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The Right and Wrong of Private Judgment

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The Right and Wrong of Private Judgment

(Continued)

"Ueber die Lehre zu erkennen and zu richten, kommt allen und jeden Christen zu, und zwar so, dass der verflucht ist, der solches Recht um ein Haerlein kraenkt" (Luther XIX:341). The matter of exercising private judgment is of supreme importance.

(1) They commit a monstrous crime who keep God's people from dealing directly with God's Word and judging all doctrine on the basis of it. (2) Blessed is the community where the right of private judgment is recognized and practiced.

(1) The Pope and those Protestant theologians who aid and abet him in this matter are guilty of enormous crimes. In the first place, they are keeping men from performing their Christian duty. "For Christ gave to the people not only the right, but also the command to judge" (Luther, *loc. cit.*). "Try the spirits!" "Beware of false prophets!" Etc., etc. The Christian who asks or permits others to judge doctrinal matters for him is breaking a plain, explicit commandment of God. And he is thereby calling down God's wrath upon his head. "The hearers are obliged to judge all preaching under penalty of forfeiting the favor of Divine Majesty" (Luther X:1543. Holman Ed. IV, 78), "bei goettlicher Majestaet Ungnade — incurring God's disfavor and wrath."

Is it indeed such a grievous sin? For one thing, God will not permit men to set up other gods before Him. The Pope is robbing God of His prerogative. (Luther: "gottesraeuberish," XIX:343.) Demanding the right to rule over the faith and conscience of God's people, he is setting himself beside God. And those who at his bidding renounce the right of private judgment are acknowledging his blasphemous claims. Men who say with Erasmus: "I bring my reason into captivity to the obedience of the Church"

are doing a wicked thing. And they who instigate this wickedness incur a double measure of God's wrath.

A second crime: the Pope exacts from his people the *sacrificium intellectus et conscientiae*, and that spells the ruin, the decline, and eventual loss of all spiritual powers. "These passages," says Luther, "assign the right and power to judge any teaching to the hearers with urgent commands and on pain of losing their souls" (*loc. cit.*). Faith is spiritual knowledge and intelligent conviction. It knows what it believes and is convinced of the truth of it on the authority of Scripture. But the Pope will not have faith perform its natural functions. The Christian who obeys the Pope must keep his spiritual intelligence from functioning—he must sacrifice it. His intelligence protests against the papistical interpretation of Rom. 3:28 and insists that Scripture denounces the teaching that justification is by works. But he is told: You must bring your intelligence into captivity to the obedience of the Pope and accept the interpretation of the Church. And what happens when faith is not permitted to exercise its functions? When an organ of the body is persistently disused, it atrophies. Keep faith from expressing itself, and your spiritual powers will waste away. The Pope is ruining the spiritual life of his people. He that refuses to exercise private judgment is losing his soul.

The Pope demands of his subjects the *sacrificium conscientiae*. In the domain of morals they must accept the regulations of the Church as binding even though their conscience protests against some of them as not commanded by God and against some of them as immoral. The ability of the Jesuit to suppress the protesting voice of his conscience when he is commanded to go against a commandment of God is considered the acme of virtue in popedom. And in the sphere of doctrine the same sacrifice is demanded. To the Christian it is a matter of conscience what he believes. He accepts a certain teaching because his heart and conscience tells him that Scripture teaches it. He rejects a certain teaching because his heart and conscience tells him that Scripture denounces it. Luther: "Christ teaches us that everyone must be concerned about his own welfare and salvation and that, therefore, everyone must know and be certain what to believe and whom to follow. . . . Another may teach and preach what he will; that is his affair. You must be concerned about what you yourself believe, for your greatest loss or for your greatest gain" (X:1587). It is a matter of conscience to the Christian to know that what he believes is God's truth. Luther: "They will at once start to argue: How can one know what is God's Word and what is true or false? The Pope and the council must tell you that. I say: You cannot put your confidence in that; that will not satisfy your

conscience. You must decide for yourself; your neck is in danger; your life is at stake. Therefore God must assure your heart and tell you: This is God's Word. In no other way can you gain assurance" (XI:1396). Again: "It is at the peril of everyone's own conscience how he believes or disbelieves" (X:398).—Nay, says the Pope, you must not let your conscience bother you about doctrinal questions; those are Lutheran scruples. You may safely put your conscience into my keeping.

Luther cries out: "In the conscience God wants to be alone; there His Word alone shall rule" (XIX:832, 1). Again: "Der Seele soll und kann niemand gebieten, er wisse denn, ihr den Weg zu weisen gen Himmel. Das kann aber kein Mensch tun, sondern Gott allein" (X:396). "God alone is Lord of the conscience" (Westminster Confession, Chapter XX). No, declares Antichrist, I am the lord of the conscience of man; you need not bother your heads about questions of right and wrong, true or false doctrine; I decide that for you; I am your conscience—*Sacrificium Conscientiae!*

The Pope and his Protestant abettors are committing a fearful crime against their people. Training them to forego the right of private judgment, they are causing them to commit spiritual suicide. A man who has lost the sense of personal responsibility for his belief has lost his soul. As long as there is spiritual life in a man, his conscience demands a hearing when matters of faith and morals are being decided. And the man who suppresses the voice of his own conscience is keeping his spiritual life from functioning.—It is a frightful condition. It is the conscience that distinguishes man from the brute. And where men are kept from forming conscientious convictions, they are being dehumanized. When we hear a man who is under the complete domination of the Roman pope or the Protestant popes utter his belief, we do not hear the voice of conviction. It is the voice of a parrot. It is a robot speaking. A good Catholic is one who cannot call his soul his own. Was Luther wrong in denouncing the Pope and his abettors not only as "thieves and robbers," but also as "wolves and murderers"?¹⁷⁾

17) A few additional statements. W.H.Prescott, *Ferdinand and Isabella*, in the chapter on the Inquisition: "In the present state of knowledge we look with disgust at the pretensions of any human being, however exalted, to invade the sacred rights of conscience, inalienably possessed by every man. We feel that the spiritual concerns of an individual may be safely left to himself, as most interested in them except so far as they can be affected by argument or friendly monition; that the idea of compelling belief in particular doctrines is a solecism, as absurd as wicked. . . . But, although these truths are now so obvious as rather to deserve the name of truisms, the world has been slow, very slow, in arriving at them, after many centuries of unspeakable oppression

A good Catholic cannot call his soul his own. That is to say, he is the slave of the priest, of the Pope. Walther: "Rob the congregation of the right to judge doctrine, and you give them over into slavery" (See *Walther and the Church*, p. 45). Again: "Der Laie ist nach paepstlicher Lehre mit seiner Seligkeit an den Pfaffen gebunden." The Catholic is compelled to put the decision of those questions which concern his eternal salvation into the hands of the priest, the Pope. And that is slavery of the worst kind. The slave who has lost his bodily freedom is to be pitied; but if he retains the freedom of his mind and of his soul, he is in far better state than the subjects of Antichrist. These slaves have their minds and souls shackled. — The Catholics resent such

and misery. . . . The policy of the Roman Church at that time was not only shown in its perversion of some of the most obvious principles of morality, but in the discouragement of all free inquiry in its disciples, whom it instructed to rely implicitly in matters of conscience on their spiritual advisers. The artful institution of the tribunal of confession, established with this view, brought, as it were, the whole Christian world at the feet of the clergy. . . ." *The Pastor's Monthly*, 1931, p. 12: "There is a mighty reason for giving us the great privilege of coming directly to God through His inspired Word. As priests, God holds each one of us responsible for his own soul. We are to exercise our priesthood over our own souls. We are to do for ourselves everything that the Old Testament priests did for the chosen people of God. And God holds us responsible not only for our own souls, but also for the souls of others. . . . To discharge that responsibility, we must have the right of private judgment. Otherwise it would be like holding a dead machine responsible for the safety and welfare of the lives of men. . . ." F. Pieper: "The vaunted unity of the Catholic Church is built on the dehumanization of humanity. What distinguishes man from the irrational brute is the human conscience, the individual human conscience, responsible to God. The Catholic Church, however, demands of all of her members, unlearned or learned, the *sacrificium intellectus et conscientiae*. The order of the Jesuits has a special training course for it, elaborate 'exercises' for drilling it. But this renunciation of ones own conscience and unquestioning submission to the judgment of the Pope is not peculiar to the Jesuits; every faithful subject of the papal dominion, the cardinal no less than the meanest priest, is required to do it and does it. This is the situation in the papacy: The faithful Catholic, active though his reason and will be in other respects, is tied to the mind and will of the Pope, a veritable automaton" (see *CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY*, 1930, p. 693). "Denying to the rest of mankind the right to judge matters of faith and morals and demanding of the rest of mankind the *sacrificium intellectus et voluntatis*, the Pope requires every human individual to renounce his own conscience, that is, to discard that thing which distinguishes man from the beast. It has been justly said of the papacy that it makes for the 'dehumanization of humanity.' The Reformation has restored to man the right to be a man. Luther demands in all questions of right and wrong the *appeal to the conscience of the individual*" (*Christliche Dogmatik* III, p. 81). Gerhard: "The Pope's men want their hearers to be real sheep, witless creatures, which follow the shepherd unthinkingly, even though he takes them into fields full of poisonous plants, even though he is a wolf; they want their hearers to be parrots, obeying the nod of the prelates; the prelates to be considered angels, never liable to error, infallible, unimpeachable" (see Baier, *Compendium*, I, p. 188).

