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F. E. Mayer

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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The *Una Sancta* in Luther's Theology*

By F. E. MAYER

Luther's concept of the *Una Sancta* was first and last soteriological; not sociological, not statistical, not organizational, not eschatological. Luther's emphasis on soteriology in his definition of the Church can be understood only in the light of his theological principle. Scholastic theology had not satisfied him. Its Aristotelian method had failed to bring assurance of peace to his heart, and its autosoteric principles had been unable to quiet his conscience. The Apostle's message: "The sinner is justified by faith alone," changed Luther's theology both as to method and to content. His theology became entirely Christocentric; in the Preface to his *Commentary on Galatians* he says: "Only one article rules in my heart, namely, faith in Christ. From this article all my theological thoughts by day and night proceed, and to this one article they again return." Luther's greatness as a theologian consisted in this, that he never veered from the material principle of his theology, justification by faith in Christ's vicarious work. For him the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation concerned themselves with only one great truth, man's redemption through Jesus Christ. The entire Scriptures were for him only the manger bed where Christ, the world's Savior, is cradled, and in his opinion he was the best theologian who was able to find Christ everywhere in the Scriptures. Christ's vicarious atonement appropriated by the sinner through faith is the *leitmotif* of his theological symphony.

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Luther could therefore never treat theology as a series of independent and isolated dogmatic statements, each fitting nicely into a specific compartment. He never discussed a theological point *in vacuo*. His theology is truly a *corpus doctrinae*, in which each doctrine stands in intimate relation to every other doctrine and all doctrines retain their proper relation to the material principle of his theology, the sinner's salvation through faith in Christ's vicarious work. Wilhelm Walther says that one will find in Luther's theology only large quarry stones, and that he who seeks in his writings cut stones and architectural embellishments will be sorely disappointed. Luther is too great for such piecemeal theology.¹ It is therefore impossible to understand his concept of the *Una Sancta* independent of his central doctrine.

I

"A child of seven years knows what the Holy Christian Church is, namely, the holy believers and lambs who hear the voice of their Shepherd"; this is Luther's definition of the *Una Sancta*.² According to his belief the *Una Sancta* is never anything but the congregation of believers, or saints. It is always the sum total of all who through Word and Sacrament have come to faith in Christ as their Savior. The principle of the Reformation: Faith embraces the grace of God in Christ promised and given to man in the Gospel—this determines Luther's definition of the *Una Sancta*, and conversely his definition of the Church is in reality a compend and epitome of his entire theology.

II

Luther had little interest in an empirical Church as such—be it visible Christendom, a national Church, a denomination, or a federation of churches. In his opinion there was only one Church in the Scriptural and proper meaning, the *Una Sancta*. As far as is known, he never distinguishes between a visible and an invisible Church as we are wont to do. Because the various meanings of the word "church" have caused confusion in the Church³ Luther avoided the term "*Kirche*" in his New Testament translation lest his readers would associate the new Testament *ecclesia* with a visible organization. Not once did he translate *ecclesia* with "*Kirche*," but always with "*Gemeinde*," assembly, congregation. In the Large Catechism

he says that "the word *Kirche* is really nothing but a common assembly, and is not a German but a Greek idiom, *kyria*. Therefore in genuine German it ought to be called a Christian congregation or assembly (*Gemeinde*), or best of all a holy Christendom." According to Luther there is only one true Church, the invisible *Una Sancta*, and the empirical Church, "the church in an improper sense," may be called a church only by synecdoche; that is, it is a Church only because of the true believers to whom the hypocrites and unbelievers are joined in outward association. The unbelievers who outwardly belong to an ecclesiastical organization were considered by Luther members of the Church as little as the mud on the wheels belongs to the essence of a wagon. To mingle believers and unbelievers in the *Una Sancta* was for Luther a mingling of Law and Gospel. According to his theology the believers and unbelievers are in two separate realms: the godly under the Gospel with its promises of God's grace, the unbelievers under the Law with its demands, threats, and punishment. The unbelievers can be dealt with only through coercive measures, moral persuasion, or social pressure, or even physical force. The Church, however, is the invisible company of all who live under the Gospel of God's grace, freed from the demands, threats, and coercion of the Law. The idea of a theocracy, in which the physical and the spiritual, the Law and the Gospel, a visible society and the invisible *Una Sancta* are mingled, is foreign to Luther's theology. In accord with Luther's theological principle, faith in Christ is the only criterion of membership in the true Church, and faith is in its very nature invisible, for it embraces spiritual and heavenly blessings, forgiveness of sin, conquest over death, peace with God. Therefore the Church is invisible even as the Rock, Christ, on which it is built is believed and not seen. In his treatise against Emser of Leipzig, Luther says that when we confess, "I believe the Holy Christian Church," we declare that the Church is invisible. What we believe we cannot see and perceive with the senses. Since faith in Christ alone makes us members of the Church, and since faith is invisible, therefore the Church in its proper sense must be invisible.

