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Miscellanea

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Miscellanea

Lutheran Graduate Schools of Theology

Why Graduate Schools of Theology?

1. General progress in education in our country today.

The Church must keep pace and provide the men with special training where needed.

A generation ago the pastor was still the best and frequently the only educated man in his community. Even as late as 1910 there were few high school students to be found in the average parish of the Lutheran Church, and college graduates were exceedingly rare.

In 1890 there were only 200,000 students in all high schools of the U. S. At present this number has exceeded the 7 million mark, and our boys and girls are among them. As late as 1910 there were fewer students in the high schools than there are now students in American colleges and universities. Members with one or more college degrees are now to be found in nearly every parish of our Church. In 1939 the enrollment in American colleges was 1,208,000. Now it has exceeded the 2 million mark.

This means that we must raise the general level of theological training to keep pace with the rise in general education in our country today. The number of parishes is increasing where more than a general theological training of the pastor is necessary. The Church must supply these men in its own graduate schools.

2. Education on the graduate level has made tremendous strides forward in the last generation, and the Church cannot afford to lag behind in theological scholarship.

There are 324 colleges and universities in the United States offering graduate work. In the five years from 1940 to 1945 these graduate schools conferred a total of 139,605 Master's degrees and 14,722 Doctor's degrees. In 1900 the total enrollment in our American colleges was 114,372. It must be noted that the five years referred to were war years, when enrollment in graduate schools was not at a normal level. During the next five years this number will increase very substantially.

Compared with these figures, there is a total of five Lutheran theological seminaries in the United States offering graduate work; and in the five years from 1942 to 1947 these five seminaries conferred a total of 127 Master's degrees and 4 Doctorates in Theology. Of these, 13 Master's degrees and one doctorate were conferred by Concordia Seminary.

There are only a very limited number of graduate schools of theology in the other Protestant churches which could be compared with secular graduate schools of our day. Theological scholarship in America has not kept pace with secular scholarship. Formerly, theology was the queen among the faculties of the great univer-

sities. Today she must struggle to maintain a few humble graduate schools. Secularism has been victorious on this front also. The spiritual health of the future Church demands that the men who train the pastors of tomorrow at our theological seminaries, and even in our preparatory schools, receive their training in orthodox Lutheran theological graduate schools. The Church will suffer irreparable harm if the fountainhead where pastors are trained becomes polluted.

We ought to learn a lesson from the Lutheran churches in Europe and from the Protestant denominations in America. When the teachers of the future pastors have become influenced by secularism, unbelief, and modernism, it will not be long before the pastors of the Church will transmit this down to their parishes.

3. Lutheran pastors and graduates of theological schools are attending in ever-increasing number non-Lutheran seminaries, and, surely, the Church cannot remain indifferent to that situation indefinitely. No student can be exposed to the influence of an able teacher and not be affected by his theology. If the Lutheran Church does not meet this situation now, the consequences for the Church in the future will be serious. Lutheran theology is bound to be influenced by Calvinism or Modernism. It is imperative that the Church provide and control the entire theological training of its future pastors and professors. The excuse that our duty is to train pastors and missionaries for the Church is no longer valid. We must do both—train pastors and missionaries and also Lutheran scholars.

The founding fathers of our Church provided a theological training far in advance of general secular scholarship of those days in America. Today we are far behind, and the Church is not doing for our age what the fathers did a hundred years ago for their age and generation.

4. There is a marked tendency today for pastors and theological students to attend graduate schools of our secular universities and earn their Master's and Doctor's degrees. This urge has become very pronounced in our day. But other professional men, like doctors and lawyers, do not increase their general education to improve their professional proficiency; they continue their professional training in their respective professional schools and clinics. The Master's and Doctor's degrees as conferred by our universities certainly have their value, but at best they can only be supplementary to the real professional training. They do not necessarily enhance the pastoral proficiency or the theology of the theological professor; but as long as there is no theological graduate school on the level of secular graduate schools to satisfy their thirst for knowledge, our pastors and theological students will continue to attend these secular institutions.

