

“Meditate
upon these things;
give thyself
wholly to them;
that thy profiting
may appear unto all”

I Timothy 4:15

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Things to Guard Against in Our Approach Toward Re-alignment

The following is a reprint of an essay delivered by the undersigned at one of the first meetings of what was then called the Interim Conference, at Cheyenne, Wyoming in May, 1958. We are presenting it here in order that others may know more about our beginnings, but particularly that we ourselves may recall those early ideals and reorient ourselves if it should prove that we have drifted off course.

The essay is reproduced as it was given at the time, with only a few footnotes added for the sake of preventing possible misunderstanding.

E. R.

Dear Brethren:

When your program committee asked me to write a paper on the subject indicated in the above title, I welcomed the assignment, not for the sake of having something to keep me busy (that was the least of my problems during these recent months) but for the sake of the topic. Although the committee gave me a free hand to re-word its formulation, I have left it just as it appears on the conference program. It recognizes the necessity of a realignment. It suggests careful deliberation rather than precipitate action. It implies that we do not consider ourselves The Remnant, but as part of a remnant; not the end-product, but a stage in a process of sifting, the duration of which is entire-

ly in the hands of our good Lord. Above all, it recognizes that there are "Things to Guard Against," dangers to be faced, pit-falls to be avoided, temptations to be overcome. I am well aware of the responsibility involved in the writing of such a paper. I know that this will call for searching and perhaps painful self-examination and self-criticism. I pray that you may not be disappointed in the trust which you have placed in me.

We are gathered as a group that has taken matters of doctrine seriously, both with regard to the statement of such doctrine and the way in which it is to be translated into life. We have come through a crisis and arrived at a decision. At such times it is so natural to relax, to find a certain measure of satisfaction in having stood one's ground, to engage in a process of building up one's own self-esteem, usually at the expense of others who (in our estimation)* did not meet the test so well. For after all, haven't we stood for the right doctrine? -- Or we may sense the danger of such an attitude of complacency and, feeling the need of justifying ourselves before the world as well as before our own consciences, launch forth into an endless round of reviewing the issues, restating the arguments, re-refuting the counterarguments, reformulating our conclusions - all with the plea that we are contending for the doctrine! Yes, let us hold fast to the form of sound doctrine. But let us not forget another matter which also calls for our keen concern. In his letter to Timothy (I, 4:16) Paul says: "Take heed unto thyself , and unto the doctrine; continue in them, for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee. "

* This does not imply, of course, that the issue itself is merely a matter of human judgment.

This Apostolic word suggests not only the need for, but also the direction of our study. Let there be no doubt as to the need, namely that we take heed, that danger threatens. Paul spells this out for us in detail when he warns, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. " And the direction of our study must be that we search our own hearts, frankly and unsparingly. For the foe who has wrought such havoc and confusion in our beloved Synod* is still at work. The partial success that he undeniably achieved last summer will not satisfy him. If some have resisted him when he was seeking to move us to the left, in the direction of indifferentism and incipient unionism, will he not then seek to swerve just those into the opposite direction?

To ignore this danger would be the very blindness against which the Apostle so urgently warns us. Satan is defeated when men stand on the simple truth of God's Word. But he gains precious ground, not only when men weaken in their adherence to this Word, but also when in an excess of zeal they go beyond it, when they seek to fortify it by well-meant but misguided additions of their own. That is how the Scribes and Pharisees became what they were in the days of the public ministry of our Lord. Let us clearly understand that one particular danger facing us lies in the direction of developing a superorthodoxy, an arrogant attitude of pride and self-esteem that someone in Germany has with rare discernment described as "Lehr-gerechtigkeit." I am not suggesting that this would be anyone's conscious and deliberate attitude. But that Satan will be trying to move us in that direction, of that there can be no doubt. And since he did not hesitate to use God's own Word in tempt-

*Referring to the outcome of the 1957 Convention of the Joint Synod of Wisconsin.

ing our Lord Jesus, he will certainly come to us also with his deceitful "It is written. " There is good reason for careful and even critical scrutiny of the way in which others have handled Scripture in our controversy. We shall need to continue this procedure. But in so doing, let us learn to be most critical of ourselves, of our own method of interpreting and applying Scripture. Having some rather strong convictions, and aiming at some rather definite objectives, let us be sure, very sure, that we are really drawing these conclusions out of Scripture, rather than reading them into it. The Devil is an expert on the psychology of controversy!

Another vulnerable target at which he is sure to aim is our flesh, the flesh which we admittedly all have. Was he not already doing this when, long before we came to the point of breaking with our Synod, he showed us in greatest detail just what the dire consequences of such an action would be for our respective careers, when he pointed up the external advantages of staying with an organized church body, when he suggested methods of modulating one's voice of protest just sufficiently to remain in good standing, even while quieting one's own conscience by what one has said? Was not this the old familiar "Spare thyself!" "This shall not be unto thee!"? -- And if, by the grace of God, this temptation has been recognized for what it is, will he not come right back with an attack at the other side of this same flesh, seeking to move it to an excess of righteous indignation, to a type of polemical discussion which is deliberately provocative and insufferably sure of having a monopoly of the truth? Furthermore, he knows all about the corrosive effects of self-pity, and will make every effort to lead us into feeling ourselves wronged ,

misunderstood, mistreated,— to see ourselves as men whose true worth has not been recognized — until we yield to discouragement and withdraw into a shell of bitterness and paralyzing hopelessness. There are many facets to this morbid phenomenon of the martyr complex, and he will explore them all in his efforts to ensnare us. He will try to close our eyes, our understanding, yes, even our hearts, to the efforts that others are making--perhaps along other lines than we have chosen, yet with the same end in view;* perhaps by methods, the inadequacy of which has already been demonstrated to our satisfaction, but to which they still are clinging in a desperate effort to stave off what they—even as we—consider a profound catastrophe. If he can get us to ridicule their efforts, to denounce them with an air of lofty condescension, if he can get us to judge them without first sincerely seeking to understand their thinking, then Satan will again have scored a signal success in his unceasing warfare against the souls of men.

These are at least some of the dangers that confront us, or--as our topic has it--"things to guard against in our approach toward realignment." I trust that recognizing the quality of these dangers will immediately suggest the nature of the cure.

There is first of all, of course, the example of our patient Lord and Savior Himself: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously. Let us learn to pray the "Father, forgive them. . . .," but not with an air of smug superiority, but as men that are keenly aware of our own need for forgiveness, and who desire nothing more than the restoration of the fellowship that we have lost.

* and in sincere support of the same principles.

The Apostle Paul elaborates the thought suggested by the above words of Peter, when he writes to the Philippians (ch. 2:5-8):

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

The point which the Apostle is here making, the mind that he would cultivate in his Philippians, is the double one of humility and obedience, or better still, the blending of these two concepts into the single one of a humility that manifests itself in absolute obedience. We shall do well to take each of these concepts by itself. Note how Paul emphasizes the amazing quality of the humility of Christ by pointing to the fact that though He was God, He did not exploit this to His own advantage. Forgoing by deliberate design the opportunities to build His own reputation, He took the successive steps that were to lead to His shameful death. The mind fails to grasp such utter humility, such complete forgetfulness of self. Yet that is the attitude which Paul is trying to instill in us. This will cure us of all posing, of the striking of heroic attitudes, of any attempts to become dramatic in the role that has been assigned to us--as well as of any tendency to become impressed with a sense of our own importance. This will make us willing to be truly humble servants of God, after the pattern of the EBED JEHOVAH, the great Servant of Isaiah 53. And yet, even here a word of warning must be spoken. For true humility is not achieved by talking about it. It is not for us to describe

ourselves in such terms time and again. Such an attitude can become both pharisaical and nauseating. Rather than talk about it, let us simple be humble, and let others say it of us. We know that we shall never achieve perfection in this Christian virtue, but we shall be on our way.