It has been said that Luther's *Una Sancta* is no more than a metaphysical abstraction, a Platonic idea, a noumenal concept, or just a nice theological term, having no practical value;

and that an effective program for church activity can be realized only in the visible Church. But Luther could not share the view that in visible Christendom, with its denominational divisions, the seamless robe of the *Una Sancta* has been shredded into so many rags and tatters that it is beyond recovery, that the majestic term *Una Sancta* denotes a mere abstraction and vague hypothesis, and that there is apparently nothing in our church-life experience to correspond to the ideal of the *Una Sancta*.⁴ Even in America, Luther would maintain that his *Una Sancta* was a reality and not an idea which is required to be supplemented by a Platonic phenomenon whereby the idea of the *Una Sancta* would become perceptible, such as a congregation, presbytery, synod, consistory. The *Una Sancta* was not a vague hypothesis for Luther. He was convinced that while invisible, the *Una Sancta* had unmistakable marks of its reality. He held that wherever the Gospel is preached and the Sacraments are administered, the Holy Spirit is building the *Una Sancta* by engendering faith in the hearts of men through the means of grace.⁵

III

In controversies the pendulum easily swings from one extreme to another. Luther's early conflict with Rome revolved very largely about Rome's claim that the visible Church is the highest religious authority. Between 1517 and 1521 this conflict brought into sharp relief the antipodal positions of Rome on the one extreme and of Luther on the other. Here a visible *Una Sancta Ecclesia, extra quam salus non est*; there the invisible congregation of believers and saints. Here the visible hierarchy; there the spiritual priesthood of believers. Is Luther's conflict with an external and hierarchical church responsible for his swinging toward a diametrically opposite view? Is Grisar perhaps right in his claim that Luther's view of the church grew in part out of resentment against the official Church which had refused to sanction his new doctrine and in part out of a desire to justify his defection from the Church? The fact is that Luther's spiritual concept of the *Una Sancta* was a *fait accompli* long before the indulgence controversy of 1517. Karl Holl has shown from Luther's *Commentary on the Psalms* (1513—1515) that as early as 1513 the material principle of Luther's theology, justification by faith — *sola fide* — was quite clearly fixed in his mind. As soon as *sola fide* — the

just shall live by faith— had become a living reality for Luther, his approach to theology as a whole and to the various doctrines in particular changed completely. He now viewed ecclesiology from the standpoint of *sola fide* and could not conceive of the Church otherwise than a congregation of believers, *communio fidelium*.⁶ We shall therefore be compelled to reverse Grisar's verdict to read: Luther's controversy with Rome grew out of his new concept of the Church.

According to Luther, *sola fide* is unthinkable without *sola gratia*. Faith and grace were for him always correlative terms. After 1513 Luther no longer viewed *gratia* as a virtue in man, but as God's unmerited favor toward the undeserving sinner, in short, as a promise. But a promise can be received *sola fide*. Therefore both *gratia* and *fides* exclude all human merit and extol the gracious activity of God as the only source of man's salvation. Luther had tried the various human ways to God, but in vain. Neither asceticism nor mysticism led his searching soul to God. But Luther's search ended when he experienced the God-toward-man activity. God's gracious action, so Luther held since 1513, had without any merit or co-operation on his part redeemed, called, converted, justified, and sanctified him, had translated him from the realm of sin into the company of saints. And this gracious activity Luther found expressed in the New Testament Reign of God (*basileia tou theou*). This explains the fact that *basileia* and *ecclesia* are like the convex and the concave in this theological circle. When Luther thought of the *Una Sancta*, his attention was focused first on God's gracious activity, and he placed the *basileia* into the forefront of his ecclesiology. For according to Luther *basileia* is a verbal noun denoting a royal activity rather than a royal realm.⁷ His opponents defined the *basileia* as a visible kingdom comprising both good and evil.⁸ Luther, however, maintained over and over, e. g., in a Christmas sermon on Isaiah 7, that *basileia* is not a visible realm, is not constituted of men at all, but denotes God's gracious rulership, the Savior's redemptive work, and the Spirit's reign in the hearts of men. Luther's *basileia* is vertical rather than horizontal, a God-toward-man activity. This is the dominant thought of his entire theology as is brought out in the explanation of the Second Article of the Creed in his Small Catechism.