statements. *The Catholic Review* of Feb. 27, 1886, said: "It is an old habit of our Protestant friends to charge Catholics with slavish submission to their priests. According to the old-time Protestant idea, a Catholic puts his conscience into his confessor's keeping; whereas the Protestant, by the invaluable right of private judgment, decides always for himself as to moral obligations of conduct." But the charge that the good Catholic yields slavish submission to the hierarchy must stand. What does the holy, infallible bull *Unam Sanctam* proclaim? "We decree that it is altogether necessary to salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff. . . . He judges all things, but himself is judged by no one." The Canon Law contains the provision that "the layman has not the right and power to decide anything in the Church: his is the duty to obey" (See Fick, *Das Geheimnis der Bosheit*, p. 83). That puts the laymen in their place. And what about the bishops? In the days of Innocent III "the oath of obedience or vassalage the bishops had now to take to the Pope was understood as binding them to unconditional subjection in political as well as ecclesiastical matters. . . . Chancellor Gerson says: 'In consequence of the lust of power of the popes, the authority of bishops and inferior Church officers is completely done away with, so that they look like mere pictures in the Church, and are almost superfluous.'" At Trent "the papal legates used at once to rebuke bishops as heretics and rebels who ever dared to express any views of their own. Bishops, who have been obliged to swear 'to maintain, defend, increase, and advance the rights, honors, privileges, and authority of their lord the Pope'—and every bishop takes this oath—cannot regard themselves, or be regarded by the Christian world, as free members of a free Council." (*The Pope and The Council*, pp. 143—146, 343.) We know what happened in 1870. And "as late as November in the year of our Lord, 1885, the reigning Pope, Leo XIII, in his 'Encyclical Letter Concerning the Christian Constitution of States' said to all Catholics in the world: 'In the formation of opinion, whatsoever things the Roman Pontiffs have handed down, or shall hereafter hand down, each and every one, it is necessary to hold in firm judgment well understood and as often as occasion demands openly to declare.'" Luther is right: In the papacy "the Christian Church is reduced to one man"; the creed of the papists is "I believe in the Pope at Rome" (X:278).

Why, the Catholics themselves openly avow their spiritual slavery. A Catholic layman wrote the following and *The Commonweal* (Catholic periodical) published it Oct. 7, 1931: "The Reverend John McCarthy, pastor of the Methodist Church in Bridgeton, accuses Catholics of having their priests do their

thinking for them. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Except in regard to religion and morals, we are allowed to think and do as we please. We are not priest-ridden." We are allowed, say the Catholics, to think and do as we please in secular matters, but in regard to religion and morals our priests do our thinking for us! And in his article on the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church Father E. R. Hull states: "As for freedom of private thought and opinion and taste, in all matters outside the strict limits of faith, Catholics enjoy the fullest liberty. . . . The important thing for an inquirer coming to the Catholic Church is to be thoroughly imbued with the principle of belief in the authority of the Church and to be ready to accept, in general, whatever the Church teaches as belonging to the deposit of faith" (*Religions and Philosophies in the U. S. A.*, compiled by Julius A. Weber, p. 60 f.). The Catholic theologian is here telling us that while the Catholics are proud of their liberty in the secular sphere, they are bound in the sphere of religion by the thinking and will of other men, of another man. He is saying—and every Catholic theologian who inveighs against the right of private judgment is saying—that no good Catholic can call his mind and his soul his own.

Are such things possible? Will men put their conscience into another man's keeping, thinking that they are doing God service? The members of the Society of Jesus, the most efficient papistical organization, do just that. The Jesuits have no mind and will of their own. They are trained to stifle the dictates of their conscience and are proud of their ability to do so.¹⁸⁾ Now, not all

18) John Lord, *Beacon Lights of History*, VI, p. 311 ff.: "The most marked thing about it [the constitution of the Society of Jesus] was the unbounded and unhesitating obedience required of every member to superiors and of these superiors to the General of the Order—so that there was but one will. . . . Loyola exacted obedience to the General of the Order so absolutely that a Jesuit became a slave. A member of the society had no will of his own; he did not belong to himself, he belonged to his General. . . . He was merged body and soul into the Society; he was only a pin in the machinery; he was a piece of wax to be molded as the Superior directed—and the Superior, in his turn, was a piece of wax in the hands of the Provincial, and he again in the hands of the General. 'There were many gradations in rank, but every rank was a gradation in slavery.' The Jesuit is accused of having no individual conscience. He was bound to do what he was told, right or wrong; nothing was right, and nothing was wrong except as the Society pronounced. The General stood in the place of God. That man was happiest who was most mechanical. . . . The novice entering the order had to go through terrible discipline—to be a servant, anything; to live according to rigid rules, so that his spirit was broken by mechanical duties. He had to learn all the virtues of a slave before he could be fully enrolled in the Society. . . . Jesuitism was, of course, opposed to Protestantism; it hated the Protestants; it hated their religious creed and their emancipating and progressive spirit; it hated religious liberty. . . . The Jesuits are accused of riveting fetters on the human mind in order to uphold their power and to sustain the absolutism

adherents of the Pope are members of the Jesuit order. But in principle all Catholics are bound to what the Jesuits carry out consistently. Where the right of private judgment is disallowed, men's minds and consciences are wax in the hands of their superiors, their religious ideas molded into any form the superiors desire. Is the Pope a murderer? He trains his subjects to deaden the noblest faculties of the soul, to suppress the sense of individual responsibility in matters of faith, and to make a man their god in spite of the protest of their conscience.

The Catholics indignantly deny that they are committing idolatry when they permit the Pope to form their judgment and belief. They insist that since God has invested the Pope with His own authority,¹⁹ they are serving Christ when they bring their every

of the popes and the absolutism of kings, to which they are equally devoted. They taught in their schools the doctrine of passive obedience; they aimed to subdue the will by rigid discipline; they were hostile to bold and free inquiries; . . . they abominated the Protestant idea of private judgment." O. Hallesby, *Conscience*, p. 33: "The Jesuits have drawn the logical conclusions from this doctrine of the Catholic Church. They maintain that conscience is in reality nothing but a *prejudicial* attitude. The Jesuit method of training seeks therefore to assist the individual to overcome, preferably to obliterate entirely, this old, ingrown prejudice and surrender himself wholly and completely to his confessor or his ecclesiastical superiors. By so doing, the individual renounces his own conscience and leaves all moral considerations and decisions to his confessor."