The humility of our Lord culminated in His obedience unto death, an obedience that did not falter even though it was the most shameful and cruel death that human ingenuity could invent. It was an obedience that followed faithfully along the way that the Heavenly Father and His Holy Spirit led, that implicitly accepted every decision that was thus made for Him.-- Here again our obedience inevitably falls far short of that perfection of our Lord, so that our sole comfort is that He was obedient for us, fulfilling all righteousness. And yet we follow after, haltingly indeed, but earnestly nevertheless, in order that this mind be also in us, which was in Christ Jesus. Learning His spirit of utter willingness (I delight to do thy will, O my God. - Ps. 40:8); observing His method (It is written—It is written again); striving for that attentive listening which notes every inflection, every shading of the Word (which is the real ὑπακούειν); and finally, the full and unqualified acceptance that simply says, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth. Admittedly, we have much to learn in this respect. But surely, we can desire no other way.

In addition to these references to the example of our patient Lord there are also given, for the sake of fortifying us further against the dangers about which we are speaking, many other Apostolic injunctions. But surely, none goes into the matter more thoroughly, and none appeals to the heart

more strongly, than Paul's great Hymn in Praise of Christian Love, ἀγάπη. And what can be of greater practical value than the section that describes this love in action? - Verses 4-7 of I Corinthians 13.

CHARITY SUFFERETH LONG, AND IS KIND. In the face of severe trials and opposition, of injustice and malice, of injury and persecution, it does not give way to anger, does not aim at reprisal, but reveals something of that μακροθυμία (long suffering) which is most often attributed to God in His patient and forbearing way of dealing with sinners. It shows something of that kindness, that χρηστότης that was characteristic of the ministry of Christ. In short, it shows something of a spirit of which the human heart is utterly incapable, save when it has been transformed by the gracious work of the Spirit, where a spark has been kindled that has its origin in the pure flame of the Love of God, the God whom we love because He first loved us.

CHARITY ENVIETH NOT, is not given to jealousy, even where there is such a wide difference in the distribution of what are commonly called "the good things in life," as in the case of Dives and Lazarus.

CHARITY VAUNTETH NOT ITSELF, IS NOT PUFFED UP. The thought of proud boasting or idle bragging is utterly foreign to it, even as it always must be when we remember the example of Him who made Himself of no reputation, but took upon Him the form of a servant. It does not become enamored of its own reflection as seen in a sort of mental mirror, it aspires to no place on a pedestal.

It is a very sober thing, having both feet on the ground, the solid base of God's Holy Word.

(Charity) DOTH NOT BEHAVE ITSELF UNSEEMLY, SEEKETH NOT HER OWN. Even in what are often considered the minor matters of common courtesy, of polite conduct, of good manners, Charity has no difficulty in conforming to the pattern that constitutes the accepted pattern, the σχῆμα of the life that brings us into daily contact with countless other men. It has no difficulty here, because it has discovered the secret of all true courtesy: not seeking her own. To be considerate of others - how different things become when viewed from this perspective! And how many doors are opened that might otherwise have been barred only the more firmly by the lack of these qualities!

(Charity) IS NOT EASILY PROVOKED, THINKETH NO EVIL. The "easily" of the AV may be misleading, as though grave provocation would justify stern retaliatory measures. The Greek is simple: Οὐ παροξύνεται. Charity is not enraged, does not react violently to insult and injury, nor is it embittered thereby. οὐ λογιζέται τὸ κακόν. It does not brood over the evil that it may have suffered. It does not keep book on these things, taking each separate incident that has occurred, each wrong that one may have suffered, and entering it, as it were, in a voluminous ledger with indelible ink! How wonderful that in the one account book that includes the sins of all the world, God is μὴ λογιζόμενος, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Let that serve as the cure for bitterness on our part.

(Charity) REJOICETH NOT IN INIQUITY, BUT REJOICETH IN THE TRUTH. Just when it seems

that Charity must be a weak and ineffective weapon against evil and error, as though it were simply yielding the verdict by default, there comes this turning point. Charity does not abdicate in the face of evil. It does not weakly condone what has occurred. It does not fail to react, does not yield to indifference. When confronted with wrong, with ἀδικία it is fully capable of recognizing this for what it is, namely an affront to, and a denial of, the righteousness, the δίκη of God. It is grieved, as indeed it must be, particularly when this ἀδικία is threatening to disrupt, or has perhaps already disrupted, a very precious bond of fellowship. And therefore Charity is ready to go into action, as was the case when Paul took the Corinthians to task for their disorderly conduct at those feasts that were dedicated to the cultivating of ἀγάπη, but which had nevertheless degenerated until a true observance of the Lord's Supper was made impossible thereby (I Cor. 11). We see it when Paul reproved this same congregation for its default in a serious matter of church discipline (ch. 5), as well as for their factionalism (ch. 1). He did it likewise in the case of the seducers of the Galatians, even as he had done to a fellow-apostle, Peter, withstanding him to the face, because he was to be blamed. Gal 2:11.-- For Charity knows the one remedy for such a situation, the one way of restoring what once was and removing the occasion for grief : It rejoiceth in (with) the Truth. It does not trust in the skillful use of human reason, it does not operate with the argumentum ad hominem. It invokes the Truth, the absolute Truth of God's Word- that Word of which our Lord said, "Thy Word is Truth." That is the one measure which under such circumstances can alone be effective.

Yet, in all this, Charity is still Charity. Love

has not ceased to be Love. But it is Love bound by the Word of God. It is Love together with the Truth. συνχαίρει δὲ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ. The two go hand in hand. If Charity would forsake this Truth, it would cease to be Love, ἀγάπη, a love that is a reflection of the Love of God. If, therefore, that Word of God prescribes stern measures, Charity does not hesitate to apply them, for it knows that they have their origin in God's desire that all men be saved. It may shrink from the thought of a separation, and yet will accept it nevertheless, if God directs it. It has but one thing to go by, and that is the Word, to which it resorts ever again- for its own enlightenment as well as for the means of restoring the joy that once was. And it is in the use of this weapon against ἰσικία that God's grace has put into our hands that Charity meets its final test.

(It) BEARETH ALL THINGS, BELIEVETH ALL THINGS, HOPETH ALL THINGS, ENDURETH ALL THINGS. Yes, it is no light task that Charity is undertaking. There will be many difficulties with which to cope, mountains of misunderstanding to be removed, pangs of disappointment to be endured. Nor will it be easy to gain even a few successes- for there will be failures without number. Yet Charity assumes the burden, for it has not lost sight of the goal. This is why it is also so ready to believe the best, so unwilling to let its efforts be undermined by suspicion or doubt. Charity really works and speaks "in all good faith." It has no time for pessimism. It hopeth all things- not with a fatuous Pollyanna type of optimism, but because it has committed matters to the grace of God, because it trusts in the power of His Word. That is why it endureth all things. It has learned to wrestle with God like a Jacob, and like an Abraham inter-

ceding for Sodom and Gomorrhah it has learned to win one concession after another with its un-abashed pleading. It has a tenacity that time and again has snatched victory from defeat—and will do so again.