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, in order that I may be His own, and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.⁹

In a sermon for the Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity, Luther says that in His death upon the cross Christ established the charter of God's kingdom, a most glorious charter, because it guarantees man a threefold freedom—freedom from the guilt of sin, from the terror of death, and the power of Satan. This threefold liberty was a living reality for Luther. In his experience sin and the resultant wrath of God were more than theological phrases. He did not view sin as a tension between man's better and worse self, but as human rebellion against God; yes, as an attempted deicide. Sin, in his view, was not a wrong against the sinner himself, nor against his fellow man, but always and finally against God. Therefore the greatness of sin, says Luther, can be measured by one yardstick only, namely, the infinitude of God's holy majesty. The wrath of God over sin was for him a stark reality.¹⁰ Therefore freedom from the accusing conscience and the assurance of God's grace and favor were for him in truth the world's greatest charter. And God's *basileia* is in Luther's opinion that gracious activity which makes this charter a living and vital reality in the hearts of the believers. It was his endeavor to inculcate this concept of the Kingdom of God in the hearts of young and old. Hence the following question and answer in his Large Catechism:

What is the Kingdom of God? Nothing else than what we learned in the Creed, that God sent His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, into the world to redeem and deliver us from the power of the devil, and to bring us to Himself, and to govern us as a King of righteousness, life, and salvation against sin, death, and an evil conscience, for which end He has also bestowed His Holy Ghost, who is to bring these things home to us by His Holy Word, and to illumine and strengthen us in the faith by His power.

Luther's theology is throughout soteriological, and therefore also his ecclesiology has its starting point, center, and final end in God's gracious activity, in short, it is the theology of

basileia tou theou. According to his view, the Kingdom of God is not eschatological, for the gracious activity of God bestows upon all members of the *Una Sancta* the heavenly treasures even here and now. Nor is the Kingdom sociological, a Ritschlian "moral union of men," for it is the bestowal of such blessings as establish a right relation between man and God. Christ has become his King so that he "might live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness." That is the compend of Luther's theology and his ecclesiology. And there is the dynamics of his theology.

IV

According to Luther, *basileia* and *ecclesia* are correlative terms, since both focus our attention upon spiritual gifts: the former, however, upon God as the Giver, and the latter upon the believers as the recipients. The *Una Sancta Ecclesia* is therefore the group which has been made holy through God's gracious activity. In Luther's opinion the phrase *communio sanctorum* is merely a paraphrase of *Una Sancta*, and he would protest strenuously against placing a semicolon between the phrases "a Holy Christian Church" and "the communion of saints," as though the ancient Church had two distinct ideas in mind. In support of his position he held, in the first place, that *sanctorum* is not neuter, but masculine gender,¹¹ and in the second place, that *communio* is not an abstract noun, denoting sharing, but a concrete noun and is best translated assembly, congregation. In the Large Catechism he states: "To speak correctly, we ought to say in the Third Article: 'I believe that the Holy Christian Church is a congregation made up purely of saints'"; again, "I believe there is upon earth a little group and congregation of pure saints under one Head, even Christ, called together by the Holy Ghost in one faith, one mind, and understanding, with manifold gifts, yet agreeing in love, without sects or schisms. I am also a part and member of the same, a sharer and joint owner of all the goods it possesses, brought to it and incorporated in it by the Holy Ghost by having heard and continuing to hear the Word of God."¹²