19) Some recent utterances. J. A. Moehler, *Symbolism or Doctrinal Differences*: "The Church interprets the Sacred Scriptures. The Church is the body of the Lord: it is his visible form — his eternal revelation. . . . All the developments of its dogmas and its morality are to be revered as the sentences of Christ Himself. . . . The dogmatic decrees of the episcopate (united with the general head and center) are infallible" (pp. 280, 282, 309). "Moehler says (*Neue Untersuchungen*, p. 373): 'Christ has founded a visible Church, has instituted a public, visible *magisterium*, and this He has invested with His own authority. This *magisterium*, therefore, enjoys the same authoritative credentials which Christ Himself has, and the judgment this *magisterium* pronounces on the meaning of Christ's doctrine can, consequently, claim for itself the authority of Christ Himself'" (see *Theological Studies*, 1943, p. 442). An encyclical of Pope Pius XI declares: "Three dogmas of the Catholic religion, which we shall treat principally, shine forth with brilliancy in the eyes of all; namely, that the person of Jesus Christ is one and divine; that the Blessed Virgin Mary should be acknowledged and venerated by everyone as really and truly the Mother of God; and that *when matters of faith or morals are concerned, the Roman Pontiff has from on high an authority which is supreme above all others and subject to none*" (see C. S. Macfarland, *Christian Unity in Practice and Prophecy*, p. 211. — Our italics.) Commenting on an encyclical by Pius XI on marriage, divorce, and birth control, *The Christian Century* of Feb. 4, 1931, says: "By far the most significant feature of the encyclical is its exhibition of the characteristic attitudes of the Roman Catholic Church with reference, first, to the subordination of individual judgment to papal authority. . . . As to the first of these points, it is sufficient to cite the words of the encyclical in the section in which the Pope is speaking of the remedy for the 'modern' evils which he has enumerated. — 'Let the faithful be on their guard against the overrated independence of

thought "into captivity to the obedience of the Church" (Erasmus). It is the sacred duty of the Christian to bow to the authority of Christ, 2 Cor. 10:5; and when we Catholics bow to the authority of the Church, the Pope, who wields the absolute authority of Christ, we are performing our Christian duty. Concerning this Satanic delusion, Dr. Pieper says: "The Catholics would vindicate the teaching that the Christian must refrain from exercising his own judgment by pointing out that God, too, demands the *sacrificium intellectus et voluntatis* and that the Christians readily comply, as is seen from 2 Cor. 10:15: 'bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.' In reply we point out that God and His Word and the Pope and his word are two altogether different things and authorities. And by placing his own word beside the Word of God and *eo ipso* above God's Word, the Pope proves himself to be the Antichrist. Furthermore, as Luther reminds us, God deals altogether differently with us than the Pope. God indeed demands that man subject his intellect and will to God, but God brings this about by *illuminating*, through the power of the Holy Ghost in His Word, the intellect of man and so *changing* the will of man that from being unwilling he becomes willing (*ex nolente volens*). In other words, God illumines and corrects the natural conscience, and the Pope suppresses it. (*Christliche Dogmatik* III, p. 82 f.).²⁰ That is the crime of the papacy: the Pope has so utterly perverted and ruined the spiritual senses of his subjects that they commit the awful crime of placing a man in God's place, of making a man the lord of their conscience. The Wicked One has so utterly blinded them that they live under the

private judgment and that false autonomy of human reason. . . . A characteristic of all true followers of Christ is to suffer themselves to be guided and led in all things that touch upon faith and morals by the holy Church of God, through its supreme pastor, the Roman Pontiff, who is himself guided by Jesus Christ, our Lord. The Catholic press has obediently echoed this sentiment. 'Rome Has Spoken' is the favorite headline. '*Roma locuta, causa finita.*' It is pointed out that, no matter whether this is an infallible *ex cathedra* utterance or not, and even though it is not technically a 'definition' of faith, it has absolute authority and demands absolute obedience. There is none of that airy assurance that we were given a couple of years ago that Catholic obedience is limited to certain matters which can never have anything to do with the State. Here is a matter which has plenty to do with the State, as the Pope points out, and the duty of Catholics is to guard against independence of private judgment and suffer themselves to be guided by the Pope."

20) Luther: "Human statutes cannot be observed together with the Word of God, because the former bind consciences, the latter looses them. They are directly opposed to each other, as water to fire. Unless indeed they could be observed in liberty; that is, not to bind the conscience. But this the Pope wills not, nor can will it unless he wishes his kingdom to be destroyed and brought to an end; for that stands only in ensnaring and binding those consciences which the Gospel declares to be free" (XVIII:1710).

Satanic delusion that the idolatrous service they are rendering the Pope is the holy bondage with which God blesses His people.

Summarizing these findings, we shall say that the Pope exacts from his subjects the *sacrificium fidei*. The faith which he demands is not the Christian faith. The faith which God creates is *personal knowledge, personal conviction, personal faith*. "The just shall live by his faith," Rom. 1:17; Hab. 2:4. Luther: "You will not be damned or saved by another's doctrine, be it false or true, but by your own personal belief" (X:1587). "It is at every-one's own peril how he believes, and he must see for himself that he believes aright. For as little as another can go to hell or to heaven for me, so little also can he believe or disbelieve for me" (X:398). "The Pope is not judge in matters pertaining to God's Word and faith; but every Christian man must see and judge for himself, even as he must live and die according to it" (XV:1915). For such a faith the Pope has no use. And the Catholic Christian, if he would obey the papal injunction against the exercise of private judgment, must refrain from exercising his personal faith. What the result will be we have noted above.—The Pope is the archcriminal. He subverts the chief article, justification by faith, by teaching (a) that justification is by works and (b) by destroying the true concept of faith.²¹⁾

Men who permit themselves to be deprived of the right, and neglect to perform the duty, of private judgment make a fatal mistake. It may result, in the third place, in the loss of eternal salvation. The spiritual blight, of which we have just spoken, will end, if things take their natural course, in spiritual death. And this spiritual death may set in at any moment. In an evil day the strength to withstand the assault of the Evil One may be lacking. In the fierce battle of faith the poor creature who is lacking in spiritual stamina is facing defeat.

He will, for instance, fall an easy prey to false doctrine. False doctrine is not an innocent, harmless affair. The loss of eternal salvation is involved. Jesus calls the false teachers "wolves," Matt. 7:15. St. Peter uses the term "damnable heresies," 2 Pet. 2:1,

21) The following quotations apply here in a general way. Dr. Francis Hall: "It is true that *personal belief*, however reached, springs from an act of private judgment, which in that sense is supreme for individual faith and practice. . . . Belief which is not ultimately due to private judgment has no personal reality" (*The Living Church*, March 7, 1930). Dr. W. J. S. Simpson told those who were about ready to accept the dogma of papal infallibility against their better knowledge why they must "not make a sacrifice of their intellect. Because if you destroy a man's confidence in his historic judgment in one instance, you ruin its validity in all others. Now, since it is by such a judgment that Christianity itself is accepted, to bid a man disparage his own judgment of history, is to undermine the very basis of his religion." (*Roman Catholic Opposition to Papal Infallibility*, p. 289).

destructive heresies, heresies of perdition, teachings which lead into eternal damnation. The gross heresies do that directly. But every false teaching exposes its adherents to the danger of losing their faith and their eternal salvation. It is, therefore, "for their salvation" that "Christians must distinguish between pure and false doctrine" (*Formula of Concord*, p. 853). In order "to know and avoid wolves, Matt. 7:15," God authorizes and requires "each and every Christian to judge of doctrines; for every one must know the difference between true and false doctrine" (Luther, XXI A:399). "Ein jeder glaubt auf seine Gefahr recht oder falsch" (XIX:342). Those who have lost, or never had, the faculty to distinguish between saving doctrine and destructive doctrine are exposed to eternal damnation; and if such a one should lose his soul eternally, his blood is upon the head of those who denied him the right of private judgment.²²⁾

22) There are those who do that in order that they may spread their false doctrine without let and hindrance. The Pope employs that Satanic strategy. Luther: "Now you can see what sort of spirit possessed these odious councils. . . . They took away from the people the right to judge and conferred it upon the popes. Without a doubt that was the contrivance of Satan by which he filled the world with strong delusions and put the abomination in the holy place. False teachers fear the right of the people to judge doctrine; taking from them this right, he established and secured his tyranny in the most effective way. The foolish and superstitious obedience and patience of the people prepared the way for the deluge of heresies and abominations" (XIX:343). As long as the Pope can suppress the right of private judgment and keep his people from appealing to Scripture, his reign is secure. That is one of his chief strongholds and defenses. Luther: "The papists, with great adroitness, have built three walls about them, behind which they have hitherto defended themselves in such wise that no one has been able to reform them; and this has been the cause of terrible corruption throughout all Christendom. . . . Second, when the attempt is made to reprove them out of the Scriptures, they set up the claim that the interpretation of the Scriptures belongs to no one except the Pope. . . . In this way they have cunningly stolen from us our three rods" (footnote in Holman, II, p. 65: "The three rods for the punishment of an evil pope"), "that they may go unpunished, and have entrenched themselves within the safe stronghold of these three walls, to practice all knavery and wickedness; do we not see it?" (X:269 f.) Again: "One hears scarcely anything else from them but the boast that they have the power and the right to judge what is Christian and what is heretical; the plain Christian must await their decision and abide by it. . . . With this claim of theirs they have intimidated the whole world: it is their chief stronghold and defense (X:1540). What would happen if the Pope should permit the Christians under his sway to test his doctrine of justification by Rom. 3:28? "They would boldly," says Luther, "pronounce sentence against the Pope. . . . Here, saith the Christian, this that by the merit of congruence we must come to grace and that afterward by the merit of worthiness we are received into heaven is not the right way to justify us. For I cannot, saith the Christian, by my works going before grace deserve grace, nor by my works following grace deserve eternal life; but to him that believeth, sin is pardoned and righteousness imputed" (VIII:184).

