



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

I Timothy 4:15

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CYPRIAN

The Great High-Churchman of The Ante-Nicene Period

EDITOR'S NOTE: THE FOLLOWING PAPER IS THE RESULT OF AN ASSIGNMENT GIVEN IN CONNECTION WITH THE COURSE IN CHURCH HISTORY IN OUR IMMANUEL LUTHERAN SEMINARY. IT IS THE WORK OF THIS YEAR'S GRADUATE, PAUL FLEISCHER. WE OFFER IT HERE BECAUSE OF ITS GENERAL INTEREST, ALSO FOR ITS DEMONSTRATION OF BENEFITS DERIVED FROM GOING BEYOND THE BEATEN PATH OF TEXT-BOOK PRESENTATION INTO THE AREA OF DIRECT STUDY OF THE ORIGINAL WRITINGS OF SOME OF THE KEY FIGURES OF HISTORY.

THIS MAY BRING THE STUDENT FACE TO FACE WITH A CONFUSING MIXTURE OF TRUTH AND ERROR BUT THIS CAN ALSO HAVE ITS VALUE. WE QUOTE FROM THE FOREWARD OF CANDIDATE FLEISCHER'S STUDY:

"It must be noted that few, if any, of the Church Fathers before the time of Luther deserve the tag of "orthodoxy," of pure and unadulterated Scriptural teaching. Cyprian also falls far short of being an orthodox Church Father. This conclusion has firm basis and will be proven incontestably to the reader, for the burden of this study will lie upon the false teachings of Cyprian. At the same time, however, the fact must not be lost sight of that each of the "Church Fathers" deserve such a title insofar as they handed down to us correct and true Scriptural principles and interpretations. From his writings it is evident that Cyprian was, first of all, well-read in Scripture; and secondly, that at times his grasp of Scriptural truths was commendable and to be highly regarded. Sad to say, however, his truth is too often mixed with error, and what appears to be white becomes black in the final analysis. We must be careful to distinguish the one from the other."

Thascius Caecilius Cyprianus, the great High-Churchman of the ante-Nicene period,¹ was born around A. D. 200. He was born of noble, wealthy, and heathen parentage most likely in the African city of Carthage. He was schooled in literature, law, and rhetoric.

A presbyter, Caecilius, who lived in Cyprian's house, was chiefly responsible for Cyprian's conversion to Christianity. He moved Cyprian to read the Bible and was successful in urging him to enter a class of catechumens. Cyprian was baptized in 245 or 246, at which time he sold his estates, giving the proceeds to the poor, and took the vow of chastity. This was a big step in Cyprian's life, for he attests in his writings to the common vices of heathenism which marked his early life. In his own words he tells us of the pronounced change which his "new birth" had upon him:

How, said I, is such a conversion possible?
I used to indulge my sins as if they were
actually parts of me... But after that, by
the help of the water of new birth, ... a
light from above, serene and pure, had been
infused into my reconciled heart.²

Cyprian then devoted himself, in ascetic retirement, to the study of the Scriptures and of the Church Fathers before him, especially Tertullian whom he called "the Master." It is certain that Cyprian adopted much of Tertullian's theology and was profoundly influenced by him. He disengaged himself, however, from Tertullian's Montanist views, such as strict asceticism, severe discipline, martyr enthusiasm, and chiliasm.

It was only two years after his baptism, in 248, that Cyprian, by acclamation of the people, was raised to the bishopric of Carthage. This position at the same time placed him at the head of the whole North African clergy.

Cyprian rose to such heights at one of the most trying times in the entire history of the church. During the next ten years the great persecutions against the Christians took place under the emperors Decian and Valerian. Cyprian escaped the Decian persecution, which began in 250, by going into a place of hiding. In order to quiet any charge against himself because of this retirement, Cyprian, through the deacon Crementius, informed the Roman and Carthaginian clergy by letter³ that he went into hiding "thinking less of his own safety than of the welfare of the people"⁴ and further assured his congregation that he forsook them "in pursuance of a divine admonition, and in order to direct them during his exile by pastoral epistles."⁵ He soon found out how difficult it is, even for a bishop, to shepherd a flock at so great a distance. He wrote some 80 epistles from his place of refuge, all of them dealing with the management of congregational affairs and most of them of disciplinary nature. (Here is where the "lapsed" fit in. The greater part of the last half of this paper will consist of a study of these epistles.)

