously--in the kingdom of God, insofar as he is already righteous, and in the kingdom of the world insofar as he is still sinful; (3) the two kingdoms are sharply to be distinguished from each other, which means that the realms of law and gospel are to be neither separated (in secularism) nor equated (in clericalism). They ought rather to coexist in harmonious interaction and co-ordination as complementary expressions of God's creative and redemptive activity among men. Absolutely no "religious dualism" is advocated here either in the gracious action of God or in the faithful and loving responses of men.⁶

Going back to the report of the Synod meeting of the Church of South India quoted at the beginning of this chapter, the concern expressed there is to create a just society. Social justice was the main theme. The Synod was only reflecting the decisions of Uppsala and Bangkok. What Harold Lindsell has to say about the Bangkok conference would apply to the Church of South India Synod resolutions. If only the Church of South India would take seriously the criticism of Lindsell!

⁵George W. Forell, Luther and Culture (Decorah, Iowa: Luther College Press, 1960), p. 69.

⁶William Lazareth, "The Church as Advocate of Social Justice," Lutheran World, XVIII, No. 3 (1971), 256.

The WCC seems obsessed with the vision of establishing a truly just society among all men, saved and unsaved, atheistic communists as well as committed Christians. Beneath the surface there lurks the terrible danger of the false promise of a golden age among men, an age of a world without injustice or oppression. Such a vision represents a sad misreading of history and reveals a mistaken view of the nature of men. The WCC is to be commended for its concern for social justice, and every Christian in and out of the ecumenical movement should likewise be concerned. But attempts to do away with injustice and oppression should be based upon one cold fact; oppression and injustice can be alleviated, in some areas considerably reduced, but they cannot be eliminated even as the individual Christian can be improved in his personal life but not perfected as long as he is in the flesh. Sin will be with us until Christ returns, and as long as sin persists there will be injustice and oppression of all kinds. The problem will remain insoluble, though partially remediable, until sin is eliminated forever; no human efforts, no earnest pronouncements, and no illusory idealism can alter this basic fact.

Virtually nothing was said at Bangkok about the command of Christ to evangelize the world, i.e., to finish the task of preaching the Gospel of personal repentance and faith to all men. Nor was anything said of the two billion who have never heard the Gospel, except in a single sentence in which Philip Potter dismissed the debate over this matter as futile. There was no clear-cut sense of the lostness of men without Christ and the fact that if they die in their sins they are eternally separated from God. The great stress on salvation as liberation from political, social and economic oppression might very well have been just as much at home in a purely humanistic or secular conference.⁷

Reshaping of a socio-political and economic world order and structure are defined as the prime mission of the Church. If only the church will call its members as citizens of the country to get involved in politics and work for these aims, while the church as church will preach the Gospel of forgiveness in Christ to remake

⁷Ralph D. Winter, The Evangelical Response to Bangkok (South Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1973), pp. 133-134.

men as children of God! Today there is a wonderful opportunity to preach the Gospel in India. There is freedom to profess, practice, and propagate the Christian Gospel. There are unprecedented opportunities, too. The churches in India have a well-trained clergy and laity who could be actively engaged in bringing the Gospel to the millions of homes in India, if only they had the conviction, the message, and the zeal. Nothing stands in the way. There is a receptivity and response that was never there before. But the big conferences and their resolutions confuse the minister and the laymen. What they hear the conferences ask them to do is not much different from what the Socialist or communist party would demand of their members. The agenda of the church is the agenda of the political parties!

It is in this context that Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms has to be studied and put into practice. A Christian has double citizenship. As a member of the Kingdom of God in the fellowship of the saints he worships the triune God in Spirit and truth and gives witness to the eternal Gospel for which there is no substitute. The church is the only body which is competent, qualified and authorized to preach that Gospel.

The Christian is also a citizen of a country. There conscientiously he fulfills his civic responsibilities. But the state is never his God. Nor does he confuse his heavenly citizenship with the earthly citizenship. The spiritual and the temporal are distinct. The humanistic theologian makes no distinction between the two. Christians in India should use their discrimination in this regard. Then the Gospel will spread in India.

CHAPTER VI

THE DOCTRINE OF THE WORD OF GOD

The importance of the doctrine of the Word of God in the Indian context cannot be overestimated. To say that the progress or decline of the church in India will depend on the stand of the church on the doctrine of the Word of God, will not be an overstatement. The church or the Christian faith cannot be based on tradition. Traditions will grow and distort the Gospel in the long run. Christian faith cannot be based on the witness of a community. A community consists of fallible men. If the Gospel is to be based on the witness of a community, individual, collective, and social sin will come to bear upon the message and its integrity will be lost. Tradition has its place. Community has its place, too. But the Christian faith cannot be based on them. The written word of God must be the basis of the Christian faith and it must judge the church, the community and the traditions.

The Orthodox Syrian Church existed in South India at least for sixteen hundred years, if not more. What was the condition of the Church in 1800? The Christians had many customs of the Hindus. They practiced horoscopes and good and bad days; they had almost all the rites of passage of the Hindus including the after-death ceremonies. There was no evangelism of any kind. The people did not have even the elementary knowledge of the teachings of the Christian faith. Only the rich liturgy of the Syrian Church kept the church from becoming extinct. It was only after the Protestant missionaries translated the

Bible and made it available in the vernacular that the church received new life.

In the Indian context the doctrine that the Scripture is the Word of God must be affirmed and proclaimed. When the Bible is compared with the other religious books of India like those of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, or Sikhism, the uniqueness of the Bible will become obvious. Before doing that let us have the definition of the Word of God.

Scripture as the Word of God

Unequivocally and without reservation the orthodox Lutheran theologians call Scripture the Word of God. They regularly call the Sacred Scriptures "the voice of God" and "the very Word of God," and they employ many similar expressions. A typical definition of Scripture as God's Word is given by Gerhard: "Holy Scripture is the Word of God, reduced to writing according to His will by the evangelists and apostles, revealing perfectly and clearly the teaching of God's nature and will, in order that man might be instructed from it to life everlasting." . . . Scripture is called the Word of God by virtue of its divine origin. Scripture is the Word of God because its author, strictly speaking, is not a number of men but God Himself.

"The supreme author of Scripture is God." The human writers are only His hands, so to speak, His penmen, His amanuenses, who wrote by His command, His impulse and afflatus, yet without being deprived of their individuality, their consciousness, or their natural endowments.¹

The Bible is God's Word because God Himself has inspired the divine writers. It is God speaking through His Word. Calov makes this point very clear:

¹Robert D. Preus, The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1970), p. 263.

Sacred Scripture is the result of divine revelation and inspiration, not only in respect to its principal parts or to the portions that it treats chiefly and per se but also in respect to the individual parts and to all things that are contained therein. It is the product of divine revelation and inspiration not only in respect to the very statements and words themselves. All this is understood in the sense that the individual words of the prophets and apostles, as they are contained in Scripture have been determined by the Holy Spirit.²

That the Bible is the Word of God and that it is God who is speaking through the Bible, these truths have to be affirmed with certainty and conviction in India today. There is a strong tendency among theologians to undermine the importance and uniqueness of the Scripture. In one of the inter-seminary conferences a theological professor asked "What is unique about the Old Testament? Can we not substitute the Vedas and the Upanishads (the Hindu Scriptures) instead?" This is not a new idea. In the 1930s two famous Indian lay theologians, Chenchia and Chakkarai, raised the same argument. They are totally mistaken, and they failed to see the uniqueness of the Old Testament.