5. The German Lutheran universities in Europe, to which the Protestant world in the past looked for leadership and upon whom they depended for research and scholarship, either have been de-

stroyed or are so crippled in finance and personnel that, humanly speaking, it will require decades or more for them to recover, if they ever can. In the meantime Lutheran scholarship will suffer an irreparable setback if American Lutheranism will not take over this responsibility and take up the torch of Lutheran scholarship where our European brethren were forced to drop it, or at least to lower it. We dare not evade this responsibility. In God's own providence the disturbed conditions of the world today have helped to bring our Synod and Concordia Seminary to the attention of Lutheranism in the world. The Lutheran Hour and other factors have contributed also to make our Seminary known here in America. The time is therefore most propitious for us to take the initiative in bringing our influence to bear on Lutheran and Protestant theology. We ought to become a city on the hill and not hide our light under a bushel. We at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, have already begun to attract pastors and students from other denominations. In the last two years we have had graduates from Princeton, Louisville, Dallas, Eden, and other seminaries, but we ought to attract still more. These young men will influence thousands of people in their parishes, as they go out into their respective ministries. The influence for good that Concordia Seminary could exert through its graduate school is beyond calculation.

6. Reformed theology is experiencing a tremendous upsurge in the world today, and Reformed scholars are beginning to assume the leadership in Protestant theology. To that must be added the very growing and expanding influence of the Catholic Church and Catholic scholarship. But, surely, the Lutheran Church cannot sit idly by and surrender to Calvinism or Catholicism. To counteract these influences, the Church must use every means at its disposal. One field which we have seriously neglected in the past is that of up-to-date scholarship; hence a Lutheran graduate school is no longer a luxury, but has become a necessity in our theological education.

7. There is a great need for orthodox Lutheran theological literature. Most of the great German Lutheran classics grew out of classroom activities. But our classes for the general preparation are too large and the field too wide to provide sufficient opportunity to produce thorough, scholarly works in theology. For that more leisure, smaller classes, and more intensive study are required. The graduate school will provide that setting.

8. What about a central graduate school operated jointly by all Lutheran bodies in America?

It is well known that this idea is receiving much attention in Lutheran circles in America today. And there are those in our own body who would either support that idea or establish a separate theological graduate school at some centrally located place and connect it with some great university — as, for example, the University of Chicago.

Theoretically, many arguments can be advanced in favor of such a project. Practically, it seems to offer insurmountable difficulties.

a. So long as doctrinal unity has not been established, such a venture would not and could not receive the support of our Church or the Synodical Conference.

b. The financial support, the theological and ecclesiastical control, the appointment of instructors, would cause very serious difficulties. Experience in America teaches that where the Church loses direct control of the theological schools, these schools become instruments of destruction of the very Church that founded them.

c. The cost would be prohibitive.

To establish a new graduate school would require an expenditure of many millions of dollars. The establishment of an adequate library alone would be one of the most serious difficulties. It would be difficult to convince our laity, who in the last analysis must furnish the money for such a venture, that this would be good stewardship.

d. In America graduate schools have flourished best in connection with undergraduate departments.

The great graduate schools in our country today are all the upper division built on the undergraduate division of our universities. In fact, the graduate schools have made the universities famous. The same would apply to our situation. A strong graduate school would have an uplifting effect on the entire seminary. The same library and the same faculty can serve in both graduate and undergraduate departments, and there is no reason why theological schools should be different in that respect from our secular universities.

9. What is necessary to develop our Graduate School.

It can be said that we have an excellent start. Our enrollment has grown by leaps and bounds. We have not only succeeded in attracting very great numbers of the pastors in the vicinity of St. Louis, some driving as far as 150 miles, but we are attracting our own graduates and, as already indicated, attracting graduates and pastors of other denominations, who are happy to find a school in which they can pursue advanced studies in theology from a positive, Biblical point of view. Many of them have expressed their satisfaction and joy to have the opportunity to study with us. But though we have made progress, our Graduate School is still in its infancy. To develop it, several things ought to be done:

a. The faculty of Concordia Seminary must be increased to the extent that we can devote more of our faculty time to real graduate school work. There has been a considerable increase in our faculty, which has improved the situation at the Seminary and also at our Graduate School, but we are still somewhat cramped because of the shortage of manpower.

b. **Faculty Training.** If the Graduate School is to measure up to the standards of the great graduate schools, we must make it possible for our professors to prepare themselves for this work. That means leave-of-absence for further study; and that must not be a matter of mere pious resolutions, but must be put into practice now.

c. We must spend more money for the improvement of our library. Our library has made wonderful progress in the last five or ten years, but there are still great gaps, and the Church must be prepared to fill these gaps and spend substantial sums for the improvement of our library. There were decades when our Seminary library was neglected. We must now atone for this neglect.

d. There is a growing need for more classroom and seminar rooms.

e. We are in need of some attractive scholarships, which would make it possible for our most promising young men to continue their studies for the doctorate. We ought to cultivate a fraternal fellowship with our daughter churches in South America and Australia and other parts of the world. The best way, to my mind, to do that is to establish a few scholarships by which a continuous and unbroken chain of young men from these countries would get their training at Concordia Seminary. They would take back with them a spirit of fellowship and an affection for our Church, so that the bonds between them and us would be made more secure. We should also have a scholarship for our seminary at Greensboro; and, finally, we ought to consider a worth-while teaching fellowship for our candidates for the doctorate. This would be a great inducement for some of our best young men to continue their studies with us.

