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The Evangelical Lutheran Church the True Visible Church on Earth.

One of the two essays read at the convention of the Missouri Synod, held in Cleveland, O., June, 1935.

I.

When Dr. Walther, at the so-called General Meeting of our Synod, held in St. Louis in 1866, began the discussion of his essay on the topic "The Evangelical Lutheran Church the True Visible Church of God on Earth," it was realized by the delegates that a highly important subject engaged their attention; and while on account of lack of time only a part of the essay could be considered, it was resolved to print it in its entirety in order that at the District conventions its remaining sections might be studied and discussed. In this way the publication of this work was brought about, one of the famous classic treatises of Dr. Walther, which, together with his two books, *The Church and the Ministry* and *The Proper State of an Evangelical Lutheran Congregation*, constitutes a priceless heritage of which every Lutheran theologian should avail himself. It is significant that after a lapse of almost seventy years the same topic has been chosen by our venerable President to be one of the subjects on which we shall bestow some special meditation these days. Tremendous changes have occurred, several generations have come and gone, the world has advanced on a number of fronts, the North Pole has been reached and the stratosphere invaded, gigantic wars have rocked the foundations of the civilized peoples, men have become weaker and wiser in various ways, prosperity has turned its periodic somersaults with cynical unconcern, in the schools theories have been propounded, believed, defended, declared enthroned once for all among the grand truths of the ages, and then unceremoniously, ungently put on the scrap-heap of outworn notions; but here is the Missouri Synod of the Lutheran Church in this year of grace 1935 considering, uttering, and confessing the same challenging declaration which the fathers

voiced a year after Appomattox. That is certainly a striking phenomenon in this unstable, restless, constantly shifting modern world, a special mark—let us say it with genuine gratitude—of divine mercy and goodness.

With interest one reads in the synodical report of 1866 how Dr. Walther introduced his essay. In a free translation his words may be given thus: "In the past, Synod has been compelled to treat chiefly the doctrine of the invisible Church, the communion of saints, which is the one holy Christian universal Church, and the error had to be combated that the holy Christian Church is identical with the Lutheran Church. On account of this warfare the Missouri Synod has been suspected in many quarters of having a low opinion of the true visible Church, the Lutheran, and of having unionistic tendencies, regarding connection with the Lutheran Church as a matter of indifference. The struggle for the right definition of the invisible Church, by the grace of God, has been crowned with victory; for nobody still has the audacity to equate the holy Christian Church with the Lutheran Church. This being the case, Synod should not hesitate now to attack the other wrong conception, to wit, that we do not care in which Church a person holds membership, that in our eyes all denominations have equal rights and value; and it is highly desirable that we set forth on the basis of the Scriptures and our Confessions that the Lutheran Church is the true visible Church of God here on earth in order to assure ourselves again of the correctness of this claim and to awake in our hearts thoughts of rejoicing over our blessed status."

How instructive a paragraph this is, my brethren! Walther and his coworkers as well as all faithful teachers and confessors before their time had to suffer from the attacks of short-sighted, turbulent, bickering, bellicose extremists, who, seeing only one half of the truth, trained the guns of their wrathful criticism on those who would not share their one-sided position. Because our fathers valiantly contended for the principle that there are children of God in the other Christian denominations, they were called half-hearted, disloyal Lutherans; and again, because they insisted that the Lutheran Church is the true visible Church of God on earth, they, as history amply attests, were given such unlovely epithets as "narrow-minded," "bigoted," and "pharisaic." Is not this a striking confirmation that they were actually pursuing the right course, which, as we know, lies between the extremes and often resembles a rocky path on a narrow ridge between two ravines, a path to be walked with fear and trembling, while down below, on either side, traveling is easy and accordingly, instead of fear and trembling, one observes a good deal of what the British call "cockishness," braggadocio and self-assertiveness?

To be sure, the convention in 1866 was not the first occasion upon which our fathers voiced such a grand conviction about the character of the Lutheran Church. This conviction was a holy fire which had burned in the hearts of Walther, Wyneken, Sihler, and their prominent collaborators when they emigrated to this country several decades earlier, and unhesitatingly, earnestly, and fervently they had spoken of it whenever an opportunity had presented itself. And when Dr. Walther founded the paper *Der Lutheraner*, this high claim about the Lutheran Church was one of its ever-recurring shibboleths. Note the four aims which the *Lutheraner*, according to the first number, appearing September 7, 1844, had fixed for itself: first, to acquaint people with the doctrine, the treasures, and the history of the Lutheran Church; secondly, to prove that this Church is not one of the Christian sects, that it is not a new, but the old Apostolic Church; thirdly, to show how a person as a genuine Lutheran may believe rightly, live piously, suffer patiently, and die happily; fourthly, to combat errorists, especially such as falsely bear the Lutheran name.