After a little more than a year Cyprian returned from his place of safety. There ensued a period of relative quiet in the church, which period found Cyprian heading a series of councils at Carthage attended by the surrounding bishops, and dealing with such things as the baptism of heretics and the lapsed. In 258 Emperor Valerian renewed the persecution of the Christians. Cyprian was sent into exile for eleven months, then was tried and condemned to be beheaded. He died a hero's, yea, a martyr's death. His biographer, Pontius the deacon, gives a vivid account of how Cyprian, in a brave and Christian manner, met his glorious fate.⁶ The following words may serve to end the historical data:

When the sentence was pronounced, he said: "Thanks be to God," knelt in prayer, tied the bandage over his eyes

with his own hand, gave to the executioner a gold piece, and died with the dignity and composure of a hero.⁷

Scholars are divided as to the question of how much influence Cyprian had upon historical Roman Catholic views and doctrines. Personally, I don't see how anyone can deny his influence upon Roman Catholic formulations, especially those regarding the Church. For already at Cyprian's time, and even before that, the devil had succeeded in using Matthew 16:18-19 to confuse the minds of the elite in the church. Following in the footsteps of Ignatius of Antioch (d. 115) and others, Cyprian misunderstood the passage to mean that the Church was a visible assembly founded upon the Apostle Peter:

There is one God, and Christ is one,
and there is one Church, and one chair
founded upon the rock by the word of
the Lord.⁸

In all fairness to Cyprian, he did not believe in the primacy of any one bishop, but rather held that the entire episcopate was founded upon the Apostles. Apostolic succession came to be the basic formula and the chief weapon of the early Fathers. According to this theory the universal episcopate (or monarchical episcopate, as it came to be called) alone held the keys, the power to remit or retain sins. And this unbroken succession from the holy apostles to the bishops was taught as a doctrine, opposition to which immediately branded one a heretic:

For neither have heresies arisen, nor
have schisms originated, from any
other source than from this, that God's
priest is not obeyed; nor do they con-
sider that there is one person for the

time priest in the Church, and for the
time judge in the stead of Christ.⁹

For further expressions of Cyprian's thoughts regarding the Church as a visible body founded upon the bishops, note the following:

Whoever he may be, and whatever he may be, he who is not in the Church of Christ is not a Christian.¹⁰

Whence it appears, that all are adversaries of the Lord and antichrists, who are known to have departed...¹¹ from the unity of the Catholic Church.

Nor let them think that the way of life or of salvation is open to them, if they have refused to obey the bishops and priests... since the house of God is one, and there can be no salvation to any except in the Church.¹²

So we see that Cyprian came to the point where he spoke the now famous words: nulla salus extra Ecclesiam (there is no salvation outside of the Church). This would all be well and good if he had understood the doctrine of the Church as Scripture teaches it, that the Church is an invisible body made up of believers in Christ. But that was far from Cyprian's concept, as has been shown. The universal priesthood of all believers was foreign to him. He did not understand Peter's very own words in I Peter 2:9 that "Ye (i. e. all believers) are a royal priesthood." And the way that Luther explained Matthew 16:18 would have been enough evidence for Cyprian to condemn him as an heretic: "All Christians are Peters, because they make the profession here made by Peter, which profession is the rock on which Peter and all Peters

are built."¹³ And so the conclusion which is set forth in the following words of Qualben is appropriate:

The original spiritual priesthood of all believers yielded to a special priesthood, the clergy, and the evangelical conception of the Church as "the congregation of saints" yielded to the Catholic conception of the Church as a group of believers belonging to the episcopate.¹⁴

I alluded earlier to the fact that Cyprian did not regard the primacy of any one bishop. More pointedly, he did not recognize any special authority of the Roman bishop over the other bishops. What he did uphold, and very strongly so, was the unity of the Church. He wrote a treatise on the subject, entitled De Unitate Ecclesia. In his estimation, the unity of the Church depends upon the unity of the episcopate:

The episcopate is one, each part of which is held by each one for the whole ... The Church also is one, which is spread abroad far and wide into a multitude by an increase of fruitfulness... and since from one spring flow many streams, although the multiplicity seems diffused in the liberality of an overflowing abundance, yet the unity is still preserved in the source.¹⁵

Understood correctly, we might say that Cyprian did uphold the primacy of Peter; since Peter was the one whom our Lord was addressing in Matthew 16, so in him the Lord "set forth unity, He arranged by His authority the origin of that unity, as beginning from one (i. e. Peter)."¹⁶ We might say then that Cyprian's recognition of Peter's primacy was "not of authority and jurisdiction, but merely as representing the unity of the Church."¹⁷

Consequently, Cyprian addressed the Roman bishop as "brother" and "colleague" and had no use for the titles of "Pontifex Maximus" and "Episcopus Episcoporum" which some (e.g. Callistus and Stephen) were claiming for themselves. It is interesting to note how the editor of Cyprian's writing in The Ante-Nicene Fathers uses every opportunity to show that Cyprian held no special recognition for the Roman bishop. And he has ample opportunity to prove his point, for Cyprian often gives counsel, advice, or evangelical admonition to other bishops whereby he emphasizes their equality. (For specific instances I refer the reader to footnotes to Cyprian's writings in the afore-mentioned book.) Let it suffice to say that Cyprian in many instances places his authority and jurisdiction as Bishop of Carthage on a par with the authority and jurisdiction of any other bishop, even of Rome.