We also require a moderate sum in the budget for extension work. So far, extension work has usually paid for itself or has been supported by the District in which it was conducted, but that is too uncertain. To begin extension work is always a financial risk, and we should have funds available to cover any shortage that may occur.

10. **The History and Program of Concordia Graduate School.** The Graduate School of Concordia Seminary was established by an act of Synod in 1920. The first graduate students were enrolled in 1922. Owing to the peculiar conditions of the thirties (the nationwide economic depression, teaching staff undermanned, large undergraduate classes) the Graduate School was discontinued from 1931 to 1938. In that year graduate work was resumed once more, and the activities of the school were expanded to include pastors' institutes and extension work in various areas of the Church.

We now have a faculty of 22 professors and three instructors and are, therefore, better able to carry on the work. Men are now called with the view toward qualifying also to teach in the Grad-

uate School. The Graduate School has become an integral part of the Seminary program.

Admission. To be admitted to the Graduate School, the applicant must hold the degrees of Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Divinity, or their equivalent, and must have a quality point of 2 or better for previous work done in theology.

We offer work towards the S. T. M., and, since 1944, also towards the Th. D. degree. Our requirements for the S. T. M. degree are one year of residence above the B. D.; and for the Th. D., two years of residence above the B. D. degree. Students must be able to work in English, German, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and for the doctorate in a third modern language. The S. T. M. degree is a prerequisite for the Th. D.

Our enrollment during the last semester was

Full-time students	29
Part-time students	65
		94

These figures do not include students enrolled in our Summer Extension Courses.

At present we have 32 candidates for the S. T. M. degree and one for the Doctorate.

A. M. REHWINKEL

Concerning the Status of the Lutheran Churches in the World

DEAR BRETHREN IN THE MINISTRY:

The following lines and letters which, God willing, are to follow this one, are addressed to Lutheran pastors in totally different churches and nations, in Germany and in the remaining Europe, in North and South America, in Africa and Australia. They are addressed to fellow-ministers who together with the undersigned know themselves bound by their ordination vow to the Holy Scriptures as the *norma normans* of all the doctrines of the Church and to the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as the true interpretation of the Scriptures. They are addressed to brethren whose hearts bleed, whenever they see the condition in which the Lutheran Church of our day and of our world finds itself. We know full well: Not only we as theologians see and labor under these distressing conditions. Numberless members of our congregations share our experience and sense the reason for the Church's need. But we, as the incumbents of the *ministerium ecclesiasticum* defined by Article V of the *Augustana*, have this duty toward the Christian congregation, to gain a clear understanding of the *status of the Lutheran Church in the world*, of the cause and ultimate reason for her need, and to do our utmost, as far as mortals can do anything in this matter, to overcome this need.

1.

At the first glance we may gain the impression as if the status of the Lutheran Church were a more splendid one than ever before in her history. We can point to the "Lutheran World Federation," which represents an organized merger of the churches of the *Invariata* as has never before been realized in the history of our Church, not even in the most favorable times of the old "Lutheran World Council." This World Federation and its constituent churches have evolved efficient organizations, which are without comparison in the history of our Church. We but have to remind ourselves of the large relief-organizations of American fellow-believers, who came to the aid of the needy churches of Europe; or of the colossal work which is being conducted from Geneva by Dr. S. C. Michelfelder and Dr. Stewart Herman. One can also point to clear signs of a considerable outward progress in the Lutheran Churches of other lands, as, for instance, the union movement of the Lutheran Churches of America. This movement at least had this result that the relationship of the Lutherans, who had stood in sharp opposition to each other, has become an entirely different and better one. This is perhaps the deepest impression of the fully altered church conditions of Lutheranism in the United States gained by the undersigned when he for the first time after 22 years was permitted to visit the Lutheran Churches of the New World at the exceedingly friendly invitation of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Even in Germany Lutheranism occasionally shows signs of life, although it has been robbed of its influence on the world and although its most recent history is one large chain of ecclesiastical political defeats. That a number of professors as members of a non-Lutheran faculty like that at Heidelberg, which legally can never become Lutheran, personally subscribe to the *Augustana Invariata* and teach accordingly, even more so than is done on old faculties nominally still Lutheran—who would not find in this a cause for rejoicing. And also in the Ecumenical Movement of our day, in the recently established Council of Churches, the Lutheran Churches are well represented and are the recipients of many a compliment. At first glance everything seems to be in the best of order, the Lutheran Church even in the ascendancy. What do we mean when we, in view of these circumstances, speak of a dire need of our Church? That there should be a need, even an urgent need of the Lutheran Church, is that not perhaps but the view of a few malcontents and pessimists, whom no one has to take seriously?

