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Theological Observer. - Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches

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Theological Observer — Kirchlich-Zeitgeschichtliches

On Exemption of Church Property from Taxes.—No one can blame the Government if, in the present emergency, it seeks to tighten all tax screws that have become loose. Will the churches be affected? The following editorial of the *Christian Century* (Aug. 19, 1942) is apropos:

"As reported by a correspondent of the *Lutheran*, the tax authorities in Washington, D. C., have been revising the tax rolls and revising them upward so far as concerns certain properties owned by religious bodies which have hitherto been exempt. A Catholic institution, Immaculate Conception College, was found to own more land than its very small student body could reasonably occupy. The American University's acreage was declared to be more extensive than could be justified by its educational needs. Some acres of land belonging to Washington Cathedral were held to be too remotely connected with the religious use on which their exemption had been based. In all these cases the privilege of tax exemption was restricted to the land actually being used for religious or educational purposes. Granting that property really in use for such purposes should be exempt from taxation—and even that is an arguable question—it is a nice problem how much landscape can properly be included under this privilege. A few years ago New York went through the throes of a similar revision of its tax rolls. Out of many incidents in that connection, there lingers the memory of one tiny religious institution which was planted in the midst of a hundred-acre tract that was being held tax free against a rise in values which would ultimately provide an endowment. This abuse was corrected. The most dubious of the recent cases in Washington is that of the National Lutheran Home for the Aged, which was put back on the tax list on the ground that its services were rendered only to Lutherans. The ruling held that tax exemption can be rightfully granted only to institutions which serve 'the indefinite public' and not individuals 'because they are Methodists, members of the Eastern Star, Odd Fellows, or Knights of Columbus.' This is certainly not the criterion which has usually been applied. If it becomes general, the Lutherans will be hard hit, for they, perhaps more than any other denomination of Christians, have accepted the obligation of providing for the helpless members of their own group and have built institutions for that purpose." A.

"Let It Be Confessional But Not Sectarian."—*The Lutheran* (July 22, 1942), under the given heading, prints a letter from one of its readers pleading for synthesis vs. analysis of Lutheranism. Among other things the writer says: "Lutheranism claims to be a timeless and comprehensive interpretation of that faith whose historical materials are the New Testament and the Church of Jesus Christ. The Word and the Church are both by inspiration. Our Lutheran faith does not desire to be judged by others on the ground of one or another article of its many confessions. It will not condemn any other Christian group on so narrow ground. *We would both be judged and judge by the sum of all the articles of all our Confessions.* [*Italics our own.*]

"Let us not bitterly consume our light and our testimony in analyzing this or that article and in the end only manage to unloose the cement which binds and holds together our Church's undivided confession. Let us rather nourish our light and our testimony in synthesizing all the Articles into one magnificent version of the Christian religion for contemporary generations who cry out desperately for 'the Way, the Truth, and the Life.' *In analysis lies disagreement, disunity, discord, and failure; in synthesis lies at-one-ness, unity, concord, and a winning witness of Jesus.*" [Italics our own.]

We have quoted from the letter only the salient points that bring out the writer's plea in clear light. It certainly does not require much intelligence to perceive how utterly impossible it is to do what he demands, namely, "to judge and be judged [merely] by the sum of all the articles of all our Confessions." Our very Confessions do what he deprecates: they carefully scrutinize and analyze their own confessional statements and those of opposing Confessions. The *Apology*, e. g., is nothing else than a thorough analysis and defense of the *Augsburg Confession* in its various parts. Against the Roman Catholic Confutation it examines the various propositions to prove in the light of God's Word that they are Scriptural. So also is the *Formula of Concord* an analysis of the *Augsburg Confession*. Luther's explanations, in his *Catechism*, of the Decalog, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer do nothing else than carefully analyze for clear teaching these fundamental parts of God's Word. And so the Church has always done when it wished to teach the divine truth over against error. It has always analyzed its own Confessions and the errors of the opponents to set forth with full clearness the teachings of God's Word. In fact, this is the only way the Church can teach the divine truth clearly and distinctly. To understand the sum of anything, one first must understand its parts. Unless we know the parts, we cannot know the sum. If in analysis there lies disunity, it is not the fault of the analysis, but that of the persons who refuse to accept the divine truth. The analysis does not cause disagreement, but merely brings out in strong relief the existing doctrinal discord. If, as the writer claims, concord lies in synthesis (i. e., in merely judging the "whole" of the Confessions), this is only a concord of doctrinal indifference and unionism, which can never be a "winning witness of Jesus."