What precisely did our fathers mean when they spoke of the Lutheran Church as the true visible Church of God on earth? Certainly not that it is the only saving Church outside of which there is no help for poor sinners. The introductory remarks of Dr. Walther which I quoted a few minutes ago are proof that no such extravagant claim was intended. And apart from Scriptural considerations, how could a consistent Lutheran declare our Church to be the only saving Church when Dr. Luther himself repeatedly and emphatically stated that in the Middle Ages, when the Gospel was like a light put under a bushel, people were living who were true children of God in spite of their outward connection with the Church of the Pope? That there are true believers in the other Christian denominations in which the Word is preached and the Sacraments are administered the fathers cheerfully and gratefully acknowledged. Neither did they wish to say that the Lutheran Church is an infallible Church, whose resolutions and decrees are inspired and hence must be obeyed by Christians. How could they have championed such a view and still have called themselves loyal followers of Luther, who with tremendous force, in incontrovertible arguments, had set forth the fallibility of church councils? Nor did they intend to maintain that Lutherans, considered individually, are better Christians than the believers in other denominations. Whatever criticism may be leveled at them, it will have to be granted by all who know their writings that they cannot justly be accused of having been blind toward their own weaknesses, frailties, and shortcomings and those of their fellow church-members, that, on the contrary, they manifested a healthy tendency of self-criticism, which operated to keep them from developing a superiority complex in the field of morality.

What they did mean to assert is tersely stated by Walther in the treatise to which I have referred repeatedly: "A true visible Church is that one only in which the Word of God is taught in its purity and the Sacraments are administered according to the Gospel." And then, in a later paragraph, he states: "If the Evangelical Lutheran Church possesses the characteristics of the preaching of the pure Word of God and of the administration of the Sacraments according to the Gospel, it is the true visible Church of God on earth." There follows then a thorough investigation, at the end of which Walther declares: "Hence the Evangelical Lutheran Church possesses all essential characteristics of the true visible Church of God on earth as they are found in no other communion known to us, and hence it does not need a reformation in doctrine." We see there are two criteria the fathers applied, the preaching of the unadulterated Word and the Scriptural administration of the Sacraments, criteria that are remarkable in their simplicity, sane in their requirements, objective over against all mystical, subjective moonshine, comprehensive in their demands, and utterly evangelical in being limited to what is essential.

The teachings of the Lutheran Church are Scriptural, and its administration of the Sacraments conforms to the divine institution. "Any organization can say that," we are told; "in fact, all churches do say it. Look at the long array of Christian denominations, which all profess loyal adherence to Bible-teachings; and it will be difficult to find any that admits having introduced a defection from Scripture in its observance of the Sacraments. The claim which you make arises from so many quarters that it fails to be impressive. What is needed is proofs and not mere assertions." As we are here repeating the great declaration of the fathers, adopting it as our own, we have to admit that whoever asks to have it substantiated is absolutely within his rights. Shall we now set about to furnish the proof? There is not a member of this convention, I am persuaded, who doubts that it can be done. Walther in his book has pointed the way by dwelling at length on the attitude of the Lutheran Church toward the Scriptures and the Sacraments. In the short time at our disposal, however, it would hardly be advisable to attempt this elaborate, comprehensive task and marshal evidence proving in a careful, painstaking demonstration that the teachings of the Lutheran Church are all truly Biblical. Let us rather content ourselves here with reminding one another that to the inquirer or to one who doubts the correctness of the claim of our Church we can hardly make a better reply than to invite him, Come and see; judge for yourself. Let him examine the confessional writings of the Lutheran Church, especially Luther's Small Catechism and the Augsburg Confession; let him compare what they say with the divine norm of the Scrip-

tures, and we are convinced, if the examination is made with an unprejudiced, unbiased mind, the outcome will be favorable to the cause of our beloved Church.

