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THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

THE "COMMON CONFESSION OF FAITH"

Copies of the doctrinal agreement arrived at by the Fellowship Committee of the American Lutheran Church and the Committee on Doctrinal Unity of our Synod are now in the hands of our pastors. Since this agreement was published in *The Lutheran Witness* (March 7) and, in translation, in *Der Lutheraner* (March 14), also the laymen of our Church have the opportunity to study it. That also officials of the sister synods of the Synodical Conference have copies of this agreement, appears from a statement by Professor E. Reim in *The Northwestern Lutheran* (March 12) to the effect: "We have also had opportunity to hear two members of the Missouri Committee who were delegated to bring not only the document [copy of the agreement], but particularly detailed explanations concerning its origin to the sister synods of the Synodical Conference." Naturally, copies of the agreement were mailed also to the pastors of the American Lutheran Church. According to the Foreword of the agreement, "this confession of faith, unanimously approved by the two official committees as their report to their synods, is hereby respectfully submitted to the synods for adoption."

The document is, therefore, now open for inspection. Everyone who reads it will react to it in some way or other. That these reactions will vary, is to be expected. There are, however, a number of basic considerations which one ought to bear in mind as one scrutinizes and seeks to evaluate this latest effort at a common document drafted by committees of the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church. These considerations have to do with the genesis of this document.

The document is, as far as the Missouri Synod is concerned, the product of a set of resolutions adopted by our Church at its convention in 1947 (*Proceedings*, 1947, pp. 510—11). The resolutions read:

"1. That Synod declare that the 1938 resolutions shall no longer be considered as a basis for the purpose of establishing fellowship with the American Lutheran Church; and

"2. That Synod encourage its Committee on Doctrinal Unity to continue discussion on a soundly Scriptural basis, using the Brief Statement and such other documents as are already in existence or as it may be necessary to formulate; and

"3. That Synod's Committee on Doctrinal Unity be instructed to

make every effort to arrive ultimately at one document which is Scriptural, clear, concise, and unequivocal; and

"4. That Synod urge all its members to give thorough and prayerful study to the problems of Lutheran unity for the purpose of achieving greater clarity in its own midst.

"Synod also *resolved* that we express our sincere desire that true Scriptural unity with the American Lutheran Church and with other Lutheran bodies may be achieved and that we humbly pray God for His guidance and blessings in this matter."

In this set of resolutions, a number of points compel attention. They are:

1. Our Synod is sincerely interested in the matter of Lutheran unity and hopes and prays that true Scriptural unity may be achieved with all Lutheran bodies in our country.

2. Because our Synod is sincerely interested in the matter of Lutheran unity, it instructed its Committee on Doctrinal Unity to continue discussion of this matter.

3. Though Synod instructed its Committee on Doctrinal Unity "to continue discussion on a soundly Scriptural basis, using the Brief Statement and such other documents as are already in existence or as may be necessary to formulate," and though Synod also instructed this Committee "to make every effort to arrive ultimately at one document which is Scriptural, clear, concise, and unequivocal," Synod did not prescribe to this Committee which, if any, pattern of doctrinal statements now in existence it should follow in its effort to draft a common agreement. Nor did Synod prescribe which articles of the Christian faith were to be dealt with in that agreement, though it naturally took for granted that the Committee would include in its formulations such articles as have been in controversy between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church. Nor did Synod prescribe the minimum or maximum number of words which this agreement should contain. Nor did Synod set a time limit for the completion of a common agreement. With regard to all these matters, Synod did not tie the hands of the Committee. There can be no doubt that the Committee on Doctrinal Unity was aware of the freedom granted it by Synod and that it made use of this freedom. Synod naturally expected that the document would reflect the theology of the Lutheran Confessions. It also expected that the Committee would draw up a document which would not be at variance with the doctrinal content of the Brief Statement and with other doctrinal statements made by our Church. But it did not resolve: The new

document must be patterned in every particular, in every phrase, and in its general structure after the Brief Statement or some other statement of Lutheran doctrine.

The Committee could have drafted a document which resembled even in detail the Brief Statement or some other doctrinal statement now in existence. It could have drawn up a document in the form of a catechism. It could have drafted a confession of faith in which every positive declaration of a doctrine was succeeded by a *damnant* or *improbant secus docentes*, followed by an enumeration of errors and errorists. It could have drawn up a document containing some 10,000 or 25,000 or 50,000 words rather than one containing less than 3,000 words. But the Committee decided not to follow these and similar possible procedures, and anyone who reads the document must suppose that the Committee did so for reasons which it can justify.

What did Synod say regarding the nature of the "one document" which its Committee should strive to produce? Synod instructed its Committee "to make every effort to arrive ultimately at one document which is Scriptural, clear, concise, and unequivocal." The document was to be, first of all, Scriptural. In so framing its resolution, Synod acted in conformity with its *Constitution* in which it declares in Article II: "Synod, and every member of Synod, accepts without reservation the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice." It also acted in conformity with Article 2 of the Brief Statement, which reads: "We teach regarding the Holy Scriptures that they are given by God to the Christian Church for the foundation of faith, Eph. 2:20. Hence the Holy Scriptures are the sole source from which all doctrines proclaimed in the Christian Church must be taken and therefore, too, the sole rule and norm by which all teachers and doctrines must be examined and judged." It follows that the first consideration of those who seek to evaluate this "common confession" must be whether it is Scripturally sound and to test every word and statement in this confession by the Word of God.

