



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

I Timothy 4:15

**Journal
of
Theology**

Church of the Lutheran Confession

The Danger
of
Emphasizing FAITH at the Expense of
the OBJECT of Faith,
CHRIST

ESSAY DELIVERED AT THE WISCONSIN-MICHIGAN PASTORAL CONFERENCE

BY

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The information contained in this paper divides itself into 3 sections: I. What this serious danger is, II. The danger truly exists, and III. Some warning signs that indicate the presence of this danger.

There is only one real Savior. He is the Lord Jesus Christ. Only because of HIS holy life and sin-atonement death, is God a Friend of poor sinners. Jesus Christ has done it all.

Satan, the world and our flesh are constantly trying to take away this one real Savior by substituting some false redeemer in the place of Christ. These enemies urge sinners to trust that God is reconciled because of other reasons than Christ: reasons such as, mighty deeds, gifts of money, church attendance, daily Bible reading, rich prayer life, high morality, respect to parents and other authorities, love for the children and other deeds of

kindness. Such works, beneficial in themselves, become false Christs when they, instead of Jesus, are made the basis of certainty that God has forgiven all sins.

A more deceptive attempt to destroy the true Christ is made when sinners are urged to combine the work of Jesus with some human effort; so that by such a "package deal" God becomes gracious in His heart toward poor sinners. The false teachers who entered Paul's congregations in Galatia urged circumcision and keeping of sabbath days upon the people as necessary to salvation. These works plus Christ's works would save the Galatians from God's curse of sin. They made Jesus into a savior who needed help from humans in order to pay for all sins. Thus Paul wrote in Gal. 1: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of CHRIST, unto another gospel; which is not another" (that is, which cannot save you) "but there be some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ."

Three years before Luther's death, the synergist Melanchthon brought in this same false Christ by teaching that in conversion (and thus salvation) there is also "the human will assenting to and not resisting the Word of God." ¹ In 1548 he wrote, "The merciful God does not deal with man as with a block, but draws him in such a way that his will, too, cooperates."² Again he wrote, "There must of necessity be a cause of difference in us why a Saul is rejected, a David received."³ Melanchthon thus taught that David added something which enabled Jesus to save him and Saul did not. That is a false-christ doctrine. The true Christ needs no help from us humans to save us. Just as He created the world without our help, so He also saved the world without our help. The only name whereby we are saved is not "Jesus plus some human effort" but "Jesus" alone.

At Luther's time, people heard very little about faith in Christ alone for salvation. Poor sinners were urged

to their beads, pilgrimages, fasts, prayers to saints, indulgences, and the like as sources for certainty that their sins were forgiven. Luther, under God, preached that faith only in Christ Jesus saves and not faith in beads, pilgrimages, indulgences and the like. "What Luther thus saw was a church enmeshed in a type of activism that tortured rather than comforted the sensitive and distressed conscience and that found it more profitable to encourage endless doing than confident being."⁴ Against the crude, blunt preaching of works and human effort for salvation, Luther preached the grace of God and faith in JESUS. His books are full of the word "faith" and rightly so, for he learned from the Apostle Paul whose letter to the Romans alone used the word "faith" at least 34 times. The motto of our Lutheran Church has become, "Salvation by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith."

Here it is important to state how the New Testament uses the word "to believe". According to Thayer's Lexicon, the New Testament uses the intransitive form of "to believe" a few times in its universal or wide sense and many, many times in its specific or narrow sense. In its wide sense, "believing" means a trusting or placing one's confidence in something. Examples from the New Testament of this universal meaning of the word are: II Thess. 2:11 "and for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." James 2:19 "the devils also believe and tremble." I Cor. 13:7 (charity) "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Acts 9:26 "When Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him and believed not that he was a disciple." I Cor. 11:18 "I hear that there be divisions among you and I partly believe it." Matt. 24:23 & 26 "Lo here is Christ, believe it not."

If we use the word "to believe" in this wide or universal sense, then we can say that everyone in the world is a believer, because every person on earth has faith in something. Some put confidence in their reason, others

in their strength, riches, friends or possessions. Scriptures warn, "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm." Jer. 17:5 "He that trusteth in his riches shall fall." Prov. 11:28

But the New Testament uses the word "to believe" in its specific or narrow sense at least 98% of the time. In this narrow sense, the word "to believe" means a conviction full of joyful trust that Jesus is the Messiah, the divinely appointed Author of eternal salvation. In this narrow sense we must say that only Christians can be called believers. The miracle of Christian faith is not that Christians are given the ability to trust in some object but that they are given the ability to turn from trusting vain works and instead to trust Christ and His work alone for their salvation. The act of trusting in something is not miraculous, but the act of trusting in Christ as the Savior is miraculous, because no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost.

The human tendency to intermingle the universal and specific meanings of the word "to believe" as it is used in the New Testament is the basic reason why it is dangerous to emphasize faith at the expense of faith's object, Christ.

Therefore, one must be careful not to conclude that all who confess, "faith alone saves," have the same true doctrine of salvation which Luther learned from Paul. These godly men used the phrase, "being justified by faith" in the narrow or specific sense only. A case in point is Luther's explanation of the Third Article in his catechism: "I Believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, nor come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith; in like manner as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith."

This one true faith of Paul and Luther meant the faith only in Christ. Faith in any other object would be a false faith. When Paul wrote in Rom. 5:1, "Therefore being justified by faith", he takes it for granted that his readers will understand that the sole object of such a justifying faith is Jesus. In verse 9 of the same chapter, the apostle just as easily wrote, "being now justified by his blood." Paul did not have two saviors: one named "faith" and the other named "the blood of Christ." One was his Savior — even Christ. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote, "God was in CHRIST, reconciling the world unto himself."

Luther preached this same one Savior. In his writings against Latomus, Luther carefully points his readers away from the act of faith and toward the object: Christ. He writes: "They do not consider it worthwhile to remember how often I have adduced what Paul says (Rom. 8:1) to the effect that, although there is sin — for he had previously said much about sin — still there is now no condemnation (for those in Christ Jesus). The reason why there is no condemnation is not that men do not sin, as Latomus in lying fashion suggests, but because — as Paul says, they are in Jesus Christ; that is, they repose under the shadow of his righteousness as do chicks under a hen. Or as is said more clearly in Rom. 5(15) they have grace and the gift through his grace. So they do not walk in accordance with sin and sinful flesh; that is, they do not consent to the sin which they in fact have. God has provided them with two immensely strong and secure foundations so that the sin which is in them should not lead to their condemnation. First of all, Christ is himself the expiation as in Rom. 3(25). They are safe in his grace, not because they believe or possess faith and the gift, but because it is in Christ's grace that they have these

things. No one's faith endures unless he relies upon Christ's own righteousness, and is preserved by his protection. For as I have said, true faith is not what they invented, an absolute, nay, rather obsolete—quality in the soul, but is something which does not allow itself to be torn away from Christ, and relies only on the One whom it knows is in God's grace. Christ cannot be condemned, nor can anyone who throws himself upon him. This means that so grave a matter is the sin which remains, and so intolerable is God's judgement, that you will not be able to stand unless you shield yourself with him whom you know to be without sin. This is what true faith does." 5

By emphasizing the act of faith at the expense of faith's object, Christ, there is real danger that faith is made the savior instead of our dear Lord Jesus. This is an agonizing situation for poor distressed sinners, but a most comfortable one for hypocritical work-saints. When poor sinners who have not been consistently directed to the object of true faith hear the words: "Thy faith hath saved thee," "He that believeth . . . shall be saved," "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," they are tempted to turn away from the sin-atonement cross of Jesus and look instead into their own hearts to see whether or not they have such a saving faith. They search for the basis of certainty of God's friendship in their own feelings and emotions rather than looking unto CHRIST, the Author and Finisher of our faith. God receives us not because of our faith, but because of Christ.