The Uniqueness of the Bible in the Indian Context

The uniqueness of the Word of God in the Indian Context came to me in a special way when I was a guest of a Brahmin convert to the Christian faith. He was running a Christian Ashramz (spiritual center) in Benares, the holy city of the Hindus. I stayed with him for a month to study Hinduism and to visit the Hindu temples of that famous city. The Christu panthi Ashram is situated on the banks of the Ganges at Dadadamedh, where millions of pilgrims come for "holy bath"

²Ibid., p. 264.

for remission of sins. Rev. R. C. Das, the Acharya or master of the Ashram, met many people to whom he witnessed about Christ. Many caste Hindus, including some women called on him.

One evening a Hindu scholar called on Das. He called me from the next room and asked me to listen to the discussion, for he said that I would benefit from it.

The Hindu Brahmin scholar started by saying that all religions were the same. All paths lead to the same goal. All religions were different paths to the same goal. Did not all rivers flow into the same ocean? Some call God Allah, others Krishna, some Jehovah and some Christ. But it is the same God to whom people give different names. Christianity taught only one way of salvation, namely bhakti or faith. Hinduism taught many ways, at least four. Hinduism is much older than Christianity.

Das listened patiently for forty minutes with interest. Then the Brahmin scholar stopped. Then R. C. Das said, "Let me ask you a few questions: Do you have a holy and a righteous God in all your scriptures? . . . Do you have a God who seeks to save sinners? Do you have a God who suffers for the sins of men?" The Hindu Brahmin scholar tried to mumble something. But he could not point to any god who did not have some grave moral fault. If Prajapati once offered his own flesh to save a bird from a hunter, and that is pointed out as a sacrifice, that very Prajapati was guilty of incest. The Brahmin soon left the room.

In the Indian context, the whole Bible has the most unique role. The Hindu scriptures are just the speculation of man on the nature of Brahman, the Supreme Spirit. Ultimately Brahman is unknowable.

Brahman in the Hindu Scriptures is described in two ways: He is "Nirgunarabrahma," one without any attributes. He cannot love or hate, bless or punish. He is not interested in man or the universe. He is simply unknowable. He could be described only in negative terms, like "not this, not that." The other aspect of Brahman is Sagunaparabrahma, the one with attributes. It is he who took "avatars" or incarnations. The numerous gods are the manifestations of the Sagunabrahma. But then all the gods are morally imperfect. The immoral stories of the gods and goddesses make the question of R. C. Das, "Do you have a holy and righteous God?" most pertinent.

Against this background the Bible reveals the triune God: the holy and righteous God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the God who hates sin and loves sinners; the God who seeks to save the sinners and who sends His own son to suffer and to die for the sins of mankind. The Bible is not interested in describing the nature of God in philosophical terms as in the Hindu scriptures. The Bible reveals a God who speaks, creates, preserves, and who forgives and restores man to fellowship with Himself.

In the Indian context the doctrine of the triune God is important. When Christians speak of Christ, the Hindus immediately associate Him with Buddha or Mohammed or Jina, founders of some religions. So in the Indian context the message of the church is the triune God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Bible is the revelation of what the triune God is doing for the salvation of mankind. In this perspective the whole Bible, every section, has a function and value. It reveals God's concern, love, anger, and God's way. Even the verse

"Nimrod was a hunter" has a significance in the Indian context. Nimrod is a person. He is real. According to Hinduism the world is unreal, the men are unreal, jobs are unreal. But in the Bible Nimrod is a real person. His vocation is important. The world has a beginning and it has an end. In Hinduism the world does not have a definite goal. When read in the Indian context every part of the Bible has a message to convey. The Bible has to be considered in units, in pericopes. Then the revelation of God to man becomes quite apparent. God calls man to repentance. God forgives because of the death of Christ on the cross. God restores man into fellowship with Himself in this life and in eternity. That is the message and function of the Bible.

The Unique Message of Forgiveness

The conversion story of R. C. Das also brought home to me in a special way the uniqueness of the message of forgiveness in Christ.

The coming of the Protestant missionaries stimulated new reform movements in Hinduism. The first modern religious movement was started by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, called the Brahmasamaj. It emphasized monotheism. Roy introduced corporate worship. People sang together. They even confessed their sins. Das became a member of the Brahma Samaj as a young boy. He became an active participant.

At that time Das met a Christian who told him of the basis of the Christian forgiveness and the meaning of the cross of Christ. Das had many questions in his mind.

Das went to the Brahma Samaj meeting and told the people that though he confessed his sins and even shed tears he was not assured of forgiveness and he did not have peace of conscience. He wanted to know

the basis of forgiveness in Hinduism and in the Brahmasamaj. Since the ordinary leaders were not able to answer Das' question, he was asked to meet their chief leader. Das went to see the venerable old leader of the Smaj. To his surprise and great joy the leader told him, "Son, I discovered that truth (forgiveness in Christ) many years ago. But I do not have the courage to profess it. I am the head of a big joint family. God bless you, son." R. C. Das openly took baptism and became a Christian.

Hinduism has a high philosophy. It has a high ethical code. But there is no assurance of forgiveness. Each man must bear the fruit of his own sins. The law of karma must work. This led to the doctrine of transmigration.

The Bible teaches justification by faith and forgiveness of sins through grace, because of the atoning death of Christ. Both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament we read of forgiveness of sins. Once forgiven, man lives in fellowship with God, building his life and the Kingdom of God with God Himself. He is an heir of eternal life.

The Law and the Gospel run throughout the entire Bible. They meet in Christ, for Christ fulfills the Law. He redeemed man from under the curse of the Law. That is a unique message.

The Old Testament and Salvation History

Today the Scripture is being attacked from many quarters. Cultural anthropology was used by missionaries as a handmaiden to cross-cultural communication. As long as it was an aid and a tool it was helpful. But unfortunately, in the hands of some social anthropologists, the Bible becomes a textbook of social and cultural anthropology. The

purpose, function, and message of the Bible are relegated to the background. Aids are aids. Tools are tools. They must be kept as such. The Word of God must be approached with reverence and faith. To some of these missionary anthropologists everything is cultural and relative. Everything is time bound. What is applicable to the Hebrew culture is not applicable to every culture. Thus the eternal and abiding values of the Scriptures are questioned.

Such anthropologists go a step further and say that of course God acted in one way with the Hebrew culture, and we look in the Old Testament for those lessons. God worked in other cultures in the same way and there is little or no difference. This thinking negates the uniqueness of the Old Testament. The same thought is behind the argument that the church may substitute the Hindu Scriptures for the Old Testament in the Indian context.

The fundamental flaw in this kind of thinking lies in this that they ignore that the Old Testament is the salvation history. If that point is missed one will never be able to see the Old Testament in the right perspective.

A few years ago Bishop Newbigin wrote a book, Sin and Salvation. In that book he described how the Old Testament has to be seen as salvation history. Some people may react strongly when we say that God chose Israel to be the people among whom Christ was to be born. They may ask why should God choose Israel; why did he not choose some other people? There is no answering the why. It pleased God to choose the people of Israel. Why? will remain a mystery. But it is a fact that God did choose Israel.

In mysterious ways God prepared Israel to be the recipients and messengers of the Gospel. God called Abraham from amidst an idolatrous people. God made a covenant with him. He received the same promise which God gave to Adam and Noah. Though rebellious as the nation of Israel was, God guided it through prophets and kings. He gave it His holy Law through Moses. In the midst of idolatrous nations God kept a remnant of Israel who worshipped the one God, Jehovah.