But could Luther really believe that the *Una Sancta* is a congregation of pure saints? Was this probably an ideal for which men should strive? Could a modern preacher as he

surveys his own personal life and the lives of his parishioners actually confess with them the Creed according to Luther's interpretation: "I believe a holy Christendom, a congregation of pure saints"? Luther could unequivocally make this confession because the material principle of his theology, justification by faith, was not a metaphysical abstraction, but a living reality. He believed that sinners are adjudged righteous before God because of Christ's righteousness and are therefore saints, all human experience to the contrary notwithstanding. Luther's concept of the congregation of saints is only another revelation of the heart of his theology. He believed that he was totally devoid of anything that would make him holy, yes, that he deserved only God's displeasure. But he believed with all his heart that Christ having assumed his nature, not only paid the full penalty of his sin and guilt, but also rendered perfect obedience to the divine Law. Whenever Luther feared the just punishment for his sin, he would seek refuge in the passive obedience of Christ, and say: "We are freely justified for Christ's sake through faith when we believe that we are received into favor and that our sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who by His death has made satisfaction for our sins."¹³ And whenever Luther's conscience convicted him that he had failed to procure the spotless holiness which God requires, he would — to use his language — deck himself in the foreign plumage of Christ's active obedience. In a sermon on the Gospel for St. Thomas Day he says:

What are the strange works which avail before God? They are the works of our Lord Jesus Christ whom God has sent from heaven to propitiate through His suffering and death. He also has fulfilled the Law in our stead by loving God with His whole heart and us as Himself. Therefore, if the Law condemns you, then point to Jesus and say: "There is the Man who has fulfilled it for me and gives me His perfect obedience to the Law as my own." This will silence the accusations of the Law. Thus we are justified through a foreign righteousness.

Luther's definition of the *Una Sancta* as the congregation of pure saints is only the logical application of his central theological principle. Believing that faith always appropriates the entire Christ, Luther held that the sum total of believers constitutes a congregation of perfect saints. In his commentary on Psalm 45: 11 he says:

As a beautiful queen is clothed in costly gowns, so the Church is decked in Christ's righteousness from head to foot. Therefore God cannot see any wrinkle in her, because He sees nothing but His Son with whom she is clothed and who has given her the garment of holiness, life, and glory. If there is still sin in the Church, only the devil sees it, and only we feel it in our conscience, but God does not see it, for as Christ is without spot or blemish, so is the Church perfect in God's sight for Christ's sake, without spot or blemish.

The paradox *peccator et simul justus* is solved in the light of faith which accepts Christ's entire righteousness, for as Luther says in his comment on Galatians 5:19, God has hidden the Church under the wickedness, sins, failings, and errors of men lest we mistakenly seek the *Una Sancta* in a visible and empirical body of man-made saints. God, however, sees the faith and therefore in his sight the *Una Sancta* is truly nothing but a congregation of pure saints.

Two charges are preferred against Luther's theology: the one, that *sola fide* leads to a life of sin, and the other, that *sola gratia* leads to quietism. The charge is allegedly sustained by the observation that Luther's adherents have consistently failed to make a vital contribution to society as a whole, and have deliberately by-passed all social problems. Luther would probably offer in rebuttal the following two arguments: (1) When he speaks of the holiness of the Church, he stresses not only Christ's righteousness, *aliena justitia*, but also the Christian's own incipient holiness, *justitia propria*. While he constantly preaches that we are justified by faith alone, he stresses as earnestly that faith is never alone, or as he put it epigrammatically: *Sola fides justificat, sed fides non est sola*. In his Preface to Romans he says:

Oh, it is a living, busy, active, powerful thing that we have in faith, so that it is impossible for it not to do good without ceasing. Nor does it ask whether good works are to be done; but before the question is asked, it has wrought them and is always engaged in doing them.

All the victories which the Christians win over their sins and all the good works which Christians perform are the trophies of their Redeemer and King. (2) The Holy Christian Church through the consecrated life of its members permeates every social institution. A study of Luther's *Exposition of the Decalog* clearly reveals that in his view every social institu-

tion, the home, the state, labor, management, is affected by the *Una Sancta*. What no organized visible Church can accomplish, that is effected by the holiness of the *Una Sancta*, which as a leaven permeates the entire social structure.¹⁴

V

Luther's concept of the *Una Sancta* left no room for an institutionalized, organizational, and statistically empirical church. His Church in its proper Scriptural sense was truly ecumenical, without racial, cultural, social, or even denominational lines of demarcation. He saw the *Una Sancta* as the body of Christ, united in one faith, one Baptism, one hope, without any schisms or sects. Even in the treatise against Hans Worst, his sharpest treatise against Rome's claim that it represents the only true Church, Luther maintains the true ecumenicity of the *Una Sancta*. He refused to pit an organized Church, for example, a Lutheran, an Evangelical, a Protestant Church, against the visible organization of the Roman Church. The Roman apologists claimed that Luther was outside of the Church because he had refused to submit to the decrees of the Church Councils. But Luther countered that the true Church was above Popes and Councils and included all those who through faith are united with Christ. His bitter denunciations of the Roman Catholics' claim that they alone constituted the true Church are a matter of historic record. But it must also be borne in mind that Luther stated again and again that the *Una Sancta* includes all those within the visible Roman Catholic Church who through faith accept Christ as their Savior. His ecumenical view of the Church prompted him to assert that wherever Baptism is administered and the Gospel is proclaimed, there in spite of human additions and corruptions the *Una Sancta* is truly present.