The proud sinner who wants to be accepted in Christian circles, knows that it is unpopular to claim any works as the reason for his salvation, but he has found that "faith" is not classified as a work and he therefore makes a secret work out of his act of believing and credits his salvation to the fact that he believes in Jesus.

Pastors, perhaps unconsciously, urge this false faith-christ on their people because it "gets results." The uncertainty of salvation for poor sinners and the sating of the hardened sinner's pride sparks a congregation into a group of seemingly active Christian workers. In reality it is only a mixed group, part of which is made up of poor tortured souls ever seeking the proffered but never quite given true Savior, and the other of proud sinners who are satisfied to support a church which will permit them to rely on their own efforts at believing as a ticket into heaven. Thus like Luther we see a church enmeshed in a type of activism that tortures rather than comforts the sensitive and distressed conscience and that finds it more profitable to encourage endless doing rather than confident being.

Poorly indoctrinated persons have said, "It does not matter what you believe, just so that you are sincere in your faith. Believing will save you." That is like saying, "Going, yes going will cure a toothache." Going where? . . . to a movie? or to a candy store? Of course not! Going to the dentist cures the toothache. So also "believing justifies," not as an act in itself, but because of the object it takes hold of, namely Christ. Luther writes: "To free myself from regarding the law and works, I make it my habit so to conceive of the thing as though there were in my heart no such quality called faith or love, but in its place I put Christ Himself and say: 'This is my righteousness.'"⁶ Unless the object rather than the act of faith is emphasized, the poor sinner's gaze will be directly away from Christ and toward himself. Faith will have been made into a false Christ. This is the danger which exists when faith is emphasized at the expense of the object of faith: Christ.

Nor is this danger of which we are here speaking an imaginary one. It actually exists and has existed for

many years. Nearly 60 years ago the Ohio (Lutheran) Synod flatly rejected the truth that God already declared the whole world justified from all sins in the death and resurrection of Christ. They called this correct teaching, "a sin against holiness", "insanity", "night of error", a "miserable figment of man's own invention." Ohio defined its wrong position this way; "Through the reconciliation of Christ the holy and gracious God has made advances to us, so that forgiveness of sin and justification have been made possible on His part; justification itself, however, does not occur until through God's grace the spark of faith has been kindled in the heart of the poor sinner.

As the years went by, this wrong position has not changed in the American Lutheran Church (now a member of TALC). In 1938 the ALC declared, "(God) purposes to justify those who have come to faith." The heretical teaching of their Dr. R. C. Lenski on Rom. 4:5 is, "God declares the ungodly righteous by reckoning his faith for righteousness . . . but for faith there would be no justification. I must ever say, 'I believe, therefore am I justified. The strength of my faith is the degree of my certainty.' "

Compare such horrible doctrine with the true teaching as presented long ago by Dr. Stoeckhardt of Missouri Synod. He wrote, "God has in Christ already forgiven the sins of the whole world. The entire Pauline doctrine of Justification, and also all comfort derived from this doctrine, stands and falls with this special article of objective justification. For thus alone does it become unmistakably clear that justification is in no way dependent upon man's conduct. And thus alone can the individual become certain of his own justification. For it is a compelling conclusion: if God has already in Christ justified all men and forgiven them their sins; so I also must have

a gracious God and the forgiveness of all my sins." And again, "Never in this sense do we hear it presented; 'I believe; I am conscious of the fact that I believe on my Savior. Therefore I am justified in the sight of God.' A believing Christian does not make the pulse of his faith-life the criterion of his state of grace. . . The believer rather makes this conclusion: 'Oh, how godless I still am'. Out of my heart godless thoughts continue to arise. There is no doubt but that I am a poor, unworthy sinner. My sin is ever before me. But now God's Word tells me that God has already declared godless sinners righteous. Thus I belong without any doubt whatsoever in the number of those whom God justifies.' "*

In spite of this wonderfully clear, correct teaching, Missouri Synod in 1950 declared that the "Common Confession" was a settlement of such past differences with the American Lutheran Church. Since the ALC did not retract its false doctrine concerning faith, it is little wonder that many pastors in the Missouri Synod have left the true position and with TALC are now emphasizing faith at the expense of the object of faith, Christ.

Certainly such a history should put all faithful pastors on guard so that they realize that the danger we speak of in this paper really exists and that they will strive to keep this error from creeping back still further into groups having the true doctrine.

* The information contained in the previous three paragraphs was taken from a doctrinal essay prepared for the Synodical Conference assembled August 10-13, 1954 at Detroit, Michigan. The essay is, "The inadequacy of the 'Common Confession' as a Settlement of Past Differences." It was written by E. H. Wendland, then of Benton Harbor, Michigan. Some of the Pastors now in our CLC were present.

Fortunately there are warning signs which indicate the presence of this danger. When the words, "faith", "believing", and "accepting" are used over and over again without synonyms, then it is possible that the act of faith is being given too great a position of importance. The use of these words tends to become a magical formula, a mysterious incantation which must be expressed in certain special, never-changing syllables or else the magic spell of being saved will be broken. These phrases become an amulet which aged and dying cling to for comfort. All their lives they have been told, "Don't worry when you die. Just believe in Jesus." They may not understand what the phrase means, but somehow one can enter heaven's bliss by mumbling the "open sesame" formula, "I believe in Jesus." Compare such hesitancy to use synonyms and other expressions for "faith" and "believing" with the way Luther speaks of the matter. He speaks of "certainty," "sure confidence," "firm reliance," "refusing to be torn away from," "casting one's entire self on," just as easily as he uses the words "faith" and "believing."

