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Miscellanea

Ostentatious Display of Piety, an Alarming Symptom

The Christian must show his faith in his Savior by a life of good works. "Faith worketh by love," Gal. 5:6. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them," Eph. 2:10. The good works of the Christian should be *seen of men*. Jesus says: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven," Matt. 5:16. Peter says: "Have your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, *which they shall behold*, glorify God in the day of visitation," 1 Pet. 2:12. The Savior says: "By this shall all men *know* that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another," John 13:35.

We much deplore that among people calling themselves Christians much worldliness is found; that by an ungodly life they give offense to the world and cause the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, 2 Sam. 12:14. Christians are much in need of being encouraged by the mercies of God to lead a godly life, to show forth their faith by good works, to let the world surrounding them *see* that they are Christians. An exhibition of piety that is the spontaneous expression of a heart filled with the love of Christ, that seeks to help others and glorifies God, not self: such a piety is to be commended, for it is pleasing to God.

The kind of piety that I have in mind when speaking of an ostentatious display of piety, was found with the Pharisees: "All their works they do for to be seen of men; they make broad their phylacteries and enlarge the borders of their garments," Matt. 23:5. This holier-than-thou attitude of the Pharisees had for its motive human applause. This kind of piety the Lord condemned. The Pharisees made a pretense of having great zeal for the religion of their fathers. They made broad their phylacteries in order to draw attention to their religiousness and to their strict attention to the observance of all details of the Law. They enlarged the borders of their garments as a badge of their extraordinary piety. "They say and do not," said the Lord. They appeared to be very pious, but, after all, in their daily life they did not show it. Their religion was outward, not inward. What hypocrisy this all was we learn from the words of the Savior Himself when He addressed these hypocrites, saying: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayer; therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin and have omitted the weightier matters of the Law, judgment, mercy, and faith; these ought ye to have done and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind

guides, which strain at a gnat and swallow a camel! Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity," Matt. 23:14, 23-28.

Of this same ostentatious display of piety the Jews in the days of Isaiah were guilty, as we read in Isaiah 1. They brought the multitude of their sacrifices, burnt offerings, and the fat of fed beasts; they offered the blood of bullocks, of lambs, and of he-goats; they offered incense; they kept the sabbath, the new moons, and the appointed feasts; they spread forth their hands in prayer when in the Temple for their solemn meetings. But the Lord said that it was all iniquity, all an abomination to Him; He was weary and could no longer bear it, for those Jews in their daily life did, after all, not give evidence of real piety of the heart. The Lord said unto them: "Your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow," Is. 1:15-17. Those Jews were people of whom the Lord said: "This people draw near Me with their mouth and with their lips do honor Me, but have removed their heart far from Me," Is. 29:13, Mark 7:6.

An ostentatious display of piety is a dangerous symptom. The Lord Himself says so. He condemns an ostentatious religion. He warns us against sounding our trumpet in order to have glory of men; against loving to pray standing in the synagog and in the corner of the streets that we may be seen of men; against using vain repetitions in our prayers, thinking that we shall be heard for our much speaking. "Be ye not like unto them," says the Lord, Matt. 6:1-8. Sincerity of worship does not call for a theatrical performance in order to secure the admiration of men, perhaps even of God Himself; but sincerity of worship demands the giving of one's self as a poor sinner to God in all sincerity and simplicity.

Whence an ostentatious display of piety? How do people get that way? Both the Pharisees in the days of Christ and the Jews in the day of Isaiah had forsaken the Lord, cast aside the Word of God, had departed from the religion of their fathers; nevertheless, they continued to make an outward display of religion with great pomp and ceremony. The Pharisees boasted that they were the children of God. "We be Abraham's seed," they said. "We have one father, even God." But Jesus said unto them: "Ye are of your father the devil," John 8:33, 41, 44.