Synod also instructed its Committee to draft a document which would be "clear, concise, and unequivocal." This phrasing can have only one meaning. What Synod had in mind was that a document might be produced the text of which would convey but one sense to both parties concerned as well as to Christian readers in general. Whoever studies the document, should therefore honestly face up to the question: "Does the document meet this requirement? Is it clear, concise, unequivocal?" Naturally, the Committee was hard put at this point since

human language, since the Fall, also suffers from imperfections. "Nihil tam circumspecte dici potest, ut calumniam evitare queat," says Melancthon (Apology VII and VII, 2, *Triglot*, p. 226). In another passage Melancthon observes: "For whereas we, with a simple mind, desired, in passing to recount those things which original sin embraces, these men, by framing an invidious interpretation, artfully distort a proposition that has in it nothing which of itself is wrong" (Apology II, 1, *Triglot*, p. 105). There is also in man the element of suspicion, doubt, bias, and ignorance, which oftentimes fails to extract from words their intended meaning.

As truly as we confess: "Credo unam, sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam ecclesiam," as truly as we love our Synod as an instrument which God has used to build His kingdom, so truly are we concerned about the matter of Lutheran unity in our land and in the world. If we wish and pray that, under God, true Scriptural unity may be established between all Lutheran bodies, and, for obvious reasons, first of all with the American Lutheran Church, it behooves everyone who has access to the "common confession" to seek to determine

1. whether it is in agreement with the Holy Scriptures;
 2. whether it is clear, concise, and unambiguous;
 3. whether it truly reflects the theology of our Lutheran Confessions.
- Only when one has done all this, will he raise other questions which may or may not be pertinent and in the interest of true Lutheran unity.

The synodical conventions of the Missouri Synod and of the American Lutheran Church which are taking place this year cannot *establish* Lutheran unity. Only the Spirit of God can do this. Lutheran unity is a "gift" of God and must be received with grateful hearts. But these conventions can do much to promote or retard true Lutheran unity, depending upon the measure of their loyalty to Scripture and their faith in the "one, holy, Christian, and Apostolic Church." Whatever resolutions these conventions may adopt with respect to Lutheran unity, may these resolutions be in conformity with the high and noble principle of the Lutheran Church that only Holy Scripture is the final arbiter in the settlement of doctrinal matters and with the faith that God alone is the Giver also of the gift of Lutheran unity. P. M. B.

WERE THE CAPTIVITY LETTERS OF PAUL WRITTEN IN EPHESUS?

On this question the *Anglican Theological Review* in the issue of January, 1950, has some interesting remarks. The subject is dealt with in an article having the heading "Paul's Ephesian Imprisonment: an

Evaluation of the Evidence. The writer is Donald T. Rowlingson of Emory University. The attempt is made to evaluate impartially the arguments that can be advanced for the two prominent views that have been proposed with respect to the place where these Letters were written. It will be recalled that Paul does not in any one of these Letters (Philemon, Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians) say where he is writing. On the expressions which are often held to point definitely to Rome: "praetorian guard" or "praetorium" (Phil. 1:13) and "Caesar's household" (Phil. 4:22), the writer thinks that they might refer just as well to Ephesus as to Rome.

The conclusions reached are the following: "References outside the imprisonment letters indicate the fact that while Paul was at Ephesus he suffered a severe reverse, and other data besides those in the letters from prison imply that it at least involved one period of imprisonment. The data in the imprisonment letters themselves are mostly neutral, capable of being interpreted in relation either to a Roman or an Ephesian imprisonment. That which is not neutral, even though it weigh no more than straws, is heavy enough to dip the finely balanced scales in the direction of an Ephesian detention and to carry with it the corollary that the imprisonment letters were written from Ephesus. This also is supported by the neutral data with respect to Aristarchus, Tychicus, and Timothy; they may have been at Rome, but they surely were at Ephesus. On these grounds, then, it is reasonable to create a working hypothesis with respect to an Ephesian imprisonment by employing the neutral data in the letters from prison in relation to Paul's ministry in Ephesus rather than to his last years in Rome. If this be true, a sequence of tremendous significance follows: Every one of Paul's letters which we possess emerges from the Aegean ministry, covered by Acts 15:40—20:38. Galatians still raises questions, but when it is considered to have been written from Corinth or Ephesus during this period, which is a reasonable conjecture, the conclusion stands. This is one of the major reasons, though not the only one, why the Aegean ministry is the most significant in which Paul was engaged. This also implies the importance of the question about Paul being in prison in Ephesus."

The writer holds a view concerning the Pastoral Letters of Paul which we cannot share; he excludes them from the genuine Epistles of Paul. On Galatians, we personally believe that it was written in Antioch or in its vicinity shortly after the first great missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas. But that the Captivity Letters were written in Ephesus seems to us quite likely.

