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Theological Observer. - Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches

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Theological Observer — Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches

Summer-School at River Forest.—Dean W. O. Kraeft submits this information to the readers of our journal:

"1. In the summer-school, Concordia Teachers' College, River Forest, offers courses leading to the bachelor's degree in elementary education.

"2. The courses offered during the summer at River Forest are, to a great extent, duplicates of the curriculum offered in the training of teachers during the school-year.

"3. The summer-school offers courses for lady teachers, which will prepare them more definitely for teaching in Lutheran parish-schools.

"4. Choirmasters and organists will find courses enabling them to take the leadership in beautifying the services by way of music.

"5. St. Louis Seminary again offers courses in theology to pastors.

"6. Some courses of the new Concordia Sunday-school Teachers' Training Series are also offered to Sunday-school teachers who were not able to get these in their home congregation." A.

"Within the Framework of Lutheranism."—That is the caption of an article in the *Lutheran Herald*, Feb. 25, by J. Reini, which takes exception to the views expressed in the article "Trends within Our Church," published in *Lutheraneren*, Oct. 12, 1938. The author of "Trends," "a well-known pastor of our Church" "had observed many trends in our Church: high-church and low-church; pietism and anti-pietism; some against unionism, others not; some against lodges, others not; some especially advocating pure doctrine, others especially a holy life. Some members of our Church feel rather grieved because of them. But the author of 'Trends' takes a different view; he is rather in favor of them; they are for him a sign of spiritual life. His advice is: 'Allow every one to believe, talk, and work according to his own view, provided that it is within the frame of the Word of God and our Confessions. Do not judge others who may favor opposite views.' . . . He declares that a Church either entirely without any or with only one trend is both dead and orthodoxistic: 'Only a dead and orthodoxistic Church can be built and kept without trends.' . . ."

"This review of the Lutheran churches, however, cannot be finished without inquiring as to the standing of the Missouri Synod. We might wonder whether the author of 'Trends' really by his description of the dead and orthodoxistic Church could have in mind the Missouri Synod. That Church has now for nearly one hundred years been noted for its God-fearing zeal for pure doctrine and Christian living. For many years it has also enjoyed unparalleled blessing in being free from annoying trends and discords. And we certainly would have to apologize most humbly if we ever thought any one familiar with the history and work of the Missouri Synod could characterize her as 'orthodoxistic' and 'dead.'"

The important part of the *Herald* article is this: "But the author's advice to give room for different trends and views is not in harmony

with the Word of God. Of the Church founded on the day of Pentecost by the apostles we read that they were all of one accord, 'of one heart and of one soul,' Acts 4:32. . . . If the rule, adopted by both our church organs, that all the various spiritual trends remain strictly within the framework of Lutheranism always and everywhere could be observed, no doubt many offenses would be avoided; but there is no leader of any party that will admit that his erroneous ideas are not in accord with the Word of God, and it appears to us that even the author of 'Trends' does not follow his own regulation. He reproves not only what is blameful but also finds fault with orthodox teaching. He touches lightly tendencies to unionism and the 'sin of lodgery,' as if such trends perhaps could be compatible with our Confessions, and does not find it needful to give earnest warnings against them. We may meet 'Lutherans' who accept the Bible as the Word of God but deny the saying of the apostle that 'all Scripture is given by inspiration of God,' 2 Tim. 3:16. And there are even members of our congregations that are unwilling to see that the religion of the lodges is repugnant and hostile to Christianity and to take note of the fact that the big United Lutheran Church, even among its clergy, has numbers of its leading men who not only take part in the religious services of the lodges but who also are active members of such organizations. . . . When we recall that even the apostolic churches were admonished to 'walk circumspectly' and to be on guard against 'diverse and strange doctrines,' can we then say that such warnings are not needed or timely at present? . . ." E.