2.

The need of the Lutheran Church becomes apparent in that she is denied the right to exist as a church and that she has put up with it more or less. It is the Reformed Church, or to be more exact, the Reformed Churches of various shades of confession, who are willing to tolerate Lutheranism as an imperfect semi-

Catholic form of Evangelical Christianity, even as they also put up with Anglicanism. This is only done under the condition that the Lutheran Church considers herself as one section and one form of the one Evangelical Church and therefore remains with the Reformed Church in the *communio in sacris*. For according to the opinion of the Swiss Reformers, as it especially becomes apparent in the far-reaching church politics of Calvin, the Evangelical Church is the church of the *sola scriptura*, different types of interpretation of the Scriptures having led to different formations of this one Evangelical Church, which do not exclude but supplement each other. In this sense all great Reformed theologians have understood the coexistence of Lutheran and Reformed Churches. Schleiermacher and Karl Barth, both living in lands of the German tongue, — despite the differences otherwise existing between them — have said it with almost the same words, namely that the difference in doctrine between Lutherans and Reformed is one of the theological school, but not one of the Church. Both have brought their theological convictions to bear on church politics: Schleiermacher as one of the founding fathers and as the actual church father of the Prussian Union; Barth as the founder and sponsor of that "Confessional Union" which in 1934 was formed at Barmen in opposition to the confessional Lutherans, in that a mixed Synod composed of Lutherans, Reformed, and United theologians framed a doctrinal declaration and thereby claimed the right to judge between pure and false doctrine in the Evangelical Church. If even in Germany the significance of this step was not understood — which in 1948 logically led to the founding of the Evangelical Church in Germany, including Lutheran, Reformed, and United Churches, as the legal and actual successor of the German Evangelical Church of 1933 — how was one to understand this step in foreign countries, where one was not able to see anything else in regard to Barmen than the courageous protest against the encroachments of the State on the legal sphere of the Church and where one knew nothing or little of the conflict which confessional Lutheranism carried on in favor of a confessional solution of the church problem? We repeat, no one knew anything or little of the conflict because of the wholly onesided information transmitted by the International Press, which again was under the control of the sponsors of this new union. In the Nordic lands, with a few laudable exceptions, Calvinistic church-politics were not known, because Calvinism never had been in the land. In America Lutheran and Reformed churches exist side by side as separate churches and apart from a few territories like Pennsylvania the question of a union between Lutherans and Reformed has nowhere really ever arisen. Added to this the Lutherans in the other parts of the world, whose forefathers at one time emigrated because of the secularization and the unionism of their home churches, and founded Lutheran confessional churches in their new homelands, lost, by failing to retain their German