Another indication of this tendency to treat the word "faith" as though it were a magical formula to insure the correctness of a given statement appears when this word is paired with some synonym, when it is quite obvious that no such pairing is needed. Our current Lutheran Literature is full of such examples, supplied quite unconsciously and no doubt unintentionally by the respective authors. But when we speak of one "who by faith accepts Christ as his personal Savior," we have weakened the statement rather than strengthened it. Let it stand in all its strong simplicity: "one who accepts Christ as his personal Savior." The same thing happens when we automatically (and therefore thoughtlessly) pair "believing" with "children of God," or "unbelieving" with rejectors of Christ" — as though there could be unbelieving children of God, or believing rejectors of Christ. There are indeed times when emphasis on the thought of belief or unbelief is needed. And such synonyms can supply it,

and should be given when it is in order. But let us use this device intelligently, always remembering that thoughtless use weakens a statement, and the constant repetition can create an unscriptural emphasis on the act of faith, emphasis on the act of faith, rather than on its object—Christ.

An easily recognized indication of the presence of this over-emphasis —of—faith danger is to note which words we emphasize when we read Scripture passages which contain both the act of faith and its object, Christ. The verse John 3:16 is a good example. Test yourself with it. Read the verse aloud and note carefully which words of the verse you emphasize. The dangerous emphasis is: "whosoever believeth in him, should not perish. . ." The correct emphasis is: "whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish. ." In a similar manner the passage from Acts 16:31 is frequently abused. The dangerous emphasis is made, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The correct emphasis is: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." From this one can see how incorrect it is to say that mere Bible reading without any comment in the public schools would not teach false or sectarian doctrines. By emphasizing faith rather than the object of faith, Christ, even a mere reading of the Bible could lead one to make a false savior out of faith.*

One of the most serious warning signs that a pastor can receive in this matter is when he finds that one of his members has been asking himself whether, if he should die right at this instant, he would be positively sure of his going to heaven and then tells himself, "I guess so; I hope so;

* Generally speaking Bible readers can get a much clearer understanding of Scripture by emphasizing the words "God" and "Lord" and the pronouns referring to Him. This is especially helpful in the Psalms.

I surely want to." Such a poor person is uncertain about his salvation probably because he is looking at the weakness of his act of believing rather than fixing his gaze on the certain object of his faith: Christ Jesus, the same yesterday, today, and forever. Such a situation calls for the highest degree of pastoral wisdom and counselling.

Another warning sign in this matter shows itself when members of a congregation hear a Christ-centered sermon and react to the doctrine of universal justification by asking, "If our salvation is so certain, then why do we need Lord's Supper?" By probing deeper, one finds that such members have been under the impression that each time they go to the sacrament they receive another portion of forgiveness to cover their sins for the period of time since they last had the Lord's Supper. God does not forgive sins by the month like a mortgage payment. The complete payment was made for all sins of all people, past, present, and future over 1900 years ago when Christ cried from the cross, "It is finished." Lord's supper is one of the ways God has chosen to underline and emphasize His words: Because of Christ, I love you. I accept you. You are my dear child." The sinner who is under the impression that some personal conduct such as sorrow for sin, belief in Jesus, willingness to amend, has punched the right button and God like a vending machine will now issue another monthly ration of forgiveness is in grave danger of being a "faithian" instead of a "Christian."

The closing part of this paper is made up of several quotations from Dr. C. F. W. Walther's book, "The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel." "A preacher must be able to preach a sermon on faith without ever using the term faith. It is not important that he din the word faith into the ears of his audience, but it is necessary to frame his address so as to arouse in every poor sinner the desire to lay the burden of his sins at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ and say to Him: 'Thou art mine, and I am Thine.'

"Here is where Luther reveals his true greatness. He rarely appeals to his hearers to believe, but he preaches concerning the work of Christ, salvation by grace, and the riches of God's mercy in Jesus Christ in such a manner that the hearers get the impression that all they have to do is take what is being offered them and find a resting place in the lap of divine grace. That is the great act which you must seek to learn—to make your hearers reason that, if what you preach is true, they are blessed men: all their anguish and unrest has been useless; they have been redeemed perfectly, reconciled with God, and are numbered with the saved and those on whom God has made His gracious countenance to shine. The moment a person thinks these thoughts, he attains to faith."

"On the other hand, you may spend a lot of time telling men that they must believe if they wish to be saved, and your hearers may get the impression that something is required of them which they must do. They will begin to worry whether they will be able to do it, and when they have tried to do it, whether it is exactly the thing that is required of them. Thus you may have preached a great deal about faith without delivering a real sermon on faith."

"I do not mean to say that you must not preach about faith. Our time particularly lacks a proper understanding of this matter. The best preachers imagine they have accomplished a great deal when they have rammed into their hearers the axiom: 'Faith alone saves.' But by their preaching they have merely made their hearers sigh: 'Oh that I had faith.' Faith must be something very difficult; for I have not obtained it.' These unfortunate hearers will go home from church with a sad heart. The word faith is echoing in their ears, but gives them no comfort. Even Luther complained that many in his day were preaching about faith without showing their hearers what faith really signifies and how to attain it. A preacher of this sort may labor for years and preach to a dead congregation. That

explains why people talk in uncertain strains about their salvation. You can tell that they are driven to and fro with doubts and become awfully frightened and distressed when they are told that they are at death's door. Whose fault is it? The preacher's, because he preached wrong about faith."⁷

"The Word of God is not rightly divided when faith is required as a condition of justification and salvation, as if a person were righteous in the sight of God and saved, not only by faith, but also on account of his faith, for the sake of his faith, and in view of his faith.

"There are not a few people who imagine that a minister who constantly preaches that man is made righteous in the sight of God and saved by faith is manifestly a genuine evangelical preacher. For what else is to be required of him when everybody knows that salvation by faith is the marrow and essence of the Gospel and the entire word of God? That is true. A minister who preaches that doctrine is certainly a genuine evangelical preacher. But that fact is not established merely from his use of these words: 'Man is made righteous in the sight of God and saved by faith alone,' but from the proper sense that must be connected with these words. The preacher must mean by faith what Scripture means when it employs that term. But here is where many preachers are at fault. By faith they understand something different from what the prophets, the apostles, and our Lord and Savior understood by faith. I pass by the rationalists, who used to preach that man is indeed saved by faith; but by faith in Jesus Christ they understand nothing else than the acceptance of the excellent moral teachings which Christ proclaimed. By accepting these moral teachings, they held, a person becomes a true disciple of the Lord and is made righteous and saved. Take up any rationalistic book of the radical type and that was published in the age Rationalism, and you will see that such was the preaching of vulgar Rationalism."

"Nor are the papists averse to saying that faith makes a person righteous in the sight of God and saves him. But by faith they understand fides formata, faith that is joined with love. Accordingly, they manage to say many excellent things about faith; but by faith they always mean something different from what Scripture teaches concerning faith."

"Moreover, in the postils and devotional writings of all modern theologians you may find the doctrine that man is made righteous in the sight of God and saved by faith. But by faith they understand nothing but what man himself achieves and produces. Their faith is a product of human energy and resolution. Such teaching, however, subverts the entire gospel."