An observation which we cannot fail to make when we study the Bible and the history of the Church is that as soon as the inward spiritual life decreases, the tendency to rely on external acts and forms increases. The inward spiritual life declines as soon as, and in the measure in which, Christians neglect to give first place in their life to the Word of God, by which alone spiritual life is created, nourished, and sustained. The history of the Church shows that whenever and wherever the preaching of the Word of God declined, when doctrinal preaching was neglected, when the sermons became shallow, then people turned to outward forms and ceremonies as a sort of "compensation." In the second and third centuries already the neglect of the Word of God brought on asceticism and ceremonialism. Asceticism then led to monasticism. A cardinal fault of the religious services of the Middle Ages was the undue prominence of the liturgical element over the didactic. Underestimating the place which doctrinal content of the Word of God is to have in the Church and in the life of the Christians also gave rise to the slogan "Not creeds, but deeds." Neglect of the Word of God does not make for a virile Christianity. Those who act very sanctimoniously often neglect the common duties of their calling, and their conscience does not seem to trouble them. In their dealings with their fellow men they do not always show forth that charity or love of which Paul speaks in his First Epistle to the Corinthians: "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things," 1 Cor. 13:4-7. Such people are very much like the Pharisees who devoured widows' houses and for a pretense made long prayer, Matt. 23:14.

The importance of the Word of God is spoken of in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession in such words as these: "With us the pastors and ministers of the churches are compelled publicly [and privately] to instruct and hear the youth; and this ceremony produces the best fruits. [And the Catechism is not a mere childish thing, as is the bearing of banners and tapers, but a very profitable instruction.] Among the adversaries in many regions [as in Italy and Spain], during the entire year no sermons are delivered except in Lent. [Here they ought to cry out and justly make grievous complaint; for this means at one blow to overthrow completely all worship. For of all acts of worship that is the greatest, most holy, most necessary, and highest, which God has required as the highest in the First and the Second Commandment, namely, to preach the Word of God. For the ministry is the highest office in the Church. Now, if this worship is omitted, how can there be knowledge of God, the doctrine of Christ, or the Gospel?] But the chief service of God is to teach the Gospel." (*Trigl.*, 325, 327.) "The true adornment of the churches is godly,

useful, and clear doctrine, the devout use of the Sacraments, ardent prayer, and the like. Candles, golden vessels [tapers, altar cloths, images], and similar adornments are becoming, but they are not the adornment that properly belongs to the Church. But if the adversaries make worship consist in such matters and not in the preaching of the Gospel, in faith, and the conflicts of faith, they are to be numbered among those whom Daniel describes as worshipping their God with gold and silver, Dan. 11:38." (*Trigl.*, 401.)

The bowing of the head, the folding of the hands, the bending of knees, the making of the sign of the cross, the robed procession with the crucifer leading, the burning of candles, the wearing of robes, the making of long prayers: none of these things are a sure sign of inward piety; they may or they may not be. If they are used for an ostentatious display of a holier-than-thou attitude, they are an abomination to the Lord. "The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, for he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God and approved of men," Rom. 14:17-18. But righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost are not produced and sustained by genuflections, the wearing of the stole, elaborate ceremonies and the like, but by the power of the Holy Ghost through His Word. As soon as the sacrificial part of our worship is given first place and the sacramental part second place, the Church begins to decay. And as soon as the individual begins to measure his piety by the amount of an outward display and by a holier-than-thou attitude instead of the inward renewing of the heart by repentance and faith, he is in great danger of coming under the Lord's condemnation: "They honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me," Mark 7:6.

In the final analysis, those who make an ostentatious display of their religion, especially if they do this by means of self-chosen works which God has not at all commanded, are in danger of making their Christianity consist in what they do rather than in the salvation procured for them by Christ, given by grace and received by faith. Of the Pharisees, who were past masters in putting on an ostentatious display of their piety, it is said that they "trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others," Luke 18:9.

After all, David gave expression to true godliness when he said: "Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it; Thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise," Ps. 51:16-17.

Such true inward piety will then also produce in the life of the Christian what God requires: "to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God," Micah 6:8.

J. H. C. FRITZ

The Question of Altar Fellowship According to The Halle Resolutions ¹

By MATTHIAS SCHULZ

The fourth synod of the Confessing Church in its meeting at Halle in 1937² discussed, among other questions, the altar fellowship between Lutherans and Reformed. Due to the controversy between Hitler and the Church and, later, through the war itself, the discussion of this topic receded into the background. However, the formation of the EKID at Treysa has again raised the issue of altar fellowship, and all Lutherans are compelled to study these resolutions and to come to a definite conclusion.