language, a knowledge of the above-mentioned events of German church history. Therefore we are face to face with the fact that world-Lutheranism, occupied with the task of setting up an imposing outward structure, does not at all become aware of having lost the ground under its feet in that the Christian world contested its right to exist as an independent church. In the Germany of the 19th century the claim of an independent church-existence was made in such a manner that the Lutherans demanded a church government in accord with the Lutheran Confessions, claiming that "the church government as an important part of the Church must also, as far as orthodox doctrine and administration of the Sacraments are concerned, be in harmony with the church which it is to govern. Therefore it is not permissible to unite, by means of a common church government, churches which are not in agreement with one another as to doctrine and the administration of the Sacraments." With these sentences Theodor Kliefoth at the General Evangelical Lutheran Conference, the first ecumenical organization of Lutheranism in 1868, opposed the theological statement of the Prussian unionists that the Lutheran Confessions do not demand a confessional church government, since the unity of the Church consists in the *consentire de doctrina evangelii et de administratione sacramentorum* and not in a fixed constitution. That this *consentire* can also obtain under a mixed church government was the opinion of the sponsors of the union at that time and is their opinion today. But if the conflict in the German Church since 1933 had one definite result, it was the knowledge that a church cannot adhere to its confession for any length of time as long as only the pastors and the congregations are bound to the confession, but not also the church government. Therefore the newly formed EKD actually does regard its church government as bound not only to the Holy Scriptures, but also to the Confessions of the Ancient Church and to "the decisions of the first Confessional Church passed at Barmen." In other words, practically speaking, the church government is bound to the doctrinal decisions of the "Theological Declaration" of Barmen, which have been taken over by many Land churches into the ordination formulas and vows of the church elders. Now as regards the Confessions of the Lutheran Reformation, they are still being recognized in the Lutheran territories of the EKD. But since the Reformed and United Confessions in the respective constituent churches within the EKD are regarded as having equal rights, the Lutheran Confessions are actually being robbed of that binding dogmatical force whereby the unity of the Church is safeguarded. With it Lutheranism ceases to be a church. From the Reformed viewpoint it is understood to be a movement of the Evangelical Church, a theological school. Indeed, it regards itself as just that since the factual recognition of Barmen, and only in this sense some Lutheran Land churches have united as the "United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany" to represent

the union of Lutheranism in the EKD. Concerning this EKD its founders, also the Lutheran bishops of Germany, say, only with somewhat different words, exactly what Frederick William III declared in regard to the Prussian Union as introduced by him: "It does not purpose and signify a relinquishing of the hitherto existing confession. Also the authority which the two Evangelical creeds had till now has not thereby been annulled. By joining it one merely expresses that spirit of moderation and charitableness which no longer regards the differences between the two creeds in point of doctrine as a reason to deny each other outward church-fellowship." Consequently unionism in Germany actually has gained a victory over confessionalism. Likewise the Reformed conception of the Evangelical Church and of the church confessions has gained a victory over the Lutheran. The conception of the Confession of the Church, as we find it unequivocally expressed in Luther's Large Confession of 1528, in his Smalcald Articles, and in the Formula of Concord, and as it is also presupposed in the *Augustana*, is now quite impossible. What Karl Barth calls the "pious and free relativism" of the Reformed Confession has now taken the place of that definiteness with which the Lutheran Confession regards its doctrinal content as the doctrinal content of the Holy Scriptures, from which one "cannot depart or give way in anything" and with which Luther and the confessors of the Formula of Concord wanted "to appear with intrepid hearts before the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ, and give an account of it." The *quia* of the confessional oath has given way to the non-obligatory *quatenus*. From this attempt at making the Confessions something relative it is only a short step to its invalidation, a step which has been taken already in large parts of Reformed Christendom. But this development means practically nothing less than that in the Lutheranism of the German churches the heretofore valid and legally accepted Formula of Concord has been invalidated. For no theologian will earnestly maintain that the spirit of moderation and charitableness, which once gained command in Prussia and now in all of Germany, can be brought into accord with the condemnations which the Formula of Concord has voiced against Calvinism and Crypto-Calvinism, although with the express reservation that it does not intend to deprive erring Reformed churches of the character of a church of Christ.

Now the shocking part of this development is that it has not only taken place in Germany. It was not a mere chance occurrence that neither from Nordic Lutheranism nor from the Lutheran Churches of America including the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod a loud warning has been voiced in regard to this wrong undertaking. Also no definite repudiation of the "Evangelical Church of Germany" and of the "United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany," which is very closely joined up with the former, has been voiced. One can explain this in part because of the extraordinary difficulty to understand the development in

