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Theological Observer

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THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

On Feb. 6, 1972, in Quezon City in the Philippines a landmark agreement on the doctrine and practice of Baptism was reached by official representatives of the Lutheran Church and the Roman Catholic Church. More than 300 lay and clergy leaders of the two churches were present as were also special guests from the National Council of Churches in the Philippines. Signatories for the Roman Catholic Church were the Most Rev. Teopisto V. Alberto, the Most Rev. William Brasseur, and the Most Rev. Cornelio de Wit; and signatories for the Lutheran Church were Dr. Alvaro A. Cariño, the Rev. Feliciano Inay, and the Rev. David Schneider. The service was held at Trinity Lutheran Church in Quezon City with the Rev. Donald Biel, pastor of Trinity, serving as officiant.

In the letter in which he transmitted the document of agreement to Dr. William H. Kohn, executive secretary for the Board of Missions for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, President Cariño of the Lutheran Church in the Philippines commented, "Indeed it was a solemn occasion, an event to be remembered. . . . We in the Philippines would like to assure you that the promotion of unity in Christ is part and parcel [of] the Church's mission. We invite you to rejoice with us for the humble beginning."

For our readers, we print the full text of President Cariño's remarks and the text of the agreement itself. (HTM)

REV. FATHERS, BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN OUR COMMON LORD:

A break-through in church relations was made when our two churches started to meet in dialog to discuss seriously what has kept them apart and matters of common concern. A break-through in theological dialogs between the two churches was made when both came to realize that they have misunderstood each other in certain Bible doctrines and in effect started to remove those misunderstandings. I like to believe that this solemn occasion for which you and I are gathered together today is the beginning of greater things to happen in church relations between these two churches in this part of the world and hopefully also among all the Christian churches in our land. I like to believe that this development is divine will—the answer, if only just an earnest of the greater things to come, of our Lord's fervent prayer:

I pray . . . that they may all be one even as Thou, Father, art in me and I in you; that they also may be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me . . . that they may be one even as we are one—I in

them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as Thou hast loved me.

It is highly significant that a common doctrinal statement on the Sacrament of Baptism is the first doctrinal consensus that came out of the dialog between the two churches. It is significant because agreement on this holy doctrine presupposes essential agreement on the doctrine of God—agreement on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, the true one God into whom every person properly baptized is brought into the fellowship, into communion with the Triune God. Indeed, Baptism presupposes public confession of the three articles of the Christian faith as found in the three ecumenical creeds—the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed.

Since Holy Baptism is Gospel and hence "the power of God" unto everyone who be-

lieves, every person properly baptized is a member of the body of Christ—a member of the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of saints. It follows therefore that everyone who believes and is baptized as Christ said: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," is a brother or sister of yours and mine and therefore my Christian concern to keep in the faith and to grow in the grace of God in Christ. It is therefore a part of the loving concern of members of these churches to exercise loving watchfulness over each other.

This occasion is indeed itself a great break-through. 460 years of separation and isolation from each other as church structures is a long time. To prolong the separation of God's people from each other through non-dialog or not to proclaim the progress already made toward resolving the separation is to hinder God's will that His people be united with Christ and with each other. We are thankful to God that efforts toward reconciliation have started and that we see today one of the blessed results of these efforts. Let me commend the respective Commissions for Ecumenical Affairs of both churches for their efforts in contributing to the possibility to make this day a day that shall remain in the history of both churches very significant as a day of reconciliation or, at least, the beginning of reconciliation.

We may not delude ourselves into thinking, however, that the road ahead will be smooth and easy. Humanly speaking, the road shall be rough. Let us pray God that He break down the barriers that impede or inhibit the trend and progress toward reconciliation. As God's people, recognizing each other as members of the body of Christ, let us break down and forget past prejudices that are rooted in our respective histories and make positive efforts to create a climate of trust and mutual confidence. Reverend fathers, brothers and sisters, as participants or witnesses of this solemn occasion, let us lift our hearts and our voices and praise God for this great day.