The Kingdom of God.— Under this heading the *Journal of Theology* of the American Lutheran Conference (February, 1941) publishes a timely article, directed against the Ritschlian view that the kingdom of God represents a "social order or economic or political concept," which is being reemphasized today by E. Stanley Jones (*Christ or Communism*), who "outlines a social system or form of government on the basis of Christ's text at Nazareth [Luke 4:18, 19?] and calls that the kingdom of God." The writer (Rev. Mikkel Lono) arrives at the following final conclusions: "The kingdom of God is not a social order but the will of God operating in the hearts of those who believe. Its blessings are apart from circumstances of life, the rich [as such?] having no advantage but rather the contrary; yet the kingdom influences powerfully all of life. The kingdom of God is the only effective force for social betterment operating in the world. The Gospel of personal salvation is the most effective means of promoting general welfare. Because of ignorance and the blindness caused by sin, even sincere Christians need encouragement and admonition in letting their light so shine that men may see their good works. The preaching of social justice and other ideals of the social gospel has a definite place in the Christian message, but this not the 'Gospel of the Kingdom.'"

We are glad that this important truth again receives emphasis, especially in a periodical like the *Journal*, which is not confined to a single synod, but reaches many and diverse theological groups. Just now when Dr. E. Stanley Jones, under the auspices of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, is again preaching the "new social order of Christianity" as the realization of the kingdom of God, Lutherans

ought to be united in the testimony that the social gospel is not the "Gospel of the Kingdom." When the writer declares that the "preaching of social justice and other ideals of the social gospel has a definite place in the Christian message," this applies, of course, to the inculcation of Christian sanctification, and that *intra ecclesiam*, for the Church is not the State's moral police agent enforcing in *regno mundi* social justice and other ideals. As Luther correctly says, the Church rules only by the Word which it proclaims, and this within its proper spiritual sphere. This fact the writer himself suggests in his article.

In his article, however, there is a lack of clarity with regard to the expression "the kingdom of God," and this is disturbing to the reader. He defines the kingdom of God as the "will of God operating in the hearts of those who believe." Properly understood, this description is correct. In Schirlitz's *Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament* the kingdom of God is described, in its Messianic sense, "als das, in dem Gottes Wille gilt." More comprehensive and adequate perhaps is the definition of the kingdom of God as "the rule of Christ in the hearts of believers." God's kingdom must be limited in this way, in order that its *spiritual* nature may be stressed in contradistinction to the divine *regnum potentiae*, in which God rules by His sovereign will, or Law. If, in an absolute sense, the kingdom of God is simply called the *Kingdom*, this is done because it is the *preeminent* kingdom, the kingdom κατ' ἐξοχήν, all earthly kingdoms being merely temporal and temporary, existing only within God's kingdom and serving His kingdom. It is called the "kingdom of God" because it has God for its author and goal. It is called the "kingdom of heaven" because it is substantially heavenly and spiritual. It is called the "kingdom of Christ" because our blessed Savior is the Lord and Mediator of this kingdom. All these assertions can be supported by clear Scripture-passages.

There is in the article also a lack of clarity with regard to the question whether the terms "kingdom of God" and "Church" are synonymous. The writer says: "At first thought it would seem that the kingdom and the Church are almost synonymous." Then, after having pointed out that the word "Church" is used in the New Testament with various meanings, causing theologians to distinguish between the visible and the invisible Church, he writes: "In the minds of these theologians the invisible Church and the kingdom of God are the same." However, he objects that "in all but a few passages the terms 'Church' and 'kingdom' are evidently not interchangeable." "Yet," he concludes, "they are related. I have merely indicated their distinction." We admit this distinction, for while the expressions "kingdom of God" or "kingdom of Christ" or "kingdom of heaven" essentially describe God's [Christ's] spiritual rule in the hearts of believers, the term "Church" refers to the *communio*, or *congregatio, sanctorum*, in which the Lord has established His rule, properly speaking, the *ecclesia invisibilis*, in a wider sense the *ecclesia visibilis*, either in one place or in the entire world. But this does not mean that the two are fundamentally distinct, so that the kingdom of Christ exists in a different place than where the Church is, and vice versa. As Dr. F. Pieper rightly puts it, the two actually coincide, so that wherever the kingdom of Christ (of God, of