And as to the fundamental doctrine of the papacy, the infallibility

Again—and now we come to the all-important point—what will be our support and stay when the dread hour of death is upon us? How will those poor souls who in the matter of faith have no convictions of their own fare on the day that decides their eternal fate? Ponder the solemn statement with which Luther began the first of the eight Wittenberg sermons: “Wir sind alle zum Tod gefordert, und wird keiner fuer den andern sterben; sondern ein jeglicher in eigener Person muss geharnischt und geruestet sein, fuer sich selbst mit dem Teufel und Tode zu kaempfen, Hebr. 9:27. In die Ohren koennen wir wohl einer dem andern schreien, ihn troesten und vermahren zur Geduld, zum Streit und Kampf; aber fuer ihn koennen wir nicht kaempfen noch streiten, es muss ein jeglicher allda auf seine Schanze selbst sehen und sich mit den Feinden, mit dem Teufel und Tode, selbst einlegen und allein mit ihnen im Kampfe liegen. Ich werde dann nicht bei dir sein, noch du bei mir.” (XX:8. Weimar Ed., X:3. See Holman II, p. 391.) The faith that saves is personal faith. “The just shall live by his faith.” The Pope does not believe that. J. Clayton condemns “the new theology” of Luther, which demanded the right of “private judgment . . . and promised assurance of personal salvation” (*op. cit.*, p. 84). The Pope’s theology does not want men to have the personal assurance of salvation, and those who *apply* his theology will in the dread hour of death lose their souls. Their reliance on the Pope’s assurances cannot

of the Pope: keep the people from exercising their Christian judgment, and all is well. See footnote 9. The Pope cannot afford to let people judge his teaching by Scripture. “Emser and the Pope’s men cannot be blamed if they shrink from doing this themselves or permitting others to do it, for if they allowed us to force them to prove their contentions by clear Scripture—God help them; then their abominations would be revealed, and they could not deny that they are under the sway of Antichrist, leading astray the whole world under the cloak of the Church and the priesthood” (XVIII:1295). See also Smalcald Articles, Tract. Par. 51, 56. Pieper: “Liesse der Papst seinen Fundamentalsatz von der Dunkelheit der heiligen Schrift fahren, dann koennte er abdanken. . . . Ja, auch seine sogenannte ‘Unfehlbarkeit’ wuerde ihm nichts helfen, wenn er den Satz von der Klarheit der heiligen Schrift stehen liesse, denn dann wuerden die Christen mit der Schrift auch ueber ihn urteilen” (*Vortraege*, p. 43). *The Calvin Forum*, October, 1943: “Such a mouth could not remain closed when Tetzl came selling indulgences for actual or contemplated sin. In vain do Catholics today defend that scandal by saying that they still must cater to the ‘ignorance of many Catholics.’ It is to be feared that the whole hierarchy was reared on the rotten foundation of lay ignorance.” John Lord: “The Catholics said, in substance: ‘We, too, accept the Scriptures. . . . But who can interpret them? Can peasants and women or even merchants and nobles? . . . We, the priests, will keep Scripture out of their hands. They will get notions from it fatal to our authority; they will become fanatics; they will, in their conceit, defy us.’ . . . Few of the Catholic clergy have ever tolerated religious liberty—that is, the interpretation of the Scriptures by the people—for it is a vital blow to their supremacy, their hierarchy, and their institutions” (*op. cit.*, VI, pp. 236, 242).

stand in the face of Satan's query: Are you sure of God's grace and forgiveness? The man who has not learned to deal with God's Word must end his life in despair. Hear Luther's warning: "Thou must speak in this wise: Pope, you and your councils have made decrees—but it is for me to decide whether I may accept them or must reject them. Why? Because you will not stand and answer for me when I must die, but I must see for myself where I stand; I must be sure of my case.—For you must be so certain that it is God's Word as certain you are that you are living, nay, even more certain; for on this alone your conscience may rest. Even if all men should come, yes, the angels, too, and all the world decide something, if you cannot grasp nor form the judgment, you are lost; for you must not base your belief on the Pope nor on anyone else; you must be able to say for yourself: This God says, that He does not say; this is right, that is wrong; in no other way can you maintain yourself. . . . For if in the hour of death you rely on the Pope and the councils and say: This the Pope has said; that the councils have decided; the holy fathers Augustine, Ambrose, have so judged, the devil will soon rip apart your confidence; he will at once suggest: What if this be false? What if they have erred? If Satan gets you into such a place, you are already overcome. Therefore, take the only safe course: you must boldly and confidently say: Here is God's Word; on that I will stake body and life and would risk a thousand necks if I had them. Your neck is in danger, your life is at stake. . . . It is absolutely necessary that you be able to say: This God has said; that God has not said. When you begin to say: That man has said it, the councils have so decreed, you are building on sand" (XI:1395—1399).

He who in the dark day of spiritual affliction and in the dread hour of death pleads a human authority for his faith is lost. Satan will drive him into despair. Hear Luther once more: "When you must die, I shall not be with you, nor will the Pope be with you. If, then, you do not know the reason of your hope and say: I believe what the councils, the Pope, and our Fathers have believed, the devil will reply: Yea, but what if they have erred? And he will have the best of it and drive you into hell. Hence we must know what we believe; we must believe what God's Word teaches, not what Pope and council order and decree. For you must by no means trust in men, but base your faith on the Word of God alone. . . . If you say with other fools: Nay, let us hear what the council decides, by that we will abide, you are lost. . . . I hear you say: Yes, but questions of faith present such a confused matter that we cannot know for certain what to believe, we must wait till somebody decides it for us. I tell you: If you

take that attitude, you will fare badly. For if you, when you lie expiring on your deathbed, do not know what you should believe, neither I nor anyone else can help you. Therefore you must know yourself what to believe and not depend on any man, but cling to God's Word; only in that way can you escape the devil and hell. . . . You must be able to give the reason for your faith. You must do it in life and certainly in the hour of death. . . . If in that hour the devil finds you unprepared and unable to give the reason for your faith, he will have you in his power" (IX:1236 ff.).

When a Catholic Christian dies in peace, it is only because he refuses to follow the directives of the Pope. The ministration of the Pope can, of itself, result only in doubt, in despair. He and his Protestant colleagues are indeed what Luther calls them—murderers.

The old evil Foe means deadly woe. And do not let Satan tell you that the Pope no longer practices his wickedness. The Pope denounces the exercise of private judgment today as vehemently as ever. The papal bulls and encyclicals we have quoted emanated in the Dark Ages—and in the present age. The formal Declaration of Infallibility issued from the mouth of a modern Pope. We heard not only Erasmus and Emser, but also modern leaders of the Catholic Church such as Cardinal Gibbons inveighing against Luther's doctrine of the right of private judgment as damnable wickedness. The Pope's theologians of today have not modified the old papal teaching one whit.²³⁾ Do not let men tell