Instead of acting now as the guide of any such inquirer, let us rather ask ourselves in what frame of heart and mind, with what feelings and sentiments, intentions and aspirations, we are to voice the old claim that the Lutheran Church is the Church of the unadulterated Word and Sacraments. It seems to me that, as we are placing ourselves on the platform of Walther and his coworkers, we must be aware that thereby we are first voicing a firm doctrinal conviction, secondly expressing a deep appreciation, and thirdly acknowledging a solemn responsibility.

II.

While it may be that the full import of the claim we are considering is hidden even from many members of the Lutheran Church, no one who is making it intelligently can be ignorant of what I before in passing have called its challenging character. To give our Church such a high title is sounding a note which is seldom heard in these days. The temper of the times in doctrinal matters is in favor of soft-pedaling, of piano and pianissimo, — remember, please, I am not now speaking of actual music, — of the sonorous and sensuous harmonies of Italian operas, of sweet lullabies and amorous ditties set to sentimental airs. Thinking of the realm of doctrine once more and using musical terms figuratively, can you imagine the present age producing such chorals vibrating with strength and virility as *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott* and *Aus tiefer Not schrei' ich zu dir* or a soul-stirring Bach fugue? Leaving metaphors aside, what I mean is this. There is nowadays very seldom to be observed an insistence on pure Scriptural doctrine. Having begun their history with the assertion that their distinctive tenets are all taken from the Bible and are important, the Reformed church-bodies, generally speaking, now can be observed to exhibit much indifference toward their official creed. When the matter of Christian teaching is touched on in religious conventions and assemblies, there is, as a rule, little or no debate; the most discordant views may be voiced by the various speakers, and that is not permitted to disturb the serenity of the atmosphere. The so-called Conservatives, professing belief in the Bible, and the ill-named Progressives, rejecting large portions of the Scriptures, decide to forget their differences and to march ahead arm in arm as though the gulf dividing them were nothing but an imaginary line drawn on some inconsequential chart by a dyspeptic geographer. The few men whose blood boils at seeing what they consider divine truth treated with such contempt are hushed or voted into silence, and their querulous strains are not permitted to interfere

with the joys and transports of the love-feast which, either literally or figuratively, is enacted.

By declaring in a world which is almost daily growing more unionistic and indifferent that the Lutheran Church is the Church of the pure Word and the unadulterated Sacraments, we serve notice that we cannot conscientiously join in the chorus whose refrain is "Peace," "Peace," when in reality there is no peace; that we have doctrinal convictions, which we cannot treat lightly.

Of the many considerations which are clamoring for a hearing, chief among them the Scripture injunction on the attitude of Christians toward errorists, we can touch on merely one or two. According to our firm conviction the teachings of the Lutheran Church are not man-made, traditional precepts, pious speculations, or the ultimate result of a long evolutionary process, but eternal truths, which God in His great mercy has Himself revealed to the world in the Holy Scriptures. How could we choose a course which, to say the least, would make it doubtful whether our adherence to these teachings is sincere and whether we are really minded earnestly to contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints? The practise of ignoring doctrinal differences which is prevalent in the Protestant world to-day may be quite fitting and logical in the case of people who are not certain that their doctrinal position rests on divine revelation. It cannot consistently be adopted where the live, genuine conviction reigns that the teachings constituting the creed of the Church are strictly Biblical. While we most earnestly desire and pray for peace and harmony with all who bear the name of Christ, and while we are willing to make great sacrifices to attain these pleasant relations, there is one price which we cannot pay for them—the sacrifice of the divinely given truth. "We desire," says Luther, "to retain pure and unshaken all articles of the Christian doctrine, whether they are great or small (although to us not any one of them is small or insignificant), and we will not yield one tittle of them. Such a course is necessary; for Christian doctrine is the only light we have, which by its shining and guiding points out to us the way to heaven. If we suffer it to be weakened and maimed in one point, it will surely soon lose all its force. . . . For one letter, yes, one dot of the Scriptures is of greater importance than heaven and earth." (Comments on Gal. 5, 9—12 in the *Commentary on Galatians* of 1535.) And our great God Himself declares: "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at My Word," Is. 66, 2.

III.