heaven) is, there also is the Church, and *vice versa*. More definitely, Dr. Pieper writes: "The Kingdom of Grace and the Church of God upon earth (*ecclesia militans*) are synonymous." (Cf. *Christliche Dogmatik*, II:461 ff.; III:458 ff.) It is only when we speak in this way that we can clearly understand the Scripture references to the kingdom of God and the Church. So also Luther and our Lutheran dogmaticians have expressed themselves, and both their *modus concipiendi* and their *modus loquendi* are clear and Scriptural, so that we cannot improve on them. Luther writes: "The kingdom of God is the Church of Christ, which is ruled by the Word of God." (St. L., XXI a:452.) That Luther regarded the terms "kingdom of Christ" and "Church" as practically synonymous, is clear also from such expressions as these: "Wherever the Gospel is preached in its truth and purity, there is Christ's kingdom; and this mark of the Church or the Kingdom of Christ, cannot deceive you." (St. L., VI:30.) J. T. M.

A U. L. C. A. Writer on Predestination. — Writing in the *Lutheran* of February 12, Dr. J. Wm. McCauley of Salem, Va., has this to say on Predestination:

"If it is 'the will of God that none should perish but that all should be saved' (1 Tim. 2:4), why need we worry about it? An 'Ironside' Baptist preacher said to me in positive terms: 'I am predestined to be either saved or lost. God knows best and will do what is right.' And he added: 'Even if I am predestined for hell rather than for heaven, God's will be done.' That is the rankest sort of predestination, with free will of man ruled out. Many Presbyterians have given up the old absolute predestination for a limited kind, including a measure of free will. It is claimed that Martin Luther once believed in predestination, or foreordination, but later substituted foreknowledge, that is, God foreknows but does not foreordain. Man has the free will to reject salvation but not to secure it, for salvation is of God only. 'By grace have ye been saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God' (Eph. 2:8).

"The other day a young person asked me, as have many others not acquainted with theological terms, if I believed in 'predestination.' That word seems to be in general use and popularly understood. Be that as it may, everybody knows what 'a worm' is and what is 'a man.' When some one was referred to as being 'a jellyfish and not a man,' the audience understood and laughed. 'A worm' is what David called himself when he said, 'I am a worm and no man' (Ps. 22:6). Poe wrote a gruesome poem on how man will be vanquished at death by 'the conqueror Worm.' The psalmist asked, 'What is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the Son of Man, that Thou visitest him?' But he gave the triumphant answer, 'Thou hast made him but little lower than God [R. V.] and crownedst him with glory and honor. Thou makest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands. Thou hast put all things under his feet' (Ps. 8:4-6). In the seeming contradiction of his groveling, crawling, helpless, earthly life in the flesh and His soaring, triumphant life of the spirit in the image of God is the problem and the answer. In His free will, the power to choose the better way, to mount on the wings of language and faith and spiritual communion into the

eternal and holy, is the key to the solution of the age-old problem. Yes, the worm will have wings and fly!"

This is confusing language. Note the fog in which the figure of Luther is left and abandoned. When the writer says, "Man has the free will to reject salvation — but not to secure it, for salvation is of God only," he correctly expresses a great Scripture truth. But what does he mean when in conclusion he says, "In His free will, the power to choose the better way, to mount on the wings of language and faith and spiritual communion into the eternal and holy, is the key to the solution of the age-old problem"? Is the writer speaking of Christ? His use of a capital initial in writing the pronoun "His" would seem to justify such an assumption. But how strange is the language if a reference to the Savior is intended! And if merely man is spoken of the espousal of synergism is unblushingly direct and manifest. A.