23) A few additional pronouncements. *The Truth About Catholics*, edition of March 1, 1936, says on page 2: "What is the means God has given us whereby we shall learn what He has taught? 'The Bible,' say our Protestant friends, 'and nothing but the Bible.' But we Catholics say 'No; not the Bible but the Church of God.' Christ did not say, 'Sit down and write Bibles and let every man read and judge for himself.' That injunction was reserved for the sixteenth century. . . . Christ does not say, 'He that will not read the Scriptures,' but 'he that will not hear the Church' is to be considered a heathen and publican." Di Bruno: "Catholics do well to read and study the Holy Scriptures for their greater instruction and edification, but always in a spirit of submission to the Catholic Church, so as never to prefer their own private view to the known interpretation and teaching of 'the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth' (1 Tim. 3:15). It was the unheard-of system of private interpretation, brought in by the Reformers in disparagement of that of the Church, that caused her to put in general some restrictions to private reading" (*Catholic Belief*, p. 43). Bishop John F. Noll wants men to say: "I could not lead myself to believe that God wanted me to get my religion, a knowledge of His will, by searching the Scriptures myself. . . . I read of a *Church*, from which Christ commanded me to get my faith: 'If he will not hear the Church, let him be as the heathen and publican'" (*Why You Should Be a Catholic*, p. 8 f.). Bishop Noll put his *Imprimatur* on a tract written by the Rev. J. A. O'Brien, *Is Our Religion as Good as Another*, which says: "Religious indifferentism had its unconscious origin in the principle ushered into the world by Martin Luther in the sixteenth century, namely, the principle of the supremacy of private judgment in the

you differently. The well-meaning Roman Catholic woman who says that the Roman Catholic Church "is no longer what it was in Luther's day" and therefore asked the *Witness* to "stop attacking" the Roman Catholic Church, does not realize wherein the real wickedness of the papacy consists. (See *Lutheran Witness*, 1943, p. 401.) And here is a Lutheran ex-pastor, F. W. Schuchard, who advocates union with the Catholic Church and cannot see that the Pope is the Antichrist. In a pamphlet issued by him he says: "The great leaders of the 'Hochkirche' in Germany, who are standing on the shoulders of such Lutheran giants as Pfarrer Wilhelm Loehe and Professor A. F. C. Vilmar, are looking over

interpretation of the Scriptures and as a guide in the religious life. Luther's example became infectious. Soon Calvin, Zwingli, Hus, and others proceeded to give their own divergent interpretation to Scriptural texts, and thus established creeds of their own." Father E. R. Hull: "Catholics consider that the Bible was never intended for the sole and adequate Rule of faith, partly because it is not a sufficiently exhaustive account of all of Christ's teaching, partly because its expressions of doctrine are often ambiguous and require authoritative interpretation. . . . When once convinced that the living voice of the Catholic Church is authorized and guaranteed by Christ, the only rational course is to accept that authority as a means of ascertaining Christ's teaching; and instead of resenting it, we ought to be thankful for the gift. . . . As supreme teacher, the Pope possesses authority to settle disputed points of faith and morals. . . . When, acting in his highest official capacity of teacher of the Universal Church, the Pope defines a point of faith or morals with the intent of binding the whole Church—then we believe, by virtue of Christ's promise, that the decision will be infallibly right." (See Weber, *Religions and Philosophies*, p. 57 ff.) Bishop Keane of Wyoming: "The Scriptures make no profession of being an adequate and complete record of the truths taught by Jesus Christ. . . . It cannot be the depository of the truths revealed by Jesus Christ or the organum of its propagation." (See *Theological Quarterly*, XVI, p. 198.) J. A. Moehler: "Next the proposition was advanced [by Luther] that Holy Writ is the sole fountainhead, standard, and judge in matters of faith. The Epitome says: 'Credimus, confitemur et docemus, unam regulam et normam, ex qua omnia dogmata omnesque doctores judicari oporteat, nullam omnino aliam esse, quam prophetica et apostolica, tum veteris, tum novi Testamenti Scripta': [See *Triglotta*, p. 776.] . . . The Reformers rejected the mediating authority of the Church, which guided the intellectual activity of each individual. . . . They concluded that Catholics are in error because they interpret Holy Writ according to the authority of the Church" (*Symbolism*, p. 314 f.). America, Feb. 25, 1939: "To the Protestant, every man's conscience is a sure guide for a life of virtue, but the most elementary psychology teaches that conscience is little more than a blend of desire plus the influence of the past. The Catholic need rely upon nothing within his own highly fallible spirit, but can rest his faith upon the Church. If the Protestant's conscience seems to tell him something that is at variance with what he hears in church, conscience is presumed to be right. The Protestant, then, cannot know the security of reliance upon some power, some institution older, stronger than himself." Cardinal O'Connell, in *The Pilot*, Dec. 21, 1923: "The Church is above the Scriptures, because it is the official custodian and unerring interpreter of Holy Writ."—Luther's statement covers the situation of today: "Solches greulichen Bruellens ist viel in seinen geistlichen Rechten und Bullen" (XIX:933).

the old wall of separation and are discovering all the beauty of the Catholic Church which our fathers were told to leave behind and are enjoying it more, as it seems, than their older brother, who never left his 'Father's' home. In union there is strength. The Antichrist is mobilizing and gaining ground every day, profiting mostly by the disunion of Christians." And there are many other Lutherans, and Protestants in general, who cannot see the Antichrist in the Pope. The Pope of Luther's day, some say, may have been the Antichrist, but the papacy has improved, and you must look for Antichrist somewhere else. These men either do not know that the Pope has not changed his teaching one whit, or they do not realize the antichristian wickedness of the denial of the right of private judgment and of the denouncing and anathematizing of the exercise of this blessed right. These men are derelict in their duty towards the Church. The eternal salvation of men is at stake; and shall we not lift up our warning voice? The papacy of today is the papacy of the past, and what Luther said of "all those who hold that the Pope is the judge of Scripture and that the Church rules over Scripture" (IX:86, on Gal. 1:9) must be repeated by us today in its full force.

The old evil Foe means deadly woe — he has raised up others besides the Pope who deny the common Christians the right to judge doctrine. There are the theologians of the stripe of the great Ritschl, who, when a layman charged him with denying the Scriptural doctrines of original sin, of the atonement, and of the real presence of the Lord's body and blood in the Lord's Supper and asked the synod to take action against these heresies, indignantly protested against this "monumental impertinence." "The monumental impertinence of the layman who has not made the study of scientific theology his profession, but still feels competent to criticize the results of the intellectual labor of the scholar who has devoted years of study to this subject!" Dr. Pieper says: "Das ist papistischer Greuel in der ausgepraegtesten Gestalt innerhalb einer lutherisch sich nennenden Kirche" (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1888, p. 1). The minister who wants his people to accept his teachings blindly, on the strength of the minister's superior learning and official position, has set himself up as a pope. The theologian who expects his Church, laity and clergy, to follow him, not because they have found his teaching to be in agreement with Scripture, but because they bow to his superior learning and the influence of his official position in the Church, is committing a popish abomination. And when he declares the plain laymen and the common clergy to be incompetent to examine and judge his teachings, his impertinence has reached the height of popish impudence. Such theologians have no place in Christ's Church — for "Christ

assigns the judgment not to prophets and teachers, but to the pupils, or the sheep. All teachers should and must, therefore, be subject with their teaching to the judgment of the hearers" (Luther, X:1542) — and they are a curse to the Church. Ruling the conscience of their followers, they ruin it.²⁴⁾ And having deprived their following of their spiritual judgment, they have a free hand to introduce any kind of error and heresy into the Church. Werner Elert points out what happens when the laity and clergy blindly follow the leaders. "What would have become of our Church if the right to establish doctrine had been granted, say, to the synodical officials of the land? Or to the theological faculties? The outcome might easily have been that Harnack's *Wesen des Christentums* would today be the doctrine of our Church" (*Allg. Ev.-Luth. Kirchenzeitung*, Oct. 30, 1936). — One pope was too much; shall we now have many popes?²⁵⁾

24) Oh, yes, the ministers rule the conscience of their people, but only in this wise: "Regnum enim conscientiarum vindicamus nobis per verbum und wollen uns nicht lassen nehmen. — Das Regiment ueber die Gewissen massen wir Theologen uns eigentlich an und sagen, dass er unser sei durchs Wort, wollens uns auch nicht nehmen lassen durch keinerlei Weise" (Luther. Weimar Ed., T. R. II, p. 354). The faithful ministers and theologians bind the conscience of the people with *God's Word*; where the Word of God has spoken, they will not permit men to have their own opinion. — The theologians with popish proclivities subscribe only to the first part of Luther's statement.