The Messianic prophecies were renewed through the prophets, and the hope was kept alive so that Simeon and Hannah were able to praise God as they were privileged to see the baby Jesus. The prophets rebuked Israel when it went away from God. They foretold the dire consequences of breaking the command of God and of the exile ahead. Still God did not forsake it even in exile, for He sent Ezekiel to be its prophet in exile to console and to convert it back to God and His promises.

While the prophets exhorted Israel with the Law and comforted it with the promise and also gave it a vision of the things to come, the priests kept the worship life of the people alive. The temple, the sacrifices, the rites and ceremonies vividly reminded them of sin and atonement, God's grace and forgiveness. All these rituals and sacrifices pointed to the sacrifice of Christ, the innocent lamb of God, on the cross. The Old Testament can be understood only in the light of the great salvation history.

Luther's preface to the Old Testament is very illuminating,

There are some who have little regard for the Old Testament. They think of it as a book that was given to the Jewish people only and is now out of date, containing only stories of past times. They think they have enough in the New Testament and assert that only a spiritual sense is to be

sought in the Old Testament. Origen, Jerome, and many other distinguished people have held this view. But Christ says in John 5:39, "Search the Scriptures, for it is they that bear witness to me." St. Paul bids Timothy attend to the reading of the Scriptures (1 Tim. 4:13), and in Romans 1:2 he declares that the gospel was promised by God in the Scriptures, while in 1 Cor. 15:5 he says that in accordance with the Scriptures Christ came of the seed of David, died, and was raised from the dead. St. Peter, too, points us back, more than once, to the Scriptures.

They do this in order to teach us that the Scriptures of the Old Testament are not to be despised, but diligently read. For they themselves base the New Testament upon them mightily, proving it by the Old Testament and appealing to it, as St. Luke also writes in Acts 17:11, saying that they at Thessalonica examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so that Paul was teaching. The ground and proof of the New Testament is surely not to be despised, and therefore the Old Testament is to be highly regarded. And what is the New Testament but a public preaching and proclamation of Christ, set forth through the sayings of the Old Testament and fulfilled through Christ . . . however simple they may seem, these are the very words, works, judgments, and deeds of the majesty, power, and wisdom of the most high God.³

Scriptures and the Gospel

There has been a tendency to speak of the Gospel apart from the Scriptures. What is important to those theologians is not the Scriptures, but the Gospel. "We preach the Christ of the Gospels," is their slogan. This approach has many corollaries. It undermines the Old Testament. The Messianic prophecies are not taken seriously. The Old Testament is seen as culturally conditioned Jewish history.

Jesus of the Gospels is their subject of preaching. Then again the man Jesus who healed the sick, fed the hungry, comforted the sorrowing is their savior. From that they define salvation in terms of

³Martin Luther, Word and Sacrament, Vol. XXXV of Luther's Works, edited by Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), pp. 235-236.

rescue from physical oppression, economic exploitation, political slavery. The great doctrines of justification by faith or the Law and the Gospel are conveniently set aside. Building up a utopia of social justice and political freedom becomes the command of the revolutionary Jesus. Skevington Wood describes the tendency of these people as follows:

The exponents of what came to be known as the "social Gospel" sought to translate the Scripture--and especially the New Testament--into the language of a leftist political manifesto. Dr. Scharlemann suggests that the all-time low for this angle was established by Boucle White when he rendered John 5:17 as "My Father is a working man, and I am a working man myself." Such a gaffe could be perpetrated only by an interpreter misled by categories derived from a sociology of class struggle.⁴

When the Bible is not seen as a unit consisting of the Old and the New Testaments, and interpretation is not done in the context of the whole of the Scriptures, many distortions are bound to result.

The apostles preached Christ crucified and risen for the salvation of lost mankind. But the Christ they preached was the Christ of the Scriptures, of whom the prophets prophesied. In the apostolic preaching, the apostles based their sermons on the Old Testament. Christ Himself told the disciples after His resurrection: "These are My words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about Me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled."⁵ Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. It is Christ who must open the understanding of men. About

⁴Skevington A. Wood, The Principles of Biblical Interpretation (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), p. 10.

⁵Luke 24:44.

the disciples who went to Emmaus we read: "And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."⁶

You cannot speak of the Gospel apart from the Scriptures. The Gospel is embedded in the Scriptures. The Scriptures are the Word of God and the Christ of the Scriptures is the message of the church. The doctrine of the Word of God is most important in the Indian context. God still speaks through His Word both judgment and grace, Law and Gospel. The church in India must uphold the doctrine of the inspiration and inerrancy of the Word of God to remain faithful to God's truth and to avoid all aberrations and misinterpretations.

⁶Luke 24:27.

CHAPTER VII

PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Principles of biblical interpretation are of the utmost importance in India today. Though Christians number only twenty million out of a population of six hundred million, almost all the denominations are represented in India. The Roman Catholics number about ten million. Ecumenical dialogues and discussions bring the many denominations together. The Catholics and the Protestants also meet together. Theological discussions inevitably bring into focus doctrines and the interpretation of the Bible.

Indian theological professors, returning from the universities and seminaries of the west, propagate the various theories of the western theologians. Rationalist organizations are becoming common among the college students and laymen. Rationalistic approaches enter the church too. The Bible is interpreted in different ways. Old traditional methods and doctrines are being questioned. Ministers and laymen become confused. In this context principles of interpretation are very important.

The principles of interpretation should help the pastors and laymen use their discernment, when they are faced by varied interpretations. Also the principles should help them to interpret the Bible for themselves. The Reformation stressed the right of private interpretation. But today some pastors are afraid to let laymen lead Bible study. The pastors seem to be afraid that the laymen will be carried away by enthusiasts or the charismatics. If the laymen are instructed

in the fundamental principles of biblical interpretation, there should be little fear of aberrations.

Luther's Battle and Today's Battle

In the "tower experience" Luther made the great discovery of the mystery of salvation, through the exegesis of the passage "The just shall live by faith." This discovery made Luther the Reformer. Thereafter, Luther, by God's grace, became the greatest exegete of all times. Besides prodigious intellectual powers and polemical skill, God also gave him the simple faith of a child. And Luther bequeathed to posterity a system of sound biblical exegetical principles. They were evolved during bitter controversies and battles. They were intellectual and spiritual battles, involving the faculties of the mind, heart, and soul. Luther faced issues fairly and squarely. Integrity, sincerity, force, and conviction marked his approach. Spiritual depth and intellectual honesty were characteristic of the method of Luther.

Luther fought his exegetical battles on four fronts--against the scholastics, the Humanists, the Enthusiasts and the non-Christians. While encounters with these groups are scattered throughout his writings, some sections may be pointed out as typifying his encounter with these groups and their theologies.

Luther's Disputations Against Scholastic Theology has 97 theses. They, with Luther's 95 theses, defend biblical truths against scholastic perversions. His Bondage of the Will against Erasmus, the greatest humanist of all ages, is the best answer to Humanism. Luther propounded his exegesis against the Enthusiasts in his treatise Against Heavenly Prophets. Luther never directly encountered non-Christian religions.

Still, in his commentary on Romans, especially chapters 1 and 2, he develops the biblical approach to non-Christian religions.

The theologies mentioned in the previous paragraph are not dead issues today. They are as much alive today as in the time of Luther. Scholastic theology was revived by Vatican II and subsequent Roman Catholic publications. Uppsala and Bangkok revived Humanism. The charismatic movements which sweep the countries and churches reflect the theology of the Anabaptists against whom Luther wrote Against Heavenly Prophets. The resurgence of non-Christian religions poses a real problem to the Christian message and witness in India today. How the non-Christian religions are to be understood and interpreted is a question which faces the churches in the Orient.