The pertinent resolutions of the fourth convention of the Evangelical Church of the Old Prussian Union read as follows: "In view of the present emergency and the question whether we are doing the right thing in the light of the Scriptures and our Confessions if we, Lutherans, Reformed, and Evangelicals, unite for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, this Synod subjects itself to the word of Scripture 1 Cor. 10:16-17: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." On the basis of this Scripture the Synod declares unanimously: (1) Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, who became incarnate, sacrificed Himself on the cross, and rose again, is Himself the gift of grace in the Lord's Supper. (2) This implies for the question of altar fellowship: Altar fellowship between Lutherans, Reformed, and Evangelicals is not justified by the situation in the Union. (The meaning no doubt is that there is no unitive element in the Prussian Union to warrant altar fellowship. — F. E. M.) Separate altars for Lutherans, Reformed, and Evangelicals is not justified in the light of the 16th century controversies. Altar fellowship has its foundation not in our understanding of the Lord's Supper, but in the grace of Him who is the Lord of it. (3) The existing differences in the doctrine of the Lord's Supper concern the manner in which

¹ This paper was read at the joint meeting of the Breslau and Saxon Free Churches in January at Wiesbaden in Germany. The author, Lic. Matthias Schulz, pastor of the Breslau Synod in Berlin-West, has been commissioned by his Synod to accompany President Petersen of the Saxon Free Church to attend our centennial convention upon the invitation of Dr. Behnken. The Rev. Schulz was in America on a visit prior to the war. The Halle Resolutions play a large part in the formation of the EKID at the present time, and are widely discussed in German theological circles. The undersigned is responsible for the translation and condensation of Lic. Schulz's essay. — F. E. Mayer.

² This Church was organized as a loose confederation by those German clergymen who refused to submit to the demands of Hitler and who followed the so-called Barmen Confessions of 1934. This group is now represented in the EKID. (F. E. M.)

the Lord communicates Himself to us in the Lord's Supper. They do not refer to the fact that the Lord Himself is the gift of Communion. (4) Therefore the acceptance of the Reformed Confession is no ground to exclude the Reformed from the Communion service in a congregation of the Lutheran Confession, or (5) vice versa. (6) Joint Communion celebrations between Lutherans, Reformed, and Evangelicals are not contrary to the Scriptural administration of the Sacrament."

The theses begin with the question whether in the light of Scripture and the Confessions altar fellowship may be practiced. It is evident that both the Lutheran and the Reformed Confessions of the 16th century are meant. It is historically established that the Lutheran Confessions do not sanction altar fellowship with the Reformed. True, this has been denied. Wangemann, for example, in *Una Sancta*, 1883, p. 269, endeavors to prove that the original Lutheran Church did not consider the divergent views concerning the Lord's Supper held by the Reformed as a sufficient reason to deny the Lord's Supper to them. This, however, is not the case in the light of the Old Church orders, and especially in the light of the Augsburg Confession, Art. X. A rejection of the contrary doctrine implies *eo ipso* a refusal to practice altar fellowship. This means that if the Lutheran Church is to change its practice, it must first change its doctrine and admit that either Zwingli or Calvin was correct and that we have advanced beyond our fathers and are ready to adopt a new confession according to our new insights into the meaning of the Lord's Supper. This is undoubtedly the meaning of the Halle Resolutions when they adduce 1 Cor. 10:16 f. to support the current practice of altar fellowship. It is well known that these words have been interpreted according to the Calvinistic as well as according to the Lutheran view, that is, both in the sense that faith effects a spiritual communion and in the sense of the Real Presence. That St. Paul can have only the Real Presence in mind is evident from the entire context of the 10th chapter, which points to the relation between bread and wine to the body and blood of Christ. Furthermore, these phrases are supplemented by the statements in chapter 11, in which not only the words of institution are repeated, but where the doctrine of the Real Presence is expressed in the most clear terms, especially in v. 27. The Halle Resolutions, however, mention no word of this. In the first resolution the general statement is made that Jesus Christ Himself is the gracious Gift of His Supper. This is not the point, for all Confessions are united on this: the Roman Catholic, the Lutheran, Calvin, and Zwingli. The question is whether this general statement is sufficient to give expression to the real essence of the Lord's Supper, or whether the real essence has not been overlooked or put aside. In other words, the question really is, whether the *manner* in which Jesus is the gracious Gift is not an essential part of the right understanding of the Sacrament. Before we answer, we must again