Germany and to correctly evaluate its significance. But this difficulty is not the only explanation. The deepest reason is rather to be sought in the fact that a similar development, although in a different manner, has taken place also in these churches. In the Nordic churches it is a result of the Reformed influences in the Ecumenical Movement. Here one understands Lutheranism as one of the great historical growths of Protestantism, which can be blended with other forms into a higher unity without losing its own peculiar rights and manner of existence. Especially in the Church of Sweden it has been forgotten that there is also an ecumenical movement which, of course, seeks a new relationship of the creeds, but which also knows that the great creeds do not only supplement but also exclude one another. The strong dogmatical character of the Confessions and with it the import of the condemnations which exclude church union have been forgotten. Apparently both in Scandinavia and in Germany this is the result of an influence of liberalism within the Church. This liberalism, which, it is true, is publicly being declared dead, has in reality permeated all theology and thereby has conquered the Church in a seemingly harmless and yet extremely dangerous manner. And something quite similar has taken place in America. There, strange enough, liberalism calls itself neo-orthodoxy and as such it has gained access to Lutheran faculties which formerly were inaccessible to all liberal influences. Step by step one can trace the weakening of the dogmatical heritage in the inability of the old orthodoxy to win the youth and to render an explanation of the present-day problems. This change has become evident in the fate of the Galesburg Rule of 1875 which conforms to the above-cited principle of the German Lutherans of 1868: "Lutheran pulpits are for Lutheran ministers only; Lutheran altars are for Lutheran communicants only." While already the matter of fact way with which the abolition of this principle was accepted in America, no conclusions being drawn from it in regard to church-unity, predicted a weakening of the approved rule on which in the United States the valid existence of a real Lutheran Church as church depends, the American conditions themselves make it apparent that is was not anymore understood and taken seriously. But not only on special occasions do American Lutherans, as the Scandinavians are wont to do, practice communion-fellowship with those of another persuasion, but one can, for instance, read in the church bulletin of one of the largest Lutheran churches of Philadelphia: "Members of other churches who believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and in the forgiveness of sin through Him are welcome to join with us in this sacred Sacrament." Instances could readily be adduced to show that in regard to pulpit-fellowship matters are still worse, which should cause every Lutheran theologian to blush for shame. But all this happens in churches that play a leading part in the Lutheran World Federation. Not in order to carry on polemics, but to understand the ailment of Lutheranism, to which vir-

tually all Lutheran churches in the world are prone, we state the objective and historic-dogmatical facts of the case, namely that the Lutheran Churches of our time — with exceptions which we do not want to mention here — that at least the leading churches of the world are not any longer churches in the light of the Formula of Concord. And if we hear the rejoinder that the Formula of Concord is not being accepted by all churches, that the Lutheran Church is the church of the *Augustana*, then we must join our fathers in answering that one can be a Lutheran without the Formula of Concord, but one cannot be a Lutheran in opposition to it. We must answer that the *Augustana* is no longer understood as Luther and the confessors of 1530 understood it if one no longer understands the *improbant secus docentes* of its Article X as a demarcation line of the church, but only as a boundary line of the theological school. This, then, is the dire need of our Church that in that very moment in which she begins to step before the world as one of the great Confessions of Christendom to testify to the world and to the Ecumenical Movement the truth of the Lutheran Reformation, she is about to lose, or to a great extent already has lost, that very truth.

3.

How are we to explain this need? Where are its roots? They cannot be sought in one country only. If German Lutheranism disintegrated through National-Socialism, if the Nordic State and Land Churches not influenced by National Socialism, and if the American Free Churches have also fallen prey to the disintegration of Lutheranism, then the cause must be sought in Lutheranism itself. It cannot possibly be found in the church politics of Calvinism. For then we would have to ask at once why the Lutheran Churches did no longer have that power of resistance which they had in the 16th and 17th century. We, of course, have to admit that the events in Lutheranism about which we are concerned also have their parallels in other creeds and therefore some of the reasons are at least to be sought in a development which is running through all of modern Christendom. The clearest example of this is the noteworthy fact that the present pope had to proceed with all means of Roman church discipline against certain excesses of the liturgical and the so-called *Una Sancta* movement, in which the dividing line separating from Protestantism also became doubtful for Catholics, even for truly pious Catholics so that they crossed it in conscious opposition to the canonical law. Did it not happen in the eastern parts of Germany — it had already happened in the Siberian prison camps of World War I — that Catholic communion was administered to Protestants? Without a doubt, a weakening of the fixed confessional boundary lines has come about in all of modern Christendom. The Ecumenical Movement has contributed its share, especially since its leadership has been transferred from the Anglicans, who were still interested in regulations and dogma, to the truly Reformed Churches. And