That is charity! We need it!

Without it—

THOUGH I SPEAK WITH THE TONGUES OF MEN AND OF ANGELS, AND HAVE NOT CHARITY, I AM BECOME AS SOUNDING BRASS AND A TINKLING CYMBAL. AND THOUGH I HAVE THE GIFT OF PROPHECY, AND UNDERSTAND ALL MYSTERIES, AND ALL KNOWLEDGE: AND THOUGH I HAVE ALL FAITH, SO THAT I COULD REMOVE MOUNTAINS, AND HAVE NOT CHARITY, I AM NOTHING. AND THOUGH I BESTOW ALL MY GOODS TO THE POOR, AND THOUGH I GIVE MY BODY TO BE BURNED, AND HAVE NOT CHARITY, IT PROFITETH ME NOTHING.

But with it--

NOW ABIDETH FAITH HOPE, CHARITY, THESE THREE; BUT THE GREATEST OF THESE IS CHARITY.

God grant us a full, rich, ever increasing measure of His Love!

AMEN

E. R.

The Kingdom of God

(continued)

In foregoing portions of this study we demonstrated the fact that the concept "kingdom" in its combinations of "kingdom of God," "kingdom of Christ," "kingdom of heaven" primarily and essentially designates the kingly ruling of God per se, that is, the continuous activity of God whereby He attains the objectives which He has fixed. Our investigation further revealed that Holy Scripture, in keeping with its character as a revelation of the Gospel, never directly refers to the pure exercise of divine omnipotence — for example, God's perfect and constant control of all laws of nature as well as of all external affairs of men and angels—as His "kingdom," although certainly all of that, too, is included in God's βασιλεία. Rather, the term "kingdom of God" in Scripture designates that activity of God wherein He establishes the Gospel in the world and by means thereof carries out His plan for the salvation of His elect and the establishment, maintenance and glorification of His Church. All that men with their earthy sense of values regard as the chief substance of world-governance, namely the invariable, regulated operation of the forces of nature, the constant, sometimes gradual and often catastrophic changes which occur in the circumstances of individuals and of nations, in brief, all that the unbelieving world considers pertinent when it presents the picture of natural and world history is indeed, as Scripture comfortingly assures the Christian, subject to the absolute sovereign-

ty of God. But the Scripture considers all this magnificent, divine administration to be so second-rate in comparison with the activity of God through the Gospel and for the sake of the Gospel that the designations under consideration are reserved for this latter phase of divine activity. Whoever therefore desires to understand the sayings of Scripture concerning the kingdom of God may never lose sight of this true and primary meaning of the term.

Inasmuch, however, as Scripture undeniably employs the expression "kingdom" also in a metonymic sense, even our sketchy study of the subject would be inadequate without a review of this derivative manner of expression. In conformity with the outline proposed in an earlier instalment (Journal, Vol.I, No. 4, pp.16-17) we are at this point to consider the many passages in which the "kingdom" is described as a place to which people may come, or a possession to which they may attain. To this we are obliged, by way of dissent from the Romanizing and Calvinistic viewpoints, to add the evidence which indicates that the concept "kingdom" never embraces anything purely material or external, but ever only the spiritual gifts mediated by the Gospel.

Before proceeding, we again affirm the fact that Scripture knows nothing of that metonymy so current among us, by which we refer to the creatures to whom God ministers in a special manner as King, and thus specifically to the Church on earth, as His kingdom. No one may say that such a metonymy is not justifiable; it comes to mind readily and so definitely expresses a correct idea that there is little ground for an objection to its use in the casual speech of the Church. But it is not proper to transport this metonymy into the

Scripture and let it determine the meaning of this or that passage. It is not indigenous to Scripture. The few passages which in my estimation might conceivably be adduced in evidence with some show of right against such a claim are Exodus 19: 6; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; and perhaps I Pet.2:9. The New Testament texts here listed obviously have reference to the passage from Exodus; and a comparative study brings us to the correct interpretation. God says through Moses: "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests (MAMLECHETH KOHANIM)." The Revelation says: "He hath made us a kingdom, priests unto God and his Father; thou hast made them unto our God a kingdom and priests, and they shall be kings upon earth." * Peter says: "Ye are a royal priesthood." When one reads these expressions, which unquestionably refer to the same matter, in immediate context with each other, it would be difficult to arrive at the conclusion that with "kingdom" Moses had in mind "subjects of the king." Rather is it manifest that the priesthood is regarded as the chief characteristic of the persons named, the stipulation being added that these also rank as kings and perform kingly work. God describes these persons whom He made priests as genuine "associates in the kingdom," not in the sense of subjects, but as co-regents who participate in His regal rule. This might impress us as a rather

*) Following another reading, Luther translates the first passage: "kings and priests before God and His Father." The A. V. here says: "He hath made us kings and priests;" the R. V.: "he hath made us to be a kingdom, to be priests" etc. —In the second passage, also, Luther and the A. V. follow a variant reading: "Thou hast made us unto God kings and priests and we shall be kings upon earth." The English Revision, however: "Thou madest them to be unto God a kingdom and priests, and they reign upon the earth."

strong hyperbole, but only if in human fashion we have in mind primarily, or perhaps exclusively, God's administration of the universe. If, on the other hand, we keep in mind that in the language of Scripture the kingdom of God is His ruling through the Gospel, and that His spiritual priests are the very ones who have been entrusted with the proclamation of the Gospel on earth, the impression of an hyperbole is dissipated. God has indeed so ordered His kingly Gospel-administration on earth that it takes place through the ministry of His Church!

It would be even less justifiable to find in Matt. 13:41 an instance of the metonymy: kingdom of God = Church, although this passage is repeatedly employed in that sense. By its context ("the field is the world") one would be forced into the inconsistency of regarding the world as kingdom of Christ or at best to externalize the concept "Church" to the point where it includes also "all things that offend and them which do iniquity." In this instance, also, the proper perspective is immediately gained if we recognize the "kingdom of the Son of man" as His reign through the Gospel. For the people described as tares the time period will run out in which the Son of man as Savior seeks to influence and rule over them by means of His Gospel. Thereupon they leave His "kingdom"; their time of grace is over.

But let us proceed to a study of those statements of Scripture in which the expression "kingdom" is actually employed metonymically. Let us begin by assembling the passages in which the kingdom is described as a place to which men may come. Thus of the kingdom of heaven: The least

(or the greatest) in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:19; 11:11; 18:1); to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:20; 17:21; 18:3; 19:23); to sit in the kingdom of heaven with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Matt. 8:11); the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 16:19); ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men (Matt. 23:13). Further, the kingdom of God: The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you (Luther here: kingdom of heaven) (Matt. 21:31); to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye (Mark 9:47); how hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God (Mark 10:23-25; Luke 18:24f); the least in the kingdom of God (Luke 7:28); ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.... they shall come.... and sit down in the kingdom of God (Luke 13:28f); blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God (Luke 14:15); we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22); walk worthy of God who has called you unto his kingdom and glory (1 Thess. 2:12); that ye may be accounted worthy of the kingdom of God (2 Thess. 1:5). Of the kingdom of Christ: Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom (Luke 23:32); that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom (Luke 22:30); hath no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God (Eph. 5:5); who hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son (Col. 1:13); the Lord will deliver me.... and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom (2 Tim. 4:18); an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour (2 Pet. 1:11).