In short, let no one deceive himself by specious phrases and illusive theories, but let us face the facts fairly and squarely, doing the same in the realm of the spiritual that we do in that of earthly, as when we analyze political platforms, formulas of chemistry, and the like. The writer's error is similar to that of all modern theologians who demand that the divine truth should be judged by the *Schriftganze*, that is, by the scope or spirit of Scripture. But what the "totality of Scripture" is, depends on the person who sets it forth. Luther's "spirit of Scripture" is radically different from that of Fosdick and other Modernists. So, after all, the "synthesis" which the writer pleads for does not make for concord or unity; what it produces is only suppression and rejection of God's Word.

When the writer says that "both the Word and the Church are by inspiration," he shows by this Romanizing expression that he repudiates

the Christian doctrine of the divine inspiration of Holy Scriptures. When he writes: "God forbid that at this late date we should stumble over grammatical, logical, punctuational, or philosophical obstacles," he obscures the point at issue. The Church's fight is for the preservation of God's Word—and of the whole of God's Word, and of God's Word in all its parts; and in that fight, grammar certainly must be considered. The ancient adage: "*Theologia debet esse grammatica*" still holds, and Luther's contention that if anyone's grammatical interpretation of Scripture is faulty, then also his theology becomes questionable, has timeless value. Let us be honest in contending for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. There is a false contrast in the very heading which introduces the letter.

J. T. M.

Unity in Diversity.—*The Christian Beacon* (July 23, 1942) reproduces "sections of Dr. H. M. Woods' book [title not given] prepared for students on the issues of the Protestant Reformation as they pertain to the Roman Catholic hierarchy today as ever." Against "the Church of Rome's mistaken conception of oneness of ecclesiastical organization" it shows and defends the "true Protestant unity," which is explained as follows:

"Protestant unity is clearly taught in Holy Scripture and is a part of that precious 'liberty wherewith Christ hath made His people free' (Gal. 5:1). This liberty consists of *oneness in essentials* and a reasonable latitude in nonessentials. St. Paul illustrates this by the human body, which has many members differing from the other and each having its own special function, as the eye, the ear, the hand, the foot: yet all sympathizing and co-operating, and together constituting one *living organism*. Variety of members, so far from hindering the action of the body, really helps it, and makes it more useful. So, says the Apostle, it is with the Church of God and its members. God in His wisdom has bestowed on different groups of men various gifts of thought, character, education, etc. These various gifts He allows to have play within reasonable limits so that *each denomination contributes something which the others do not possess*, and the sum total brings to all variety and enrichment of Christian faith and service. Variety in the branches of the Church no more militates against true spiritual unity than variety in the members of the human body militates against the oneness and efficiency of that body."

From this presentation of "Protestant unity" one may learn how much confusion may result from the application of the words of our Creed "I believe in the *one* holy Christian Church" to the visible Church on earth. This mistake is made by the Romanists and generally also by the Calvinists, though the latter acknowledge the *ecclesia invisibilis*. The Romanists teach, as Dr. Woods expresses it in another place, "a mechanical and forced union," the Calvinists, a "unity in diversity." Confessional Lutheranism allows unity in diversity only so far as ceremonies or other externals are concerned. It permits no unity in diversity in regard to doctrine or practice, for here Christ's command holds: "Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). It is true, Lutheranism can bear with weak brethren in non-

essentials as long as they are open to conviction. But it cannot tolerate error even in nonfundamentals in case such error has its source in a contentious spirit which refuses to heed God's Word. (Cf. 1 Cor. 14:37, 38.)