"What God's Word really means when it says that man is justified and saved by faith alone is nothing else than this: Man is not saved by his own acts, but solely by the doing and dying of his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the whole world. Over against this teaching modern theologians assert that in the salvation of man two kinds of activity must be noted: in the first place, there is something that God must do. His part is the most difficult, for He must accomplish the task of redeeming men. But in the second place, something is required that man must do. For it will not do to admit persons to heaven, after they have been redeemed, without further parley. Man must do something really great—he has to believe. This teaching overthrows the Gospel completely. It is a pity that many beautiful sermons of modern theologians ultimately reveal the fact that they mean something entirely different from the plain and clear teaching of Scripture that man is saved, not by what he himself does or achieves, but by what God does and achieves." ⁸

Therein lies the danger of emphasizing faith at the expense of the object of faith:

CHRIST.

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 2. Ibid
 3. Ibid p. 130
 4. Luther's Works. American Edition vol. 35 p.6
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 6. Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, Vol. II, p. 259
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PREACHING THE WORD

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Matthew 5:14-16

This sermon was preached at a conference service (Wisconsin-Upper Michigan Pastoral). It is offered here not merely as a sermon, but as a sermon on the subject of our department heading, *PREACHING THE WORD*. --Ed.

The only way to keep ourselves in right perspective and in motion is to take an occasional long hard look at the charter of our existence, at the manner of our behavior, and at the very purposes for which we are here. To live an unexamined life, said one of the ancients, is a mistake. What are we here for, anyway? What *ARE* we—for what we are will determine what we are for. There is a close connection between what men are and what they do, as true of men as it is of tools in your shop.

YE ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD — that's who we are.
SHINE BEFORE MEN —that's what we do. So we speak
today of *THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD*.

We shall spend very little time with the problem of what light is. It seems utterly incomprehensible. Some scientists think that man will never be able to understand light, and will never be able to decide what it is. Some problems in physics can be understood only if light is looked upon as a quantity of material, we are told; and others are meaningless unless we look upon light as wave energy.

So also, just what this light is that makes us lights is hard to describe, or to trace out its workings. It is God. But you and I cannot grasp God. God is as He has revealed Himself: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation." Ex. 34:6-7. "According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth." Ps. 48:10. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. 4:6. That is the axial passage for the thought that is before us in our text. On that fact turns everything that follows. The God of light who first caused the light to shine at creation has shined into our hearts: then we become lights to shine.

Bushel measures were also used in those days for black-out purposes. But you don't black out the candle you have lit; you place it upon the light stand so as to give central light to all that are in the house—that was in simpler days when a house had one room.

A simple reading of our text must make you and me wonder how we are doing in this light-giving business—an activity to which we are automatically, yes, divinely assigned. We do know how the early Christians responded: they went all over the world and started fires wherever they went. There is considerable testimony in the New Testament to the light-giving activities of these early believers. A lot of light shone into the darkened world before God's chosen Twelve, the Special Messengers, did their work. A deacon with a table-serving job in Jerusalem got to Samaria first and lit so many lights that when the specially-commissioned Twelve heard about it while they were still sitting there in Jerusalem, they quickly sent Peter and John to go up to Samaria and give the new believers there the special measure of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, to bless what was already done. And the next thing that happened was that the angel of the Lord sent this same Philip, this food-relief clerk, down the desert trail that led to Africa to hitch a ride with Queen Candace's secretary of the treasury, who was having trouble with some difficult passages in Isaiah. They got that straightened out, and Philip baptized him without sending him to Peter, James and John for further instructions. And Philip didn't stop with that. Philip found himself at Azotus, and he preached (kindled lights) all the way back to Samaria.

The only thing that gives light is light. How simple to say! Yet how profound is the truth that we have in this!

To give light you have to be a light. With light you are able to see. With your imparted light, others can see. "Where there is no vision (seeing), the people perish." We live or we perish by the fact, and by the quality, and by the depth of our seeing. The end and purpose of God's light-giving activity among us is that we might see, that we might have insights.

The only time we give off light is when we ourselves are learning, seeing, being ourselves in an improving state, when we are energizing. To give off light we have to burn. Do you learn anything from someone who takes it easy, who sleeps half the time, who does only what he has to do to remain respectable? Do you learn anything in church or in school from someone who gives you the impression that he is not interested in what is going on in the world, who does not bring you gold that he has mined out of the Scriptures, who cannot tell you about people's responses because he is not studying them?

Jesus had such zeal for the house of God that when the disciples saw Him in action they remembered that it was written, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." John 2:17. When the multitudes pressed upon the Savior to get the healing that He dispensed, He said, "Somebody hath touched me; for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me." Luke 8:46. Energy left Him! Nothing is more consuming than engaging in tense concern with a trembling sinner who is worried what he must do to be saved. Many of you may know what it took out of you when you spent hours and nights with a soul plucked like a brand from the burning. Or how teaching and talking a long time can leave you limp for the rest of the day. A service with a sermon in which you gave your deepest and dearest best can leave you with more exhaustion than a long day at the factory or on the farm. Surely, it consumes you. But what can be a more reasonable sacrifice? That writer had something when he said that he could see no reason why his pastor should die of old age if hard work could kill him! It is much better to die facing the enemy than to collapse retiring from the battle.

But oh! what a supply of oil we Christians have for our lamps! It is all poured in by grace. The Savior explained

this, too, that day when His disciples hurried away to Sychar-town to buy groceries to make a meal while Jesus went on shedding light unto the woman at the well (there, of course, the picture is of pouring forth the water of life). When they got back they prayed him, "Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of." John 4:32. "Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." V. 34. A play on words, of course, but you understand what He said, don't you? He was sustained by some special secret source of energy as He sacrificed himself to give light and living water to a benighted soul lost in the desert of sin and death. —So let the light shine, even if it burns you up. That has to be done. Can you think of anything better to have burned, if the light so shines that men are led in new-found faith to glorify our Father in heaven? Really cheap fuel!

Yes, men say, that's great! And each may readily say, "I'll buy that." Fine! But "they all with one consent (begin) to make excuse." You remember the talk about taking time out from kingdom work for reasons of getting married, going to examine the new farm, or testing out the new power supply, oxen in those days. It isn't hard to call up the modern counterparts of the same familiar excuses: the demands at the office; the new venture that is so time-consuming as we climb the pyramid of business success; and our ceaseless running to and fro. But where, can you tell, are there more opportunities for your light to enlighten the darkness than in this very busy time of ours when contacts with people are often the veriest part of our daily living?

But we want it orderly! We want it organized! It should be done more properly than that! We have come up with a procedure that has prestige! We have turned all that over to a particular chosen person whom we have put under orders (we ordained him, remember?) in a solemn assembly to do just that work of shining forth such light as our church

has. We have all our little rays concentrated into one laser ray that can cut through with so much more power than we individually have. We could forgive ourselves a little internal smile at that if it were not so tragically true that that is just the way that many think. Yet it is a kind of thinking that is contrary to the message of our text.