It is against this background that the principles of biblical interpretation have to be formulated. Also the principles to be observed in the formulation of doctrines have to be stated. Ten principles will be stated. For these I lean heavily on Luther and on the Lutheran confessional books.

1. Scripture is the source and norm for doctrine and life.

The classic statement that Scripture is the only authority for doctrine and life is found in the Formula of Concord. (F. C. 1)

We believe, teach, and confess that the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments are the only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged, as it is written in Ps. 119:105, "Thy Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

And St. Paul says in Gal. 1:8 "Even if an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed."

Other writings of ancient and modern teachers, whatever their names, should not be put on a par with Holy Scriptures and should be received in no other way and no further than as witness to the fashion in which the doctrine of the prophets and apostles was preserved in post-apostolic times. (F. C. 2)

In this way the distinction between the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments and all other writings is maintained, and Holy Scripture remains the only judge, rule, and norm according to which, as the only touchstone, all doctrines should and must be understood and judged as good and evil, right and wrong. (F. C. 7)

The Solid Declaration states as follows:

We pledge ourselves to the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments as the pure and clear fountain of Israel, which is the only true norm according to which all teachers and teachings are to be judged and evaluated. (S. C. 3)

What Melanchthon says about the Roman Catholic teaching on saints and the Mass may be applied to other doctrines formulated by the Pope, like the immaculate conception of Mary and the Assumption of Mary. The latter was based on a particular dream of the Pope, as Pelican points out in The Riddle of Roman Catholicism.¹ Note Melanchthon's remarks:

Neither a command nor a promise nor an example can be shown from Scripture for the invocation of saints . . . How do we know, without proof from Scripture, that the saints hear the individual's prayers? (Ap. xxi, 10)

Again, Melanchthon affirms that the Roman Catholics "have no scriptural proof or command" for applying the Mass to the soul of the dead. To do such things "without the command of God and the example of Scripture" is "an abuse of the name of God in violation of the Second Commandment."

¹Jaroslav Pelican, The Riddle of Roman Catholicism (New York: Abingdon Press, 1949), p. 140.

So in formulating or evaluating any doctrine, the first question to be asked is whether it is based on Scripture.

2. Doctrines and interpretations are based on Scripture, which is the revealed will of God, and not on the secret or hidden will of God.

Erasmus, in his Freedom of the Will, said that the Scripture was obscure. If Scripture is obscure, he argued then no assertions were possible. Luther held that Scripture was clear and that Christianity must make assertions. About the obscurity of Scripture, Erasmus argued thus:

For there are some secret places in the Holy Scriptures into which God has not wished us to penetrate more deeply and, if we try to do so, then the deeper we go, the darker it becomes, by which means we are led to acknowledge the unsearchable majesty of the divine wisdom, and the weakness of the human mind . . . So when we come to such a place, my view is that the wiser and more reverent course is to cry with St. Paul: "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!" and with Isaiah: "Who has heard the Spirit of the Lord, or what counselor has instructed him?" rather than to define what passes the measure of the human mind.²

Replying to Erasmus in The Bondage of the Will, Luther says that the passages Erasmus quotes do not speak of the Scriptures, but of the mind of God. There are many mysteries about the mind of God which are hidden to us. We do not probe into that, nor do we speculate about it. We base our doctrine on the Word of God, which is the revealed will of God. Thus Luther makes a distinction between the hidden will of God and the revealed Word of God. We are concerned only with the latter.

²E. Gordon Rupp and Philip S. Watson, editors, Luther and Erasmus Free Will and Salvation (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959), p. 38.

God and His Scripture are two things, just as the Creator and His creation are two things. Now nobody questions that there is a great deal hid in God of which we know nothing. Christ himself says of the last day: "Of that day knoweth no man, but the Father." (Matt. 24:36) and in Acts 1 he says: "It is not for you to know the times and seasons."³

We must discuss God, or the will of God, preached, revealed, offered to us, and worshipped by us, in one way, and God not preached, not revealed, not offered to us, nor worshipped by us, in another way. Wherever God hides Himself and wills to be unknown to us, there we have no concern. Here that sentiment: "what is above us does not concern us," really holds good.⁴

At present, however, we must keep in view His Word and leave alone His inscrutable will; for it is by His Word, and not by His inscrutable will, that we must be guided. In any case, who can direct himself according to a will that is inscrutable and incomprehensible? It is enough simply to know that there is in God an inscrutable will; what, why, and within what limits It wills, it is wholly unlawful to enquire, or wish to know, or be concerned about, or touch upon; we may only fear and adore.⁵

These concepts of the "hidden God" and "the revealed will of God" are especially important in the Indian context today. Some Christian theologians say that God is so great that how can we know His will and judge other religions or make any assertions. In answer it may be pointed out that we are not dealing with the inscrutable will of God but with the revealed will of God, which is the Holy Scripture.

God is certainly greater than the Bible. The Scripture does not comprehend God. God is not confined to the Bible. But our knowledge of God is limited by the Scripture. We cannot go beyond the Scriptures.

³J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston, Martin Luther on the "Bondage of the Will" (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1957), p. 70.

⁴Ibid., p. 169.

⁵Ibid., p. 171.

As such we are confined to the Bible. Our task is not to fathom the unscrutable will of God. It is not for man to speculate on the nature of the "hidden God." The Christian's duty is to obey what God has revealed in the Holy Scriptures and to worship and obey God's commandments. The speculations of the Scholastics and of the Humanists are not based on the Word of God. Christians ought to remember that they are confined to the Scriptures, the revealed will of God. Formulation of doctrines has to be based on the Scriptures only.

3. In interpreting Scripture, one is always conscious that it is God who is speaking through it.

All Scripture is inspired by God, 2 Tim. 3:16. The Authorized Version renders it as "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."

Also the two expressions "God says" or "Scripture says" are used to mean the same.

It would be difficult to invent methods of showing profound reverence for the text of Scripture as the very Word of God, which will not be found to be characteristic of the writers of the New Testament in dealing with the Old. Among the rich variety of the indications of their estimate of the written words of the Old Testament as direct utterances of Jehovah, there are in particular two classes of passages, each of which, when taken separately, throws into the clearest light their habitual appeal to the Old Testament text as to God Himself speaking, while together they make an irresistible impression of the absolute identification by their writers of the Scriptures in their hands with the living voice of God. In one of these classes of passages the Scriptures are spoken of as if they were God; in the other, God is spoken of as if He were the Scriptures; in the two together, God and the Scriptures are brought into such conjunction as to show that in point of directness of authority no distinction was made between them.

Examples of the first class of passages are such as these: Gal. 3:8, Rom. 9:17.

Examples of the other class of passages are these: Matt. 19:4,5; Gen. 2:24; Heb. 3:7; Acts 23:34,35.

These two sets of passages, together, thus show an absolute identification, in the minds of the writers, of "Scripture" with the speaking God.⁶

Unequivocally and without reservation the orthodox Lutheran theologians call Scriptures the Word of God. They regularly call the Sacred Scriptures "the voice of God" and "the very Word of God," and they employ many similar expressions . . . Thus it is that the prophets so often repeat the words "The Lord has spoken," "The Word of Jahve," "The Word of the Lord came," "The mouth of the Lord has spoken," . . . Through these same apostles who were evangelists He willed to put into writing the necessary and most important elements of His divine revelation. Thus God is the author of Scripture, or to say the same thing, God is the author of the divine revelation that has been incorporated into the Sacred Scriptures.⁷

Thus while interpreting Scripture, the Christian is always conscious that it is God Himself who is speaking through the Scripture. So he does the task of interpreting in a mood of reverence and devotion.