That the designation which we give to our Church, calling it the Church of the unadulterated Word and Sacraments, expresses a firm conviction on our part, provided of course that we are not merely

repeating these words mechanically, we considered in the preceding chapter. The spirit of the age is skeptical, reflecting somewhat the doubting attitude of the criminal who on the scaffold is said to have prayed, "O God, if there be a God, save my soul, if I have a soul." Thank God that, standing on our Lutheran Confessions, we can face the great issues of life and death with a strong conviction as to the whence and whither, God and man, sin and grace, the present and the future. But this firm conviction should be accompanied by deep appreciation of what we possess as members of our Church. It must be evident to every one, upon revolving the matter in his mind a minute or two, that intellectual conviction and sincere appreciation with respect to a certain truth do not always live and walk together. The outstanding example is that pointed to by James, saying, "The devils also believe and tremble." Yes, the devils have an unshakable conviction touching the great truth of the existence of one God, and yet the only reaction which is recorded of them is fright and fear.

Alas! the old adage that "familiarity breeds contempt" is confirmed in the attitude of many Lutherans toward their Church. Having been its members from the days of infancy, constantly receiving its various ministrations, they have gradually come to be indifferent toward its divinely given possessions and its unfading beauty, and a feeling of satiety is manifesting itself in what they say and do with reference to the Lutheran Church. They are like children that have eaten at mother's good table for many a year and now long to have the privilege of traveling salesmen and eat in hotels, where there is a menu card with French names and where there are various courses with many bowls and plates and waiters with shining buttons and a grand opportunity of paying a tip. We have in our communion successors of the Israelites in the wilderness who grew weary of eating the manna which God so mercifully bestowed day after day from heaven and who complained, "Our soul loatheth this light bread." There is no doubt that every one of us has moments of weakness when the sentiment of appreciation toward what our Church does and offers droops and the fleshpots of Egypt, which here stand for everything foreign, look enticing. The Word and the Sacraments — perhaps we at times wish that our Church might boast other treasures. Who of us has not caught himself thinking thoughts like these: If we only had more money and could carry out our missionary and other projects without the constant groaning and begging and worrying that now attend every move we make! If only our Church numbered among its members more prominent, influential politicians, statesmen, bankers, railroad presidents, and other representatives of the aristocracy of power! So run the wishes. The danger is that the splendid, genuine diamonds which we hold in our hand are not valued as they should be and that, instead, we go

bargain-hunting for far inferior ornaments in renowned markets or probably even in Vanity Fair. That we may here remind ourselves what riches we as Lutherans possess because our Church preaches the pure Word is the purpose of my remarks this morning.

Consider what it means to have this possession. The pure Word and the unadulterated Sacraments constitute, as it were, a crown of many jewels, chief of which is the teaching pertaining to Christ, the Son of God, as the only Redeemer. How can any one who is somewhat acquainted with the Scriptures and who has read there, *e. g.*, the words of Jesus: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me," and the words of St. Paul: "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," be inclined to deny that the message of Christ is the center of the sacred Volume, about which all other teachings revolve as the planets around the sun? Having the Word of God in its purity, we have this teaching, too, in its original splendor and at the very place where God Himself has put it, at the heart of all revealed truth. Would you exchange possession of this teaching for all the wealth, prestige, cathedrals, universities, and galaxies of great names and dignitaries with which our imagination in its most daring mood can endow a church-body? At the side of this doctrine stands the one which has very fittingly been called the article with which the Church stands and with which it falls, that of justification by grace, through faith. You will readily and gladly recall how this teaching, setting forth that the forgiveness of sins obtained by Christ for us unworthy sinners is offered us freely and that to have it we merely have to appropriate it by the hand of faith,—I say, you will readily recall how this teaching pervades the whole sacred Volume as a *leitmotif* pervades, governs, and gives character and unity to an artistic musical composition. And whoever knows the Lutheran Church is aware of the dominant position which this doctrine occupies in our teaching. For how much will you sell it? For a membership of fifty million or two hundred million? For the so-called See of St. Peter and the College of Cardinals and all the power that these terms represent? Will you not rather fall down before the throne of God and with outstretched arms plead most earnestly, O Father in heaven, strip our beloved Lutheran Church of all her outward possessions, if it so please Thee, but pray, do not, O do not, take from it this jewel, the doctrine of justification by grace through faith!?