Come along, now, and keep this straight! Your ordained servant is often more than busy tending to us as lights so that we do not go out. He is called to pour the Word of s. power into our lives, our lamps, so that we do not flicker and die. He is busy with the oil for our lamps, for the gas in our tanks, with our power lines to keep them in contact with the mighty source of supply at the great generating station above — busy with dividing unto us the Word of truth in Word and Sacrament. He is busy to be watchful and to strengthen the things that remain among us and that are ready to die. That is exactly what the minister at Sardis-church was told to do —and you might ask around a bit to find if that isn't a major concern of every called minister of the Word.

We in the gathered congregations of the church are the lights that God has kindled to shine in the world. That is precisely what all believers are. That is what the disciples were when Jesus talked to them in that circle that sat on the mountainside. They were not special messengers yet; they were not commissioned apostles at that time. There was Jesus talking to a handful of men (and how often are they not just a handful!) who had come to faith in Him, forsaking all else and entrusting to Him their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor. In fact, it was when Jesus saw the crowds that He walked away and talked to these few believers directly, after they had gathered into a cluster apart. Yes, the crowds were listening in, over His shoulders, so to speak, kibitzing on the conversation. But His words went directly to the believers, apparently only in short, seemingly disconnected sentences. It seems

that He must have made long pauses to let the several truths sink in: "Blessed are the poor in spirit... Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. . . . Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. . . Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness. . . Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. . . Ye are the light of the world." This last He expanded into about a dozen lines in our Bibles. While He spoke these things —there was the world in the background, swarming over the hillside: Let your light shine among them, and souls will be regenerated to glorify your Father.

Jesus did not give directives and blueprints for them to go out and become lighthouse-builders. He did not say: Go and raise some money and build a church or a tabernacle or a temple or a synagogue and pick one of your most godly men of good repute and ask these crowds to come and hear his sermon. He did not say: Go and organize yourselves into committees and boards and commissions and faculties and student bodies and conferences and synods and conferences of synods —many of which things are a perfectly proper and good thing to do in their time and in their place, but they are not the first, basic essential, yes, native, thing to do.

The natal property of a light is to give light: it gives out in all directions, it casts light upon all that are around it. It most likely enlightens the family circle. The early disciples were pretty much family affairs. Andrew "first findeth his own brother Simon." Then we read that "Philip findeth Nathanael." Paul teaches that a pagan husband or wife may be saved by the believing partner. John The Baptist was a cousin of Jesus. The close position of three crosses led one malefactor to see the light. Being shipwrecked on the right boat was the means by which some got to hear the testimony of Paul. Even being the right man's slave can be the contact that brings salvation, as

with Onesimus. Predestination is at work in human contacts—don't you see it? And it is all a matter of individual shining lights! Ye are these lights, says our Savior to us.

Christians have had a knack of picking the blazing ones among them to send them forth — and that is very right so surely as your little candle keeps burning back home. But do not douse your own because you have bought oil for another. Today's offering buys oil for someone else's lamp-lighting; but you do not stop giving light yourself. Stephen did not give any less light on his own just because he was elected to a church-property committee, and so might have an excuse. From him we have one of the first and finest testimonies in the New Testament. St. Paul was a special chosen vessel of God to bear the Gospel to the Gentiles, but the eyes of fellow-believers, led by the keen-eyed Barnabas, were quick to discern him and join in the sending. But Paul went as a shining light, as a meteor in the sky — yet a weaver of tent-cloth to pay his own way. And look at his contacts with men, not organizational and formal and distant in pontifical robes of clerical majesty; but on foot from town to town, yes, from house to house, and with tears. They tried to cut off his wick and douse his torch, and with rocks from the roadside they tried to pound the daylight out of him — and they did, till they thought he was dead. But he wouldn't lie still! He got up and went to the next town and kept talking. Paul made contacts!

Paul did not go out and build lighthouses. There is no indication that Christians built any kind of a church for at least two hundred years. Surely, they used buildings many times, synagogues that were already there, and where Jews gathered; and once when his preaching caused an uproar, Paul went next door and kept talking. Or he met with believers who were accustomed to gather by the river, as in Phillippi. Sometimes the later believers even got together in the large underground burying-places called the catacombs. It would be very interesting if some researcher could find out

when and where the first idea came from that light-giving and witness-bearing could best be done in a special building set apart for that activity. Paul tells us that he taught publicly and from house to house in Ephesus. In Athens he went to the busy marketplace where the people were, and then he got a few of them to listen and believe when he preached on Mars hill where the supreme court held its sessions. In Rome he rented his own house, but he got in some good work while sitting in the Emperor's jail.

In our day we can very often do the very same thing without so much as laying down either our tools or our dishtowel. Often you can touch off a flood of light while making a purchase or while paying for your bargain. I'll never forget the flashes that flickered my way from a carpenter nailing tiles to our ceiling—thoughts that have many times been passed on to my students, though they weren't always told where they came from. Likewise, light often came from a grandmother rocking in her invalid chair, or from Father when we were struggling with crops on one part of the farm or another. Much of the light that today shines from the pages of Holy Writ was spoken by the Savior among people busy with the affairs of the world—sometimes in fishing smacks on the Lake of Galilee.

We will never forget the time when a young man whom we know very well sat down among the men in a smoker on the train, and soon a filthy-mouthed gentleman (if we can call him that), who happened to be a Jew (a fact entirely beside the point), suggested that everyone toss in a quarter and the jackpot should go to the one who could tell the dirtiest story. Well, to shorten the account, the blasphemer ended the trip with tears in his eyes, hoping that what he had heard might help him straighten out his badly tangled life.

Nor will we forget the consequences of a pious mother's shining light among the people of depression homes near the industrial part of a large city—homes with rough

talk, bitterness and fighting, drunkenness and brawling. Quite a group of these families were finally drawn together into a Christian congregation. When this mother in Israel was laid to her rest, a prayer-list was found in her Bible: and not one of those families was missing. We met some of those families, we worshiped once in that church, we saw evidences of how far into the darkness a light can throw its beams.

Forgive us for being so personal, a thing that can be in poor taste many times; but this thing is personal. It is primarily that, or it is nothing. Being on committees and boards and driving hundreds of miles and losing sleep and energy perhaps has to be done sometimes—but please ask yourselves whether that can not very often be a very low form of church-work. We can work with externals and polish the brass and trifle with technicalities that consume us and leave the genuine work with spiritual weapons undone. And that is tragic! We can drive very fast, yes really spin our wheels and throw vast amounts of gravel. But it doesn't even blind the devil. He is throwing sand in our eyes! And our light is not shining!

Back to the pristine beauty and simplicity of our text! Every wise man will look often at his presuppositions and assumptions; he will look to the very franchise, the charter of his existence, which tells him what he is here for.

"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

"The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Prov. 4:18. Amen.

Martin Galstad

PAIDEIA

SOCIAL OR SACRED?