WM. F. ARNDT

A NOTE ON 1 COR. 4:9

Theologia Viatorum is the official title of the *Jahrbuch der Kirchlichen Hochschule, Berlin*, 1948/1949, published by Walter de Gruyter & Co., Berlin. It contains a number of instructive articles, among them one entitled *Exegetische Randglossen zum I. Korintherbrief*, written by Lic. Herbert Braun, professor of New Testament. One of these apostil notes is on Paul's words in 1 Cor. 4:9: "We are made a spectacle unto the world and to angels and to men." Lic. Braun is especially interested in the statement θεάτρον ἐγενήθημεν, which, as already Lietzmann has pointed out, has some very interesting parallel thoughts in Paul's contemporary, the Stoic philosopher Seneca, whom he amply quotes in proof of his thesis. Similarly to Paul, Seneca describes the battle of the brave man with his untoward fate as a spectacle, deserving the attention of the deity. But, as Seneca shows, the heroic man prides himself on his ability to challenge and combat his fate. In fact, he welcomes the severe battle of life, which he defies. According to Seneca, God is indeed interested in the strong and his sufferings. He loves him, not indeed with the soft love of a mother, but with the ruthless love of a hard father. *Patrium deus habet adversus bonos viros animum et illos fortiter amat* (De Prov. 115:6). And the good need this severe discipline of fate, for otherwise their strength would weaken, and they themselves would remain unconscious of their strength. For this reason the strong welcome the blows of fate and rejoice in the spectacle of their suffering. *Quid cessas, fortuna? Congredere, paratum vides* (Ep. LXIII, 4). The Stoic thus views God as a cruel fate with which he must wrestle for his own good, even if the battle should mean wretched suffering and a dreadful death. But not so does Paul view himself in the spectacle of his suffering. It is true, also he believes that God has made him a spectacle to the world, to the angels, and to men, in sufferings so great that he regards himself "as appointed to death," indeed, as "the filth of the world" and "the offscouring of all things." But there is no carnal pride in the suffering Apostle; nor does he conceive of God as a cruel fate, tormenting him merely for his temporal good. What he suffers, he endures in the service of Christ, in particular, of His Cross, to glorify Him who was crucified for the sins of the world. As Paul suffers in the ministry of Christ, His divine Lord is exemplified, realized, glorified in him. So the cross works out the crown. There is victory in his very defeat. His utter helplessness is God's opportunity for magnifying His strength in him. And, ultimately, all this happens to the Apostle in order that he might comfort, with the comfort which he has received of God in his suffering, those

who suffer after his own pattern and that of Christ. Licentiate Braun thus suggests the great difference between Christian theology and pagan philosophy. There is a difference with regard to the conception of God, of man's mission and ministry in the world, of the purpose of suffering, of the final outcome of human affliction. Both Seneca and Paul could say: *θάνατον ἐγενήθημεν*. But with the one it is a cry of despair, despite all seeming challenging of fate, while with the other it is a cry of victory over the evils of life and the sorrows of death. Behind it all is the fact that Seneca wrote as a natural man, not perceiving the things of the Spirit of God, while Paul wrote as an Apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, and by inspiration of the Holy Ghost. One must feel deeply grateful to Licentiate Braun for calling attention to this radical difference between Paul, the Apostle, and Seneca, the philosopher.

J. T. MUELLER

THE SILENCE OF THE PULPIT

Hugh Thomson Kerr, Jr., in his "Theological Table-Talk" in *Theology Today* (January, 1950) discusses Bishop Sabapathy Kalandran's "The Message and the Silence of the American Pulpit" (Pilgrim Press, \$2.50). Bishop Kalandran is a native of Ceylon, a former Congregationalist minister in India, and now newly elected Bishop of the United Church of South India, which was created in 1947 by the merger of the Congregational, Presbyterian, Methodist, Reformed, and Anglican Churches. He spent two years in America at the invitation of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, and his book gives some of his impressions of the American church movement, as Dr. Kerr writes. But what does the Bishop mean when he speaks of the silence of the American pulpit? Dr. Kerr answers this question as follows: "He means, quite simply, that we are silent on the very things about which we ought to be speaking. He is not at all concerned about homiletics or pulpit eloquence or sermon construction; his concern is not with the method of preaching, but with the matter. He thinks we are talking about the wrong things, or at least not making it clear why we say what we do. Where, then, lies out great sin of omission? 'About most great and small things,' writes the Bishop, 'over which for long centuries there have been argument and agitation, fear and hope, an almost complete silence has descended on the American pulpit. During its history the Church has been seriously engaged on questions of Christology. . . . The Church has been engaged about the correct Christian doctrine of the Godhead. . . . The Church has been engaged about soteriology or the question of salvation. . . . The

American pulpit has now developed a practical concern and a sound common sense; so it will scarcely take the trouble to dwell on all those abstract questions on which, in its opinion, the preachers of a hundred years ago wasted time.' What impresses this observer from India is not the prevalence of the social gospel in American preaching, but the evident lack of theological undergirding, without which the social implications of Christianity are meaningless and ineffectual." There is no doubt that Bishop Kalandran is right. The question now is: How can doctrinal preaching and discussion be revived? In particular, how can Lutheranism help in resuscitating theology in the pulpit in such a way that it warms and enlivens? The Lutheran Church, perhaps more than any other, owes this duty to its contemporaries since it is rooted, by its very origin, in the depths of divine teaching as this is set forth in Scripture. In this "age of theology" there certainly must be theology also in the pulpit.