But you do not mean to say, some one inquires rather heatedly, interrupting us as we are discoursing on the glories of the Lutheran Church,—you do not mean to say that the Lutheran Church is the only one which preaches Christ and which extols justification by grace through faith! What monstrous conceit that would be! Think of your own hymn-book. Do not many of the beautiful hymns which

you sing Sunday after Sunday and in which the crown of Deity and Redeemership is with reverence and adoration put on the brow of Christ, come from people who were not Lutherans? Friend, we reply, how happy we are to acknowledge that what you are contending for is absolutely right. If we took a different position, we should be contradicting ourselves. What we before voiced as our firm belief, that there are children of God in all Christian denominations, presupposes that the message of Christ as Son of God and only Savior resounds in their midst; for without that teaching faith cannot arise and exist. Even if the doctrine of some of the Christian churches opposing us is extremely far removed from apostolic purity, the Bible is still read and studied in their midst, and the official creed does not reject the salvation obtained for us by Christ. And still, though we make this far-reaching declaration with great readiness and joy of heart, though we, to say it once more, willingly admit that possession of the heart of the Gospel is not necessarily dependent on having all the teachings of the divine Word in uncorrupted form, we maintain that to have and to teach the Word of God in its unadulterated state and to possess the Sacraments just as instituted must ever remain our serious concern. And as we investigate this matter a little, our appreciation of these treasures, I trust, will be somewhat heightened and become more fervent.

For one thing, a diligent Bible-reader need hardly be reminded that the Scriptures nowhere tell us to give earnest attention merely to that part of divine revelation which pertains directly to the person and work of Christ and to justification and to treat other parts with such indifference as we find to our liking. On the contrary, in the last chapter of Matthew, alongside of the command to baptize all nations in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, our exalted Lord puts the words "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." It is a weighty statement, binding two things on the conscience of the believers, the one by implication, the other directly: the teaching of all things that He has taught and the insistence on the keeping and observing of all these tenets. The Liberalist will squirm in the jacket into which, so to speak, this order of our Lord places him, depriving him, as he complains, of freedom of action, of indulging in those religious acrobatic stunts in which his intellect and fancy delight. But if he wishes to wear the Master's livery, we have to insist that he do not cast this garment aside.

For another thing, the word and the example of the apostles definitely show that the position which declares itself satisfied with acceptance of the great essentials of faith and will not press for submission to everything that is revealed as divine truth is simply fallacious. When the Judaizers were disturbing the Church at Antioch

and other places, saying that circumcision had to be practised, the apostles did not declare that, since these people were acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah, as Redeemer, their activities should not be opposed. On the contrary, in the famous decree of freedom from the Ceremonial Law they took a firm stand against such propaganda, thereby declaring unmistakably that the avowal of faith in Jesus Christ does not give a person a charter to hold and teach in other respects what he pleases. Quite *apropos* are some remarks of Dr. Krauth (*Conservative Reformation*, p. 195): "A human body may not only live, but be healthy, in which one lobe of the lungs is gone; another may be sickly and die in which the lungs are perfect. Nevertheless the complete lungs are an essential part of a perfect human body. We still truly call a man a man though he may have lost arms and legs; we still call a hand a hand though it may have lost a finger or be distorted. While, therefore, we freely call systems and men Christian though they lack a sound sacramental doctrine, we none the less consider that doctrine essential to a complete Christian system and to the perfect faith of a Christian man. The man who has lost an arm we love none the less. If he has lost it by carelessness, we pity his misfortune, yet we do not hold him free from censure; but when he insists that to have two arms is a blemish and proposes to cut off one of ours, then we resist him."

And our own Dr. Walther, in the sermon which he preached on 1 Tim. 4, 16, when the Synodical Conference was founded in 1872, said (*Brosamen*, p. 572 f.): "Many people declare, Yes, we admit that adherence to the great general Christian truths on which the salvation of our souls depends is indispensable. But should there not be freedom with respect to the remaining teachings? . . . Those who argue thus really do not know what they say and do. The holy apostle does not say in our text, Take heed unto the chief doctrines, but, Take heed unto *the* doctrine, that is, unto that which is taught in God's Word. And he continues: 'For in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.' God, truly, has revealed not merely this or that teaching, but His whole Word, for the salvation of men. David says: 'Thy testimonies are very sure,' Ps. 93, 5, not merely one or the other part of them. Hence the great Apostle of the Gentiles also declares: 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.' And in another passage he states that he is pure from the blood of all men because he has not shunned to declare unto them *all* the counsel of God, Acts 20, 26 f. And finally Christ Himself makes the statement: 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by *every* word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' Note, then, that in every word of God life, temporal and

eternal life, is enclosed as in a germ. The Word of God is an immeasurably rich storehouse of the most varied and attractive foods for people that are sojourning here without God and without hope. The one, when God's hour has come, is attracted by this, the other by that precious morsel. And who are we that we should despise the riches of God's grace and neglect a single one of His life-giving words?" While others may make light of the pure Word and Sacraments, designating them as antiquated furniture which our age ought to get rid of, let us joyfully and with thanksgiving take the same position as our fathers concerning these divine treasures, saying with the psalmist, Ps. 19, 7—11: "The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is Thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward."