However, while true Lutheranism earnestly desires to see in operation a visible orthodox Christian Church on earth, united both in faith and practice, it finds the "oneness" of the Church in the *communio of saints*, the *ecclesia invisibilis*, thus avoiding the dilemma which Dr. Woods vainly endeavors to avoid when he resorts to the principle of "oneness in essentials and a reasonable latitude in nonessentials." This unscriptural principle of the Reformed Church had led to the formation of numerous sects within the Calvinistic fold, all championing diverse pet teachings and yet unionistically fellowshiping with one another as a spiritual brotherhood, and this in open revolt against all Scripture passages which condemn such syncretism. In the last analysis it has led to the utter rejection of Christian doctrine in the great apostasy known as Modernism. The illustration which Dr. Woods here quotes from 1 Cor. 12:4 ff. does not at all apply to the false unity which he is defending, but to the different forms of Christian service rendered by the various members of the Church. According to St. Paul's teaching, however, the Church in matters of doctrine and practice should be "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." (Cf. 1 Cor. 1:10; 14:37; etc.)

The principle of "oneness in essentials and a reasonable latitude in nonessentials" has been sponsored also in Lutheran circles in our country, and the deplorable confusion to which it has led is sadly attested by the early development of the Lutheran Church in the United States. It is a principle foreign to the spirit of true Lutheranism and withal a most destructive principle. The glory of Lutheranism does not consist in "unity in diversity," but in full unity of faith and practice, thus exemplifying (though weakly, since there is nothing perfect on earth) the true spiritual unity of the *communio sanctorum*. The position of genuine Lutheranism on the *ecclesia visibilis* and the *ecclesia invisibilis*, and their relation to each other, alone is logical and Scriptural, and it alone will preserve to the Church that soundness in doctrine and practice that is so vital to its well-being and progress.

If it is said that since members of the *communio sanctorum* are connected on earth with erring churches they are themselves sponsoring error, the very satisfactory reply has been given that they err in ignorance since their faith in Christ prompts them to dedicate themselves to the Lord in body, soul, and mind for full obedience to His Word and will.

J. T. M.

The Originality of Christianity.—In *The Christian Advocate* (June 25, 1942) Harris Franklin Rall, in his special department "Dr. Rall Answers Questions on Beliefs," explains to his readers the "originality of Jesus and of the Christian religion." In the final analysis he deals with what is ordinarily denominated the absoluteness of the Christian religion.

In his reply Dr. Rall, professor of Systematic Theology in the Garrett Bible Institute, says: "There are two dangers that we need to avoid here. One is to suppose that Christianity in its ideas, its ideals, and its religious

rites (such as Baptism and the Lord's Supper) is totally different from every other religion; or even to hold that outside of Christianity no truth, no virtue, and no faith are to be found. Hardly anyone would go to this extreme, but there is often the fear that in any such admission we endanger the uniqueness of Christianity. To hold such a position, however, is surely to think unworthily of God. We believe in the one living God of all peoples and all history. Supremely revealed in Christ, He is yet the God who has everywhere and always sought to disclose Himself to men and has never left Himself without a witness. And wherever the love of God meets human need, and the truth of God speaks to the human heart, and man makes response in repentance and faith, there in some measure is real religion. Not uncommon is the second danger: to suppose that there is really no difference between the various faiths, that truth is everywhere, and that each people has its own best religion."

To avoid the two mistakes, Dr. Rall suggests the following way out: "We believe in the living God who in Jesus Christ brings the supreme and sure revelation of Himself and the gift of forgiveness and fellowship with Himself. If elsewhere there is any truth or faith, we rejoice, for this is from the living God. We do not seek to establish Christianity by denial or depreciation; we believe that in Christ the living God has spoken to men and is reconciling men to Himself. Our systems of doctrine are imperfect; so are our lives; so is the historical Church. . . . In Jesus as the Truth and the Way and the Life we have what is central and unique and original in Christianity. This does not mean that there was no truth before Him; let us remember that the Old Testament was His Bible and the synagog His Church. . . . The ages prepared for Christ; He took up in Himself the life and truth of the past. But He Himself was new. He was the supreme deed of a God who had always been acting; He was the clear, sure Word of God who had always been speaking."