VI

But how could Luther be so truly ecumenical in theory and at the same time so highly separatistic in practice? In the *Una Sancta* he wishes to embrace all who believe, but in the visible union of Christians he refuses the hand of fellowship to such as are not in full doctrinal agreement with him. Is he paying lip service only to ecumenicity when in his letter to Count Lueneburg he stated that next to Christ he desired

nothing more than true unity between the Reformed and the Lutherans, and would gladly endure a bitter death to accomplish such unity? The solution of the problem lies in Luther's attitude toward the Word of God. To him the Word was both the inviolable source of all doctrine and the only means of grace.

Luther had sought Christian assurance in the traditions of the Church, in scholastic philosophy, and in German mysticism, but in vain. In his threefold Reformation principle, *Sola Scriptura*, *Sola Gratia*, *Sola Fide*, however, he found it. For to him the Scriptures were the complete and reliable revelation of God's gracious will to man, which man must accept in full faith. The absolute reliability of the Word in its promises of God's grace was therefore indispensable for his doctrine of justification by faith. The Word of God as contained in the canonical books of both Testaments was for Luther the only source and foundation for faith. And conversely he held that only they who unconditionally accepted God's promises in the Scriptures were believers and members of the *Una Sancta*.

The modern slogan "Deeds not creeds" was foreign to Luther's thinking. True, he esteemed Christian virtues very highly and did his utmost to inculcate them. In his controversy with the Antinomians, who had spoken disparagingly of good works, Luther stated that he would not sell one *Pater Noster* spoken in faith for all the riches of the world. Nevertheless he held that doctrine must come first, for to him the Bible was God's revelation of His grace in Christ. Only the person who through faith in Christ's redemptive work has first been justified can perform God-pleasing works. This is what Luther meant when he said that God is not so much concerned about our deeds as about our creed. Filial submission to every word of God's revelation was the life stream in Luther's theology. He has been charged with lovelessness in dealing with those who differed with him in doctrinal matters. Luther's answer runs something like this: "We must differentiate sharply between the nature of love and faith. It is love's nature to bear and to forgive. Love can do so even at the risk of being deceived, because it will not thereby lose Christ." Luther did possess a large measure of love and was truly tolerant. But, he said, faith's nature is to endure nothing, to

yield to no one, for if we yield in matters of our salvation, we lose Christ. His comments on Galatians 5:9, "Cursed is the love whereby the doctrine of our faith is endangered," may seem harsh to modern ears, but they were in accord with his principle of *Sola Scriptura*. It was not contentiousness but loyalty to his principle which prompted his action toward Zwingli at Marburg in 1529 concerning the Real Presence. In his opinion doctrine is like an unbroken and unbreakable golden ring or like a strand of pearls strung on the golden thread of Christ's vicarious work as the God-man. According to Luther's view Zwingli attacked not only the *Sola Scriptura* principle when he employed the rationalistic principle *Finitum non est capax infiniti*, but also the *gratia sola* and the *fide sola*. Luther argued that if Christ is incapable of being present in the Lord's Supper according to His human nature, then the union of the two natures in Christ, the so-called personal union, was likewise untenable. Then by inevitable logic not the God-man died for man, but only a human nature, and the death of Christ as a mere man was according to Luther insufficient to deliver man from sin, death, and hell. Not only the *Sola Scriptura* principle, for which he contended against Rome, was at stake, but also the other two great Reformation principles, principles which were for him the very foundation of the Church.

A consistent and determined effort to sabotage *Sola Scriptura* was in Luther's opinion tantamount to breaking the golden ring of Biblical theology. Toward such as erred in doctrine from ignorance and without undermining the foundation, Luther was extremely tolerant. But his attitude toward those whose teachings destroyed any one of the three Reformation principles was adamant.