25) Theodore Traub said that. Discussing Dr. Otto Baumgarten's statement that "our laymen have got to learn that on the question of the institution of the Lord's Supper, albeit it is of vital interest to their faith, none but the theological experts are competent to judge," he exclaims: "Das fehlte gerade noch, dass wir statt des einen unfehlbaren Papstes die vielen religionsgeschichtlichen Professoren mit ihren vielen sich widersprechenden Behauptungen als Autoritaeten in Glaubenssachen annehmen muessten" (*Handreichung fuer Glauben und Leben*, p. 72). Let us hear some similar declarations. *The Lutheran Sentinel*, Jan. 27, 1939: "Concerning certain doctrinal disagreements, a certain pastor said: 'I cannot cope with the questions at issue and leave it to the higher theologians to make the decision.' . . . No one need despair of finding the truth however unschooled in this world's wisdom, for of the Bible it is said: 'In all things the knowledge of which is necessary to salvation, it is plain enough for those who use it rightly, whether they are ignorant or learned (Pantoppidan).'" *The Pastor's Monthly*, 1935, p. 40: "When experts become dictators, liberty ceases. This is true in the common affairs of life, and it is true in the realm of religion. What is the great liberalist movement but an attempt of experts self-styled to foist upon Christians their opinions? The smoke screen of superior scholastic attainments blinds the eyes, the sonorous tones of polished oratory tickles the ears, and men are fooled into sacrificing their right of private judgment and accepting the dicta of those who pose as angels of light and advancement while they stand in secret league with the Prince of Darkness and retrogression. No man can transfer to another his right of private judgment. The man who fails to exercise that right, be he pastor or layman, has lost his liberty. The pastor . . . who accepts the statements of supposed experts or even of those who are in truth experts, without verifying them by the Word, becomes again a slave, and instead of aiding his people in maintaining their liberty assists in

Finally, we have the great host of the Romanizing Protestants, including the Romanizing Lutherans, who are telling the individual Christian that he cannot know whether a doctrine is true, is Scriptural, till the Church has told him so, that he cannot understand, interpret Scripture without "the living voice," the *viva vox* of the Church, that he must rest his faith on the decision of some nebulous "council" of the universal Church, etc. They say, in general, that the "Church" has equal authority with Scripture and, specifically, that Scripture means nothing until the "Church" interprets it. "*The Second World Conference*," edited by L. Hodgson, states: "Some of us hold that the Church under the guidance of the Spirit is entrusted with the authority to explain, interpret, and complete the teaching of the Bible, and consider the witness of the Church as given in tradition as equally authoritative with the Bible itself." Dr. C. C. Morrison complains in *The Christian Century*, Nov. 2, 1938, that "Protestantism has given to the Church a subordinate position," not realizing that the doctrines of Christianity "all derive their Christian meaning from the continuous communal life of the Christian Church." And in his book *What Is Christianity?* he says: "Not the Bible, but the living Church, the body of Christ, is the true Word of God." Dr. H. P. Sloan: "This Christian consensus . . . is the living voice, guiding the Church from generation to generation in its interpretation of the written record" (*The Christ of the Ages*, p. 155). The Episcopalian H. P. Scratchley says in *The Living Church*, May 5, 1934: "The Bible is the Church's book, to be interpreted by its teaching, rather than the teaching of the Church by the Bible." And the Episcopalian Dr. B. I. Bell "contends for a liberal catholicism in which authority rests on the collective reaction of Christendom to revelation" (quoted from *The Living Church* in *CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY*, 1942, p. 229). There are many Lutherans, too, who are

binding upon them the yoke of bondage. . . ." Luther: "God forbid that I should presume to exercise authority over other preachers and rule over them, lest I also establish a papacy; but I will commit them to Christ, who alone shall rule over His preachers in Christendom" (X:1524).—Here would be the place to record a historical curiosity: Luther, too, played the pope! So say the Catholics. In his book *Luther Examined and Re-Examined* Dr. Dau has a chapter dealing with the charge that "Luther was the destroyer of the liberty of conscience"; "the Catholics claim that Luther had indeed adopted the principle of 'private interpretation' of the Scriptures, however, only for himself. He was unwilling to accord to others the right which he claimed for himself" (p. 190 ff.). J. Clayton has taken up this cry. "Private judgment was right enough when it coincided with Luther's judgment. It was nothing but an imposition of the devil when it was contrary to the Lutheran program." "Till his death Luther was never reconciled to the exercise of a private judgment in religion that brought departure from Lutheranism" (*op. cit.*, p. 107).

saying that without the *viva vox* of the Church the individual Christian cannot get the real meaning of Scripture and that he cannot be sure of the truth of any doctrine till "the Church has spoken." Leaders of our Church have in our days set up the principle that a doctrine can be received as Scriptural only when the Church has so decided. (See *Proceedings, Western District*, 1901, p. 53.) They have been ringing the changes on the slogan: "Die Kirche hat noch nicht gesprochen." The right to judge doctrine which the Lutherans will not grant the Pope the modern Lutherans assign to the "Church."

These men are establishing a Protestant popedom. And in suppressing the right of private judgment they are working hand in glove with the Pope for the ruin of the Church. What Luther said to the Romanists of his day, he is saying to the Protestant Romanizers of our day: "They say, we must wait till the Church has decided it; let the devil wait for that; I cannot wait that long" (VIII:100). The day of affliction and doubt and the hour of death will be upon me before the church councils have decided; and if they have decided, the devil will ask me: What if the councils have erred? (Luther; see above.) It is a fundamental error, touching the foundation of our faith, to give the "Church" the right to produce "saving" doctrine,²⁶ and there can be no personal saving faith if it is made to rest on the findings and decisions of "councils." It is an evil thing. "The theology," says Walther, "which operates on the principle: 'Die Kirche hat noch nicht gesprochen,' is a daughter of Rationalism parading in a Christian dress, a sister of Romanism hiding behind a Protestant mask, and a fecund mother of large families of heresies." (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1868, p. 134 and CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY, 1939, p. 507. See also *Lutheraner*, X, p. 191.) Read Walther's essay: "Wie verwerflich es sei, Sachen des Glaubens aus den Schriften der Vaeter begruenden und die Gewissen an die Lehrentscheidungen derselben binden zu wollen" (*Proceedings, Synodical Conference*, 1884). Ponder the words of J. G. Machen: "Those who hold to this view (that takes as the test of truth and of life the pronouncements and regulations of the Church) do not usually deny

26) Dr. Hardeland declared at a Lutheran conference in Mecklenburg: "Der Glaube ruht auf dem Wort der Propheten und Apostel. Wir haben heutiges Tages das Wort der Apostel und Propheten nirgends als in der Schrift. Von den *Dorpatern* ist ausgesprochen, dass ein *selbststaendiger*" [also nicht ein fort und fort aus der Schrift ausfliessender] Strom des geistlichen Zeugnisses fortlebe in der Kirche bis auf den heutigen Tag. Das ist ein grundstuerzender Irrtum, es ist Schwarmgeisterei, oder es naehert sich dem Romanismus. . . . Will mir der heilige Geist etwas offenbaren, etwas ganz Neues, so sage ich zu ihm: Hebe dich weg von mir, Satan!" Walther comments in *Lehre und Wehre*, 1866, p. 309: "Vortrefflich."

the authority of the Bible in so many words. What they do is to say — by implication, if not in words — that the Bible is interpreted authoritatively by the 'living church.' 'When a man becomes a minister or a member of a church,' they say in effect, 'it is his duty to support the program of that church. He may think that it is contrary to the Bible; but never mind, it is not his business in this particular matter to think; he must submit his judgment to the judgment of the councils of his church; he must let them interpret the Bible for him and must make the message that he supports conform to their shifting votes.' In sharp distinction from that view, we make the Bible, and the Bible only, the test of truth and of life. There is no living authority to interpret the Bible for us. We must read it everyone for himself and must ask God to help us as we read. A Church that commands us to support any program on the authority of the decisions of the Church is usurping in the interests of fallible men an authority that belongs only to God. . . . God grant that you, my brothers, may be ministers of another kind! May God send us ministers who come forth into their pulpits from a secret place of meditation and prayer, who are servants of Christ and not servants of men, who, be they ever so humble, are ambassadors of the King, who, as they stand behind the open Bible and expound its blessed words, can truly and honestly say, with Micaiah, the son of Imlah: 'As the Lord liveth, what the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak.' " (*The Christian Faith in the Modern World*, p. 84 f.) But the minister trained by the Romanizing Protestants cannot speak thus. He must say: "Thus saith the Church." It is an evil thing. He robs himself and his hearers of the assurance of faith. And he sells himself and his hearers into spiritual slavery. Verily, they who suppress the right of the Christian to judge doctrine and make the Church the judge and interpreter of Scripture are doing an accursed thing (Luther XIX:341. IX:86).²⁷⁾

27) We do not shut our ears to "the voice of the Church." The title of Walther's classic is: "Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Frage von Kirche und Amt." And discussing this book, Dr. Dau writes: "The right and duty of private judgment are never impaired by the interpretation of another; but it can be clarified, strengthened, and confirmed by the understanding which another has gained of a given Bible text" (*Walther and the Church*, p. 52). Similarly *The Pulpit Commentary* says: "Our teachers are not intended to see for us, which is the Roman Catholic idea, but to help us to see for ourselves." (On 1 John 2:20, 27.) Chemnitz: "Gratefully and reverently we make use of the works of the Fathers, who have in their commentaries placed many Scripture passages before us in their true light and have been of great help to us for the better understanding of Scripture." (*Examen*, loc. cit.). Luther "had a great respect for the fathers and teachers like Augustine, etc.," "for the *patres* have written many good and useful things" (XXII:1390, 1404), and listened attentively to the voice of truth speaking through his contemporaries. We cannot afford to disregard