For our purposes it is not necessary to examine each and every one of these statements in their

immediate context. The discussion of a selection from their number will suffice to demonstrate the correctness and applicability of our understanding of the terminology under consideration. As a unique example we turn first to the word of the malefactor (Luke 23:42) which the Lord acknowledged as perfectly correct in concept and expression. After his suffering, then, Jesus came into His kingdom. When this is said of Him, it naturally means something entirely other than when we say of ordinary men that they enter the kingdom of God; not alone because it is His kingdom into which He comes and which properly belongs to Him, but primarily because it is here only the verb that creates the impression that we might be confronted with a metonymy. Perhaps the malefactor actually thus visualized the procedure, as though Jesus would be transported from the locale of His suffering to another place, just as we ourselves readily see the removal of the Lord from His State of Humiliation to the State of Exaltation in glory as a process involving space and locality. It is more probable, however, that as a Jew he intended the expression kingdom in the sense that was current among His people ; and doubtless we correctly understand his saying when we see it as a direct reference to God's kingly ruling. Accordingly it is wholly responsive to the intent of the petitioner if we thus paraphrase his words: Remember me when after Thy suffering and death Thou enterest upon Thy kingly-divine rule. In faith he had laid hold upon the truth that the Crucified One possessed divine omnipotence which He would presently and fully employ. In this light the appearance of a metonymy in this passage vanishes entirely; "to enter into His kingdom" means, for Jesus, the assumption of His divine rule-activity.

But what is the meaning of passages which ascribe to ordinary people an act of entering into or sitting in God's kingdom? Manifestly these expressions make reference to a change that occurs relative to the sinner in question. But no spatial change can be meant, for in most of the instances under consideration the persons remain localized in exactly the same circumstances in which they had existed previously; and where a change of place does seem to be involved, a careful investigation reveals that the change is not an essential feature of the entering into the kingdom of God. This alone removes from such passages every factor that might seem to justify their use in application, for example, to the external participation in Christian worship or the act of accepting membership in a Christian congregation. In God's design such an act may well, as *actus paedagogicus*, physically bring a person nearer the kingdom of God, in that he is being exposed to the preaching of the Gospel; but no man enters the kingdom of God purely through such an external, spatial coming into proximity. Indeed, localiter he may be standing so near the kingdom of God that others may take him to be "great in the kingdom of God," whereas he may nevertheless be utterly far from it.

The Lord Himself plainly suggests this when He says of the rich that they shall hardly, that is, with great difficulty, enter the kingdom of God. This thought is so emphatically presented that the disciples were entirely justified in gaining the impression that it is impossible for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God and be saved. Yet everyone knows that it is not at all impossible for wealthy people to belong externally to the assembly

of confession Christians and also that now and then, in the confessing group, someone emerges from a state of great physical poverty and attains to a considerable degree of prosperity without thereby being separated from the ranks of church members. The issue in such passages, therefore, is not an actual change of location. It must further be pointed out that in some of these passages the kingdom of God is described as a place to which the respective subjects will attain only in the future (preserve us unto His heavenly kingdom; through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God), while in others the kingdom is a place in which the believers are already sitting with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who, after all, have long since departed this temporal life and are no longer subject to the limitations of space as we know them. The entering into the kingdom of God and the being therein, therefore, lies wholly outside the physical, bodily, spatial domain and deals with space, time and matter only in the sense that we who dwell on earth cannot exist other than in a spatial, temporal and material manner.

For the understanding of our metonymy the comparative study of our passages has not only provided us with the fact that not everyone who comes under the influence of the Gospel has therefore already entered the kingdom of God—although kingdom of God essentially denotes God's kingly activity through the Gospel; we also come to realize that the entering into the kingdom of God does not specifically signify the process by which the sinner becomes a child of God. To enter into the kingdom of God does not mean to be converted or regenerated. Let no one misunderstand this as saying that conversion and regeneration have noth-

ing to do with the entering into the kingdom of God. For when Jesus Himself declares: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," and when Paul asserts that God has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son, we are thereby undeniably told that only those have entered the kingdom of God who by means of regeneration live in a new, spiritual life. On the other hand, in that very conversation with Nicodemus the Lord distinguishes between the seeing of the kingdom of God, the being therein, and regeneration itself, as between cause and effect. He who is regenerated is thereby and for that reason in God's kingdom. The creative act by which God transports a sinner out of death into life must have preceded the state of his being in the kingdom in the sense of the passage here under consideration. Add to this the fact that the Lord occasionally describes the being in the kingdom of God in terms of a metaphor representing a festive meal: Eating and drinking in His kingdom, eating bread in the kingdom of God. We are at this point not concerned with the actual sense of this metaphor; for the understanding of our metonymy involving space we are simply pointing out that with the imagery chosen by Him He is defining the being in the kingdom of God as a conscious state of enjoyment. The believer is not only new-born; he is also aware that he has become God's child. He not only possesses all the treasures which Christ won, but consciously revels in the possession of them. "We know that we have passed from death unto life;" "I know whom I have believed."

Thus we realize that the metonymy of which we speak is the metonymia causae pro effectu. The kingdom of God, the kingly ruling through the Gospel, is the actual cause. By virtue of this kingly activity a man is not only regenerated but is made aware of his transplantation under the Gospel. Through the Gospel God constantly works in His believers the certainly of faith, the consciously happy (festive meal!) enjoyment of the riches which God gives His people. To be in God's kingdom, therefore, means nothing else than this: that through God's gracious ruling one knows that one is under this rule of Grace. In keeping with God's purpose that is the normal state of those who have entered His kingdom; they know and by faith sense that they dwell under the gracious βασιλεία of God and Christ. This knowing and sensing is created by the Gospel and is dependent upon it. The hours of temptation during which a Christian seems to lose such awareness do not arise from the activity of God in the Gospel but invariably from this, that the Christian transfers his attention from the Gospel to himself and his personal merits—in other words, that he begins to withdraw from the kingdom of God.

We shall now apply this understanding of the matter to a number of the previously cited Scripture references. In so doing, we must observe that the kingdom of heaven is not to be taken as a specific reference to the next world with its full salvation, but as a synonym for kingdom of God denotes the gracious activity of the heavenly King through His Gospel. Christ says: "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever

shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 5:19). It will not do to assume that this statement parallels that other, rather mysterious, remark about the least in the kingdom of heaven who is nevertheless greater than John (Matt. 11:11). The Lord in all likelihood meant Himself when speaking of the least in the latter passage; but this probability does not justify us in importing into the former passage the thought that Jesus is the One Who teaches and fulfills the Law perfectly. In Matthew 11:11 Jesus is presented as the least because of the profound humiliation which He willingly assumed; in the former passage Jesus calls him the least who breaks and rejects but one commandment. But we have recognized that they are "in the kingdom of heaven" who are aware of their position under the active influence of the Gospel. Their judgment is the prevailing point of view "in the kingdom of heaven." In other words, the teaching of Jesus is this: He that is under the Gospel influence can esteem no man highly who does violence to a single commandment of God. The spirit of the Gospel makes a profound regard for all words and commandments of God self-evident to those who are "in the kingdom of heaven." Governed by the power of the Gospel, therefore, they entertain a deep respect for those who live according to God's commandments and ratify these commandments as fully normative for all children of God. Indeed, the Lord at once presents the concrete application: "Except your righteousness shall exceed" etc. There is a tendency to interpret the "better righteousness" as a reference to the imputed righteousness of Christ, perhaps because one may involuntarily be reading: ... "enter into heaven." But the Lord is speaking of the kingdom of heaven, that is, of His activity through the Gospel; and one "enters

the kingdom of heaven by being consciously made subject to the power of the Gospel. He is therefore here not discoursing on the process by which a sinner is saved from damnation but is describing the state of those who have been saved. As long as one deals with the divine Law as the Pharisees taught it, that is evidence of the fact that one is not yet under the active operation of the Gospel. He who is to enter the kingdom of heaven must therefore experience a conversion by virtue of which he subsequently assumes an attitude toward the divine laws and their fulfillment that differs radically from the position of the Pharisees, the arch-representatives of natural man.