In his controversy with Rome Luther stressed the sufficiency and inerrancy of the Scriptures. In the clash with the "heavenly prophets," particularly with the Anabaptists, he emphasized that God deals with man only through His Word. He was firmly convinced that there is no immediate and direct way from God to man, but that God deals with man only through means, the means of grace. To understand Luther on this point it is necessary to keep in mind that he believed that by nature man is totally depraved, spiritually dead, and an enemy of God and therefore totally unable to have any

"spiritual movements." If man is to be converted, God must by His omnipotent grace kindle and nourish the spiritual life. But God performs this only through the Word. He held that as God's almighty *Fiat* created the world out of nothing and still sustains it, so also the Word of God in the Bible and the Sacraments is the power of God to change the hearts of men.

He believed that through the Law the Holy Ghost works the terrors of conscience and through the gracious invitation of the Gospel the Holy Ghost engenders faith. And this effective and efficacious Word of God, this transforming voice of the omnipotent and gracious God, Luther heard only in the revealed Word, whether it was read in the Bible, proclaimed in the sermon, pronounced in the words of absolution, or connected with the elements of the Sacraments. His *Sola Scriptura* principle did not permit him to divorce the Spirit's operation from the Word, as though the Spirit worked immediately and even irresistibly. And his *sola fide* principle prevented him from attaching magical views to the Sacraments, as though by the mere act performed (*ex opere operato*) they conferred the grace of God. Luther's view on the means of grace is summarized in the Augsburg Confession as follows: "That we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and Sacraments as through instruments the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith."¹⁵

Luther believed that the Word was God's creative voice, even though only portions of this Word were read or proclaimed, and for this reason he was certain that the *Una Sancta* was present if no more than the Gospel and Epistle lections were read and Baptism administered. Luther viewed the Word not quantitatively, but qualitatively, and for him the question was not how much of the Bible a Christian knew and accepted, but rather, how well a Christian believed in Christ on the basis of whatever quantum he knew. On the other hand, he held that purity of doctrine was necessary for outward unity and union. In his view truth and error cannot be granted equal rights in the Church, for only truth builds the Church, while error, being merely a human word, has no creative power, in fact, may actually impede the activity of God's truth. When hearing both, God's truth and man's error, the hearer may be tempted to accept the latter and thus

frustrate the life-creating activity of the Word of God. This is what Luther had in mind when he said that "in the congregation of saints the Word is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered." His implicit trust in the Word of God as the only means to engender and preserve faith prompted his uncompromising stand toward error. His concept of the *Una Sancta* as the company of all those who through the Word are united by faith with Christ and with one another demanded unswerving loyalty to the *Sola Scriptura* principle.

The ecumenical movement hopes to rise above and eventually to remove denominational and ideological differences and to present a united visible Church. But as Dr. Visser 't Hooft pointed out in a recent issue of *Christendom*, the Ecumenical Movement must be the expression of an already existing inner unity. The Lutheran concept of the *Una Sancta* is the dynamic for such inner unity, since it furnishes the means whereby men are incorporated into the body of Christ: the Word of God engendering faith to accept the grace of God in Christ Jesus. In the face of Roman institutionalism, enthusiastic immediacy of the Spirit, and pure activism Luther's concept of the Church stressed *Sola Scriptura*, *Sola Gratia*, and *Sola Fide*. In the light of these three principles Luther understood the Savior's sacerdotal prayer for the unity of the Church: "I pray for them also which shall believe on Me through their word, that they all may be one."

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Memorandum Concerning the Church Situation in Germany

By MARTIN KIUNKE

Since the collapse of 1945 the church situation in Germany is horribly confused, for the political chaos seriously affected the church conditions. But even before the political collapse a number of trends developed in the Protestant churches which brought havoc to the churches. This disorder was accentuated by the political collapse to such a degree that conditions never were so confused in German church history as at present.

Two years have passed since the political collapse; years of honest searching, tireless activity, and extreme suffering. What has been accomplished? The confusion has not been dissolved; on the contrary, the points of emphasis are beginning to stand in bold relief. The alembic is functioning. New concepts are in the process of formation. Naturally, these are intimately related to the old church forms, but at the same time they bear the stamp of the new day. One senses that the history of Christ's Church is progressing as though it were equipped with seven-league boots. Whither? To new heights? Hardly. For apparently the Church must go through new dark valleys which, though differing somewhat from the former depths, are no less dangerous. The Church is confronted with dangers such as the Church since the Reformation has not experienced.

No matter what will happen to the Church in Germany, the fate of the German Church cannot be restricted to Ger-