(2) But blessed is the community where the right of private judgment is recognized and practiced. "The right of private judgment does not endanger the Church, but establishes it all the more firmly upon the foundation of the Prophets and Apostles of which Jesus Christ is the chief Cornerstone" (*The Pastor's Monthly*, op. cit.). The Church whose members are able to make an intelligent use of God's Word is in a position to perform its duties towards those within and those without the Church. There are those who need instruction, reproof, consolation. Who shall take care of them? Again: "It is the duty of the congregation to care for the purity of doctrine and life in its midst and to exercise church discipline in these matters. Matt. 18:15-18: 'Tell it unto the Church.' Rom. 16:17 'Mark them which cause divisions, etc.'" (*Proper Form of a Lutheran Congregation*, Thesis 7). Who shall perform this duty? Once more: "It is incumbent upon the congregation to do its part in building up and promoting the welfare of the church at large, bringing the Gospel to those who still sit in darkness and in the shadow of death" (Thesis 11, 62). Who shall broadcast this sweet voice of the Church? It is the duty and privilege of all Christians. "All the members of the congregation must strive to grow and be enriched, in all utterances and in all knowledge, that they may not remain children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, but try to judge by the Word of God the doctrine preached to them" (Thesis 26). All Christians, all of them incumbents of the royal priesthood, are to show forth the praises of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvelous light (Thesis 63). The clergy alone cannot do the work of the Church. The old Lutheran theologian Quistorp said: "As long as the congregation of saints will not join hands with us, letting the burden rest on the shoulders of the poor preachers alone, no betterment of the times is in sight." (See *Walther and the Church*, p.104.) The pastor cannot reach all.

the "voice of the Church." "Walther declared it to be arrogance which God would punish if, in getting doctrine out of the Scripture, a person refuses to be aided by others or would not study the writings of the great teachers, but endeavored to find everything in Scripture himself. See note to § 3 of his *Pastorale*" (F. Pieper, *Conversion and Election*, p. 96). And a writer in *The Journal of Theology of the A. L. Conference*, 1943, p. 204, says: "The Episcopalians insist that it is the Church which interprets the Scripture. To be sure, it would be folly to ignore the testimony of the Church, as to the meaning of Scripture, as that testimony comes down to us through the ages. Such an attitude would be as foolish as for a scientist to ignore the accumulated results of scientific research." We need the "voice of the Church," the help and Christian testimony of the brethren. But that does not mean that we get the saving doctrine from the Church. The writer just quoted says: "It is the Word which gives to the Church any authority which she possesses. The Word is the primary source of authority." It is folly and wickedness to look to the Church to decide questions of doctrine for us.

In many a case the layman has the first opportunity to counsel, admonish, console the brother. The layman has opportunities to meet people—in the shop, on the street—which the pastor does not have. Sometimes it is the layman, not the pastor, who is invited to address public gatherings and called upon by God to proclaim the saving Gospel. And the pastor himself is in continuous need of the counsel and consolation of the members of his church. The Church needs "lay theologians." Where the conditions prevail about which Chrysostomus complained ("He often took the laymen severely to task for leaving the study of Scripture to the monks and not caring to search the Scriptures themselves in order to see whether that which was taught in the Church agreed with Scripture"), the laymen, having no firm convictions, easily fall prey to the ecclesiastical rabble rouser. The Church needs "lay theologians." At Nicaea, "when all the bishops failed to confute a sophist, a layman at last took the floor (a man of most simple parts, not at all trained in speaking) through whom God would show that His kingdom does not stand in words or in the exalted position of the bishops, but in power. This layman confounded the sophist, who voluntarily confessed that he was beaten and turned to the Christian religion." (See *Theological Monthly*, 1929, p. 238.) There have been times, too, when the clergy refused to do its duty, and Luther had to write his treatise "on the reform of the Christian estate, to be laid before the Christian nobility of the German Nation, in the hope that God may deign to help His Church through the efforts of the laity, since the clergy, to whom this task more properly belongs, have grown quite indifferent" (X:266). And if the clergy is faithful in the performance of its duty, that does not relieve the laity of its duty. Each and every member of the Church must contribute his share if the Church shall have full success in her mission. Blessed is that community where "every Christian teaches, instructs, admonishes, comforts, and reproves his neighbor with the Word of God, wherever this is necessary" (Luther V:1038), "so that, in addition to the public ministry, the Word of God dwells richly among them, both publicly and privately, both generally and individually" (XII:394); where, in the words of Dr. Pieper, all spiritual priests proclaim the inspired Word to their fellow men, as Is. 40:9 asks them to do: "O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength," "the terms *Zion* and *Jerusalem* designating not merely the preachers, but the entire Christian Church" (*What Is Christianity?* p. 140); where, in the words of Philip Schaff, the laity no longer occupies the degrading position of passive obedience, but enjoys the privileges of the royal priesthood, the right and duty

of every believer to read the Word of God in his vernacular tongue, to go directly to the Throne of Grace, and to take an active part in all the affairs of the Church according to his peculiar gift and calling (see *Four Hundred Years*, p. 289) — blessed is that Church; it is accomplishing the work which the Lord gave it to perform.

The Christian Century, Nov. 17, 1943, declares: "The strength of Protestantism depends at last upon the laity's having sound and intelligent Christian convictions." Yes indeed; the Word of God is the strength of the Church, and that Church whose clerical and lay members form their judgments by the Word of God and speak out with the firm conviction and assurance which the Word of God gives wields a mighty force; the power of God is back of it. We want all the members of our Church to wield this power. We are not afraid, God is not afraid, to entrust them with it. Some have misgivings about this matter. *The Christian Century* said on Nov. 30, 1938: "If the right of private judgment is granted, differences of opinion are inevitable. The truth is that Protestantism has always been a little fearful of the right of private judgment and has handled that principle gingerly and with grave doubts as to its workability." The old, genuine Protestantism never had these misgivings. There is, naturally, plenty of room for misgivings when liberal Protestantism permits men to form their judgment independently of Scripture; that exercise of private judgment is pernicious. But where men subject their judgment to Scripture and form their judgment by Scripture, there is no danger of "differences of opinion." What happens is that these men proclaim the truth of God's Word with a united voice and with firm convictions. And such a laity the Church needs. *The Lutheran Sentinel*, Nov. 27, 1943, says: "In our dear Lutheran Church we take it for granted that matters of doctrine are as much a concern of the man in the pew as it is for the man in the pulpit. And we hold our parishioners responsible for carefully watching over what is proclaimed from the pulpit or taught in the official publications of our Church. From Luther we have gotten this excellent bit of sound counsel on this score: 'It is the sheep which must determine whether or no the voice is that of the Shepherd.' . . . Yes, the laity can be trusted. But it must be an *enlightened* laity, a laity which daily searches the Scriptures, studies its precious Confessions, protests against anything appearing in the church body's official organs which is not in accord with the truth or at best but an half-truth. We have absolutely nothing to fear from an enlightened, consecrated laity. What Thomas Jefferson said regarding political questions may be applied with equal force to questions in the spiritual realm: 'Whenever the people are well informed, they can be trusted with their own government.'" The

Church needs not only an enlightened clergy, but also a laity which can wield the power of God's Word. Walther wanted such men. Dr. Pfotenhauer writes: "The writings of Walther here appearing in English were originally presented not to Walther's theological classes or to pastoral conferences but to synodical conventions made up one half of lay delegates. And when they first appeared, they were eagerly read by many of our congregation members, thus helping to rear a laity well grounded in Scriptural principles" (*Walther and the Church*, p. IV). That makes for a strong Church. Blessed is the community in which the Word of Christ dwells richly in all wisdom, where all pastors and laymen, men and women, old and young, are trained to apply Scripture to every religious matter and are ready to utter their convictions before friend and foe.