IV.

The remaining one of the major thoughts which we are deriving from our theme "The Lutheran Church Is the Church of the Pure Word and Sacraments" is simply the realization that in voicing such a claim about the visible organization to which we belong, we distinctly, whether we are always aware of it or not, acknowledge a heavy, a sacred responsibility. The thought has been expressed by our divine Lord in that searching word: "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more," Luke 12, 48, alongside of which we may place the blow which He strikes at self-satisfied, vain, puffed-up complacency: "Behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last," Luke 13, 30.

The possession of extraordinary treasures is one thing, to use them properly is another. Think of the rich man in the parable whose field had brought forth plentifully, filling his granaries to overflowing, who now sees nothing but visions of selfish enjoyment, saying to his soul: "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." That this picture, though drawn by the Savior more than nineteen hundred years ago, has numerous living counterparts to-day, and not only among those who boast stocks and bonds and extensive farmlands and meadows and warehouses, but even in quarters where religious values are pointed to as the chief ornaments, hardly any one of us will question. To what extent we have individually and collectively become guilty of manifesting a tendency to glory in our spiritual possessions without

balancing such jubilations with earnest reflection on the obligations which this ownership imposes, it would be wholesome and profitable for every one of us to inquire before the throne of God.

When we stress that we who have the Word and the Sacraments unimpaired should be filled with holy zeal to share these riches with others, we are voicing an axiom, a principle, written large on the tablets of every man's heart, the justice of which is universally acknowledged, — that he who has must be willing to assist those that have not. Just as the man who would be so fortunate as to discover an absolutely certain cure for cancer or an unfailing formula how to end and how to avoid depressions or an effective method of sand-storm and flood prevention would be morally bound to make known his discovery to his fellow-citizens instead of concealing it in some pocket of selfishness and greed, so we cannot escape the verdict of the Moral Law demanding that we communicate to our fellow human beings the gifts of God which we extol as our choicest possessions. Consider with what force our own teachings give emphasis to this truth. Since, as we proclaim, it is by the means of grace that the Holy Spirit performs His blessed work, and since we have no guarantee or assurance that He will renew human hearts and make them temples of the Holy Trinity without these means, how, then, possessing these life-giving fountains in their crystalline purity, can we be so hard-hearted as to refuse dispensing these regenerating waters to those who are perishing for want of them? And at the side of and above these considerations there are ranged many clear, powerful testimonies of Holy Writ constituting penetrating clarion calls to all that have ears to hear. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, Him will I also confess before My Father which is in heaven. And whosoever shall deny Me before men, Him will I deny also before My Father which is in heaven." And what does the great parable of Jesus regarding the talents which a certain master entrusted to his servants teach but this very thing, that the spiritual riches of which Jesus has made His disciples stewards must be put to work, so the kingdom may grow? May a holy fire sweep through the length and breadth of our Synod, reviving the missionary spirit where it has died and strengthening it where it is weak, so that worldly indifference and selfish lethargy be cast aside and we become ever more faithful in administering our sacred trust!

After having furnished a brilliant description of outstanding characteristics of the Lutheran Church, Dr. Krauth says (*Conservative Reformation*, p. 159): "That such a Church has a mission of extraordinary importance in this land in which exist such dangerous

tendencies to sectarianism and radicalism and whose greatest need is the cultivation of historical feeling, under the restraint of a wholesome conservatism, requires no argument. The Lutheran Church daily becomes better known through the translations of her literature, though most of them are very bad ones [please remember Dr. Krauth wrote this more than sixty years ago]; but her work of good cannot be consummated till she renders her genius and life themselves into the idiom of the new nationality into which she is here passing. Protestant to the very heart, yet thoroughly historical, happy in her liberty of adaptation in things indifferent, while she is fast anchored in the great doctrine of justification by faith and the doctrines which cluster around it, popular in her principles of church government, which, without running into independency, accord such large powers to the congregation, principles free from the harshness of some systems, the hierarchical, aristocratic, autocratic tendencies of others, the fanaticism and looseness of others, possessing liturgical life without liturgical bondage, great in the history in which all mankind are interested, her children believe that she bears special treasures of good to bless the land of her adoption." This is a remarkable eulogy coming from one of the famous sons of the Lutheran Church in America and embodying in it very properly the recognition of the task which is ours in this land of the free by virtue of our grand spiritual heritage.