Current thinking and advanced practice have given wide acceptance to the principle that social studies should constitute the core of the curriculum of the common school. Social studies should permeate and give significance to the whole educational program, we read in educational literature.

What are social studies, these crucial and pivotal learnings in the school? They are that body of knowledge combined with that expected behavior that should be acquired by all who live in social groups. They make up that knowledge and behavior that should characterize all who have successfully gone to school and thereby been made ready to take their places in adult society precisely because they have learned to play their role aright in school society. We think especially of their taking part with others in community, state, religious, recreational, and educational functions. Sociology students will recognize that this is the Pitirim A. Sorokin formula: that part of living together which is common to people in all occupations, cutting across familial groups, political affiliations, and economic pursuits. It is that area in which everyone along the street interacts, whether he be characterized by this or that color, religion, occupation, status, or whatever. Social studies imply the commonality of all citizens. Obviously, social studies mean most in a democracy.

It was a neglected field before the decade of the Depression. Until then we were more individualistic, we made our own way more or less, and Society was not the factor that it is today. The Social Security Act did not come until 1935. The Wisconsin Act was first to provide unemployment compensation in 1932. Numerous similar pieces of legislation followed making the social approach to the problem of men, and perhaps the climax of them all came with the United Nations late in the next decade. It followed that the schools were expected to magnify the virtues of the changed approach to the problems of life, and naturally so, because society is always reflected in its schools.

This new approach was, indeed, the best that society can ever do. A new philosophy had come to flower and was ready to supply the impetus. The schoolroom was made a miniature democracy, the community became its textbook, and One World became its goal: peace, good-will, free trade, cultural exchange, uplift, development, freedom, and the pursuit of happiness. Noble goals, every one of them. Far more to strive for than the recited information of geography, history, and civics.

The early steps were stumbling. A mishmash was made of those three subjects, but we soon got past that stage and reinstated good geography, history, and study of our government. The minds of educators cleared, and they began to see the need of a higher point of view: one that calls for the proper use of all that is learned toward the full, rich, and satisfying fruition of all one's talents and materials in the service of democratic living together in this land of the Pilgrims' pride.

We surely wish them well who are laboring long and with commitment to make our society one that is fit to survive, one in which sin will not so reek to heaven that the nation must go the way of all flesh. But we are not reassured by what we see. Less than ten years ago we

had a President's Commission that was assigned the task of stating our national goals, but nothing thrilling came of it. A modern justice of the Supreme Court, Oliver Wendell Holmes, the great liberal, "The Yankee From Olympus," scoffed at the whole theory of natural law, calling it "a brooding omnipresence in the sky." And our present Court has informed us that it bases its judgments on sociology. Social studies? Law made by majority vote? Expediency?

The French observer of democratic society, Alexis de Tocqueville, saw something going to pieces as long ago as the early nineteenth century: "Moralists are constantly complaining that the ruling vice of the present time is pride. This is true in one sense, for indeed everybody thinks that he is better than his neighbor or refuses to obey his superior; but it is extremely false in another, for the same man who cannot endure subordination or equality has so contemptible an opinion of himself that he thinks he is born only to indulge in vulgar pleasures. He willingly takes up with low desires without daring to embark on lofty enterprises, of which he scarcely dreams. Thus, far from thinking that humility ought to be preached to our contemporaries, I would have endeavors made to give them a more enlarged idea of themselves and of their kind. Humility is unwholesome to them; what they most want is, in my opinion, pride (Democracy In America).

The careful reader will recognize Tocqueville's oblique way of telling Americans that they were already suffering from the reduced standards of the herd, sadly other-directed and conforming to mass morality instead of pursuing that severer conduct that flows from a consciousness of right and wrong. Is a generation of lackeys a promising source of the tough-mindedness that it takes to fund and bottom a sound society? Does enough substance and vigor remain to give hope for necessary renewal? Social studies are predicated on an affirmative reply to that question.

Before we present a higher ground and base of government let one more witness say what he thinks must be the consequence of society-derived guidance for a nation: "It is the contention of this book that expanding democracy leads unintentionally to imperialism and that imperialism inevitably ends in destroying the republican institutions of earlier days; further, that the greater the social equality, the dimmer the prospects of liberty, and that as society becomes more equalitarian, it tends increasingly to concentrate absolute power in the hands of one single man. Caesarism is not dictatorship, not the result of one man's overriding ambition, not the brutal seizure of power through revolution. It is not based on a specific doctrine or philosophy. It is essentially pragmatic and untheoretical. It is a slow, often century-old, unconscious development that ends in a voluntary surrender of a free people escaping from freedom to one autocratic master." (Amaury de Riencourt: The Coming Caesars, p. 5, New York, Coward-McCann, Inc.)

Something more than social studies seems to be indicated. From our higher vantage point of sacred studies it appears to us that the very existence of social studies reflects the threshing about of the world in its estrangement from that happier state of society that the Creator intended for us people. For we believe that we can honestly subsume all learning under the aegis of God's overruling hand and relax — first bend every effort to seek the peace of the city, but then relax! We make bold so to commit ourselves because we are relieved from the frustrating fear that the end and outcome of all things is our responsibility. There are some certainties that stand without man's vote. Those who take the sociological view are forever telling us that everything is up to us, up to our performance in the community, to how we vote, to how hard we work, to what solutions we find. All this is simply too anthropocentric, and it is simply too much to bear. We would be the last to deny the consequences of our striving and fighting and working and praying for what is right. But

we do view the course of the world and its progress of deterioration from a higher plane, from the viewpoint of Sacred Studies.

There are signs that the educators of the world realize that we are right, and that socially derived solutions do not promise as much as has been hoped. The typical social studies-oriented educators try to see how far towards a Christian understanding they can come without invoking theological authority. In sacred studies we can and do invoke that authority. Therein is the difference, and it makes all the difference. It is the difference between the "unknown God" of the Greeks whom they were seeking "if haply they might feel after him and find him," and St. Paul's "Him declare I unto you." Acts 17. There are some things in connection with which the Christian says, "I have more understanding than all my teachers" (Psalms 119:99).

Sacred studies operate when there is a happy combination of divine revelation (that in the Book and that in nature) and an active appropriation of those revelations in an ongoing development of the human powers of man. Obviously this goal can be reached only under the aegis of Christian teaching, be it the formal instruction in the school or in the informal instruction of home and church. This sounds bold, but not to assert it would be to despise the Truth that we have, and it would be to disbelieve the power of that Truth to perform. The result is a constant in those that have ears to hear; it is not a phantom that forever recedes beyond our grasp. It yields a fundamental peace, yet it rouses us to the most hopeful and fruitful activity.