Dr. Rall here follows such rationalists as Harnack, Ritschl, Fosdick, and others who regard Christianity merely as the most complete, the most adequate, the supreme revelation of God. The difference between Christianity and other religions (according to these men) therefore is one of degree only, not one of kind. Dr. Pieper in his *Christliche Dogmatik* (as do all truly Christian theologians) rightly condemns this view; for Christianity is not simply the best religion, but the only religion. It is true: the man-made religions more or less teach the divine Law since this is written in man's heart. But Christianity alone teaches as its central doctrine the vicarious atonement, and only Christianity therefore proclaims the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ. Dr. Rall, as most rationalists, bestows great praise upon Christ and uses the customary Christian dogmatic terminology, though not in its traditional sense. We must, however, not be deceived by this subtle hypocrisy. Modernism, despite all its pious phrases, rejects the "blood religion" of orthodox Christianity and therefore has no other way of salvation than following the noble example of Christ's exemplary life. Briefly expressed, the originality of Jesus consists in the amazing fact that by the shedding of

His blood He has become the Savior of the world. Other religions have teachers; Christianity has a divine Savior. Just that is the originality of the Christian religion, or as Dr. Rall calls it, its uniqueness.

J. T. M.

Church Conditions in Norway.—Developments in the Norwegian ecclesiastical sphere seem to have reached the crisis stage. The *Lutheran Companion* of Aug. 20, 1942, in an editorial, submits pertinent information:

"What appears to be a complete break between the Lutheran Church of Norway and the Quisling-dominated State has occurred, according to news dispatches reaching this country on July 27. The separation between Church and the Nazi government in Norway became a fact when six leaders of the Church met secretly in Oslo and set up a provisional church council. They also drew up a manifesto addressed to Norwegian churchmen, declaring that no compromise peace with the Quisling regime was possible and that the Church of Norway would continue to function independently and, if necessary, against the Nazi rule in that country.

"This is a fateful decision, but it is clear that the Church in Norway had no other alternative. Not only had the Quisling government openly assumed spiritual prerogatives which did not belong to it, but it had interfered with the internal affairs of the Church and sought to deprive it of its freedom of action.

"Not only this, but it had also assumed the authority of deposing the regularly ordained bishops of the Church and of appointing new ones in their stead. The consecration of the latter was not in accordance with the traditions and canons of the Church, which require that this rite shall be performed by regularly consecrated bishops of the Church.

"It is clear that the situation in Norway between the Church and State has become an intolerable one, and the regularly constituted leaders of the Church had no alternative but to declare their complete independence of a treasonable government which is trying to compel the Church to bow to despotic foreign yoke. In reality, the bishops and other heroic spiritual leaders of Norway are fighting for a free Church, but, in doing so, they are also fighting for a free country and a free people.

"Perhaps the events in Norway will prove to be providential and that the separation between Church and State, precipitated by an emergency, may become a permanent one. Although the relationship between Church and State in all of the Scandinavian countries has been a salutary one in many respects, there are many church leaders who have believed that a free Lutheran Church in these lands would become more virile and spiritual in character than a State Church. The Lutheran Church in America has been cited as an example of the advantages of a free Church.

"In any event, all Lutherans throughout the world will pray for their brethren in Norway, that God may strengthen and help His people in these trying days, and that the Church of Christ may prove victorious over all its adversaries."

A.

The Ev. Luth. Synodical Conference Seventy Years Old. Since the 1942 convention of the Ev. Luth. Synodical Conference was canceled, Dr. L. Fuerbringer, its present President, has published the reasons why this was done together with an account of the special meeting of repre-

sentative men of the Synodical Conference who made the decision. What interests us above all in the article is a personal note of Dr. Fuerbringer attached to his report, which, we believe, deserves careful consideration by all who are connected with the Synodical Conference. We quote the paragraphs as they are published in the *Lutheran Sentinel* of July 27, 1942. Dr. Fuerbringer writes:

"The Synodical Conference has now been in existence for seventy years. It is a union of synods which unwaveringly acknowledge the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God and adhere to the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the year 1580, the so-called Concordia. In these seventy years the Synodical Conference had as its purpose and goal what is declared in its Constitution, 'outward expression of the unity of the spirit existing among the respective synods; mutual strengthening in faith and confession; promotion of unity in doctrine and practice and the removal of any threatening disturbance thereof; co-operation in matters of common interest; . . . union of all Lutheran synods of America into one single orthodox American Lutheran Church.' In this sense the Synodical Conference has labored for seventy years and wherever difficulties and disturbances arose has exerted itself to solve and remove them. The Synodical Conference is God's work, and its confession and purpose are God-pleasing because in accord with Holy Scriptures.

"The writer has had personal contact with the Synodical Conference since 1886 and has rather regularly attended the conventions for the last fifty-six years. Anyone interested in its history can readily inform himself of the genuine joy and gratitude of our Fathers when the Synodical Conference, after extended negotiations and efforts, was finally called into being. In these seventy years there were indeed difficulties and differences of opinion, but throughout earnest efforts were made at a brotherly, God-pleasing solution. We repeat: the Synodical Conference is the work of God. The times are fraught with dangers for the confessional Church; difficulties and attacks are apparent. And for this reason all honest Christians sincerely pray to God that He might grant to all members of the Synodical Conference and maintain among them a spirit of true brotherliness and love, sincere confidence in one another, and that He may heed and fulfill the ancient prayer:

Unto Thy Church grant, Lord, Thy grace,
Peace, concord, patience, fearlessness."

Dr. Fuerbringer in these paragraphs calls attention to a number of important points. In the first place, quoting the Constitution of the Synodical Conference, he mentions as one purpose of the Conference the "union of all Lutheran synods of America into one single orthodox American Lutheran Church." That is one of the purposes of the Synodical Conference still, for the clause in the Constitution has never been revoked. In the second place, the Synodical Conference itself was called into being only after "extended negotiations and efforts." Let us not be discouraged if today the pursuit of a God-pleasing church union is a very difficult and thankless task. In the third place, Dr. Fuerbringer calls for the prayers of all members of the Conference that God may maintain it in the dangers, difficulties, and attacks of the present time.

Let us offer up our prayer on that behalf, but let us also add our intercessions that God, in His infinite mercy, may gather all Lutherans who are willing to stand foursquare on His precious Word and the Confessions of the Lutheran Church into one spiritually united Church; for as the bringing about of the Synodical Conference was God's work, so also it will be God's work to bring about a "union of all Lutheran synods in America into one single orthodox American Lutheran Church." Lastly, as the acceptance of God's Word in its truth and purity was the unconditional basis of the Synodical Conference, so also true unity in faith and Lutheran practice must characterize the "orthodox American Lutheran Church" for which so many earnest Lutherans have been working these many years and still are working with ardent zeal. President Fuerbringer's report indeed offers a very timely and important message.

J. T. M.

The Study of Scripture and of Christian Doctrine in Lutheran Seminaries. The *Journal of Theology* of the American Lutheran Conference (June, 1942) contains a most interesting "Study in Curriculum Offerings and Requirements of Twenty-two Lutheran Seminaries" in the fields of Biblical Instruction and Systematic Theology. The statistics in general speak well for our own curriculum in the two mentioned fields at Concordia Seminary. In fact, in the department of General Bible Study St. Louis ranks highest with 159 semester hours, in the Old Testament (with Hebrew) with 96 semester hours and in the New Testament with 63. The writer, the Rev. C. Umhau Wolf, M. A., M. S. T., fellow, Hartford Theological Seminary, introduces his statistical report on Bible study with the remarks: "The Lutheran Church believes that its founder rediscovered and unchained the Bible. It is to be expected, therefore, that the Lutheran minister receives a strong foundation training in essentially Biblical courses. That same founder was a translator of the Bible, and so it likewise is to be expected that Lutheran seminaries would give a great place to the study of the original languages of the Bible. Both of these expectations are borne out by the present study and analysis of the curricula in the twenty-two Lutheran seminaries in the United States and Canada." By way of further explanation he says: "All of the seminaries offer or advertise work in the Old and New Testaments. Only three seminaries do not offer any Hebrew or Aramaic. However, eleven do not require it for a certificate of graduation. All the seminaries offer some Greek, and only two permit graduation without the study of New Testament Greek. . . . The total advertised semester hours in all departments of the twenty-two seminaries is 3,050. Of this number 1,234 are in the Department of Biblical Studies, or 41.1%. This is above the average of 57 seminaries in 1930-1931, devoting 38% to the combined study of English Bible and Biblical Languages."