4. The purpose and goal of Scripture, namely the salvation and sanctification of man, has to be borne in mind while interpreting Scripture.

God has revealed Himself and His way of salvation to man, so that he may be saved from the power of Satan, sin, and death and live in the Kingdom of God, worshipping Him and obeying Him. The Word equips

⁶ Benjamin B. Warfield, The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1970), p. 300.

⁷ Robert D. Preus, The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1970), pp. 263-264.

the Christian to do good works and to grow in sanctification. These purposes must be kept in mind in interpreting Scripture.

John 20:31. These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.

2 Tim. 3:15-16. And how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Rom. 1:16-17. For I am not ashamed of the Gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith.

1 Cor. 10:6-11. Now these things are warnings for us, not to desire evil as they did . . . Now these things happened to them as warning, but they were written down for our instruction upon whom the end of the age has come.

The purpose of the Scripture is to deliver us from the dominion of darkness and to transfer us to the kingdom of His beloved Son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Through the Scripture, the Holy Spirit converts, edifies, comforts, exhorts, and strengthens men in mind, heart, soul and spirit. Interpretation should serve these purposes.

5. Interpretation of the Scripture must take into account the contents of Scripture, namely, the Law and the Gospel.

All Scripture should be divided into these two chief doctrines, the law and the promises. In some places it presents the law. In others it presents the promise of Christ; this it does either when it promises that the Messiah will come and promises forgiveness of sins, justification, and eternal life. By law in this discussion we mean the commandments of the Decalogue, wherever they appear in the Scriptures. (Ap. LV. 5)

We believe, teach, and confess that the distinction between law and Gospel is an especially glorious light that

is to be maintained with great diligence in the church so that, according to St. Paul's admonition, the Word of God may be divided rightly.

We believe, teach, and confess that, strictly speaking, the law is a divine doctrine which teaches what is right and God-pleasing and which condemns everything that is sinful and contrary to God's will.

Therefore everything which condemns sin is and belongs to the proclamation of the law.

But the Gospel, strictly speaking, is the kind of doctrine that teaches what man who has not kept the law and is condemned by it should believe, namely, that Christ has satisfied and paid for all guilt and without man's merit has obtained and won for him forgiveness of sins, the "righteousness that avails before God," and eternal life. (F. C. V. 1-4)

Sin and grace, commandment and promise, punishment and forgiveness, Law and Gospel run through the entire Bible. The Law accuses. It as guardian leads men to Christ. The Law cannot save man. The Law is found in the hearts of all men; it is found in all religions, as conscience, the code of ethics. But the Gospel of forgiveness through the death and resurrection of Christ is the unique message of the Bible and the Christian faith. All interpretations of Scripture should take into account the chief contents of the Scripture, namely the Law and the Gospel.

It is a common flaw in dealing with the Scriptures that the Law is treated as the Gospel, and at other times the Gospel is made into a law. Proper distinction between these two fundamental doctrines is of the utmost importance in rightly interpreting the Scripture.

6. Justification by faith is the key to the interpretation of the Scripture.

The doctrine of justification is not only the main subject of the Lutheran Confessions but the chief teaching

of Scripture as well. The Augsburg Confession argues that "the chief article of the Gospel must be maintained, namely, that we obtain the grace of God through faith in Christ without our merits" (A. C. XXVIII, 52). For the Apology the doctrine of justification is "the main doctrine of Christianity."⁸

Luther writes about the doctrine of justification by faith in the Smalcald Articles as follows:

The first and chief article is this, that Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, "was put to death for our trespasses and raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25). He alone is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). (Is. 53:6). Moreover, "all have sinned," and "they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, by his blood" (Rom. 3:23-25).

Inasmuch as this must be believed and cannot be obtained or apprehended by any work, law, or merit, it is clear and certain that such faith alone justifies us, as St. Paul says in Romans 3, "For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of law" (Rom. 3:28), and again, "that he (God) himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26).

Nothing in this article can be given up or compromised even if heaven and earth and things temporal should be destroyed. For as St. Paul says, "There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). "And with his stripes we are healed" (Is. 53:5). (S. A. II, 1)

In the Old Testament as in the New, the saints had to be justified by faith in the promise of the forgiveness of sins given for Christ's sake. Since the beginning of the world, all the saints have had to believe that Christ would be the offering and the satisfaction for sin, as Is. 53:10 teaches, "When he makes himself an offering for sin." (Ap. XXIV, 55)

(The article of justification) is an especial service for the clear, correct understanding of the entire Holy Scriptures, and alone shows the right way to the unspeakable treasure and right knowledge of Christ, and alone opens the door to the entire Bible. (Ap. IV, 2).

⁸Ralph A. Bohlmann, Principles of Biblical Interpretation in the Lutheran Confessions (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968), p. 74.

Thus the doctrine of justification by faith remains the key to the right interpretation of the Scripture. In this fundamental doctrine of the Bible, is summed up the doctrine of salvation in Christ and the entire plan of God for man.

7. Any portion of Scripture has only one meaning. In interpretation the simple clear meaning should be found out with the help of grammar and the historical context.

During the Middle Ages, the Bible was considered an obscure book, which only the Pope was considered competent to interpret. And every passage and pericope was said to have four meanings, including analogical and spiritual.

The insistence of the Lutheran Reformation that every passage of Holy Scripture has but one sense, which the exegete must discover and explain, constituted a major breakthrough in the history of Biblical interpretation. In medieval times Scripture was expounded by means of the Quadriga, or fourfold rule, according to which Bible passages could have a literal, moral, allegorical, and analogical sense. The moral or tropological sense applied to the individual believer, the allegorical to the church, and the analogical to the future. This type of exegesis made of the Scriptures a "waxen nose," a book filled with obscurity and mystery that only the church could interpret . . .

Over against this view of Scripture Luther asserted: "The literal sense of Scripture alone is the whole essence of faith and Christian theology;" and again, "If we wish to handle Scripture aright, our sole effort will be to obtain the one, simple, seminal, and certain sense." Or again, "The Holy Spirit is the plainest writer and speaker in heaven and earth and therefore His words cannot have more than one, and that the very simplest sense, which we call the literal, ordinary, natural sense."⁹

⁹Ibid., pp. 89-90.

A given text or passage of Scripture offers only one genuine sense, the literal sense. This one meaning of individual words or passages in their given context is a constant and cannot be changed. The rule is stated concisely by Gerhard:

There is only one proper and legitimate sense to each Scripture passage, a sense intended by the Holy Spirit and derived from the natural meaning of words; and only from this one literal sense can any valid argumentation be brought forth. Allegorical, tropological, and analogical interpretations are not different meanings but different inferences drawn from the one meaning or different adaptations to the one meaning and sense that the writings express.¹⁰

Luther stressed the simple rules of grammar. In refuting the arguments of Erasmus, Luther again and again pointed out how Erasmus violated the rules of grammar and thus distorted the meaning. Stretch out your hand is an imperative. It does not necessarily mean that one has the power to stretch out, as in an indicative sentence.

8. Let Scripture interpret itself.

This principle is evident in Luther's writings as early as 1519. To form a doctrine, passages related to that theme should be brought together, and let Scripture speak for itself. A less clear passage is interpreted by more clear passages.