For us, all learning and growth and development are sacred. All that the facts substantiate is also God's truth, and He allows us to seek and find much that otherwise is not in His book of revelation. We also know, and this es-

pecially relates to society, that "the lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" (Prov. 16:33). We will not allow that to be called too simple, a mere childish quest for certainty. We know, as well as do the secularists who would teach us, that truth comes in two ways, in propositions on the one hand (from both revelation and "assured findings"), and on the other hand in and from events (the working out of them in life.) We want to see and study all things, knowing that everything that is established is God's truth, one pattern, one sacred study. Name anything that is true, and we insist that it is the trace of God's finger. In saying this we confess and declare that teaching sacred studies means more than teaching subjects "from the Christian point of view" —that, yes, but something more: A seeing in all things the reality of God and His governance, veiled as it may be, but there to the eyes of him that sees. Religion informs education and makes it greater than itself; the sacred studies soar as high above social studies as the firmament rises above the earth. In Christ, all that which otherwise would fall apart into countless fragments is held together, for "by him all things consist" (Col. 1:17). As someone has said, "Those who begin with absolute truth cannot improve upon it." It can improve them.

Martin Galstad

P A N O R A M A

THE PROBLEM OF FREE CONFERENCES — I

At the request of its Editor the undersigned has prepared an article on this subject for the LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN, presumably for its March issue. Because of the nature of the topic as well as for the sake of keeping the record of our comments on inter-synodical matters complete for readers of our JOURNAL we are offering the same article also on these pages.

THE PROBLEM OF FREE CONFERENCES

A discussion of this topic is suggested by the fact that there is a growing awareness among "conservative" members of various Lutheran church bodies that they are being carried away by an ever growing tide of "liberalism," especially of the kind that aims its attacks at the old and basic doctrine of the verbal inspiration and consequent inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible. Having found that their protests have gone unheard, that their official leaders have proved either unable or unwilling to check the trend, they are looking beyond their own immediate synodical affiliation for kindred spirits in other Lutheran bodies, for the creation of a forum where they can meet "as free agents, not representing their church bodies as such." Such gatherings certainly deserve our sympathetic consideration.

One such project that will be of particular interest to us is a Lutheran Free Conference that is being called for July 7-9 at Waterloo, Iowa. While Wisconsin has accepted no official responsibility for sponsoring this gathering, the

movement nevertheless has its full moral support. *THE NORTHWESTERN LUTHERAN* of February 9 devotes an entire page to explaining the nature and purpose of this meeting and extends an open invitation to all interested Wisconsin Synod members. The Bulletin of Information shows that some very thorough preparatory work has been done, that at least one mistake of previous conference has been noted and corrected—the joint devotions. But we wonder whether the problem of the free conference has been recognized in its entirety.

No one has stated the principles for intersynodical discussions better than Wisconsin in declining an invitation to participate in setting up a pan-Lutheran organization to succeed the present National Lutheran Council. There Wisconsin listed three conditions: 1) frank acknowledgment of all existing differences in doctrine and practice; 2) making removal of these differences the "prime business" of the discussions; 3) deferring all practice of church fellowship, all forms of joint worship and all joint church work until actual unity has been achieved. (*Journal of Theology*, April 1963, page 21)

The ruling out of joint prayer at the coming conference is obviously in keeping with Point Three of the specified conditions. So far, so good. But what is the purpose of the Waterloo Conference? We quote from the Prospectus: "The immediate purpose is to provide a forum for mutual strengthening of all those who are concerned about an uncompromising confession of doctrine currently being jeopardized in the Lutheran Church. The ultimate objective is to obtain full unity in the understanding of the Lutheran Confessions and in their application in practical church life." —We submit that because of its lack of any specific references this is hardly a frank acknowledgment of all existing differences. Having sent out nearly 400 invitations to members "from various Lutheran groups" (in addition to an open invitation to all Wisconsin, ELS, and SELC members), the

list of "existing differences" would have to cover quite a bit of ground. Nor does the fact that the need of obtaining "full unity" is called "the ultimate objective" suggest that this purpose is being made the "prime business" of the discussions.

What then is the program for this Conference? Again we quote from the Prospectus: "A program which is being prepared centers around the doctrine of the Scriptures— inspiration, revelation, etc." We might add that the program consists of eight essays, each on a different aspect of the one central question of inspiration. This will fully occupy the time of the Conference. No other doctrinal subject is listed.

This provides for a wonderfully thorough treatment of the burning issue of the day. Let there be no mistake about that! But since the very act of registration of this Conference is defined "as an expression of agreement with the purpose" (as stated above) "and basis of the Conference" (viz: "agreement on the doctrine of the inerrancy, inspiration, authority and historicity of Scripture" — our emphasis), the opposition will hardly be represented. So it will be easy to speak out on this fundamental issue of inspiration without encountering serious opposition. It will be encouraging to meet so many kindred minds. It will be pleasant and comforting to know that one has done something in these days of crisis, that a blow has been struck for the truth. —And it would be regarded as the height of tactlessness for any one to suggest that the real problems have not been touched, that the existing differences between these "Lutherans from various bodies not in fellowship" (as the Prospectus calls them) are still there, and that the failure to meet them has weakened rather than strengthened the confessionalism of the participants.

This, we believe, is the problem, yes, the danger of the Free Conferences. Unionism, which is so prom-

inent in the program of theological liberalism, is not something to which "conservatives" are immune. There can be unionism also on the level of conservatism. To recognize this danger and to guard against it, this is the first problem of any who would organize a proper Free Conference. We deeply regret that the necessary pre-conditions (so well stated in Wisconsin's "Three Points") were not adhered to in the thinking which went into the planning of the Waterloo Conference. Such an oversight will be difficult to remedy at this stage, though we may hope and pray that it might even yet be done.

But regardless of what will be done about Waterloo, the problems connected with the holding of a proper Lutheran Free Conference constitute a chapter for themselves. To these we shall, God willing, address ourselves in our next issue.

E. Reim

THE CONFERENCE PROSPECTUS

For the sake of ready reference and for a necessary check on our above critique we offer the full text of the Bulletin of Information as it was sent to us by the Arrangements Committee of the projected conference.

Why Is This Conference Being Called?

Many pastors and laymen in various Lutheran synods are concerned with "liberalism" which marks much Lutheran thought today. Many of these are especially concerned about the dilution of the doctrine of inspiration by neo-orthodox influence and by accommodation to current scientific theories.

What Is The Purpose of the Conference?

The immediate purpose is to provide a forum for mutual strengthening of all those who are concerned about an uncompromising confession of doctrines currently being jeopardized in the Lutheran Church. The ultimate objective is to obtain full unity in the understanding of the Lutheran Confessions and in

their application in practical church life.

On What Basis Is The Conference Called?

The basis is agreement on the doctrine of the inerrancy, inspiration, authority, and historicity of Scripture, and on the necessity of doctrinal unity as a prerequisite for joint worship and church work. (This does not mean that everyone already has the same understanding in all matters.)

Who Is Sponsoring The Conference?

A group of concerned individuals from various Lutheran bodies has formed the Arrangements Committee, which is sponsoring the Conference. It is not sponsored by any one synod or church body.