How precisely this view corresponds to that which was in the Lord's mind is revealed by the Pericope Matt. 18:1-4 (Mark 9:33-37; Luke 9:) Pericope Matt. 18:1-4 (Mark 9:33-37; Luke 9:46-48). There was a dispute among the disciples on the subject of which one of them should be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. "Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Here, too, the Lord does not speak of the how of man's conversion; he discloses nothing of the process of conversion, but of its immediate consequence, namely that then the person is in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever reaches for rank and honors in the kingdom of heaven and desires to be preferred above others is not yet therein. In the kingdom of heaven, under the Gospel rule of God, such thoughts simply do not arise. Whoever is under the sway of the Gospel rejoices in it

as a child which is well aware of its weakness and inadequacy and therefore lays no claim to "greatness." "Greatness" in the kingdom of heaven consists in this, that one is happy in a child-like way to be under the regency of the Word of Grace, and the "greatest" of such is the one least conscious of his greatness, like a child. We therefore find also here, as everywhere in Scripture, the rejection of all trust and every pride in personal accomplishment. Through such trust and pride awareness of being in the kingdom is destroyed. At this point there comes to mind at once, then, that observation concerning the publicans and harlots who go into the kingdom of God before the self-righteous Pharisees — not because their achievements please God more than those of the conceited, but because conceit, the confidence in personal strength and merit, excludes a joyful awareness of the Grace bestowed, while to the penitent just this awareness is a cause for rejoicing.

Another obstacle — one which indeed in the last analysis also has its roots in self-satisfaction and self-righteousness — is mentioned by the Lord when He speaks of the rich who shall hardly enter the kingdom of heaven. Here the obstacle assumes the shape of love of money or a reliance upon material possessions. In the context of this reference the rich is not the wealthy man whose possessions are above the prevailing average (after all, Abraham was such an one!) but the man of any status who allows his thinking and emotions to be governed by earthly possessions, Mammon and deceitful riches. Whether his worth is reckoned in millions or by far lesser values is quite irrelevant here. Anyone who is motivated by what Scripture calls covetousness has as little inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God as harlots, adulterers, etc. His temperament cannot entertain that trusting confidence in the Grace of God by which alone a man attains to the joyful conviction that he is in the kingdom.

The "Keys of the kingdom of heaven" we have always understood to be the Gospel. Thus the statements of the Lord involving these are relevant to the point now under consideration, because the Keys are conceived of as the means of making the kingdom accessible as a place. Jesus gives to Peter and to His entire body of Christians the Gospel, by the ministrations of which sinners are brought into the kingdom of God. Not indeed in the sense that those entrusted with the Gospel can or should according to their whims or judgment authorize an entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Where the Gospel is administered in accordance with Christ's purpose, the Savior Himself is officiating with the intent of converting men to Himself and of awakening in them the faith-conviction of being under His rule. For him who has this conviction, the Gospel has become the Key to the kingdom. This divine truth of course also has a reverse side for him who despises it. If it is true that by His Gospel alone Jesus wills to place sinners under His rule of Grace, then the same Gospel automatically excludes from the kingdom of heaven those who will not submit to Him. The preachment of Grace assures everyone who hears it that God in Christ is truly reconciled to him; but by the same token it affirms that there is salvation in none other and that no man can find another deliverance.

E.S.

(to be concluded)*

*) For the sake of its contribution toward an understanding in the discussion in Lutheran circles relating to the doctrine of the Church we are offering this translation of an article written by the late Prof. John Schaller. The original may be found in the Quartalschrift, Vol. 15, Nos. 2-3.

P A I D E I A

Point and Process

The idea in our theme is not at all difficult once a person gets an eye for it. It is a thought that can be descriptive of both the material and the spiritual aspects of life, for there are two particular ways, among many others, of looking at life and business and whatever. Things are static and fixed and settled and finished, or they are changing and growing and developing and living. The two views are sometimes defended as opposed one to the other; indeed, a recent writer on education did thus make them mutually exclusive, even as the early Greeks set them one against the other.

First, please understand that we are not asking that a choice be made between the attitudes we have described as point and process. We hasten to say that the two viewpoints belong together, like two sides of a coin, or like two views of a mountain. A distinction needs only to be made between what remains fixed and firm on the one hand, and what is growth and change on the other.

There may be those who do not wish to bother with ideas and thinking and philosophy. But there are those who do. Some people think and like to analyze people's thoughts and words and deeds. Some are observant and analytical and appreciative of all this excitement called life; others glare at it, as Luther said, "like a cow at a new gate," finding nothing to specially note or appreciate or make comments on.

But we know from experience with students that some (or many?) of them are looking for something that "will reduce the skill-drudgery of learning and human development, such as creativity, the use of reflective thought, and experiences in freedom. " What we have to say about point and process fits into this category.

Nor is the notion of our theme the least strange to our Christian religion; indeed, it is there that it applies most fully-- in fact it was in that area that we stumbled upon the idea. May we add, parenthetically, that no person stumbles upon much of anything who does not wander about and browse and investigate, especially in that remarkable written Word that we have.

So what are we trying to do for paideia (education) when we suggest the thought of point and process? This, first, that many truths and facts are fixed and immutable, like the Law and Gospel, specifically the Ten Commandments and "the laws of nature and of nature's God," and the great works of God for our salvation and preservation. And, in our grasp of these, yes, in our faith in them, there is growth and expansion and movement and excitement.

There is nothing so dead as school subject-matter merely set out to be learned, in connection with which thrill of discovery, enjoyment of understanding, and inspiration for life are wanting entirely or toned down to a duty and a chore.

Now, it is a pity that heretics and atheists and modernists and unionists and national religionists and men of the world in general (make the list as long as you wish) have the knack of making things interesting and exciting and consuming of men's time and effort. They are largely (we almost said wholly) given to process, process understood as life and movement and gain and progress of one kind or another. Much of this is the delusion of the Tempter, of course; it is often based on lies and evil, but it works in its way, and it draws crowds onto the broad way that leadeth to destruction. Yet not all of it is so. Much of it, by whomever it is done, is really the tracing of the marvellous finger of God in creation, the revealing of fascination processes furiously going on in the present wonderful creation, and the learning of how things go in this present world.