read the conclusions (cp. Point 2) which the Halle Resolutions draw from the first point. The adherents of the Prussian Union (*Unierte*) are granted altar fellowship with Lutherans and Reformed though they have not come to a new and deeper understanding of the Lord's Supper. On the contrary, the (Prussian) Union recognizes the divergent opinions of the Lutheran and the Reformed and insists that both should be recognized and that the Lutheran as well as the Reformed remain with his Confession. The only condition is that the divergence in this doctrine should not erect barriers. The Halle Resolutions deny the validity of this position. They likewise reject that separate altars for Lutherans, Reformed, and Evangelicals may be justified on the basis of the doctrinal controversies of the sixteenth century. This apparent contradiction is said to be resolved by the new understanding of the Lord's Supper advocated by the Halle Resolutions, to wit, that the Lord Himself is the Gift of His Supper. Therefore the conclusion in point 2 reads: "Altar fellowship has its foundation not in our understanding of the Lord's Supper, but in the grace of Him who is the Lord of it." What does this mean? Evidently no more than that the historically established and confessionally fixed contrasts have no essential or factual value. They exist only in our human understanding. Whether Jesus is truly present or whether the elements are only symbols, whether the believers receive Christ spiritually or orally has no significance for the true understanding of the Lord's Supper. They are only questions of an intellectual understanding, which must lose all significance when we consider that the Lord Himself is in His Sacrament. In this light Resolution No. 3 means that the manner of Christ's self-communication must be left to the individual as an open question. As long as we maintain that the Lord Himself is the Gift of His Sacrament, all other questions are unessential. Thus the controversy perpetuated in the various Confessions is *passé*.

But is this really the case? True, the differences in the doctrine of the Lord's Supper concern themselves with the manner of our Savior's self-communication. But the manner is not left for us to decide, but has already been determined by the Lord of His Church. This has been the claim of Luther and the Lutheran Confessions. Luther did not write 1 Cor. 10:16-17—as important as this word was for Luther—but "This is My body" on the table during the Marburg Colloquy. (See Gollwitzer, *Luthers Abendmahlslehre*, p. 109). The Lutheran Church, following Luther, believes that Christ communicates Himself in a very specific way, namely, that under the bread and the wine He offers His body and blood to be received orally. This has never been an open question in the Lutheran Church. The Reformed hold an entirely different view. They consider the manner of Christ's presence a question of secondary importance and are willing to follow either Zwingli or Calvin, yes, to bear even the Lutheran view. In this respect the Halle Resolutions are a triumph

of the Reformed spirit (of indifference). The Lutheran Church, however, believes that the "sacramental presence" constitutes the characteristic and valuable element in the Sacrament. It is, of course, true that Christ is always present in His Church, for He offers Himself as a gracious Gift through the Word. But in the Sacrament of the Altar He does something special, for here He unites Himself by means of His word more specifically through His body and His blood to the sacramental elements. By means of the oral manducation we receive in, with, and under the elements His body and blood. And this applies also to the godless. This is His institution: His Apostles give witness thereto, and therefore it is the only Scriptural and the only correct understanding of the Lord's Supper. Therefore the Church dare not make the question of the manner of the Lord's self-communication an open question. The Lutheran Church has at all times considered the Lord's Supper a confessional act of the first order and for the sake of the truth will abide in it. For that reason our shibboleth must remain, "No Communion fellowship with the Reformed." Luther and the Lutheran Church are convinced that the understanding of the essence and purpose of the Sacrament is relatively simple so long as one will not grant human reason the right to determine the meaning of Christ's words. If our doctrine concerning the manner of His self-communication is determined on the basis of human reason, not only essentially divergent opinions will evolve, but finally a clear understanding of what the Lord's Supper really is will also disappear. Nothing remains but a few very broad statements with which nothing has been gained and nothing has been decided. Is this not intimated in the Halle Resolutions when the statement is made "Jesus Himself is the gracious Gift in the Communion"?