The principle of the self-interpreting is consistently followed in the confessions. It is evidence in the many places where long lists of passages are cited as being in agreement with each other and therefore expressing the same truth . . . Passages from Paul and John are used side by side (Ap. LV, 29-33), as are citations from Paul, John, Acts, Habbakuk, and Isaiah (Ap. IV, 88-89). 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Matthew, Acts, John, and Colossians are cited in the same

¹⁰Preus, p. 326.

paragraph (FC, SD II, 10). In one paragraph of the Formula, 15 different Biblical books are cited (FC, SD II, 26). Passages from Romans, Genesis, and Hebrews are cited together to explain how Abraham was justified before God through faith alone (FC, SD III, 33).¹¹

New Testament passages are used to interpret Old Testament passages. Eph. 5:9 and Col. 3:10 are used to interpret "image of God" on Gen. 1:27 (Ap. II, 18, 20). Abraham's faith and Abel's sacrifices are explained on the basis of Rom. 4:9-12 and Heb. 11:4 (Ap. IV, 202).

The principle that Scripture is to interpret Scripture, whether individual passages or entire articles are employed, is a theological principle of literary exegesis. Its validity and reliability rests ultimately on the Biblical unity of authorship, content, and purpose.¹²

The Confessions regard the "Word of God as the eternal truth" (FC, SD Rule and Norm, 13); they believe that "God's Word cannot err" (Lc, IV, 57); God never contradicts himself. Therefore Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture. It reveals the same mind of God and the same way of salvation.

Hollaz divides the hermeneutical aids suggested by Scripture itself into three classifications: antecedent, formal, and consequent. The antecedent aids for interpretation are prayer; a previous acquaintance with the articles of faith; a solid knowledge of the Biblical mode of speaking, which would enable one to recognize the genres, tropes, etc.; a love for the truth that desires only to find the genuine sense of a text and interpret it clearly; and finally, the continued and repeated reading of Scripture. The formal aids are a careful and analytical examination of the words and phrases of the text; a careful consideration of the scope and intention of the text (bearing in mind always that the aim of all Scripture is the glory of God and the instruction, comfort, and edification of believers): careful study

¹¹Bohlmann, p. 102.

¹²Ibid., p. 108.

of the context of every text and pericope . . . The consequent aids for interpreting Scripture are the means necessary for serious application of the Bible theology: we are to translate the literal sense of the divine words into teaching, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness.¹³

9. The unity and Christocentricity should be borne in mind while interpreting Scripture.

The Old and the New Testaments belong together: They constitute one unity. The New is hidden in the Old; the Old provides the background for the New; and the New interprets the Old. They are closely linked together. The center of both is Christ.

Following Luther, the theologians of Lutheran orthodoxy make Christ the central theme of all Scripture. Christ is the pearl, the scope, the center, the nucleus, the evangelical treasure of all Scripture, Old and New Testament alike. All Scripture points to Him. Only in Him is Scripture read aright and understood. "The genuine scope and ultimate intention of the entire Scripture is that we might come to a knowledge of the person, the office, and the benefits of Christ."¹⁴

It is the Christocentric understanding of Scripture, seen and believed by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, that serves the Lutheran interpreter as a general presupposition for the interpretation of the entire Scripture.

All the Old Testament prophecies point to Christ, and the prophecies find their fulfillment in the New Testament. Christ showed to the disciples the fulfillment of the prophecies. In the apostolic preaching the same fulfillment idea was repeated. The central theme of the salvation of lost man through faith in Christ, the Messiah,

¹³Preus, p. 263.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 331.

should be constantly born in mind in the interpretation of Scripture. History, prophecy, or sacrifice in the Old Testament point to Christ, His work, and the Kingdom of Christ, namely the church. The apostles and the evangelists bear witness to the Gospel of Christ and establish churches under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Everything is according to the plan of God. This unity and Christocentricity are guides to the interpretation of the Scripture.

10. The Holy Spirit, who is the author of all Scripture, is the true interpreter of the Scripture.

It is the Holy Spirit, who is the author of the Scripture, who illumines the hearts of men to understand and interpret Scripture. Writing against Erasmus, in the Bondage of the Will, Luther brings out this truth:

If you speak of internal perspicuity (of the Scripture), the truth is that nobody who has not the Spirit of God sees a jot of what is in the Scriptures. All men have their hearts darkened, so that, even when they can discuss and quote all that is in Scripture, they do not understand or really know any of it . . . The Spirit is needed for the understanding of all Scripture and every part of Scripture.

He (the Holy Spirit) opens the intellect and the heart to understand the Scriptures and to heed the Word, as we read in Luke 24:45, "Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures." Likewise, "Lydia heard us; the Lord opened her heart to give heed to what was said by Paul." (Acts 16:14) (FC SD, 26)¹⁵

Christ promised the Holy Spirit to the disciples and to believers of all ages. "When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever

¹⁵Packer and Johnson, p. 70.

He hears He will speak, and He will declare to you the things that are to come" John 16:13. It is the Holy Spirit who illumines the hearts of men. The natural man cannot understand the mysteries of God. They are foolishness to him. But sanctified and illumined by the Spirit, the believer delights and is edified by the mysteries of God revealed in the Bible. Human reason has only a ministerial role in interpreting the Scripture, never the magisterial role as in the case of rationalists.

There is much confusion in the interpretation of the Scripture today. The Scholastics, the Humanists, and the Enthusiasts have different ways of interpretation. These confuse the laymen. The ten principles of biblical interpretation should help people to use their discernment in judging the orthodoxy or unorthodoxy of interpretations.

To appeal to Scripture is not in itself a guarantee of orthodoxy. The most superficial acquaintance with ecclesiastical history is sufficient to confirm the saddening fact that heretics and extremists of every sort have rarely failed to invoke Scripture to support their errors. Each sect or denomination of Christians maintains that it has the sanction of God's word for its particular brand of isolationalism. Such diversities could scarcely exist unless some fallacy had distorted the principles by which Biblical interpretation is governed.¹⁶

Every interpreter has some presuppositions and standards by which he interprets. The presuppositions may center around the purpose, authority, unity, content, function, and other matters. The ten principles dealt with in this chapter cover all these facets of interpretation. As I said earlier, some pastors are afraid to let laymen

¹⁶Skevington A. Wood, The Principles of Biblical Interpretation (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), p. 10.

study the Bible for themselves in small groups. The pastor feels that he should be there to guide them. The Reformation stressed the principle of private interpretation. If given guidance in the principles of interpretation, the laymen should find much edification in Bible study. That may be one way by which the unchurched may be helped in small Bible study groups with Christian friends. Under the guidance of the Spirit, it should become an exciting and rewarding experience.

CHAPTER VIII

MARCHING FORWARD

What is the role of Lutheran theology in India today? That is the basic question we are trying to answer in this thesis. In the introduction, we saw the spiritual and theological climate in which the Lutheran Churches are functioning today. Union with the Church of South India¹ had a high priority in Lutheran circles some time ago. Now the enthusiasm has waned. Some kind of a union should be achieved among Lutherans before union with the C. S. I. could be negotiated; that is another trend of thought. The Lutheran Churches of North East India are forming a union and they may remain as a Lutheran Church. Joint theological training is widely acclaimed and except for the Gossner Lutheran Seminary and the Concordia Seminary, all others have gone in for joint theological training. In this context, it will be well for the Lutheran Churches to remember that they have a heritage to keep and to share for the edification of the church in India.

