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Editorial Comment

Paul M. Bretscher
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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Bretscher: Editorial Comment

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*Address all communications to the Editorial Committee in care of
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Editorial Comment

The fifties of our century produced an unusually large number of theological investigations of the term "tradition." Whether the wide interest in this term resulted from efforts in ecumenical circles to determine precisely what Protestantism means with its accent on the sole authority of Scripture, or whether this interest resulted from the proclamation in 1950 by Pius XII of the dogma of the Bodily Assumption of Mary, or whether other factors contributed to this veritable explosion of investigations of the term "tradition," may be difficult to establish. Nevertheless, the fact remains that in reviewing theological studies published in the past decade one discovers article after article, as well as a number of exceedingly important books, titled "Church, Scripture, and Tradition," or bearing similar headings.

Some of these investigations concentrate on the meaning of the term "tradition" as used in the early Christian centuries. Others examine the meaning and significance attached to the term by the Reformers and reflected in sixteenth-century Confessions. Roman Catholic and Anglican writers, in particular, have surveyed the meaning of the term as employed in "early Catholicism," in the patristic period, in the Middle Ages, and by champions of their faith since the sixteenth century.

Therefore the feature article in this issue of the CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY, in which Richard Baepler takes a close look at the proceedings which led the Council of Trent on April 8, 1546, to set up "tradition" as of equal authority to the Bible and thus to introduce what has been labeled "the new Trent religion," seems eminently relevant. The editors of

this journal believe many readers will join them in thanking Mr. Baepler for his valuable contribution. The relevance of his article becomes evident also from the report that a special commission of the Lutheran World Federation under the leadership of Professor K. E. Skydsgaard will, in the next few years, study "the problem of Scripture and tradition, especially in view of recent developments in Mariology and other problems" (see under "Theological Observer" p. 388).

The Lutheran position with respect to Scripture and "tradition" is spelled out in her Symbols. It seems appropriate, therefore, at this point to call attention to Professor Herbert J. A. Bouman's review of English translations of the Lutheran Symbols, including his evaluation of the latest translation titled *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. We fully agree with Professor Bouman:

There is now no excuse for the Lutheran parishioner of average intelligence and education to neglect a study of the historic formulations of his faith, and certainly there is none for the Lutheran pastor not to incite his people to such study (p. 370).

Applying Professor Bouman's observation to the case in point, we add that the interested student of the Lutheran Symbols, be he layman, pastor, or teacher, will become more and more persuaded that not "Scripture *and* Tradition," but "Holy Scripture remains the *only* judge, rule, and norm according to which as the only touchstone all doctrines should and must be understood and judged as good or evil, right or wrong" (FC, Part I: Epitome 7).

PAUL M. BRETSCHER