Concordia and Culture. — That is the heading the *Christian Century* of March 5 gives the following communication:

"EDITOR, 'THE CHRISTIAN CENTURY':

"Sir: I note that in a recent issue of your paper some brickbats are tossed at the Missouri Synod of the Lutheran Church. I am not a member of this religious group, but, being a historian, I feel that I should correct these erroneous statements. You say that the Missouri Synod Lutherans are descended from peasants. As a matter of fact, the forebears of the Missouri Synod Lutherans were far removed from 'peasants.' Among them were skilled artisans, writers, lawyers, teachers, physicians, and theologians. Indeed, it is hard to find any pioneer group that had as high an intellectual average as these German pioneers who laid the foundations of the Missouri Synod.

"Furthermore, you further malign these pioneers as 'misunderstanding everything which does not fit into their rigid pattern.' Well, are you not tarred by the same stick? You have certainly misunderstood their history, and very sadly at that. In fact, you know little about it.

"You further say that these pioneers were 'suspicious of culture itself.' Here I have to smile out loud, inasmuch as the scholars and theologians in this group early established Concordia Seminary, which has grown to be the largest Protestant theological seminary in the world.

"Pennsylvania State Senate

C. HALE SIPE"

While we do not attach great importance to this matter, the item certainly has historical value. Besides, it evidences the good will of Senator Sipe. E.

Subscription to the Lutheran Confessions. . . . The Restoration of the Confessional. — A word of praise is due, we believe, to the *Journal of Theology of the American Lutheran Conference* (March, 1941) on its fine selections of articles, three of which concern themselves directly with questions of theology, making the issue very readable and attractive. The five articles are: "What does Subscription to the Lutheran Confessions Imply?" "The Minister and Mental Hygiene"; "The Mode of Baptism"; "The Restoration of the Confessional"; "Practical Teacher-

training Courses." Besides these articles there are, of course, "theological-observer" items and book reviews; but our interest just now is in the articles. Articles 3 and 5 are both helpful and interesting and supply fine variation by transferring the reader to the practical department, on which the minister, too, must be informed. But we were especially pleased with the editorial staff's selection of theological articles, since this manifests a new appreciation of doctrinal essentials. After all, theology is the life-blood of a Church, without which it is bound to die of spiritual pernicious anemia. We are sure that, if the *Journal* will continue this editorial policy, it will not only increase its reading circle but also largely assist in bringing about that inward unity which is so absolutely necessary to true church union.

Much in the articles bears quoting, as it represents a reemphasis on truths always held sacred by confessing Lutherans. Writes Rev. A. G. Wacke (Hamler, O.) in his article on "Subscription to the Lutheran Confessions": "The Church is altogether in the right when it requires that its servants faithfully adjust their teachings to the symbols not *quatenus* but *quia*. Naturally, only he can do this who is inwardly convinced that the churchly symbols are the adequate expression of the doctrine of Scripture that sprang up from the soil of the divine Word and agree with the same." That is very fine and gives us a solid basis for church union. If all Lutherans could agree on the meaning of subscription to the Lutheran Confessions, then, we believe, the divisions now existing in the Lutheran circles in the United States would soon disappear. Or again: "We confess the symbols not because they were composed by our theologians, but because they have been taken from the Word of God and are founded firmly and well therein, after the custom of the early Church, whereby succeeding councils, Christian bishops and teachers appealed to the Nicene Creed and confessed it that condemned errors might not steal into the Church of God. Here we not only repeat our doctrine but also the cause and ground why we have abandoned errors and idolatries and know, and can think, of no way for coming to any agreement with those who champion such errors and idolatries." Dogmatically expressed, this means that we need not only the *norma decisionis* of Scripture but also the *norma discretionis* of our Confessions, which *discernit orthodoxos ab heterodoxis*. Emphasis on this point is very, very necessary. Next to the study of Scripture that of our Confessions ought to come in our scholastic pursuits. We only deceive ourselves if we study merely the peripheral concomitants of our ministry and avoid the "weightier things of the Law."