Heritage of the Lutheran Church

Five important Lutheran heritages, namely the doctrines of the Law and the Gospel, justification by faith, the two kingdoms, the Word of God, and the principles of interpretation, were discussed in this thesis. Much of these doctrines has great relevance and significance for the Indian situation today. Lutheran heritages have to be

¹ Hereafter referred to as C. S. I.

kept and developed. The need is not to just transplant Lutheran theology from Germany or America into India, but to study the truth and principles involved in the doctrine and to adapt them to the Indian situation. When Luther wrote of the natural law in his commentary on Romans or of the Law-Gospel dichotomy in his commentary on Galatians, it is true he was not aware of the teachings of Hinduism. Still the principle of work-righteousness he had described in his commentaries is aptly applicable to Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, or Sikhism. Also Luther developed the doctrine of justification by faith in a different context. The work-righteousness of the medieval Roman Catholics was different from that of the Hindu today. Still the principle is not different. The contrast between the doctrine of good works and faith are equally applicable to both situations. The doctrine of the two kingdoms had the medieval empire and the Papacy as the background. Such terms as the theology of development, humanization, or liberation theology were not in the vocabularies of Luther's time. Still when the question is asked, what is the role of the church and what is the role of the state? the dilemma the church faced in the sixteenth century and now faces in the twentieth century, is not different in principle. Regarding the doctrine of the Word of God and biblical interpretation, circumstances may have changed quantitatively, but not qualitatively. Man and his quest, the rebellious and proud nature, the tendency to assert the magisterial role of reason remain the same in spite of the passing of centuries.

So these valuable heritages have to be cherished with gratitude to God and then developed to meet the challenges and problems of today. That will open up new opportunities for effective witness and growth

of the church. This is all the more necessary because of the present confusion in theology which is widespread. Some pioneer missionaries rightly saw the value of the heritage and hoped to develop them to adequately speak to the present age. Today we need to recapture their vision and be true to the trust they have left behind.

Gurukul Theological College and Research Institute

A notable example of how an institution with great potentialities dies for want of leadership, vision, and conviction, is the Gurukul Theological College and Research Institute. It is situated in the heart of the city of Madras. With great hopes and vision it was inaugurated in 1954 in a beautiful and extensive plot of ground. It functioned under the Federation of the Evangelical Lutheran Churches. The nine component church bodies and their supporting missions sponsored this institution. It offered B.D. and M.Th. degrees. Students from the different Lutheran churches came together. It functioned well for fifteen years. Then the ecumenical trend became very strong, and it was merged with the United Theological College, Bangalore, a C. S. I. seminary. Gurukul is reduced to a lay-training institute. Even after four years it does not have a good program of lay-training. The many houses that had been built for the faculty and students are rented out to outsiders. Where there is no conviction and vision, deterioration is inevitable. The fate of the first Lutheran Mission which I described in the second chapter is being repeated. This is a warning for other churches.

In the early years of Gurukul after 1954, some notable research monographs and books were published. The history of some Tamil and

Telugu churches was written. The religion of Tagore was published. The pioneers set a noble and ambitious example in combining popular and philosophic studies. But today Gurukul is in ruins--intellectually and spiritually.

Gurukul could still be revived. It could become a Luther study center. Scholars from the continent and America could help stimulate such studies. Soon Indian scholars will be able to study Lutheran concepts in terms of the needs and quests of India. The Center could encourage study of Hinduism, Islam, and the many cults. Gurukul could develop as a graduate school of mission to serve the whole of India and other countries of Asia. The church in India has to be equipped intellectually and spiritually to meet the challenges and problems of today. A kind of intellectual cowardice and uncertainty have gripped many clergy and laymen.

Gurukul could serve the 800,000 Lutherans and through them the 20 million Christians of whom 10 million are Protestants. This would be possible if only they are aware of and proud of their heritage. There is a tendency among some to say that doctrines do not matter. All that is needed is conduct. Incidentally, this is the Hindu theory. There could be no right conduct without the right values and there could be no right values without the right doctrines. They are closely interrelated. Faith and conduct are the two sides of a coin.

Lutherans in India should recapture the vision and courage of the pioneers of the mission who dreamed great dreams and dared many great things.

Adding Strength to Strength

When we speak of the heritage of the Lutheran Church, it does not mean that the Lutheran Church in India does not have its weaknesses. It is true that the Lutheran Church can learn many things from other churches of India and abroad.

An age-old accusation against Lutherans is that they emphasize justification, but not sanctification--that Lutherans are indifferent to good works. As local churches and organizations other churches have shown more concern for the poor, the sick, the orphan and the destitute, the blind, the deaf, the old, the widows, and the like. Lately Lutherans have shown an interest in this field, but more has to be done. Through handicrafts, embroidery and technical schools, other churches have done a good deal to help church members and non-members.

Like other churches, Lutherans also pioneered in education. But they seem to have been content with elementary and high schools. The Presbyterian Church took the lead in establishing colleges in India. It was Alexander Duff who laid the foundation of the present educational system of India. Following him others like Wilson of Bombay, Hislop of Nagpur, Miler of Madras, and others established a noble tradition. Only the Andhra Lutheran Church had a college for many years. The Tamil Lutheran Church started one only in the 1970s. Let us hope that the attitude toward institutions of higher education is not a reflection of the intellectual life of the Lutherans. We have to meet the intellectuals of India too with the Gospel.

Lutherans are accused of rugged individualism, belligerence, and a disregard for fellowship. One of the points of strength of the C. S. I. is its emphasis on fellowship. On the first of January the communicant members of the Kanyakumari District come to Nagercoil, their headquarters for communion. About eight thousand people gather, and the entire group is given lunch by the central church. Every three months, communicants of a circuit gather in one church for communion. This helps to build a strong bond of fellowship. Among Lutherans the individual congregation remains one unit and association with other churches is limited.

In the matter of Sunday school, youth activities and women's groups too, the C. S. I. is better organized than the Lutherans. Both men and women voluntary workers are a strength of the C. S. I. Some of these volunteers are effective evangelists and church planters. Men working in government offices take out time on Sundays to minister to some congregation voluntarily.

If Lutheran churches can add to their heritage the strong points from other churches a new era will dawn. There is no doubt that in the present confusion and confrontation with non-Christian religions, the theology of development and humanization, and in the fashionable teaching that if you follow your conscience you will be saved, only the doctrines described in the previous chapters could give a biblical stance and the right perspective. Only with those could there be a meaningful program of action.

In the field of Christian literature and publications, the Lutheran Church has been behind compared to some of the other churches. Though

Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg, the first Lutheran missionary, did some research into Hinduism, the Lutheran Church has not produced a William Caray, a Farquahr, a Macnicholl, a Sydney Cave, a Hume, a Newbigin, a Stephen Neill (a former bishop in India), a McGavran, a Pickett, a Devanandan, a Devadutt, a Surjit Singh, or a Jai Singh. Dr. Estbone published a few books. Bishop Diehl did some valuable study of popular Hinduism. But on the whole the contribution of Lutherans, whether missionary or national, has not been much. It is high time that the Lutheran Church published books on many levels and on a wide variety of subjects. Here again the Federation of the Evangelical Lutheran Churches of India and the Gurukul Research Institute could help. A joint venture would help avoid unnecessary duplication.