Still more important are the writer's remarks on the study of Systematic Theology in Lutheran seminaries. He writes by way of introduction: "Among other Protestants, Lutheran ministers are noted for their theological unanimity. Despite the unfortunate and, perhaps, inconsequential [?] synodical divisions, the Lutherans are more united than any other denomination in America. In a study of theological beliefs Lutheran pastors agreed on 44 out of 56 items. This is both a cause and

a result of the type of training the Lutheran minister receives. . . . In the twenty-two Lutheran seminaries in America the study of Systematic Theology ranks second in importance, judged by courses required and offered. Only the Department of Bible and Biblical Languages exceeds the importance of Systematic Theology from this point of view. . . . The combined number of semester hours offered in the twenty-two seminaries in this department for the school year 1940—1941 was 561.3. This is 18.4% of the total number of hours advertised. This likewise is above the average of 55 seminaries offering such courses in 1930—1931, in which only 12.5% of all offerings were in Theology and Philosophy. . . . The average curriculum would advertise 25.5 hours and require 21.7 hours in Systematic Theology. The proportion of required hours to the total offered in the department is the highest of any department of study in the Lutheran curriculum."

Next the writer offers some interesting statistics on courses in Christian doctrine. Here again Concordia, St. Louis, ranks highest with 45 advertised semester hours, but Concordia, Springfield, ranks highest with 36 required semester hours. In Philosophy and Philosophy of Religion Gettysburg ranks highest with 15 advertised semester hours and Suomi with 11 required semester hours. The writer comments on these figures as follows: "From these tables one interesting thing is apparent. In the Lutheran Church of America the reputation for liberal thinking, whether deservedly or not, has become attached to Gettysburg Seminary. This is either the result of or the cause of the above ranking of Gettysburg as lowest in requirements of Christian Doctrine and Systematic Theology *per se* and as highest in advertised offerings in Philosophy. The next lowest in Systematic Theology requires twice as much work as Gettysburg. There is allowance made in this judgment for the reduction of the Gettysburg *term* hour into semester hours. On the other hand, the Synodical Conference has generally the reputation for fundamentalism and conservatism. It is in line with this reputation that Concordia, St. Louis, offers the most work in Systematic Theology, while its sister seminary, Concordia at Springfield, Ill., requires the most work in Christian Doctrine. The Synodical Conference places three of its seminaries among the first four according to hours in this department.

"Comparative Symbolics,' the study of other Christian churches, forms an important sector of the total curricula of Lutheran seminaries. There are some fifteen courses in varying length offered with this title. Many non-Lutheran pastors have made it known personally to the writer that this is one subject greatly missed in their general theological training. The confessional emphasis of Lutheran Christianity makes this training necessary along with the study of Lutheran Symbols. Thirteen seminaries offer courses in the Lutheran Confessions. In addition to a general course in Symbolics, seminaries have courses entitled "The Large Catechism,' 'Formula of Concord,' etc."

The writer closes the article with a plea which deserves very much to be heeded and which, we believe, Lutheran seminaries will heed more and more in the present crisis and in the period it will usher in. He says: "The place of doctrine in the Lutheran Church has been maintained through the age of its expansion. It is to be hoped that in this

age of theological experiment and educational theorizing the Church of the Reformation will not permit its backbone to be broken or bent. By emphasizing the departments of Bible and Systematic Theology the Church will remain strong, the ministers will be able to combat the heresies of the world and to strengthen the faith of the sheep within their flocks."