And just like this honored spokesman of Lutheranism who belonged to another synod, so our fathers, in the clearest terms, acknowledged that they perceived the challenge contained in their high estimate of the Lutheran Church and declared themselves willing with God's help to meet it. After Dr. Walther, in one of the masterly works referred to by me at the beginning, has sketched the functions of a Lutheran congregation pertaining to its own members, he in the two final sections discusses its duties toward its brethren outside of its own limits and toward the world at large, pointing out that the upbuilding of the Church, the spreading of the Holy Scriptures, and the establishing of missions must be a matter of deep, vital concern to it. (*Die rechte Gestalt*, §§ 52—66.) It is an important testimony, disproving effectually, as do many other expressions of our fathers, the charge that insistence on loyalty to the Confessions of the Church is bound to destroy the missionary spirit.

The pure Word and Sacraments,—how the world about us is famishing for lack of them, with Christ in the center, and of the hope and joy and comfort and strength which He dispenses! It is true that the sufferers for the greater part do not know what is ailing them spiritually. While there is much pessimism abroad, it is not of the most intelligent kind when surveyed from the Biblical standpoint. Some may blame the Constitution of the United States for

their and the country's ills because it does not avow belief in the existence and guidance of God. Others may hold that the lamentable religious woes of our generation are due to the Church's failure definitely to pronounce how many hours a week must be set aside for labor and how many for pleasure and recreation. To judge by the manifestoes of numerous crusaders who are thrusting their views on the public, the one potent cause of moral, social, and spiritual degeneracy is militarism with its many attendant evils. But we must remember that the diagnosis of the patient himself often is faulty and that a conscientious physician will not be influenced by the insistence with which the sick man demands that certain nostrums be administered to him, but by what his own superior knowledge and experience prescribe.

But, we are told, preaching which has as its stepping-stone and foundation the pure Word and Sacraments will never have a large appeal in America. What the public here wants is something born of emotionalism, giving it a religious thrill, a message which directly affects the feelings and makes people either laugh or cry. The objective presentation of doctrine, be it ever so orthodox, is not to its relish. Others will tell us that what the American nation is hungry for and will welcome without a moment's hesitation is religious leadership which will take the Church into battle against kidnaping, extortions, harmful Congressional filibusters, the fomenting of the war spirit, the munitions traffic, the manufacture of poison gas, the strife between capital and labor, the employment of children in factories, the exploitation of men and women in sweat-shops, and the like. "Furnish us such leadership, and we are with you." What shall we say? We do not wish to speak lightly of the emotions, which, we readily admit, play an important part in a person's life; but of what use are pleasant religious experiences and feelings if they lack a real foundation and, after they have lifted the soul into ecstasy, leave it as lonely and ravaged and exhausted as the countryside over which a hurricane has passed, causing much excitement while it lasts, but departing quickly and bequeathing nothing but destruction?

And as for the warfare against injustice and oppression in our social order, whatever the Scripture proclaims we, standing on the Word and the Sacraments, shall in all earnestness place before ourselves and our congregations. That has to be done, and, God helping us, we shall not shirk it. The Law has to be preached. But what a sad mistake we should make if we should deem ourselves as Lutherans competent to settle knotty questions of statesmanship and sociology, questions upon which the Word of God has not pronounced either directly or indirectly, and if we should make our churches and schools lecture-halls in which to hand out dubious and apocryphal views on the rehabilitation of the NRA, the gold or silver standard,

the proper distribution of power generated at the Norris Dam, and similar debated and debatable projects! What a tragedy if we, entrusted with the eternal Gospel of Jesus Christ, which saves the soul for this life and for that which is to come and makes people new creatures, serving God and their neighbor in gratitude and joy,— what tragedy, I say, if we should forego the proclamation of this Gospel and change our Church into a club for social experimentation!