Why Is This Called A "Free" Conference?

The Arrangements Committee defined a free conference as "a meeting of individuals who meet as free agents, not representing their church bodies as such."

How Will The Expenses of the Conference Be Met?

Interested individuals and congregations are meeting these expenses with donations sent directly to the Conference treasurer, Mr. Robert G. Frick, 733 Community Drive, LaGrange Park, Illinois. It does not have the financial support of any synodical body.

Who Is Invited As A Participant?

All who find themselves in agreement with the purpose and basis of the conference are invited to participate.

Is The Conference Restricted To Pastors?

No, laymen are also invited to participate.

How Does One Become A Participant?

Registration with the Arrangements Committee makes one a participant. Such registration will be accepted as an expression of agreement with the purpose and basis of the Conference.

What Is The Time And Place of the Conference?

The Conference will be held on July 7-9, 1964, at Waterloo, Iowa.

What Is The Cost For An Individual Participant?

a) There is a \$5.00 registration fee; and b) each one is expected to take care of his own transportation and lodging. A committee will be ready to help you secure lodging at a reasonable cost.

What Is The Program For This Conference?

A program which is being prepared centers around the doctrine of the Scriptures — inspiration, revelation, etc. A set of these has been prepared which will serve as a basis for essays and for the conference discussions. Interested persons will receive a copy of these theses in advance.

Will Further Conferences Be Held?

That will be determined by those who attend this first Conference. They may determine on further conferences and further subjects to be discussed to foster confessional unity.

Will There Be Devotions At The Conference?

Since the Conference will be composed of Lutherans from various bodies not in fellowship, no joint devotions will be held. A moment of silence will provide opportunity for all to implore the Lord's blessings upon the Conference.

THE PROBLEM
OF FREE
CONFERENCES—II

WHAT, ANOTHER?

Having written one article on the problem of Free Conferences, we have added the sub-title because we expect that this will be the reaction of some readers on seeing this subject brought up again.

That this projected Lutheran Free Conference (Waterloo, Iowa, July 7-9) will involve the collaboration of what the Prospectus calls "Lutherans from various bodies not in fellowship" (our emphasis) is made increasingly clear by the recent announcement of the eight essayists who will read papers on different aspects of the one subject of the inspiration of the Bible. Listed are two Missouri pastors, two ALC pastors, two Wisconsin professors and two ELS (Norwegian) professors. The distribution of assignments on the basis of synodical affiliation is fair and impartial. To see so many men from such different synodical backgrounds make common cause for so important a doctrine as that of Inspiration would indeed be a heart-warming sight were it not for the chilling intrusion of the stubborn fact that their togetherness on this one issue hides the fact that many others are still far from being resolved. Or shall we conclude that by some miracle of understanding the old differences that have divided Lutherans for so many years have suddenly been removed? And if so, on what basis? If that basis should prove to be soundly Scriptural, why not proclaim it from the housetops? And then let the essayists and the Conference speak with a truly united voice against the inroads of theological liberalism! What an inspiring sight that would be!

But what if there is no such agreement as we have for the sake of argument been assuming above? What if these old differences are still lying like submerged reefs,

threatening destruction to the ship that steers too close? Would it not be wiser to give them a wide berth, to steer clear of them, to concentrate on the issues on which this mixed group can safely agree? It would indeed—if we consult with flesh and blood, if we let human reason be our guide, if we are going to be governed by considerations of expediency. But it would not be honest. This was Luther's reason for rejecting Philip of Hesse's plan for a military alliance with Zwingli and his Swiss followers, "who differed in one point only" (the doctrine of the Lord's Supper), and declared themselves willing to discuss that "for future settlement." Augsburg was looming on the horizon. A military alliance seemed imperative. Yet, God's truth was at stake, even if in that "one point only," and Luther was not ready to let that become an "ultimate objective," to be taken up in due time. Luther did agree to a discussion before Augsburg. That was the famous Marburg Colloquy on the Lord's Supper, which demonstrated conclusively just how illusive and dangerous such a deferment would have been.

But just what do we propose now? What course should Wisconsin follow if Waterloo is to become a truly constructive Free Conference? — We have already paid our respects to what we have called Wisconsin's "Three Points," as we summarized them in our previous article and as they are quoted in full in the April 1963 issue of our Journal of Theology, page 21. They constitute an excellent program. Let Wisconsin stand on its own platform. Let there be (1) a frank acknowledgment of all existing differences in doctrine and practice. Let there be (2) a determination to make removal of these differences the prime business of the discussions. Let there be (3) a deferring of all practice of church fellowship, all forms of joint worship and all joint church work until actual unity has been achieved.

We grant that this would not be an easy way to follow. The list of admitted controversies would be quite long. It

would have to include the old differences with the synods that now make up the new American Lutheran Church (TALC), on election, conversion, justification, to mention just a few. Are those issues settled by the Common Confession or not? It would have to include the doctrine of Church and Ministry which was so long debated between Missouri and Wisconsin. It would have to include those issues that came to be called the "peculiar" position of Wisconsin, on Scouting, Military Chaplaincy, Joint Prayer and Prayer Fellowship, Co-operation in Externals, etc. Other issues will come to mind. This is indeed a huge program. It would call for the most careful subdividing, not only of topics but even of the personnel of the discussion groups. It is a hard program. But it is also a necessary one. For a "Free Conference" group presenting a united front in its denunciation of the many fruits of modern liberalism would still, if the old differences have not been removed, be a house divided, even though the old fissures might be well concealed. So let them be removed. Let the structure be renewed from ground up.

If Wisconsin will undertake this, thus putting its own program into effect, we shall bless them. More, they not only should but, we are sure, would have our wholehearted support.

E. Reim

TWO CORRECTIONS

I

Two of our readers caught the fact that I was in error in an article in our previous issue (page 42) entitled "Scientist and Theologian Discuss Genesis 1." In discussing an open letter by Dr. Robert P. Scharlemann in THE LUTHERAN SCHOLAR I mistakenly described the author as "of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis." I have written the

St. Louis professor, Dr. Martin Scharlemann, assuring him of my profound regret for the error. I am addressing this correction to our readers in order to erase any false impressions that may have been left in their minds by my unfortunate mistake. It seems that Dr. Robert is teaching at the the University of Southern California.

E. Reim

II

It has been brought to our attention that § 7 of our statement Concerning Church Fellowship (Revised Edition) does not fully reflect the changes made in this document by the 1960 Convention as they are recorded in the Minutes, page 14, item 4. The paragraph should read:

"Thus the Church tolerates no divisions. The high standard of Scripture is clear. All members of the Church are to speak the same thing in all matters of faith. This is stated by St. Paul in just so many words 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 the same judgment."

We ask all who have copies of this Revised Edition to make the changes, which are limited to the first half of the paragraph.

Paul G. Albrecht, *PRESIDENT*

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