what would the fathers of the Faith-and-Order-Movement say to the fact that the great event of the World Council of Lausanne in 1927, the renewed acceptance of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Confession as the basis for the ecumenical work, was so rapidly by-passed in favor of what had now become the order of the day? But beyond this, there must be in Lutheranism itself a reason for the weakening of its dogmatical substance. In Germany it can be explained in part by the extinction of two theological generations. Whole families in which Lutheran theology and Lutheran faith were a living tradition, died out in the two World Wars. In America the decline of the German language played an important role. Not one of Luther's great writings on the Lord's Supper has been put into English. But this does not explain everything. Why were these writings not translated? Why do Anglo-Catholics and Roman Catholics believe in the real presence? Why do leading Scandinavian bishops — concerning those who are less renowned one knows nothing, at least they have not voiced their opinion — reject Luther's teachings on the Lord's Supper in their own church? One cannot explain all this by saying that the untenableness of Luther's exegesis has become apparent. For no serious-minded exegete, even in the Reformed Church, will understand the *est* of the words of the institution as *significat*. That was reserved for the Lutheran "dogmaticians" of today who know nothing of exegesis. The question also has to be raised whether the Benedictine esoteric theology, which was recently appraised by a German "Lutheran" theologian in the official organ of the German Lutheran bishops as the real meaning of the Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper, has, after all, the least foothold in the Holy Scriptures. — No, this whole decadence of Lutheran doctrine must have another reason for which there is no rational explanation. It is the dying away of a faith which hides itself, as many another decline in the spiritual life of Christendom, behind a theological trend which seems to be on the up-grade. And as is the case with every decline in Christian life, so also this one goes hand in hand with a shocking weakness of character. To put it very frankly: The present-day theologians do no longer believe what they say and do no longer say what they believe. What great characters were the liberals of the past century who in public worship refused to confess the Apostolic Creed, because they did not any more believe some of its pronouncements! Today no theologian stumbles over such thin threads. We have no Sydow, Schrempf, or Knote incident any more; not because our times have a greater desire for dogma, but because theologians are no longer serious-minded in regard to their own confession and to confession as such. This is true despite all confessional movements of our times. No confessional church would dare to exclude one from its midst who denies the Trinity or the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. And that heresy has not yet been discovered which would compromise a pastor in one of our Lutheran Land churches. At the most it could only be the very untimely and inopportune loyalty

to the Formula of Concord. Here, of course, all tolerance ceases and for no other reason than that it would involve insubordination toward a practically unconfessional church government. Proudly our churches acknowledge the fact that errorists are no longer being disciplined. They do not suspect that they are leaving it to Rome to defend the fundamental truths of the Apostolic and the Nicene Creeds without which there is no Church. And they do not realize that thereby they are placing themselves into an impossible contrast to the Scriptures, which, as is well known, very earnestly war against heresy and urge such warfare upon the Church of all times. What would have become of the Church if she had not taken up arms against the heresies of the second, fourth, and sixteenth centuries, but had hoped, as present-day bishops are doing, that of itself the truth would carry the day.

Thus it is a serious weakness which has befallen our Church, and which is undoubtedly to be associated with the fate of Christendom as such. God has not blessed Christianity with a new revival as He had done in the decades following the Napoleonic era. It may be that it will come yet, but till now we are not aware of it. The spiritual life of the Catholic Church of the world, excepting in a few countries like Germany, which, however, are not being heard, shows signs of an apparent decline. The present pope when elected in 1939 was one of the intellectuals of Europe. Today, because of his political undertakings and his superstitious belief in the Madonna of Fatima as the liberator from Bolshevism, he has lowered himself to the level of a Pius IX. What human respect did one have in the twenties for the preachers of the social gospel in the Reformed Churches of America! They at least had the courage of an independent conviction. Today they have that conviction which the daily press may momentarily have, which, so to speak, is no conviction at all. Where in the independent America is there a Reformed churchman who has the power and the courage with which Karl Barth as a lone "voice in Switzerland" spoke to his people and its church? There were men in the Reformed world who once spoke so courageously against the destruction of the dignity of man and the disregard of human rights in National Socialism. Where are the men today who now do not criticize Communism only, but also oppose, in no uncertain terms, the trampling underfoot of people in Spain and by Latin-American Neo-Fascism? There were such voices, but they are silenced.—No, the appearance of Christendom today is everything else but uplifting, even in the most elevating moments of a convention like that of Amsterdam. The need of the Lutheran Church is *mutatis mutandis* the need of all churches.

4.