This means that the Lutheran Church would have to forsake its former position, as the Halle Resolutions plainly indicate when the statement is made that altar fellowship between Lutherans and Reformed and Evangelicals is not contrary to the Scriptural administration of the Lord's Supper. This is the *nervus rerum*. According to Lutheran theology the correct administration requires not only the teaching of the correct doctrine, but also the rejection of false doctrine. When the Halle Resolutions demand the opposite and do so with an appeal to Scriptures, then we must express our complete dissent from these resolutions.

Formation of Canadian Lutheran Council Postponed

Representatives of various Lutheran bodies in Canada, including those of the three Canadian Districts of the Missouri Synod, met in Winnipeg on April 17 and 18 to give further consideration to the formation of the Canadian Lutheran Council, and if so indicated, to effect formal organization of this new body. The Missouri Synod Districts were not yet in a position to become members of the Council, inasmuch as the constitution

which had been drafted in 1945 had not been approved by them because of certain sections which they had not considered acceptable. All three Districts were agreed, however, in their desire to join hands with other Lutheran groups in Canada in such relations and projects in the field of externals where joint activity and co-operation are possible without violating Scriptural principles. The very fine work which these various Lutheran groups have performed jointly in Canadian Lutheran World Relief was to them an indication of the feasibility of working together in similar or related projects, and of the usefulness to the Lutheran Church as such of an organization such as the proposed Council. To bring their influence to bear in the direction of having a constitution adopted that would be in agreement with these principles and which would enable them also eventually to join the Council, was the prime purpose of Missouri Synod representation at this meeting.

The first part of the meeting was conducted as a free conference at which certain revisions to the proposed constitution were discussed. These had been brought forward from within the U. L. C. A. and from a joint committee appointed by the Missouri Synod Districts. Both sets of proposed revisions dealt with the question of participating bodies in the proposed Council and with the scope in which the Council would carry on its work. It had been felt in some quarters of the U. L. C. A. that not the Canadian units of the Lutheran Church—as had been proposed in the original draft—but the general bodies to which these units belonged should be the participating bodies. This had been submitted to the provisional chairman as a proposed change in the constitution. The Missouri Synod committee, on the other hand, felt that one of the important purposes of the Canadian Lutheran Council would be defeated by the adoption of this revision and submitted the proposal that the original interpretation of "participating bodies" should stand. This proposal found support with the representatives of the Canada District of the A. L. C. After a somewhat lengthy discussion the proposal of the U. L. C. A. committee was adopted, the representatives of the Canada District, A. L. C., and the Missouri Districts dissenting.

Another important issue raised for discussion was the scope in which the proposed Council was to work. It appeared that most of the representatives of the groups other than those of the Missouri Synod had envisioned the work of the Council as embracing all areas of church work, regardless of any doctrinal differences on the part of the participating bodies. The Missouri Synod representatives insisted that co-operation and joint activity in such spheres as missions, education, student work, and deaconess work should be carried on by the Council only after doctrinal unity had been achieved, and that until such doctrinal unity had become a reality, the work of the Council would have to be restricted to the field of externals. Others pressed the opinion

that the scope of the Council's work should not be so restricted and that the constitution should be so worded that an all-out co-operation should be made possible. By another affirmative vote, the A. L. C. group and the Missouri Synod delegation again dissenting, it was resolved not to restrict the scope of the Council's work in any way.

On the second day of the meeting the authorized councilors went into executive session with the purpose of proceeding with the formal organization of the Council. It appears, however, that new difficulties were now encountered with respect to the revised constitution which had been presented. Certain revisions had immediately been implemented, stipulating among other things that the approval of the constitution on the part of at least five participating bodies should be required before the Council could be formed, and it had now developed that organization could not be effected because of a lack of sufficient approvers. Those present finally resolved to refer the proposed constitution back to the various Lutheran bodies which have congregations in Canada, and thus having failed in its objective, the meeting was adjourned until such a time when the various Lutheran groups had taken action on the proposed constitution.

Dr. Nils Willson, who had been provisional chairman, and who had thus far been most active in guiding the steps that were to lead to the formation of the Canadian Lutheran Council, tendered his resignation, and Dr. Mars Dale, president of the Norwegian Lutheran Church in Canada, was elected to succeed him.

W. C. EIFERT