In his article on "The Mode of Baptism" Rev. E. F. Janssen (Denver, Colo.) reaches the conclusion that, since "the efficacy of baptism lies not in the amount of water used but rather in the Word of God, it does indeed seem foolish to argue back and forth about the mode of baptism. Christ has not commanded the one or the other mode with express words. Had He wished us to use a certain mode, He would have told us that in plain language. We can therefore not agree with those who say that this or that must be the mode of baptism. Any mode of baptism is permissible." This may seem elementary to some, but is it not true that throughout our earthly life we do not get beyond elementary

dogmatics? Did not even the apostles state and restate elementary teachings throughout their epistles? It is, after all, the elementary dogmatics that is so very hard to get straight.

In his article on "The Restoration of the Confessional" Rev. R. I. Knudson (Kintyre, N. Dak.) reemphasizes the great need in the Lutheran Church of private confession. It should, of course, be evangelical, not legalistic: "The confessional exists for the sake of the absolution. . . . The confessional is Gospel-orientated ('The ministry of absolution is favor, or grace'), while Romanist theology and practice emphasize the confessional as an exploration of the conscience, the absolution being conditioned both by priestly intention and the enumeration of all remembered mortal sins." In the article there is at least a trace of a legalistic note; for the writer says: "Every communicant member should know that he is expected at the sacristy at the least once a year. If all are expected to commune at least once a year, then no one feels embarrassed in going for registration, and tongues are given no occasion to wag." Such "expectation of at least once a year" might become very dangerous, promoting an externalism at this point that would be fatal. No, let the private confession be conducted in so evangelical and winning a way that the communicants come to the confessional and the Holy Supper cheerfully and gladly just because of the grace and favor which is offered them in the pastor's absolution. Those who despise the Word and the Sacrament must be dealt with according to Matt. 18. And that can still be accomplished.

The writer once more wishes to express his joy at the rich theological content of the March issue of the *Journal*. If even Reinhold Niebuhr (cf. *Time*, March 24, 1941) is swinging back to a more positive theology (cf. *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, Vol. I: "The idea that man is sinful at the very center of his personality . . . is universally rejected. It is this rejection which has seemed to make the Christian Gospel simply irrelevant to modern man"), how much more should we Lutherans foster the "queen of studies"—doctrinal theology! J. T. M.

Church Census Figures Are Not Reassuring.—The figures of the 1936 religious census, which have been recently released by the Federal Census Bureau, are not altogether reassuring to the Christian churches of America. Indeed, they are somewhat disturbing. The most discouraging thing about them is the fact that they reveal a growth in population ten times more rapid than the increase in church-membership. In other words, while the country's population from 1926 to 1936 was increasing about 13,000,000, the number of souls added to the church rolls totaled only 1,331,020. In other decades the growth of the Church has been more rapid than the increase in population.

Seven of the more important denominations, according to census figures, suffered actual loss during the period from 1926 to 1936. These include the Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians, Disciples of Christ, Congregationalists and Christians, and Quakers. [NOTE.—The figures, so we are assured by the denominational journals, do not necessarily represent actual losses, but are in some instances due to failure to participate in the census.—Ed., C. T. M.]

Body	1936	1926	Decrease
Baptists	8,262,287	8,441,030	178,743
Methodists	7,001,637	8,070,619	1,068,982
Presbyterians	2,513,653	2,625,284	111,631
Episcopalians	1,735,335	1,859,086	123,751
Disciples of Christ	1,196,315	1,377,595	181,280
Congregationalists and Christians	976,388	994,491	18,103
Quakers	93,697	110,422	16,725

The church-bodies showing gains in the 1936 census are the following:

Body	1936	1926	Increase
Roman Catholics	19,914,937	18,605,003	1,309,934
Jewish bodies	4,641,184	4,081,242	559,942
Lutherans	4,245,160	3,965,152	208,008
Mormons	774,169	606,561	168,608
Evangelicals and Reformed	123,877	675,804	48,073
Christian Scientists	268,915	202,098	66,817
Seventh-Day Adventists	133,254	110,998	22,256
Salvation Army	103,938	74,768	28,270

As we view the above figures, we find consolation in only one fact, namely, the apparent discrepancy between the Government census figures and the official figures of our own Lutheran church-bodies. Instead of 4,245,160 the official Lutheran figures for 1936 were 4,624,134. This would mean that the Lutheran Church gained 586,982 during the decade instead of 208,008, which is a considerable difference! If the other church-bodies suffered in a like manner at the hands of the Federal census, the actual religious picture of America is not nearly as gloomy as the above tables would indicate. However, this is a matter into which church statisticians ought to delve very energetically as well as conscientiously, for it is of the utmost importance that the churches should know the truth.