Then, in contrast, there are those who have glimpsed a portion of truth and closed their minds to learning more. They have staked out their reservation, built a fence around it, and virtually said "We know it all, " even as many years ago someone proposed that the United States close its patent office because everything that could possibly be invented was then already patented. In education we have the case of Aristotle. It is generally granted that he was the most learned man of his time and for centuries thereafter. It was this notion of stopping at the point of Aristotle that threw Martin

Luther into such a rage with respect to the thought of our theme that he thundered against Aristotle as the "know all" of all time. Likewise he was infuriated against the medieval scholastics who had united theology and philosophy in a way so final and fixed that in Luther's own student days at the university the Bible was not even used as a textbook in theology. Luther had to contend with a papacy that had everything finished and finalized and filed down to fine points-- and that was the end of "growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Luther's return to process, to learning and growing and developing, is what gave wings to his feet and fire to his words and thunder to his teaching that shook the towers of papacy and philosophy.

Some seem content that they have the truth. In a way they can be and should be; in another way they cannot be and should not be. They have their point, their faith which has been handed down from good fathers; but they cannot keep it if they do not engage in the daily battle of learning it and gaining it. That is why we entitled our theme point and process. These cannot form a dualism, one opposed to the other, with a choice to be made between them. They go together. Because we have the truth, we must pursue it. If Jefferson saw that the tree of liberty must be watered with blood and saved by battle for it again and again, can we expect our Adversary to let us keep our point without the process of daily retaking it?

The answer to that question is there for us in Scripture. "Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die" (Rev. 3:2). Neglect a skill and it will deteriorate. Stop work-

ing the farm and it will be a wilderness of weeds. Burma became a jungle that was hard to rejuvenate after World War II. Neglect the faith which is confessed in our Book of Concord and many will have trouble recalling the names of our confessions. Let the Bible lie and what was known of it will be forgotten. Deceive ourselves that process is not necessary and our point of truth will be taken from us.

Earlier we cited the activism of errorists and all. The roaring lion is always on the prowl. Sects are busy denying Christ from door to door. Then note the quietism of those who have the truth, and the contrast hurts. "The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity," wrote Yeats.

Luther, again, is a pattern for us in turning the tables on the enemy with hot pursuit and battle that must have made the heavens ring with angelic cheers. Heinrich Boehmer wrote of him in his "Martin Luther: Road of Reformation": "As early as his first lecture on the Psalms, which probably took place August 16, 1513, at seven o'clock in the morning, Luther set up new principles for exegesis which are deserving of the most careful consideration. Of course he was able to express them much better later on. Perhaps he summarized them best on that famous scrap of paper (Feb. 16, 1546) on which he set down the very last thing which he wrote: 'No one can understand Virgil in his Bucolics and Georgics unless he has been a shepherd or farmer for five years. No one can understand Cicero in his Letters unless he has busied himself with the affairs of a large state for twenty years. Let no one think that he has studied

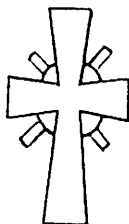
Holy Scriptures sufficiently unless he has governed congregations with the prophets for a hundred years.. We are beggars, it is true!' What did Luther mean? To understand an author requires an inner relation to the matter which the author is treating. So a certain measure of religious experience is essential to an understanding of the Bible. Such experience always presupposes a certain 'conformity of disposition' between the exegete and the sacred writers, 'for a man judges as he is. Anyone whose attitude toward the mysteries of Holy Scriptures is like that of a horse or mule will never understand the Scriptures.' The intelligence and education of the reader do not play a part in this kind of understanding. Hence the learned are often less fit for this than the unlearned, and shrewd, rational persons are generally inferior to plain, simple people who are not merely guided by their reason, but also have an eye for that 'which no intellect of intelligent men sees.' And it is just this which is the chief thing in the Bible." (Living Age Books, Meridian Books, paperback edition, p. 124.)

Thus the hero of the Reformation calls down in spirit to all of us in the arena of life's stadium so to run as the one who receiveth the prize. The implications are clear: teachers that provoke thought and pursuit and growth in pupils and students; sermons that stimulate, and house to house ministry that stirs to "talk of these things"; Bible classes that are tense with thought and growth and digging into the Scriptures; homes where father especially is "always saying something wise," as was actually said of one Christian home we know.

In closing, we emphasize the solid ground that is ours, won by the Savior and bequeathed to us as that mighty fortress which is our point of refuge, our tower

of strength, our sector of the battle-front that is marked off against the gates of hell. There is our consolation, there is our rest. And, not but, with this goes the battle, the defense, the watching on the walls, the putting on of the armor of God for wielding the sword of the Spirit as we proceed to the land of promise, our home eternal!

M. Galstad



P A N O R A M A

NEW DELHI —
AN APPRAISAL

There seems to be little doubt that the revised basis of membership in the World Council of Churches will long be discussed and will variously be interpreted. We have an indication of what is in prospect for the WCC's new Basis in the Christian Century's appraisal: "The debate will continue until a Basis is drawn up which commends itself to the conscience of all the member churches, a Basis which does not depend upon linguistic universal joints that turn shared words into varied and contradictory meanings, a Basis which is scriptural, minimal, and inclusive."

Confessional Basis

In order that the readers of the Journal may compare the old Basis with the new, the two are here given. Old Basis: "The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior." New Basis: "The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

Already the theological significance of the change of "accept" to "confess" and of "our" to "the," the addition of "according to the Scriptures" and the appendage of the "Trinitarian formula" has been measured.

There can be little doubt that the value of these changes was primarily utilitarian and secondarily theological. For what was the confessed motivation for the writing of the revised Basis? The journalistic voice of the ecumenical movement in this country, the Christian Century, freely admits that the Basis was broadened to make room for the Orthodox Churches and to satisfy some of the Protestant Churches who were opposed to the original Basis. Time magazine reports that Visser 't Hooft, the General Secretary, wrote the new formula on a table menu while breakfasting with an Orthodox Church delegation. This delegation was making it clear to the General Secretary that the original Basis, lacking the Trinitarian basis of Christianity, was unsatisfactory to the Orthodox Churches. In fact the Christian Century goes so far as to say that the Orthodox Churches made the Trinitarian appendage a pre-requisite for joining and that staff and officialdom resorted to high-pressure politics to accomplish acceptance of the new Basis.

Be that as it may, the new Basis is far from providing an assurance that the WCC is committed to a sound confession on the doctrine of the Trinity. Since the Orthodox Churches played such a major role in the adoption of the so-called Trinitarian appendage, it is most fitting to call attention to the fact that the Greek Church, for instance, rejects the "Filioque" clause of the Nicene Creed. To refresh the memory of Journal readers; this clause confesses that the Holy Ghost proceeds not only from the Father but also "from the Son" (Filioque). This is just one example to show that the new Basis with its brief statement "to the glory of one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" does not settle long standing differences on the doctrine of God. Another consideration that must not be over-

looked is the ancient error of Modal Monarchianism which holds that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are in some manner manifestations of one and the same God. It does not require a great amount of erudition to understand that Modal Monarchianism will find no difficulty in interpreting the new Basis as being conformed to their view of the doctrine of God. And certainly when one considers the free-wheeling attitude of such leading ecumenists as James A. Pike (cf. Journal of Theology, Vol. I, No. 2. pp. 34-36) then it can be said that the WCC has no intention of excluding from its fellowship those who hold to varying views on the doctrine of God. Rather the new Basis was carefully worded so as to fulfill the minimum demands necessary to expand the membership without losing any ground already gained. But the basic disunity of the WCC cannot be concealed.