J. T. MUELLER

THE FAITH OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

Under this heading, Dr. R. C. Chalmers, associate secretary of the Board of Evangelism and Social Service of the United Church of Canada, in *Religion in Life* (Winter Number 1949—1950) discusses the doctrinal status of the United Church of Canada. It is an anniversary contribution, since the U.C.C. came into being on June 10, 1925, and therefore celebrates this year the silver anniversary of its formation as a church, into which flowed three streams: Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational. What, Dr. Chalmers asks, is now the status of theology in this Church? The writer points back to the Preamble to the Articles on Doctrine in the Basis of Union of the church, which was composed in 1908. In this Preamble there are five clear statements respecting doctrine in the United Church of Canada. The first is that the United Church is *Christocentric*: "We build upon the foundation laid by the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone." "This implies that the faith of the Canadian church is Trinitarian." The writer admits that there are undoubtedly varieties of Trinitarian interpretation. "But," he adds, "our doctrinal witness as a church has been one with the great historic traditions of Christianity." And "this Trinitarian theological outlook ultimately means that we have a weapon with which to fight those anthropocentric or humanistic tendencies in our world which dethrone God and enthrone man." In the second place, "the faith of the U.C.C. is *biblical*." The writer quotes Article Two, "Of Revelation," in the "Articles of Doctrine," which states: "We receive the Holy Scriptures of the Old and

New Testaments, given by inspiration of God, containing the only infallible rule of faith and life, a faithful record of God's gracious revelations, and as the sure witness to Christ." In discussing this point, the writer says: "Biblical illiteracy is the handmaid of evil, while scriptural wisdom is the key to life. Having come through a period of spiritual aridity in our Western culture, we realize that we must re-dig the wells of soul renewal and find the water of life which proceeds from the Word of God in the Bible. Our theological need can only be met as the whole Church nourishes its spirit on the Bible." Third, as the writer says, the U. C. C. is a "creedal church." "We acknowledge the teaching of the great creeds of the Ancient Church." "We believe that these creeds, such as 'The Apostles' Creed' and 'The Nicene Creed,' as well as the Confessions of the Reformed Churches, witness to the one true gospel of God's holy and redeeming love in Jesus Christ." "We believe that these creedal words attest before the world those things most surely believed amongst us." Speaking of creeds, the writer points out that the U. C. C. has produced a number of books, setting forth the belief of the church, such as "A Statement of Faith," a "Catechism," "This Is Our Faith," and "Our Living Faith," not to speak of many devotional and educational booklets showing the interest of the church in doctrine. In the fourth place, the faith of the U. C. C. is "evangelical." "They [the doctrinal standards adopted by the U. C. C.] are all evangelical in that they center on the evangel of God's redemptive love for sinful man in Jesus Christ. This is the good news the church must proclaim to a lost world. The United Church, in company with other evangelical communions, exists to declare in word and life that Jesus is the Savior of men." The last point which the writer emphasizes is that the U. C. C. is an "ecumenical church." It is "not only a united, but also a uniting church." "But is it not true that this emphasis on 'our common faith' must have meant a toning down of some important doctrinal points of view?" Mr. Chalmers does not think so. He says: "Our experience in the United Church of Canada has not found this to be so. There are varieties of theological outlook in the United Church, as in other churches." But he adds: "The first twenty-five years in the United Church of Canada, from the point of view of doctrine, have been years of progress in the things of the faith. There has been considerable theological indifference in both the pulpit and the pew, but we believe that this indifference is being supplanted by a deep concern for matters of doctrine. As we have stated, there are many indications of this theological turn in our church's thinking. Moreover, this trend is a promise of better things to come in the next twenty-five years."

The writer, nevertheless, admits that there is a definite form of syncretism underlying the structure of the U. C. C. He writes: "We have not endeavored as a church to reduce the theological thinking of our people to a least common denominator. This would only result in a colorless, insipid, and powerless evangel. Rather we have tried as a church to be true to the faith of our founders in permitting diversities in biblical and theological interpretation to exist side by side in the one fellowship. Part of the genius of our church lies in our ability to hold differences of opinion within the unity of the faith." But he closes with a conservative note: "This is a theological age. We cannot escape history in this regard. Man is compelled to theologize by the contemporary situation. In such an age it behooves the whole Church of Jesus Christ to let her light shine that men may see and be saved."

As the undersigned read Dr. Chalmer's article, there came to him two important thoughts. In the first place, church union does not always mean the liberalizing of creed and confession. It may do so, but not of necessity. When in 1925 the United Church of Canada came into being, there were many who predicted that the new church would, in a short time, become so utterly Modernistic that it would destroy itself by sheer infidelity. But Mr. Chalmers' remarks do not seem to indicate that this has been the case. Even indifferent, syncretistic, and liberal churches are subject to doctrinal reform, provided sincere and undaunted Christians make the best of their opportunity in such a union to witness to the divine truth. In the second place, it seems that Dr. Chalmers suggests to us Lutherans a timely lesson. Despite their many shortcomings, Lutherans theologized at a time when theology in wide areas in the United States and Canada had become very much taboo. Should they now, when the age is again theological, yield their Lutheran loyalty to Scriptural theology and omit doctrinal discussions when theology means so much in bringing Lutherans into the unity of faith? Lutherans certainly have every reason in the world to get together, but should not this getting together be on the basis of true unity in the faith, which is so squarely founded on Scripture and so splendidly set forth in the Lutheran Confessions? J. T. MUELLER