In any event, it is quite apparent that there is much work to be done if America is to be won for Christ. The paganizing influences at work in this country today are legion, and the Church needs to be keenly alive to the tremendous odds it faces. These are trying days for the Church throughout the world. Let it labor and pray without ceasing that it may not fail in the great task it has received from its Lord.

The Lutheran Companion, March 20, 1941

A Discussion of Unionism.—In the *Lutheran Standard* for April 19 we find two articles and an editorial dealing with the subject of unionism. We here reprint in part, with a few comments, the article written by Dr. Albert A. Jagnow of Dubuque, Iowa:

"Our difficulty in this matter of fellowship arises from a conflict of duties. On the one hand, we are members of the one holy Christian Church, the body of Christ on earth, and it is perfectly clear from the New Testament that membership in the Church ideally involves earthly fellowship also. On the other hand, we are members of a particular denomination which has its peculiar contributions to make in the interpretation of the Gospel, and as Lutherans we must witness the truth we know (the primacy of faith, the reality of the Presence in Communion, the freedom of the life of faith, etc.). From this it follows that

"1. We must acknowledge our fellow-Christians and cooperate with them in common Christian enterprises in which the Church speaks as with one voice against the world.

"2. In such cooperation we must never compromise the full truth of the Gospel as we have found it in Scripture. Sometimes we do not know whether we should follow the greater loyalty or the lesser, the Church Universal or our denomination.

"Some specific instances may help to make this clear. Since the Church is one, we can pray with all who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, whether our prayer be private or public. We can sing the songs of all Christian writers. Since our nation is a Christian land, we can help direct its aspirations aright as we celebrate its great holidays with proper services. Again, we may well display the flag in church, together with the Christian flag, as symbol of our allegiance to God and to our land. Again, it would be quite all right to invite patriotic groups (American Legion, D. A. R., etc.) or social-service groups (Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Girl Reserve, etc.) to attend some of our services in a body. The Church is commissioned to preach the Gospel to all people, and sometimes she can, through an organization, reach those who else would not hear.

"Again, in periods of national emergency or of local social or industrial strife it may be necessary for your congregation and pastor to cooperate with other Christian churches in helping the Church to speak with one voice as the conscience of the world. In works of charity and love, especially in times of great need, such cooperation is also indicated. Worship is not confined to one department of life nor to one day in the week. It ought to hallow the whole of life. Our Lutheran Church has not always done its duty toward the society in which it lives. Let it bear witness wherever opportunity offers. The Church dare not separate herself from the world though she is not of the world.

"In such matters as joint baccalaureate or joint patriotic services the individual case will have to be decided on its own merits. As long as the Gospel will be obscured by the proceedings, we had best be absent.

Can a member of another Christian Church receive Communion in the Lutheran Church? Here opinion is divided. Some say that according to the Galesburg Rule this is out of the question. Others point out that every rule has exceptions and that it is the *Lord's Table*, not ours!

"We need to remember two things. 1. We belong to the one holy Christian Church on earth and therefore are in duty bound to cooperate with other Christians in large issues, so that the Church may speak with one voice as the conscience of the world and may act together as its Good Samaritan. 2. We are members of the Lutheran Church, a denomination which must witness to its specific insight into the Gospel. We must therefore act not only as Lutherans, clearly testifying to the truth given us; but we must also act as Christians, fellow-members with all other Christians in the body of Christ on earth.

"This whole question of 'unionism' is not a simple one and needs to be carefully thought through again and again in the light of Scriptural principles, not merely in the light of churchly expediency and sectional traditionalism."