The unadulterated means of grace,— we need not think that to bring them to our fellow-men in an appealing, successful way every one of us has to employ unusual, spectacular, startling methods. The Lutheran Church is often called a doctrinal Church. If the term is to describe us correctly, it must be interpreted as stating not only that as a church-body we insist on acceptance of certain doctrines, but that we *teach* doctrine. If you think of the four centuries of our history as a particular communion and visualize the work done by Lutherans in that span of time, doctrinal instruction in church and school and, thank God, in many homes stands out very prominently. It is here where the emphasis has to lie in the future also if we are to try earnestly to measure up to the sacred obligations resting upon us. The sermons of our pastors must continue to be doctrinal sermons in the best sense of the word, spreading out before the congregation-members as a rich repast the divine truths given us in the Word. The children of the Church have to be carefully indoctrinated. That marvelous instrument of religious instruction which has played such an important rôle in our past history, the Christian day-school, must be lovingly fostered, the teachers encouraged and assisted, and the whole institution placed on as high a plane as possible. The instruction of classes of catechumens must in the future as well as in the past be taken very seriously, so that those who are being taught will receive more than a mere coat of varnish consisting in the name Lutheran. In the Sunday-schools, with careful planning and supervision, indoctrination must ever be the chief goal. What a sad situation does not obtain in a congregation if the sermons are nothing but a series of paragraphs exhorting and admonishing the hearers to support this or that movement, if in the Sunday-school the pupils do not advance far beyond the First Commandment and "Now I lay me down to sleep," and if in the catechetical classes instruction is mainly centered on hints what to wear on the day of confirmation and with what decorum to approach the Lord's Table! I hasten to add, lest anybody think that I am pointing at him, that I am not speaking of any congregation in our Synod. What I have been presenting just now is a caricature; but I hope that it will remind all of us of our sacred duty with respect to thorough indoctrination of the souls entrusted to us. And do we not all see that every congregation, even the smallest, can have a worthy share in this great work if it ap-

proaches the task of breaking the Bread of Life to its members with true earnestness and devotion, that it can do it without the publicity which its larger sisters enjoy, that it does not require the facilities of spacious, festooned auditoriums and loud speakers for this purpose! Let us indeed thank God for the mighty means of spreading the Word which He has placed at our disposal in these latter days, the printing-press, the means of rapid travel carrying missionaries to their fields, the radio sending its message to every hearth in the country. And whatever we can do to make these marvelous instruments effective servants of the Word of God, heralds of the tidings of redemption, let us by all means do. But while not neglecting these grand avenues of proclaiming the divine truths, let us here at this convention encourage one another lest we become lukewarm, indolent, slothful, in carrying on that work of careful, painstaking indoctrination with respect to the members of our congregations, the adults and the children, in which our fathers excelled. Continuing their noble endeavors, we shall ever be extending and strengthening the foundation from which we can reach out to the unchurched masses all about us.

An honored leader of our Church said years ago: "We few ministers shall by faithfully preaching the Word not be able to stay the deluge of sin and wickedness sweeping over the earth in these latter days; but woe to us if we do not shout as loudly as we can into the din and roar of the murky waters the message of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ!" (Cf. Walther, *Pastoraltheologie*, p. 107.) The unadulterated Word and Sacraments — may God grant us firmness, loyalty, and holy zeal to keep our dear Church on this foundation, both for our own sake and for that of many others!

W. ARNDT.

Der Pietismus.

(Fortsetzung.)

In einem früheren Artikel (VI, 496) ist gezeigt worden, daß die Zustände in der Kirche, gegen die der Pietismus Stellung nahm, nicht etwa auf die Orthodogie, nicht auf das Dringen auf reine Lehre, zurückzuführen sind. In dem Übel, worunter die Kirche litt, Gewohnheitschristentum, Verweltlichung, „tote Orthodogie“, war zum großen Teil das Kirchenregiment schuld. Dieses lag fast gänzlich in den Händen der Fürsten. Das ist die allgemeine Klage. Natürlich waren die Zustände nicht überall dieselben; aber wo es im Lande besser stand, da war der Grund dieser: Ein guter, frommer Fürst führte die Zügel. Selbst da war es nicht die Kirche selber, die das Regiment in Händen hatte, auch nicht einmal ein Konsistorium.

Wie war es zu solch einer allgemeinen Cäsareopapie gekommen? In außerlutherischen Kreisen wird fast durch die Bank behauptet,