There are many factors which make such systematic publications imperative. Literacy in India is growing year after year. The number of colleges and universities is on the increase. Hindus and Muslims publish many books about their religion. Some of them are apologetic in nature. Some directly or indirectly attack Christianity. The Christians should be made aware of the Christian stand. Even Christian scholars and theologians publish books which confuse the laymen and the pastor. Soon after the Second Vatican Council a conference on Christian Revelation and Non-Christian Religions was held in Bombay. It was attended mostly by Roman Catholic theologians. The papers read there were published as The Christian Revelation and Non-Christian Religions in 1967. Scholars like Raymond Panikkar and Hans Kung have stated in their theology that non-Christians can be saved in their own religion. That idea is being propagated by others including

Protestant theologians. Unique and Universal is another book published by the Roman Catholic Center for the Study of World Religions at the Dharmaram College in Bangalore in 1972. In that book again universal salvation to all religions is advocated. These ideas reach the pastors and the laymen. Pulpits are influenced by these ideas. Even Edward G. Parrinder, the professor at Oxford University, in his book Avatar and Incarnation, advocates universalism. In these circumstances it is highly imperative that the biblical stand be made clear. The clear doctrines of the Lutheran Confessions help a good deal in clarifying issues in this context. Hence again the importance of cherishing and developing the Lutheran heritage. Ministers and laymen should be equipped to evaluate the various doctrinal positions held by the different schools and theologians.

Also many books are needed which will equip and inspire ministers and laymen to witness with conviction and concern. They should know the points of contact, the Christian message, and the method of communication.

Thus the Lutheran Churches in India should cherish and portray the rich Lutheran heritage and develop it through research. The Lutheran Church should learn from other churches where she is weak and incorporate points of strength in fellowship, social service, and other areas, and finally move forward in outreach. Evangelism and outreach are the big needs of the hour. There is an opening that has never been before. There is a wonderful opportunity.

All the doctrines treated in this thesis, if rightly understood and applied, will greatly help evangelism. In the chapter on the Law and the Gospel, it is evident that there is salvation only in the

Gospel and not in the Law. The non-Christians have only the Law and not the Gospel. The chapter on justification by faith shows that salvation is by faith in Christ and not by works as the non-Christian religions teach. In the doctrine of the two kingdoms we found that humanization and revolution fall in the realm of the state and not in the domain of the church. The doctrine of the Word of God and the principles of interpretation equip the minister and the laymen with the tools for witnessing.

The greatest age of church growth in India is just ahead of us. The time is opportune. The church has the resources. Obstacles to growth are not without but within the church. It is there the need for the right stand on the Scripture and the doctrines is needed. The church must be sure of her message and mission. If she is confused about them, no matter what all facility and material equipment she may have or employ, there will be no result. The weapon of the church is the Spirit of God operating through the Word. The Word must be interpreted and understood in the right way. There comes the contribution of Lutheran theology. In India Lutheran theology has a great role to play in edifying the church and equipping her to face the many challenges and problems within and without.

The first Lutheran mission to India dies because of rationalism and indifference to the Word of God. The zeal for mission waned, and great opportunities were missed. Those very forces are at work today in India. Let us be confident that God, the Lord of the church and the Lord of the harvest will raise men of vision, conviction, and courage with wisdom from above to lead the church to be true to her call and to her commission.

When Jesus saw the crowds, He had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. Matt. 9:36-37.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against principalities, against powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with equipment of the gospel of peace; besides all these, taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Eph. 6:10-17.

A Strategic Plan for the India Evangelical Lutheran Church²

It is for each of the nine Lutheran Church bodies to prepare strategic plans of consolidation and expansion. The Gurukul Institute in Madras could be the national center which could coordinate the different plans. But growth is always at the level of the local congregation. So the emphasis should be more on local congregations than at the center or plans at the national level.

A Plan for the India Evangelical Lutheran Church 1975-1985

The I. E. L. C. has a total membership of 40,000 souls, 330 congregations and 130 pastors. The church has been static during the

²Hereafter referred to as I. E. L. C.

last 15 years. It was a period of indecision and uncertainty. The church was in suspense regarding its future. Some were eager for union with C. S. I. Others were eager for joint theological training, suggesting that the Concordia Seminary be reduced to a lay-training institute and the Seminary be merged with the C. S. I. seminaries. Periods of indecision and suspense are not conducive to growth. In addition to these the church tried writing a new constitution. The idea was to abolish the three district synods and to make the I. E. L. C. a union of congregations. Though there has been coercion behind this plan, the I. C. L. C. stood her ground and rejected the idea of abolishing the districts. Anyway it took three years finally to pass the new constitution. It had too many committees and boards, something heavy for the I. E. L. C., a small church. An effort was made to put the constitution to work for three years. Then the Synod convention threw it overboard. Thus six years were wasted. Prior to that much money and time was spent in preparing a Planning Commission report on the basis of which the new constitution was framed. That makes nine years. After the constitution was thrown overboard, it took another year to write another new constitution. Thus a total of ten years were wasted, the time that should have been used for planting churches and consolidating the existing churches. Today many churches are dying. The Nilamel district and Alleppoy districts are dying.

It is high time the I. E. L. C. has a bold realistic and ambitious plan of consolidation and expansion. The only consistent policy the mission board practised was the five percent cut each year in subsidy. Self-support became the slogan. That became an idol. I do not say that self-support is not important. But self-support is not a goal

but a by-product. If the churches are growing, if they have an active program of Bible study, youth program, women's activities, and mission outreach, the church coffers will also be filled. But the stewardship program presented from above made self-support the goal and neglected emphasizing the factors which go to make the church self-supporting.

Bearing these factors in mind I suggest a strategic plan. The church exists for the mission of outreach. Winning of souls and planting of churches are the prime goals of the church. As that is done according to the command of the Lord, other needs will be met. The plan will be to plant a thousand congregations of one hundred members each in ten years. It is an ambitious plan. Still worth trying with faith, hope, and perseverance.

How? one might ask. We will mobilize the laity. We will enlist a thousand laymen, teachers, and farmers. We will give them training in church planting at the Institute of Research, Evangelism and self-help, at Concordia Seminary, Nagercoil. Each layman will visit one village, or group of people continuously for three years. He will organize Bible classes and eventually house-churches. In ten years there will be a church of a hundred members.

The Institute of Evangelism and Research will provide the necessary literature, both in Christian teaching and in apologetics to enable the laymen to understand the deeprooted beliefs of the villagers and to establish points of contact. The apologetic literature will emerge as a result of the confrontation with the living religions, practices, and rituals of the living people.

The laymen will be trained to start Christian cooperatives. Where government projects for economic uplift failed, the church will

succeed with Christian cooperatives. Evangelism, research, and self-help projects should go hand in hand. Through poultry, duck, rabbit, bee-hives, vegetable gardens, and small industries each member will be helped to make an income of a hundred rupees a month. There will be a hundred members in each cooperative. So the total income will be 10,000 rupees. If they give one-tenth of that income to the church they will be able to support one pastor and four voluntary teachers who in turn will found new churches.

With this goal in mind the whole church should be mobilised and all the institutions like schools and hospitals should be reoriented to this program.

New churches will be established. The name of God will be glorified. Millions will enjoy the true freedom in Christ. Churches will become self-supporting. They will send out missionaries to other countries. The churches will be solidified. There will be a joy in seeing the power of the Gospel and the joy in sharing the good news of the redemption in Christ.

The Lutheran churches in India have a great role to play in India for the edification of other churches who are caught in uncertainty and confusion. To play her part well, according to the will of God, the Lutheran Church must be aware of her heritage. She should develop that to the Indian situation and apply it with diligence for God's glory and the growth of the church.

It is my trust and hope that the ministers and laymen of the Lutheran churches in India will act when the time is ripe and not let the opportunities slip by because of their indifference and callousness.

Challenges are great and the time is opportune. May the Lord of the church guide the ministers of the church at this crucial time to fight the good fight with vision and faith and faithfulness.

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