A Strange Twist

The reception of the Russian Orthodox Church into the WCC brings to attention a number of strange paradoxes. WCC members were anxious to receive the Russian Orthodox Church, for they felt less apprehension about what it would do within the organization than about what it would do outside of it. In fact the assembly was so anxious to embrace the Russian Church that it changed its Basis to a wording which contained the so-called "Trinitarian appendage". The reception of the ROC and the adoption of the new Basis were accomplished with such dispatch that some of the members were filled with apprehension over such smooth and accelerated action.

But now after the hearty reception the WCC is finding that the Russian Orthodox delegation tends to shy away from its social and political activities and in the main centers its activities on matters of faith and order. And this causes some members of the Council to be fearful. Certain social-gospelers were not pleased with the effect since more forthright declarations on such matters as the Berlin Question and the Portugal Affair were stymied. Some are uncomfortable with the thought that the seventeen Eastern Orthodox members on the Central Committee constitute the largest confessional segment in this powerful inter-assembly body. With the benefit of hind-sight, the heartiness of the first reception has gone through a cooling process.

One wonders if the Russian delegation centers its main concern on the matters of faith rather than on political matters because of a clearer view on the proper functions of the Church or because it finds itself committed to a political ideology at home against which the WCC, at least outwardly, is opposed. However, whether they like to admit it or not the members of the WCC will now find it increasingly difficult to make pronouncements on international questions.

A Theology of Absorption

The WCC assembly at New Delhi revealed its syncretistic character not so much by what it officially said to its member churches as by what the assembly did and by what was said to the assembly by its speakers. We have chosen to characterize this manifestation by giving it the title: "A theology of absorption."

Now what is meant by absorption may be illustrated by the temple in Delhi which has this dedicatory caption: "To the only true religion: Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, et cetera." This a crass example indeed but it serves to exemplify what, in a finer sense, is going on in the WCC. Through the embracing of the International Mission Council and the acceptance of 23 new member churches the range of the WCC has been extended and this enlargement means to the Council that more churches will contribute their varied "gifts" to the "enrichment" of the whole. Among these "gifts" are mentioned "diversities in liturgy, in doctrine(sic), in church polity." The Managing Editor of Christian Century speaks of irritations suffered by delegates from contrary views of fellow delegates and cites these as arguments for and not against the existence of the WCC. Then he goes on to say: "Every church which now feels constrained by some cherished uniqueness to remain outside - the council has in that constraint the most forceful argument for its early entry into the Council--not to lose its uniqueness but to make its distinctive gift available to the whole church and, perchance, in the process to make up its own deficiency." The expansion of its boundaries he says "symbolizes in a dramatic way the bigness of the Council's embrace and its eagerness to receive any church which accepts the Basis, however much the church may in other respects differ from the members of the Council." (Christian Century. Jan. 10, 1962. pp.39-40.) This is a part of the theology of absorption.

Another feature of this theology was brought to the fore by the pulpits calls for a "synthesis of Oriental apprehensions of Christianity to the Occi-

dental structure of thought." D. F. Niles, main spokesman for the Asian churches had another way of expressing it. He said: "The Christian Gospel is a seed. If you sow it, you get a plant. The plant will bear the mark of both the seed and the soil. The trouble with the missionaries was that they brought Christianity to us as a potted plant. Now we are breaking the pot and putting the plant in our own soil." It is true that the WCC message to its member churches said: "There is one way to the Father, namely Jesus Christ his Son." However, when we view this on the background of all that was said and when we consider that one of the WCC's most ardent admirers has held that the above-mentioned statement was merely an edict and not a consensus ground out in study and discussion, then our joy over such a fine statement is dampened. It becomes only a part of the theology of absorption which has just as much praise for the system of yoga. Compare all of this with the words of the great missionary, Paul: "For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." I Corinthians 1:22-24.

Mission and Unity

Mission and Unity—surely no-one who is concerned about true Gospel testimony will deny that these two must go together. But one cannot be blamed for having serious reservations when the integration of the International Mission Council and the WCC is proclaimed as bringing these two—mission and unity—together. How indeed can there be talk of unity when there is disagreement on such vital and fundamental matters as the Virgin Birth of Christ, the Verbal Inspiration of the Bible,

the Means of Grace and other doctrines? How indeed, unless by unity is meant an agreement to tolerate these differences and even consider them as desirable diversities contributing to the enrichment of the whole. Such "unity" is not according to the Spirit of Christ and surely is nothing less than an offense to those whom the WCC may consider mission material. That the WCC, by integrating the IMC, considered these differences as no hindrance to its mission activity is shown by its message to the Churches: "In some things our convictions do not permit us to act together; but we have made progress here in giving content to the unity we seek. Let us everywhere find out the things we can do together now; and faithfully do the praying and working always for that fuller unity which Christ wills for his Church." In its report on the subject of "Unity" the Council said: "But how much consensus of doctrine is needed? Surely there is a core of the gospel which is apostolic and enduringly indispensable. Concentric with it is a ring of doctrine and theological interpretation which is valuable but mutable. It is in this outer ring where our divisions are chiefly found; and the ecumenical problem remains one of agreeing on what is outer and what is central."

What does the WCC mean by unity? On this important matter it has given no clear image nor can it be expected. But it is clear that the Council believes it has a unity sufficient to carry on the work of missions. But here again one meets with a hazy and confused picture. What does the WCC consider its mission to be? In its message to the member churches it says on the one hand: "There is no greater service to men than to tell them of the living Christ and no more effective witness than a life offered in service," and on the other hand it proceeds to say "There is no more urgent task for Christians than to work together for community within nations and for peace with justice and free-

dom among them, so that the cause of much contemporary misery may be rooted out." What indeed is the mission of the WCC?

As for us, we know of no other mission of the Church than that of the Great Commission: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." And for the proper carrying out of this mission the requirements can be no less than that set forth in I Corinthians 1:10, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." As for the popular view that there may be degrees of working together commensurate with degrees of agreement reached, this is not restricted to the WCC. This is a virus which has infected also the body of the Synodical Conference of recent years. Fellowship theses from four sides of the American affiliation plus conclaves with foreign theologians have not succeeded in curing it.

C. M. G.

MISSOURI AND N. L. C. — In our previous issue we
THE OVERALL PICTURE discussed the tentative
agreement reached
between representatives of the Lutheran Church—
Missouri Synod and the National Lutheran Council, concerning the possible establishment of a cooperative agency to replace the NLC and include Missouri. We expressed our concern over what was called a consensus "sufficient to justify further exploration," a concern caused by the absence of any specific discussion of the doctrine of Inspiration from the indicated agenda.

Since that has been a notable point of difference between right and left wing Lutherans in the past, and since agreement on this point is an indispensable premise to any sound discussion on matters theological, we hold that this lack of a firm foundation is indeed valid cause for concern. — Having thus scrutinized the foundation, it is our purpose in this present article to examine the structure itself, the Agreement ("consensus") that has been reported.

The material available for study is presented under three major topics: Part I, The Doctrine of the Gospel; Part II, The Significance of Confessional Subscription; Part III, What Kind of Cooperation is Possible in View of the Discussions to Date? Two papers were read on each subject, one for NLC and one for Missouri. While there is no information as to the discussion that followed, the published report does in two cases supply some comment by the essayists themselves, separate statements by Dr. Conrad Bergendoff and Dr. Martin Franzmann on the first topic, and a joint statement by Dr. Theo. Tappert and Dr. Herbert Bouman on the second. While there was no similar statement on the third, we shall use the former as the basis for our remarks.