THE QUANDARY OF PROTESTANT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

To this the *Watchman-Examiner* (December, 1949) calls attention editorially, making the plea: "If Protestantism is to survive, it must improve its Sunday school training process. The decline in home teaching of religion and the increasing trend of separating all public

education from moral and religious influences places a great burden upon Protestant churches. There must be a greater emphasis upon the Bible." It then quotes an article by Ernest Trice Thompson in *Christian Education* on "The Bible in Teaching," as follows: "There must be a revival of Bible teaching in the church. That means more Biblical instruction, more Biblical exposition from the pulpit; and it means more adequate Bible teaching in the church school. The Roman Catholic Church puts its reliance in parochial schools. It has more than 2,000,000 pupils scattered in approximately 8,000 such institutions. These parochial schools are being supplemented now by a system of high schools. Twenty years ago there were practically no Catholic high schools; ten years ago there were almost a thousand; today there are more than 1,500. Ten years ago there were 150,000 students in Catholic high schools; today there are more than half a million. In addition, there were 769 Catholic colleges and universities. In all these institutions — colleges, high schools, and parochial schools — religion is taught day after day and week after week. As a consequence, the average Catholic is well instructed in the faith. Protestantism as a whole has rejected the idea of a parochial school system, and for the training of its children and youth is depending upon Sunday schools — twenty or thirty minutes of instruction each Sunday morning, imparted by volunteer teachers, to students who are exceedingly irregular in their attendance. There are a host of devoted men and women giving their time to the Sunday schools and without their aid our whole educational program would collapse; yet we are bound to recognize that many of these teachers are inadequately prepared and that many of the methods used are somewhat antiquated. . . . Two thirds of the teachers have never had a course in leadership training." While everything that is here said is most certainly true, the trouble with the all but universal neglect of Protestant religious education goes much deeper. Romanism believes its system of doctrine to be true and necessary to salvation. Hence it is willing to go to the greatest expense in schooling its youth in the field of primary and secondary education. Unless religion means as much to Protestantism as it does to Catholicism, it will never pay the price which 8,000 and more parochial schools, 1,500 high schools, and more than 750 colleges and universities are costing Romanism. The question facing our Lutheran groups today is this: How highly do we value the Word of God, which we possess as a heritage of the Reformation, and how eager are we to preserve it to our children by means of adequate Christian training on the lower and higher levels? Our parish schools and other means of instructing

our youth in religion are only manifestations of our loyalty to Christ. If we fail in loyalty to our Lord, we shall also fail in loyalty to our children and children's children in the point of training them how to remain faithful to Christ.

J. T. MUELLER

ROME'S BASIS FOR THEOLOGICAL RAPPROCHEMENT

In a *Monitum* of June 5, 1948, Roman Catholics were forbidden to take part in the public discussion of religious questions unless they had specific permission of the Pope. The Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office in an instruction of February 28, 1950, "explained, developed, and completed" this *Monitum* and fixed the norms according to which Catholics may participate in religious conferences with non-Catholics. In certain circles this instruction has been viewed as an overture on the part of the Roman Pontiff to establish closer relationships with Protestant churches. However, the Sacred Congregation has carefully restricted the areas of religious co-operation, so that in reality Rome has not deviated in the slightest from its former exclusive and separatistic position. Rome still insists that the only ground on which it can and will co-operate with Protestants is the Protestants' recognition of Rome's absolute authority and supremacy in all questions of faith and morals. According to a recent release of *Religious News Service*, Roman bishops are to observe the following points in regard to "mixed" reunion discussions: (1) Only qualified priests and laymen may participate; (2) joint conferences must be promoted to defend the fundamental principles of the natural law and the Christian religion against the enemies of God or to re-establish social order as the Church indicates it; (3) Catholics may become associated with other groups engaged in promoting or defending common interests outside the religious field; (4) Catholics may participate in common action with other believers in God against the threat of atheism and Communism and for the amelioration of abuses in the social order; (5) reunion must be understood strictly in the sense of a return of all dissidents to the Roman Catholic Church; (6) all "mixed meetings must be adequately controlled and directed," and no religious functions shall take place at them, except a joint recitation of the Lord's Prayer or other prayers approved by the Catholic Church; (7) the meetings are not to take up theological questions, since none of the discussions are to involve merely "a useless desire to assimilate various religions to the disadvantage of the purity of Catholic doctrine."

The Protestants who observed that sometimes Roman Catholics apparently co-operate with Protestants and again at other occasions

refuse such co-operation must keep in mind that the Sacred Congregation distinguishes clearly between such meetings as are in the interest of promoting a common moral and social good, and such meetings as are devoted to the discussion of religion proper. The former type of joint meetings have been held for some time. It is the latter type which are spoken of in the *Monitum* and which the recent Instruction discusses. *America* (3-11-50) reprints the following paragraph from the Instruction:

"Nor does the same *Monitum* (of June 5, 1948) refer to mixed assemblies of Catholics and non-Catholics in which nothing touching faith or morals is under consideration, but discussions are held to take counsel as to the advisable ways and means of defending by concerted action the fundamental principles of the natural law and of the Christian religion against the enemies leagued together against God; or re-establishing the social order, or dealing with and settling questions of a similar nature. Even in these assemblies, as is evident, Catholics are not allowed to approve or concede anything that is not in accord with divine revelation and with the Church's teaching, *including her teaching on the social question*" (italics by us).