And blessed are the ministers of Jesus Christ who labor to bring that about. God asks His ministers to urge upon their people the duty of exercising private judgment and to fit them to pronounce a Christian judgment. The Christian minister is glad to do that. He does not consider it a degradation of his high office to let the Christian hearers judge his teaching. They are judging it by God's Word, and in asking for their judgment he is bowing not to men, but to God. And he always bears in mind that these people are his equals. He suppresses the papistical thoughts continually arising in his flesh that only the clergy is fit to judge doctrine and run the affairs of the synod and the congregation. He does not look upon the Christian people as a witless rabble, but sees them as members of the royal priesthood, fitted by God to perform the duties of their high office.²⁸⁾ And he is happy to know that through his teaching and instruction God is fitting His people for their glorious work. Moreover, he himself loves the study of the Bible, loves to proclaim the blessed truths of Christian theology, and he has no greater joy than to have his people study and apply the same blessed truths.²⁹⁾ He wishes and prays and

28) Walther: "I bow to the humblest member coming with Scripture." "This humble member, bringing God's Word to bear against me, is so far above me as God is above a man." (See *Walther and the Church*, pp. 22, 45.) Kromayer: "We must give a more ready ear to a plain layman when he adduces Scripture than to a whole council which takes a stand contrary to Scripture." (See *CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY*, 1939, p. 594.) Kromayer and Walther express the mind of Luther: "One must believe a layman when he offers clear Scripture . . . more than the Pope or council" (XV:1549). And we have the mind of Luther: "Wenn ein Privatmann die klare Schrift fuer sich hat, dann ist ihm zu folgen, da haelt er das eine Licht vor Augen" (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1918, p. 118).

29) Could there be Christian ministers who would deliberately keep their people from acquiring solid theological knowledge? Could it be true what Luther said about conditions of his time? "Sonst, wenn die

labors for this, that "Jerusalem, that bringeth good tidings, lift up her voice *with strength*."

Blessed be Martin Luther, the restorer of the right of private judgment. J. Clayton says: "To this day Martin Luther is praised for bringing the gift of private judgment in faith and morals to all believers. On the other hand, among the Catholics Luther is held in abhorrence as an apostate monk who drew countless souls into heresy and whole nations into schism." To be sure, the papists execrate Luther. Emperor Charles V was horrified and cried out: "A single monk, led astray by private judgment, has set himself against the faith held by all Christians for a thousand years and more." And the Pope's men hate Luther with an undying hatred for having dethroned their lord as the ruler of Christendom and enthroned the believers as kings and priests. But for this very thing we love Luther and praise the name of the Lord. John Lord thus praises the work of Luther: "Thus was born the second great idea of the Reformation—the supreme authority of the Scriptures, to which Protestants of every denomination have since professed to cling. . . . No, I say, let the Scriptures be put into the hand of everybody; let there be private judgment; let spiritual liberty be revived, as in Apostolic days. . . . Then will the people arise in their power and majesty, and obey God rather than man and defy all sorts of persecution and martyrdom, having a serene faith in those blessed promises which the Gospel unfolds! . . . Thus was born the third great idea of the Reformation—the right of private judgment, religious liberty, call it what you will. It appealed to the mind and heart of Christendom. It gave consolation to the peasantry of Europe; for no family was too poor to possess a Bible, the greatest possible boon and treasure—read and pondered in the evening, after hard labors and bitter insults; read aloud to the family circle, with its inexhaustible store of moral wealth . . . its supernal counsels, its consoling and emancipating truths. . . . The Satanic hatred of this right was the cause of most of the martyrdoms and persecutions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It was the declaration of this right which emancipated Europe from the dogmas of the Middle Ages, the thralldom of Rome, and the reign of

Laien die Schrift laesen, muessten die Pfaffen auch studieren, dass sie nicht gestraft und ueberwunden wuerden" (IX:1236). And what about this statement in *The Christian Century*, Dec. 1, 1943? "The deterioration of Christian intelligence among the laity reflects an aversion to theology which exists among the clergy. . . . The deterioration of Christian intelligence among the laity reacts upon the preacher to lower the dignity of his message. He would not resort to these trivialities and irrelevancies if he were preaching to a congregation in, let us say, Scotland, where some vestige of the old-time Christian intelligence among the laity still survives. . . ."

priests. Why should not Protestants of every shade cherish and defend this sacred right?" (*Op. cit.*, pp. 235, 239, 241, 243.) In a sermon on the restoration of Christian liberty through the Reformation, based on 1 Cor. 3:21-23, Dr. Walther said: "Christ says to His Christians: 'One is your Master, One is your Father,' but the Pope said: 'I am your master and your pope, that is, the father of all Christians.' Paul says to the Christians: 'Not that we have dominion over your faith; I speak not by commandment,' and Peter warns all ministers of the Church: 'Neither as being lords over God's heritage'; but the language the Pope, bishops, and priests use with the Christians is: We will, order, and command; and what we order you to do and believe, you must do and believe; if you refuse, you will be banned and die under the curse of God as heretics. . . . Then came Luther. He had discovered the meaning of a glorious truth of Scripture; it had revived his despairing soul; and with a loud and glad voice he proclaimed it to stricken Christendom: 'All things are yours'. . . . 'All things are yours' who believe! That was the proclamation putting men into possession of all the blessings of salvation gained by Christ and filling the hearts of millions of doubting and despairing souls with the consolation and hope of eternal life. And it did something else. By means of the article: 'All things are yours' who believe! Luther restored the whole body of the evangelical doctrine to the Church. The word: 'All things are yours,' who believe! was the sun in the light of which the mystery of iniquity, hidden for long centuries, stood revealed and naked before the eyes of all who would see. This was the stone from David's sling which felled the monster who had for so long insulted Israel of the New Testament, ended his tyrannical rule over the hearts, souls, and consciences of the Christians, and restored to them their Christian liberty. 'All things are yours,' who believe! That was God's thunder clap, at which the priests who had been barring the way to the paradise of grace, who had thrust themselves between Christ and the Christians, fled in dismay and terror. 'All things are yours,' who believe! Emblazoned on the banner floating above our Evangelical Church is the glorious legend: 'All things are yours!'" (*Lutherische Brosamen*, pp. 595, 598.)

Blessed are we if we jealously guard the right of private judgment and exercise it to the full. Let us heed Walther's exhortation: "But to you, my dear brethren and sisters in the faith, I say: Know what you possess in Christ; and if it were possible that we, your pastors, should betray our trust as custodians of this great treasure, do you boldly make use of your dearly bought privileges; let the earth burst asunder, let the hierarchs raise a hue and cry against you—it is and will remain true for all

times and must be preached to all true believers: 'All things are yours; and ye are Christ's.' Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage! Amen." (*Loc. cit.*) Let us follow the example of Luther, who would not permit any man to rule over his conscience, but did make Christ its absolute ruler. "In his very last sermon the great champion of private judgment and liberty of conscience declared once more (XII:1260 ff.): 'I grant that the emperor, king, pope, cardinal, princes, and lords are prudent and wise; but I will believe on my Lord Christ alone: He is my Master and Lord, whom God has bidden me to hear and to learn of Him what is true, divine wisdom. . . . Therefore, dear Pope, your claim to sit in Christendom as lord and to have authority to decide what I should believe and do, that I cannot accept. For here is the Lord whom alone we should hear in these matters. . . . This, and much more, might be said on this Gospel, but I am too feeble; let this suffice. God give us grace that we receive His precious Word with thanksgiving and increase and grow in the knowledge and faith of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and continue steadfast in the confession of His holy Word unto the end, Amen!'" (*Theological Quarterly*, 1911, p. 254.)

(To be continued)

TH. ENGELDER

Nathan Soederblom

I

Lars Olof Jonathan (Nathan) Soederblom was born in the parish of Troenoe, Sweden, January 15, 1866, the son of Rector Joseph Soederblom and his wife. He received the degree of Candidate of Philosophy at the University of Uppsala in 1886 and the degree of Candidate of Theology in 1892. He was appointed pastor of the Swedish church in Paris in 1894 and also seamen's pastor at Dunkerque, Calais, and Boulogne. While in Paris, he pursued his studies and graduated from the *École des hautes études*, in the section of the science of religion, in 1898, receiving the degree of Doctor of Theology from the University of Paris in 1901. The same year he was called to the chair of comparative religion in the University of Uppsala. In 1914 he was made Archbishop of Sweden.

The honorary degree of Doctor of Theology was conferred upon him by Geneva, Oslo, St. Andrews, Glasgow, and Greifswald, the honorary Doctor of Philosophy by the universities of Uppsala, Greifswald, Bonn. Other honorary degrees he received from Berlin and Oxford.

In the work *When the Hours Course and Change*, 1909, there