I. The Doctrine of the Gospel.

After the reading of the two essays Dr. Bergendoff reported as follows:

"We agree that the doctrine of the Gospel is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and that the New Testament gives us the standard of teaching of the church. I have emphasized the central truths of this revelation as being those which unify the church. Prof. Franzmann has stressed the radiation of these truths into the fulness of the glory of the message.

"We agree that obedience from the heart to the standard of teaching is essential, and is part of the doctrine of the Gospel. I have probably been more eager to suggest that this can take place within the fellowship created by the unity of doctrine and is not a prerequisite of such unity, while Prof. Franzmann has been concerned that the imperative to obedience be 'built into the Gospel.'

"We agree that the unity of the church is given in Christ and is a mark of membership in the body of Christ, wherein the individual is to attain to manhood in Christ. Further, we agree that there may be different manifestations of this unity, but not any that obscure the fundamental oneness with Christ. In regard to the requirements for unity, Prof. Franzmann would want to ascertain the seriousness of those who accept the confessions. I would respect the statements of the confessing bodies and within a confessional unity work for a fuller understanding of the Gospel by all within the fellowship." *

Dr. Franzmann reported:

I

"Both papers make the 'teaching of the Gospel', or 'the Gospel' simply (sic) the indispensable and inviolable basis of the unity of the church. Both, therefore, submit in principle to the authority of the Scriptures.

"The NLC presentation tends to view the 'doctrine of the Gospel' in antithesis to 'whole theological systems' and to emphasize its basic simplicity. The Missouri presentation views the doctrine of the Gospel in its organic connection with the whole of divine revelation and therefore tends to stress the innate comprehensiveness and complexity of the doctrine of the Gospel.

II

"The NLC presentation emphasizes the fact that man's response to the Gospel is inevitably imperfect and draws the line between justification and sanctification rather stringently. The Missouri presentation emphasizes the not-to-be-relaxed tension of holy living under which the Gospel puts believing man.

"The NLC presentation looks toward a variety of ecumenical relationships and envisages degrees or stages of fellowship proportionate to the degree of consensus which has been attained. The Missouri presentation is oriented toward doctrinal confessional unity between Lutherans and raises the question of the *damnamus* as indispensable to the proclamation of the Gospel as both a savor of life and a savor of death."

Comparing these two statements, we note that Dr. Bergendoff strongly emphasizes the note of agreement.

*) All page references in Parts I and II are to "Essays on the Lutheran Confessions Basic to Lutheran Cooperation." Those in Part III refer to "Toward Cooperation among American Lutherans." Published jointly by the National Lutheran Council, New York, N. Y., and the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, St. Louis, Missouri.

See the opening words of each of his paragraphs. Where even he must report disagreement, he speaks softly, treats the difference as a mere matter of approach or of their respective manner of speaking. Dr. Franzmann, on the other hand, speaks guardedly about agreement, and is more specific about the differences. But he speaks, as it were, with the peculiar detachment of a scientist comparing, say, two different specimens of rock in his laboratory. He "raises the question of the *damnatus*," but does not invoke its use. The net effect is one of pleasant agreement.

We are glad to say that the essay itself creates quite a different impression. There are indeed places where he airs both sides of a question up to a point where his own answer is no longer clear. Asking for instance: "What interpretations may be left to individual judgment?" he answers that this "will depend on how one understands the word 'individual.'" But generally the statements come strong and clear. Where NLC limits "the doctrine of the Gospel" (on which according to Augustana VII it is necessary to agree) to "what the New Testament proclaims as its fundamental truth," (p. 7), and subsequently defines it as referring "primarily to the teaching of justification," (p. 10), Dr. Franzmann stresses the "large comprehensiveness" of that term, points out that one cannot say "doctrine of the Gospel" without saying "Law," and holds out for recognition of the Old Testament implications, since also those "prophetic writings" have "an indispensable place and function in the revelatory act." (pp. 15-17). As he takes the "Gospel" of Aug. VII in its widest

sense, so he also, contrary to the prevailing NLC view, calls for full rather than partial agreement, and speaks against considering certain doctrines "expendable." (p. 18). We also appreciate most highly his discussion of John 17:20-23, in which he describes the "one-ness" for which the Savior prays as vertical rather than horizontal. "It is doubtful whether our Lord is speaking, directly at least, about the kind of unity which concerns us at this meeting." (p. 19).

One is happy that these things were said. They express the old Synodical Conference position. They clearly refute the NLC stand. But how can this same author permit these things to be de-emphasized as Dr. Bergendoff does with his "We agree . . . We agree. . . We agree. . ." ? How can this be presented to Missouri's coming convention as "sufficient to justify further exploration" ?

II. The Significance of Confessional Subscription.

After the reading of papers on this subject and following the discussion by the entire group, the authors, Dr. Theo. Tappert for the NLC and Dr. H. J. Bouman for Missouri, issued a joint statement which those present voted to accept as a press release, and an expression of the consensus of the group. The statement follows:

"Substantial agreement was reached with reference to (1) designation of the confessions which are involved in subscription, (2) assertion of historical limitations in the Confessions, (3) allowance of distinction between the primary norm of the Scriptures and the secondary norm of the Confessions, (4) recognition that the heart of the Confessions is their witness to the Gospel, (5) acknowledgment that this understanding of the Gospel requires rejection of contradicting understandings, (6) affirmation of the importance of confessional subscription for the proclamation of the church.

"Since there was substantial agreement on the significance and nature of confessional subscription further talks between The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and the National Lutheran Council are being planned."

There is a peculiar blandness about this joint statement. Some of the propositions are so neutral that it is hard to see what there might have been to debate about them. Does anyone argue against Number Three — or for that matter, against Four and Five? And why argue Point One, if the debate on "quia" and "quatenus" is not yet settled? But we are interested in Point Two, particularly because of what is said by Dr. Tappert for the NLC on page 29: "When subscribing the Confessions today, Lutherans assert that, in view of the issues which were then at stake and the alternatives which were then offered, the confessors were right." (Our emphasis). Are these the "historical limitations" ? Does this relieve men of the obligation to declare themselves on the basic question, namely, whether the confessors were right because they were standing on Scripture?

But our main concern is about Point Six, which affirms the importance of confessional subscription for the proclamation of the church, but does so without indicating what kind of subscription it should and must be, whether the Confessions are being accepted with a "quatenus," in so far as, or with a "quia," because they are the true teachings of the Word of God? On this question the two bodies (or their antecedents) have differed strongly in the past. Here one should therefore expect a statement from the Missouri representative that would have something of the ring of Walther, who granted indeed that since the Symbols were never intended to be anything else than confessions of faith and doctrine, the confessional pledge does not cover things which do not pertain to doctrine — but who insisted that when doctrine is involved, the only honest pledge is one that accepts the Confessions because their teachings are the true teaching of Scripture. But here (p. 37) the Missouri representative, losing sight of Walther's simple distinction, becomes so involved in technicali-

ties("The matter is not so simple, however") that the NLC representative sounds conservative by comparison. We are convinced that the St. Louis professor meant to bring out the same distinction that Walther made, even as we are happy to note in his essay many things that needed to be said, and were well said. But the confusion on the "quia" remains. And that, after all, was the crucial part of the second topic.

E. R.

(Note: This review will be concluded in the April issue with a consideration of Part III:

III. What Kind of Cooperation Is Possible in View of the Discussions to Date?

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