As *America* points out, this means that Catholics are ready to co-operate with non-Catholics on issues involving justice and charity, e. g., race discrimination. However, a discussion of the natural rights of man and the establishment of just social order does not come under this heading, for here Rome sees moral and religious questions at stake, and on such questions Rome claims to be the absolute authority to give the answer. It is, therefore, wishful thinking to believe that Rome has receded from its former position. Even such apparently hopeful signs as the discussions between Lutherans and Catholics in Europe, particularly in Germany, must not be overemphasized. (Cf. *Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung*, March 15, 1948, page 35 ff.) Rome will not compromise its central and cardinal doctrine: the Roman Catholic Church's supremacy and infallibility in all matters of faith and morals.

F. E. M.

ROME APPROVES PROTESTANT BAPTISM

Under this heading, the *Watchman-Examiner* (March 16, 1950) reports that "in a ruling at Rome by the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office of the Roman Catholic Church, in response to a questionnaire submitted by United States Catholic bishops in regard to baptisms by Presbyterian, Congregational, Baptist, Methodist, and Disciples of Christ pastors, it is conceded that such baptisms are valid pro-

vided they are performed with the form and in the true spirit of Christian doctrine as interpreted by the [Roman] Church.'” The editorial comments: “This is a concession to Protestantism which we are sure Protestants never sought. It is not a characteristic of Protestants that they desire approval for what they do from any Roman Catholic authority. If, however, it will lessen the tension which exists through the arbitrary authority of the Roman Church regarding the view of the validity of marriage performed outside that Church or of the children of mixed marriages, that will be that much to the good. According to Catholic doctrine, when a valid marriage has been contracted by two unbaptized persons and one of them becomes baptized in the Catholic faith, he can have the marriage dissolved if the unbaptized party refuses to be ‘converted’ or live in ‘peace’ with the Christian. The Church applies this proceeding in accordance with its interpretation of the words of Paul in 1 Cor. 7:12-17, which is called in Catholic procedure the ‘Pauline privilege.’ The offspring of mixed marriages are frequently baptized in Protestant churches, according to the choice of the parents, or, when old enough, of the offspring themselves. We presume that the Protestant and Free Churches of this country will proceed with their obedience to Christ in baptizing in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, whether there be authoritarian consent or no.”

The American Catholic bishops, of course, are not to be censured for requesting a special ruling by Rome’s “Sacred Congregation” on the Baptism of the denominations, or at least of some of the denominations, named in the editorial. Lutherans certainly recognize the Baptism of Christian Protestant denominations, as they also recognize the Baptism of the Roman Catholic Church. But when Protestant denominations insist on being creedless, and both liberal pastors and liberal congregations are tolerated side by side with confessing Christian pastors and congregations, Lutheran pastors have every reason to find out by what kind of pastor and in what kind of congregation the Lutheran confirmand has received Baptism. In no case dare Baptism remain uncertain.

With regard to the ruling on Baptism by the “Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office,” however, this really does not decide anything respecting the validity of the Baptism in question, for Rome demands not only that Baptism, to be valid, must be performed “with the form and in the true spirit of Christian doctrine,” but also that this must be done “as interpreted by the Church.” In practice this ruling leaves every priest in doubt when facing a convert baptized by a Protestant. There is no real Protestant who holds the Roman Catholic *ex opere*

operato doctrine of the Sacrament; nor does any real Protestant hold that the Sacraments infuse "supernatural grace"; nor does any real Protestant maintain that Baptism completely wipes out original sin, so that the remaining lusts of the flesh are not truly sins, but only occasions for sin. We could multiply such perversion and confusion of Roman Catholic "interpretation" ad infinitum, so that after all the American Catholic bishops are not served so very well by the ruling. In every case where the Catholic priest faces a convert baptized by a Protestant, he has reason to doubt whether the Protestant baptizer performed Baptism "with the form and in the true spirit of Christian doctrine as interpreted by the Church." Rome's rulings on questions of Christian practice have a clever way of saying *sic* and *non* at the same time.

J. T. MUELLER

ILLITERATES, HYPOCRITES, DOCETISTS

These are not nice names. Whom do they label? According to the March 19 issue of *The Living Church*, one or all of these fit anyone who accepts "the inerrancy of the Bible." This is the verdict of the Rev. Carrol E. Simcox. In the third of a series of articles on "The Word of God" entitled "Inspiration Versus Verbal Inerrancy" he hands out these compliments to those who have a different view from his on the inspiration of Scripture. He does allow a choice between the first two labels. "Only the illiterates, and those unfortunates whose ecclesiastical pastors and masters forbid them, on pain of mortal sin, to raise questions about faith and morals, believe in verbal inerrancy today."

The first of the alternatives is an old one. In fact, it is so old that we have not seen it mentioned in recent years. Many who hold "the inerrancy of Scriptures" have proved their scholarship beyond knowing the letters of the alphabet. If Simcox would be a little more literate, he would find that there are men who know as much about language, history, philosophy, and sundry other fields of knowledge as he does and still profess the inerrancy of Scripture. In the same issue of *The Living Church* there appears an article on "Humility," which we suggest to Simcox for collateral reading.

The second epithet of hypocritical acquiescence in the official doctrine of the Church is also a blow beneath the belt.

The third badge that the writer pins on all who accept the inerrancy of the Bible is Docetism, the heresy that Christ's human nature was only a phantasm. This charge has been made with some degree of regularity in certain quarters during recent years and deserves scrutiny.