What shall we say? It is very true that membership in the Church is by no means limited to one denomination. We of the Missouri Synod cheerfully and gratefully acknowledge that there are Christians in non-Lutheran church-bodies. It is one of the great principles which our Synod has always stood for. The trouble is that through the membership of believers in heterodox churches, in which precious truths of the Gospel are spurned, they make it impossible for us to recognize them and to associate with them as our Christian brethren. By their membership they assist in carrying on a war against what is divine revelation. As everybody knows, no one of us has the ability to read human hearts. All that we can be guided by is the profession of the mouth which people make and the flag under which they have placed themselves. If that flag announces rejection of what the apostles and prophets have taught, we cannot call those that march under it brethren in the faith.

Is the sentence of Dr. Jagnow acceptable "We must acknowledge our fellow-Christians and cooperate with them in common Christian enterprises in which the Church speaks as with one voice against the world"? The sentence as we understand it means that we must be willing to join with other denominations in religious enterprises concerning which all are agreed. Dr. Jagnow overlooks the divisive character of false teachings. "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed," says the Savior. How can we strike up a religious alliance with people that are not continuing in the Word of the Savior? That here and there their objectives are the same as ours does not remove their opposition to divine truth in other points.

Is it right to hold that, "since the Church is one, we can pray with all who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, whether our prayer be private or public"? That is one of the most sweeping sentences on prayer-fellowship which we have seen. If his brethren in the American Lutheran Church tried to practice what is here laid down, Dr. Jagnow himself, we imagine, would stand aghast. Let him visualize one of his associates appearing in a Congregationalist church some Sunday morning and there speaking the chief prayer! His principle as enunciated above would permit such a course. Or does he wish to draw a distinction between "can" and "may"? We were furthermore painfully surprised to see the Galesburg Rule left suspended in mid-air, as it were.

It is true that the right course is not always easily discerned. Hard and fast formulas may do much harm, proving at times a device of legalism and at other times of indifference. But wherever there is the spirit of holy awe when God has spoken, where there is the sincere desire to remain faithful to everything that the Holy Scriptures inculcate, the right balance, even when momentarily lost through human weakness, will always be regained, and a Scriptural course will again be followed.

A.

The Imprecatory Psalms.—The *Lutheran Church Quarterly* (April, 1940) treats this old but always interesting subject in an article which closes with an apologetic borrowed from liberal Bible criticism and therefore opposed to the traditional explanation of believing Christian theologians. The writer declares: "If we study the religion, the ethics,

the culture, and the national traditions of ancient Judaism; if we sense the madness of the everlasting wars that sacked their cities, killed or wounded their best men, ravished their women, and murdered their babies, followed by pestilence, famine, economic confusion, and desolation of land and sanctuary, so that they feared national annihilation and the desertion of the God who alone could help them; and realizing how far for generations they had been debauched by weak and godless rulers,—I say, reviewing all these facts and forces, what other appeal could those ill-starred tribes make than utter frenzied cries to all the powers in the upper and nether world to curse the bloody, idolatrous hordes that almost brought them to extinction? When, oh, when, would Messiah appear? Verily, the strings of David's harp gave forth many dulcet tones; but some of them contained much iron." To write this means to assume, after the fashion of the destructive higher critics, that the imprecatory psalms were not written by David but by some pseudo-David at a very late time in Israel's history; for at David's time (ca. 1000 B. C.) the Israelites could not look upon "generations debauched by weak and godless rulers." The time before David was rather (with exceptions, of course) one of conquest and victory for Israel, when the chosen people had every reason in the world to rejoice in the good fortune which it enjoyed by God's grace. For this reason the imprecatory psalms (e. g., 35, 41, 69, 109) could not have been motivated by any "madness of the everlasting wars, ravished women, murdered babies, and the fear of national annihilation." To motivate them in this manner is utterly absurd. Meusel, in his well-known *Kirchliches Handlexikon*, emphasizes the fact that these psalms must not be regarded as outbursts of personal hatred against sinners but as a demonstration of lawful zeal against sin." This is far more in accord with the spirit of the Psalter. The *Cyclopedia* of McClintock & Strong justifies them "partly by the atrocity of some of the crimes execrated and partly by the fact of special authority in the act of inspiration." Luther contributes the thought that the prayers in the psalms are directed either against the devil as a liar or against the devil as a murderer, that is, either against false teachers or against the tyrants who inflict [upon the Church] cross and persecution." (St. L. Ed., IV:1753.) Strong (*Systematic Theology*), too, interprets the imprecations as "the expression of judicial indignation against the enemies of God" and not as "the ebullition of personal anger." Admitting all this, we nevertheless must not overlook the Messianic element in these psalms, and when pious scholars prefixed to the imprecatory Psalm 109 the title "The affliction of David, a type of Christ's sufferings at the hands of His people," they suggested a solution which is still more satisfactory. Did not, after all, David utter these imprecations by divine inspiration as the mouth-piece of Christ, whose way-preparer, John the Baptist, called the Pharisees and Sadducees a "generation of vipers," warning them "to flee from the wrath to come," lest they be "hewn down and cast into the fire" (Matt. 3:7 ff.), and who Himself pronounced woe after woe upon those who perverted God's Word, hindered His cause, and interfered with the bringing of salvation by Him to the poor and contrite (Matt. 23:1 ff.)? The writer in the *Quarterly* certainly misrepresents facts when he says: "The