J. T. M.

The "Orthodoxy" of the New-Supernaturalism. There is reason to assume that Christian ministers at times are inclined to take the "orthodoxy" of the New-Supernaturalists rather seriously just as if they were willing to leave humanism and return to positive Christianity. Reinhold Niebuhr especially seems to make that impression on many. The *Calvin Forum* (June-July, 1942) in an article entitled "Christian Theism and the New-Supernaturalism," very fittingly illustrates the "band wagon of the New-Supernaturalists" by the story of a man in hiding a short distance from the road. To a friend on the road he had given instructions to play a doleful march in case the passer-by should be a man and a bridal march in case of a woman. For a while all went well, but suddenly the friend played a mixture of joyous and sad music. "I thought," the friend later explained, "you would understand that it was a *monk*." "Such a monkish tune," says the *Calvin Forum*, "is that of the New-Supernaturalist. It sounds both orthodox and heterodox." Of the New-Supernaturalists Reinhold Niebuhr perhaps is still the most popular, but as Georgia Harkness, who studied under him, says in *The Resources of Religion* (p. 97), he did not "manifest a somersault back to Fundamentalism" and "it would be impossible for him to revert to Biblical literalism." These statements are proved correct by what Niebuhr himself has written. Regarding the Bible he believes that it contains "irrelevant precepts deriving their authority from their sometimes quite fortuitous inclusion in a sacred canon" and "social and moral standards which may once have had legitimate or accidental sanctity, but which have, whether legitimate or accidental, now lost both religious and moral meaning." (Cf. *Calvin Forum*, Vol. III, Aug.-Sept., 1937.) The writer of the article remarks on this: "It is apparent that such a view of the Bible must upset the other doctrines as held by the theist [that is, the Christian believer]. The Biblical account of the Fall of Man becomes a myth, which is true at all times, for it occurs again and again. The New-Supernaturalist speaks much of Christ, using traditional terms with a nontraditional meaning, but from all appearance this Christ is not the traditional Son of God. Niebuhr relates in *Beyond Tragedy* how, at the time of his ordination, he was perplexed about confessing 'I believe in the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.' The words *resurrection of the body* caused him much difficulty. Now, however, he says 'the stone which we then rejected has become the head of the corner.' He realizes the importance of the phrase and we gladly agree; but then comes [Niebuhr's denial of the Christian doctrine]: 'The idea of the resurrection of the body can, of course, not be literally true.' And later: 'Resurrection is the divine transformation of human existence' (pp. 289-290). The vicarious atonement of Calvary is explained in these words: 'The Savior dies not because He has sinned, but because He has *not* sinned. He proves thereby

that sin is so much a part of existence that sinlessness cannot maintain itself in it.' (*Op. cit.*, p. 167.) . . . Becoming impatient with the world order, Niebuhr also becomes impatient with the orthodox Church and speaks of its 'petrified doctrine and irrelevant puritanical precepts.' We agree with the New-Supernaturalist that this world is in a bad way, for it is not 'of the Way.' We also agree when he shouts that God should be on a high throne and not on a high chair. We would not even maliciously remind him that that is what the theist has maintained all along. 'Sin is real,' he tells us. That, too, we have known all along, and we hope that he understands what he says. When, however, such statements are merely 'selected passages' from a Bible which they refuse to accept as infallible, we realize that what they *select* today they may *reject* tomorrow. Their Supernaturalism is 'new' as in conquered Europe there is 'new' bread; it does not contain the real stuff."

The New-Supernaturalism or Neo-Orthodoxy is as far removed from orthodox Christian belief as was Ritschlianism in the footsteps of which it follows very closely. It is nothing else than a modified brand of Modernism with new twists of speech and new emphases. J. T. M.

To Say the Truth.—Under this heading, Paul Ylvisaker in the *Lutheran Sentinel* (April 27, 1942) makes a historical correction, which because of the importance just now attaching to the Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church (since next year it intends to celebrate its ninetieth anniversary as the direct successor of the former Norwegian Synod), no doubt, deserves far greater publicity than it can receive in so small a periodical as the *Sentinel*.