Rev. Simcox puts it thus: "God becomes Man in Christ: true Man. To deny the genuine manhood of Christ is the heresy of Docetism. But if God can become Man, is there any reason why the Word of God cannot be spoken in the words of men?" And he means faulty, wrong, erroneous words of men. "Matthew and Luke (Acts 1:18) contradict each other in their accounts of the death of Judas. There are innumerable such contradictions in the Bible." Furthermore, he does not want such "contradictions" removed by "a reconciling sophistry of some sort."

To the writer's credit it should be added that he believes "that God does indeed speak to us through the Bible. This is an article of faith. The Christian faith in the God who reveals Himself through the Scriptures may be illusory: our heads may be 'buried in an immortal illusion. But if it is an illusion, it is certainly an immortal one. The task of indicating faith before the bar of reason is the task of the apologist." Rev. Simcox does not want to be a rationalist and unbelieving critic. He believes that the teachings of the Bible were not invented by man, but that "God speaks to us." Why, then, is the Bible full of contradictions? It is not God's fault, it is the fault of faulty men. What God poured into the earthen vessels was pure Water of Life. But because He had to use earthen vessels, much of what He poured in became adulterated with sediment of error or it was lost entirely through the cracks of the faulty vessel. "It [the Bible] is written by men who are sinners and who know in part . . . and sinful men cannot speak sinless words. The sin of even the saintly author of the fourth gospel is an obstacle and a hindrance to the articulation of His Word. [If you want a specific example I might mention this writer's evident anti-Semitism.] We may hear God's Word through St. John's Gospel, but the word must pass through the walls of both the Evangelist's sin and our own."

What has this to do with the charge of Docetism? "But if God can become Man, is there any reason why the Word of God cannot be spoken in the words of men?" This is the charge: If you say what the human writers produce under the Spirit's inspiration is not human and therefore faulty, then you deny the human nature of Christ." "The logic of Incarnation actually implies the illogicality of verbal inerrancy." Fortunately the writer believes in enough of Scripture so that he contradicts the analogy that he draws. "At this point the analogy I have suggested, between the Incarnation of Christ and the verbal inspiration of the Word of God in the words of men, needs some qualification. The Son of God Incarnate is a sinless Man." What a difference this

qualification makes. We agree Christ was a true Man, but He had no sin. Hence we say the Bible speaks in the words of men, but it, too, is sinless because it is God's verbal incarnation. The challenge of Docetism vanishes into thin air.

W. R. ROEHRS

JOHN WESLEY'S FIRST HYMNBOOK

Under this heading, Robert Stevenson, professor of church music, Westminster Choir College, in the *Review of Religion* (January, 1950), discusses John Wesley's *Collection of Psalms and Hymns*, published in 1737, in Charleston, S. C., and there again in 1741. Forty-seven years afterwards, when Wesley published his last *Collection of Psalms and Hymns*, he, as the writer says, "returned to those same Psalms and hymns that had nourished his spiritual life during those parched years when he was yet wandering about in goatskins, being spiritually destitute, afflicted, and tormented amidst the wilds of Georgia" (p. 141). To the aged Wesley (he was then eighty-one years old) that "Charlestown Collection" with its seventy items in 1784 must have seemed very important. More than one third of the hymns of the Charleston hymnal were carried over into the 1784 collection, published by the two brothers, John and Charles, "at the very end of their ventures in collaboration." Of the many interesting and instructive things which the writer emphasizes about John Wesley and his hymnal we select two, namely, first, the almost amazing diligence and industry of the then thirty-four-year-old preacher, who, besides preaching, teaching, making love, conferring with uncountable afflicted souls, studying the Bible for hours each day, as he groaned before God in prayer and confession, not only continued his German studies, took up the study of Spanish and Italian, and published his abridged *French Grammar*, but also engaged in many theological, social, and political pursuits. In the second place, John Wesley deeply appreciated good German hymns. In all, he translated thirty-three German hymns, and of these nearly all were done into English while he was in Georgia, a period of one year. Wesley's translated German hymns were gratefully used by the English Methodists for many years, and some of them are still favorites among English-speaking Christians.

When we had read the article on Wesley's hymns, we examined some of them in order to discover just what made them popular in England and other countries where English is the language of common worship. Of course, not all of Wesley's translated hymns are among those that Lutherans might select for congregational devotion, but at least a large number of them are of such a nature that they can well be used in

Lutheran worship. Wesley's translations are characterized by wise selection of impressive stanzas, genuine poetic elaboration of the thoughts presented in the German originals, and a fine, appealing sincerity of Christian faith and love. In short, John Wesley in his translations proves himself an earnest Christian, a gifted linguist, and a true poet. We write this, because we are personally concerned at the tendency of our congregations to discard the German hymns and to sing in the main songs and hymns composed by non-Lutherans. That in itself is not wrong, but it shows a regrettable, wide gap between the classic Lutheran hymn writers and our present English-speaking Lutheran worshippers. To them the existing translations still seem too inadequate; there seem to be too many stanzas and the melodies largely too "heavy"; the content of the hymns appears too dogmatical. These at least are criticisms that have been voiced. Now, our new *Lutheran Hymnal* shows a decided progress in hymnological improvement of the treasures we possess. The melodies have been selected with greater care; the translations on the whole are better; many stanzas have been omitted, and efforts have been made to acquaint our people with the writers of the hymns and the composers of the melodies. That work must go on, and it is to the credit of our Church that everywhere outstanding choirs appear under capable directors that endeavor to win the hearts of Lutherans and non-Lutherans for Lutheran church music and Lutheran chorales. It is in the interest of this fine work that this article is written. John Wesley recognized the surpassing value of Lutheran hymns; do we appreciate the treasure that is ours? And a final thought: John Wesley preached the Word effectively and diligently; but it was still more by inculcating congregational singing that his evangelical movement was spread both in England and in America. He had the ability to produce a "*singende Kirche*." Are we failing in this?