We must keep all of this in mind when putting the question: what is to be done? What *are we to do*, dear brethren, who have been intrusted with the ministerial office of the Lutheran Church

in times so decisive for the Church and the world? Nothing would be more wrong than if we would wait for that which others will do. The World Conference will take its course in accordance with the law by which it was guided at the outset. We cannot expect it to know what the church of the Formula of Concord is, and to act accordingly. This does not imply that we do not support and aid it everywhere where we are able to do so. From it we can expect an inner renewal of Lutheranism as little as from any other ecclesiastical organization, not even from the organization of our own church. Also from our bishops, synods, church-presidents, and faculties we can expect nothing, nothing at all. We are not to wait for an extraordinary miracle, for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit. That would be altogether un-Lutheran. If God should once more grant us a revival and thereby a renewal of our church, that rests with God's omnipotence alone. That which we are able to do is threefold. First of all we can make ourselves see the status of our church and of Christendom. We must understand, of course, that the question is not how the legendary 80 million Lutherans of the world, who really are not in existence but have been invented by exceedingly superficial and thoughtless statistics, can be merged into a powerful organism. We must know, however, how those can be congregated from the midst of that poor, stricken, and feeble Lutheranism for whom the Lutheran Confession is not a mere pretence, but, as it was for Luther and the signatories of the Confessions, a matter of life and death, of eternal life and eternal death, because it is a matter pertaining to the everlasting truth of the Holy Scriptures, which concerns all peoples and all churches of Christendom. Indeed, not such a one thinks and acts in an ecumenical fashion who looks upon the Confessions as something relative, who reduces them to a low level and practically does away with them, but who, like Luther, searches for the one truth of the one Gospel for the one Church. Let us again become *confessional Lutherans* for the sake of the unity of the Church.

The second thing that we must do to attain this end and the thing that we can do without difficulty, is that we again study the Confessions, that we again and again compare them with the Holy Scripture, and that we constantly learn to gauge their interpretation of the Scriptures and their Scripture proofs more profoundly. As the Roman Catholic has the daily duty to read his breviary, a tedious and difficult task, thus our duty must be, next to the thorough study of the Scriptures, the unflagging study of the Confessions. In this manner let us begin prayerfully to read Luther's Large Catechism, even as Luther, although an old Doctor, still was not ashamed to pray the Catechism daily. The deepest cause for the failure of the German church conflict is none other but that everyone always spoke about the Confessions, appealed to them, but knew them too little. We do not only need this insight for ourselves, our teaching, and our preaching, but very much so for our congregations. At the last large convention of the

United Lutheran Church in America an engineer made the statement, by the way in agreement with the president of the church, Dr. Fry, that the church is in need of theologians, that it calls for theologians. The Christian congregation of the present day in all lands and of all creeds is tired of the undogmatical, devotional character of the ethical sermon, which changes its theme every year. It demands in a manner which we pastors frequently do not at all understand a substantial dogmatical sermon, a doctrinal sermon in the best sense of the word. If our contemporaries do not find it in the Lutheran Church, then the hunger for doctrine drives them into other denominations. Therefore lay hold on the Confessions, dear brethren in the ministry, by yourselves and together with others.

The third thing, however, that we must learn anew is Luther's invincible faith in the power of the means of grace. Whatever the Church still has and still does should not be minimized. But she does not live from mercy, or from political and social activity. She does not subsist on large numbers. When will the terrible superstition of the Christendom of our day cease that only there Jesus Christ is powerful where two or three millions are gathered together in His name! When will we again comprehend that the Church lives by the means of grace of the pure preaching of the Gospel and by the divinely instituted administration of the Sacraments and by nothing else. And for no other reason but because Jesus Christ the Lord is present in His means of grace and builds His Church on earth, being even as powerful as ever before in the history of the Church — even if His power and glory, to speak with our Confessions, are *cruce tectum*, hidden under the Cross. Oh, what a secret unbelief and what little faith we find in the Church which calls herself the Church of the *sola fide*! May God in His grace eradicate this unbelief and strengthen this little faith in our souls and renew us through the great faith of the New Testament and the Reformation. That and that alone is the manner of overcoming the urgent need of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the greatest and weightiest crisis of her history.

To all of you, whether I am acquainted with you or whether you are strangers to me, wherever you may be sojourners, in whichever Lutheran Church you may be serving, I in the fellowship of the Lutheran faith extend my most heartfelt greetings for the Advent Season and for the beginning of the New Church Year.

Your devoted and faithful
HERMANN SASSE

Translated by P. Peters. (*Quartalschrift*, April, 1949, pp. 81—95.)

[NOTE. Dr. P. Peters rendered a service to the Lutherans of America by translating the remarks of Dr. Sasse, and the *Quartalschrift* is to be thanked for publishing this English version and for inviting other journals to copy it. Dr. Sasse takes for granted that EKID (Evangelical Church in Germany) is a church, while many other German theologians look upon it as a mere federation. We trust that this point will gradually be fully clarified. A.]