curse represented the inherent and inevitable blight upon evil. That blight might be death, diseases, weakness, madness, perplexity, misery, bad luck, or any other adversity to which flesh is heir. And so the last verse of the Old Testament is a threatening curse. But the opening message of the New is 'Blessed.' The religion of the Old Testament taught that the man who dared only touch a sacred thing, such as the Ark of the Covenant or the holy mount, was cursed with death. The New teaches that any one who touches sacred things, even the body of Christ, may live and be saved. So, then, let us not look for *Christian ethical concepts in the primitive morality of ancient tribes — which is reading history backward.* (Italics in original.) Anything more false and misleading could not have been written on this point. It is so altogether against the testimony of Christ and the apostles that one wonders how it could have been penned by a Lutheran. Christ's witness on this point is indeed clear and decisive. The Old Testament Scriptures testify of Him, John 5:39. They set forth *God's Word*, Matt. 15:3, not any "primitive morality of ancient tribes." He Himself extols and inculcates the morality of the Old Testament as perfect and binding all men at all times, Matt. 22:36-40. Christ recognizes no "evolution of morality and religion" in the Holy Bible, for He quotes even Genesis as divine truth, Matt. 19:5. And so does St. Peter: "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," 2 Pet. 1:21; and St. Paul: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," 2 Tim. 3:16. Essentially there is no difference in content between the Old Testament and the New, even though there is greater clarity in the latter; both contain Law and Gospel, the divine message of wrath and of grace. To say that the Old Testament closes with a curse and the New begins with a "Blessed" is simply not true. Both Testaments close in the same way, with a Gospel-message of love for those who believe and a Law-message of wrath and punishment for those who reject God's free grace and pervert His Word. (Cf. Mal. 4:5, 6 with Rev. 22:18-21.) Let all who write in the spirit of the article just quoted beware lest they themselves come under the condemnation of the righteous God, whose warning reads: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked," Gal. 6:7.

J. T. M.

Brief Items.—Twelve new languages in which the Scriptures had not previously been published were added last year, bringing the total number of languages into which some part of the Bible has now been translated to 1,051, according to the American Bible Society.—*Christian Century*.

From Tokyo a correspondent writes the *Christian Century* that, while many large missions are removing their workers from Japan, Korea, and occupied China, no one hears of Roman Catholic missionaries leaving on account of the present difficulties. The same correspondent states that the Episcopalians have refused to join the National United Church of Japan, a stand for which we give them credit. Besides, "no body representative of the entire Presbyterian Reformed Communion has yet officially approved participation" in this federation. A.