The error was committed by the *Lutheran Herald* (Feb. 10, 1942), which claimed that Nils Thorbjornson Ylvisaker, the first ordained pastor of that name, was a "Haugean layman, who later became an ordained pastor in our church." The correction of this statement is twofold. In America at least, N. T. Ylvisaker was neither a lay preacher nor a Haugean. As the article says, "the pioneer Nils Ylvisaker was hardly a lay preacher in the accepted American understanding of the term. He was licensed as a traveling emissary of the Mission Society in Norway. . . . It was the Rev. H. A. Preus, who in 1867 went to Norway to seek pastors for the new settlement here. Finding out from personal conversations of Nils Ylvisaker's doctrinal soundness, he, on behalf of his Norwegian Synod, asked him to come to America. He informed Nils Ylvisaker of the fact that the spirit of the Haugean movement in America was not that of Hauge, but rather that of Elling Eielsen. Eielsen was a schismatic of the first order.

"Nils Ylvisaker learned of the resulting confusion of church life in America and cast his lot with the Norwegian Synod. . . . For such loyalty to the Lutheran Confessions and to Scriptural teaching with regard to the divinity of the minister's call to a local congregation he was bitterly attacked. We read in the Introduction to his book of sermons published in 1876: 'It is a well-known fact that the church body of which I am a member (and I thank God from my heart that He has brought me into it, in spite of its weaknesses), the Norwegian Synod, has been the object of the most damaging accusations and attacks. A chief accusation has been and is that we make the way to heaven

wide, that we deceive souls by a hope of salvation without the heart's thoroughgoing conversion to the Lord, yes, that we even oppose all spiritual life in the congregations. I personally, not the least, have been the object of such accusations. In rapid succession they have accused me of having fallen from the old simple faith, of having sold my convictions for a clergyman's collar, yes, that I have by an oath obligated myself not to preach the Law. . . . I know as far as I am concerned, as before the countenance of the All-knowing, that I from the heart ask for the old paths where is the good way, and in spite of weakness I humbly pray God that I might receive His wisdom and power to walk therein."

The writer admits that N. T. Ylvisaker was a lay preacher while still in Norway, for "circumstances in that country called him to conduct devotional meetings from place to place. But when the same Ylvisaker came to America, he wanted nothing to do with Eielsen and his followers, who were a thorn in the flesh of the Norwegian Synod." In America, Ylvisaker, therefore, was neither a lay preacher in the ordinary meaning of that term nor a Haugean, as the word is commonly understood.

The writer concludes his article with the words: "Nils Thorbjornson Ylvisaker was regularly ordained by Synod officials, accepted a call, wore a gown in the pulpit, and preached that we are saved by grace alone, without the deeds of the Law. His whole theology was contrary to the conflicting philosophy of 'Opgjoer.' He was not a 'Haugeaner' in the sense that the word is used today. Let us speak the truth, and the whole truth."

As we read the last admonition, we thought of the utter impossibility in many instances of speaking the truth and the whole truth regarding the great men and movements in the early history of our Church. Frequently the necessary sources are lacking, and the testimony is contradictory. For this reason, men who are acquainted with the facts ought to attest the truth, even at the cost of being regarded as picayunish in their emphasis on details, in order that the history of our Church may accurately and truthfully be told both by us and those coming after us. To call N. T. Ylvisaker a "Haugean layman" certainly does not do justice to this great Lutheran pioneer in America. J. T. M.

Brief Items.—The Franciscan Fathers have purchased in the loop district of Chicago a theater and the building in which it is located. The price was \$600,000.00. It is the intention to make the building a mission center with a chapel and monastery. Rome evidently is still very aggressive.

Dr. Daniel A. Poling, international president of the World Christian Endeavor, editor of the *Christian Herald*, and pastor of the famous Baptist Temple in Philadelphia, has announced a leave of absence as pastor to become an Army chaplain. He served as a chaplain in the last war.

The Lutheran

In Berkeley, Calif., Dr. J. Hayden Tufts, one of the first faculty members of the University of Chicago and a prominent American philosopher, died August 6.

A.