J. T. MUELLER

ITEMS FROM "RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE"

At its recent meeting in Minneapolis the National Lutheran Council set a goal of \$2,900,000 for its 1951 Lutheran World Action. The 1950 goal is \$3,200,000. Tentative goals for succeeding years were set as follows: 1952, \$2,500,000; 1953, \$2,000,000; and 1954, \$1,200,000. Beginning with the year 1954, the Council proposed that the participating bodies discontinue special appeals for Lutheran World Action.

The American Lutheran Mission, Lutheran Swedish Mission, United Lutheran Mission, and Lutheran Augustana Mission have begun a Rural Service Institute to assist needy farmers in Kwangsi Province,

China. Work has been started in four small communities—Lo Yung, Sha Pu, Wu Yu, and Liuchow—and in spite of Communist activity in the communities the program will continue without "much trouble." At Lo Yung a tractor team plowed sixty-six acres to be planted in wheat, and plowing of other waste land is going on in other localities. Ten tons of fertilizer were brought into a central place for distribution.

Dr. R. H. Gerberding, executive secretary of the Board of American Home Missions of the United Lutheran Church in America, reported at a recent meeting of the Board that 350 congregations had received about \$4,000,000 from their Church Extension Board to assist them in acquiring real estate and in building their churches and parsonages.

Over a period of ten years 10,000 Lutheran women of the United Lutheran Church contributed \$100,000 for renovating and improving the Philadelphia theological seminary of their Church. No campaigns or special efforts were used to raise the money. Each woman had made a pledge to contribute \$1.00 a year. The women redeemed their pledges.

The Virginia Synod of the United Lutheran Church has withdrawn from its consultative relationship with the Virginia Council of Churches because the Council of Churches had taken stands on what the Virginia Synod considered to be purely political questions.

Dr. Karl N. Marthinussen was ordained as bishop of the Stavanger diocese of the Norwegian State Lutheran Church. King Haakon and representatives of the Norwegian government attended the ceremony.

The Board of Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Church has made plans for a new one-million-dollar Christian liberal arts college in Alaska. The new school will prepare Alaskan youths of U.S. ancestry for later specialization in law, medicine, journalism, social service, business administration, and music.

The Church of the Nazarene during 1949 received more than \$1,600,000 from its members for its world missionary program. This sum brought the total giving for all purposes to an all-time high of \$104.64 per capita.

Professor John W. Bachman, chairman of the Baylor University Radio Department, recently concluded a survey of the religious radio field. His findings revealed that a majority of radio listeners switch to another station when a religious program comes on the air because the talks are dull and obscure. To catch the interest of the listener, Professor Bachman insists that the religious broadcaster should not

begin his program by forcing his listeners to imagine that they are in church, but that the speaker should imagine himself making a pastoral call at the listener's home. With this in mind the speaker should begin where the people are and talk their language.

Ohio Farm Bureau Insurance Company and the Ohio Farm Bureau Co-operative Association made scholarships amounting to \$1,200 available to rural ministers. Under the gift sixteen clergymen of the State, who will be chosen later as "rural ministers of the year," will attend the Oberlin (Ohio) School of Theology for a short summer course.

For the first time in the history of Japan, a prominent Roman Catholic layman, Kotaro Tanaka, former minister of education and professor in Tokyo Imperial University, was named new Chief Justice of the Japanese supreme court by Premier Yoshida. If this appointment is not disapproved by the people at the next elections, Mr. Tanaka's term as Chief Justice will run for eleven years.

Archbishop Richard J. Cushing of Boston advanced a three-point plea before the American Catholic Historical Association for more stress on American Catholic history. He said: "First: That our historians be alerted to the grave danger in which our children stand of growing up totally unaware of a proud heritage which should be contributing to their perfection both as Catholics and as citizens. Second: Surely in our own schools and colleges the field of American church history ought to be considered an area worthy of separate treatment and separate study. Not merely should a formal course in the religious history of America be included in the curriculum, but there should be a very generous opportunity for reading and reflection on what George M. Schuster (President of Hunter College, New York City) called 'the Catholic spirit in America.' Our students will be stunted indeed if they fail to catch that spirit — and their education for life in the American community will be truly defective if they do not absorb that spirit in its legitimate relationship to the general American scene. Finally: In the teaching of American history itself we should integrate for our students any significant aspects of the church's thought and action, especially on the level of political idealism, social progress, economic reform, and diplomatic efforts toward peace, prosperity, and international organization. Nowhere in the world has she a better chance to live out her history constructively and courageously. Nowhere can she record it so freely and so fairly with greater pride within the household of the faith or better opportunity to be heard by those outside."

ALEX W. C. GUEBERT