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY BAPTISM

Resolved, that the Lutheran Church in the Philippines adopt the joint statement of mutual recognition of baptismal validity. And be it further

Resolved, that we declare our willingness to have the statement published as an official joint statement of the Roman Catholic Church and the Lutheran Church in the Philippines as follows:

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY BAPTISM

The Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines and the Lutheran Church in the Philippines, after careful study, declare the following:

1. *The Essence of Baptism*

The Sacrament of Holy Baptism is the spiritual cleansing of an individual by the washing of water with the Word of God, in obedience to Christ's command, and with faith in the promises which God attaches to this Sacrament.

Eph. 5:26
Matt. 28:19
1 Peter 3:21

2. *The Necessity of Baptism*

Holy Baptism is necessary for salvation, as our Lord said, "Unless one is born of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." Although God could save men without Baptism, nevertheless, Baptism should not be despised, because we are bound to obey our Lord's clear word and command. Moreover, Baptism, being the sac-

John 3:5

rament of initiation, is necessary for all, for infants as well as for adults.

3. *The Effects of Baptism*

God acts through Baptism to accomplish His purpose in the person baptized:

Through Baptism, God gives to the baptized forgiveness of sins, re-birth into a new life in the Holy Spirit, and salvation.

He incorporates the baptized into the crucified and glorified Christ.

By incorporating the baptized person into the living Christ, He also incorporates him into the Church, and adopts him into His own family, making him a brother to all other baptized persons.

He enables the baptized to begin and carry on a life of joyful service through the Holy Spirit, and to fight against all kinds of evil.

Rom. 6:6, 11

John 3:3-6

Acts 2:38 f.

Titus 3:5-7

Rom. 6:3 ff.

1 Cor. 12:13

Gal. 3:27, 28

Rom. 6:1-23

4. *Responsibilities of the Baptized*

Those who have been baptized should walk in newness of life, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. Thus all Christians are bound to show forth by the example of their lives and speech that new man whom they put on at Baptism.

Baptism lays upon the baptized the responsibility to use God's Word regularly to enable him to repent, to receive forgiveness, and to grow in faith and good works.

Our Lord's command places upon the Church the responsibility to baptize, and to instruct and encourage the baptized in the Christian faith and life.

Baptism constitutes a sacramental bond of unity which joins together all who have been reborn by means of it. This one Baptism therefore demands that those who through it have been brought together into the body of Christ, the Church, strive together for greater expression of their oneness in Christ and for unity in all areas of faith.

Acts 2:38-42

Matt. 28:19, 20

Eph. 4:3-6

5. *Validity of Baptism*

Baptism is valid if it is performed in accordance with Christ's command, that is, applying water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. By His power, God is present in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, so that when a man baptizes, it is God Himself who acts. There is only one Baptism. Therefore, a person who is validly baptized should never be baptized again.

Except in cases of emergency, only an ordained minister of the Church will administer Holy Baptism.

Matt. 28:19

Eph. 4:5

6. *The Rite of Baptism*

In emergency cases, it is sufficient to use a simple rite, which includes at least applying water either by immersion or pouring to the person to be baptized and reciting the Baptismal formula.

Any further ritual and ceremonial elaboration of this basic rite may

be prescribed by the Churches for the sake of order and its instructional value.

A common rite for those churches which have the same understanding of the nature of Baptism, though not necessary, would serve to make them more consciously aware of their oneness as well as to demonstrate their common understanding of it.

7. Mutual Recognition of Baptismal Validity

The Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines and the Lutheran Church in the Philippines hereby express their mutual recognition of the validity of Christian Baptism as it is performed according to the rites of the respective churches. The implications of such mutual recognition follow:

We rejoice in this expression of Christian unity;

We promise to honor the Baptism definitely established as having been performed by the other body as God's own action, not to be repeated under any circumstance, not even conditionally;

We commit ourselves to a faithful observance of the Baptismal rite as prescribed by our respective Churches;

We pledge to continue working toward unity in all areas of Church life and doctrine, including those areas in which very real and serious differences still exist.