Parenthetically, I would just like to insert here a quotation from The Catholic Encyclopedia which I consider to be quite humorous. Needless to say, the following is not an unbiased opinion:

It is certain that where internal discipline was concerned he (Cyprian) considered that Rome should not interfere, and that uniformity was not desirable—a most unpractical notion. We have always to remember that his experience as a Christian was of short duration.... and that he had no Christian writings besides Holy Scripture (isn't that enough? -P.F.) to study but those of Tertullian. ¹⁸

Even though Roman Catholics themselves do not have too much good to say about St. Cyprian, still this does not take him off the hook. I am inclined to agree with most church historians whose usual conclusions might be summed up in these words, that "in Cyprian's teaching the tendencies illustrated in the development of the 'Catholic' Church

received their full expression." ¹⁹ For though Cyprian opposed the idea of a Roman hierarchy, his peculiar conception was too idealistic to remain practical in church life. This is brought out well in these words:

While all the bishops theoretically stood upon the same level, the so-called "country-bishops" would not, because of the location, enjoy the direct influence and popular esteem of the bishop of the larger cities (Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria). ²⁰

Even if one were ignorant of the historical facts, still he could almost predict the inevitable result: the titles which Callistus and others gave themselves by self-acclamation ("Pontifex Maximus" etc.) soon became the official title of the Roman Bishop by acclamation of Holy Mother Church. Cyprian can not wash his hands of that, for he put the leaven in the loaf.

This general overview must be kept in mind as we now proceed to study Cyprian's views regarding, first of all, the "lapsed." During the Decian persecution many Christians denied the faith that their lives might be spared. These apostates were referred to as the "lapsed." They were classified as thurificati, sacrificati, and libellatici. The first two can be differentiated thus:

They made a declaration that they worshipped the gods and in the presence of the commissioners they took part in the pagan worship, either joining in a sacrifice, tasting the wine and eating of the sacrificial victim (sacrificati) or throwing incense of the altar of the emperor (thurificati). ²¹

On the other hand, the libellatici were those who procured from the civil authorities a false certificate that they had

taken part in the sacrifices, which they had not done. (The Lutheran Cyclopedia names yet a fourth group, the acta facientes, who were "such as made false depositions concerning their Christianity." ²²) The question which now forced itself upon the Church's attention was whether or not such should be readmitted to the Church. The whole matter became more complicated because of the action of the confessores. (The confessores were "those Christians who were of sterner stuff" ²³ and who, during the persecutions, rather than deny their faith, endured torture and even death—whence they were called martyrs. Many of the confessors, at the request of the lapsed, gave them letters which encouraged the elders of the Church, the bishop having taken refuge in hiding, to readmit them to the Church.

As we learned earlier, Cyprian was absent at this time, so that he dealt with this problem of readmittance of the lapsed chiefly by way of his epistles (though later, in keeping with a promise, he wrote an entire treatise on the subject entitled De Lapsis). Naturally, with his belief that "there is no salvation outside of the Church," and also that "he can no longer have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his mother," ²⁴ Cyprian held out no hope for the lapsed if they remained outside of the Church. For that reason, and also because he understood the mercy of God as Scripture teaches it, he desired that the lapsed should be admitted to the Church again, provided they showed signs of real repentance and made public confession. For his position on the matter, note these statements:

Let not the mercy of the Lord be denied to those that are imploring the divine favor.. ²⁵

While in all Scripture the Lord God soothes those who return to Him and repent.. inasmuch as He is merciful and loving, the groaning of those who mourn is to be ad-

mitted, and the fruit of repentance is not to be denied to those who grieve.²⁶

Once they were back in the Church, the lapsed were to be treated fully as brethren; for as Cyprian himself says:

We, so far as it is allowed to us to see and to judge, look upon the face of each one; we are not able to scrutinize the heart and to inspect the mind. Concerning these the Discerner and Searcher of hidden things judges.....²⁷

It is to be noted that with this approach toward the lapsed Cyprian was fighting the precedent. The older practice in the Church had been to deny restoration to all who were guilty of "sins unto death" —and the denial of faith was considered such a sin. It is easy to understand that Cyprian would be faced with not a little opposition.

Cyprian met with strong opposition to his view from two sides. On the one there was Novatian of Rome who would not allow the lapsed to be restored to the communion of the Church even on proof of penitence. For this Novatian became widely proclaimed and charged as guilty of schism in the Church. Cyprian, while in hiding, was likewise gravely concerned for his congregation over this heresy, and attacks Novatian with many words. One example:

Then, moreover, what a swelling of arrogance it is, what oblivion of humility and gentleness what a boasting of his own arrogance, that anyone should either dare, or think that he is able, to do what the Lord did not even grant to the Apostles; that he should think that he can discern the tares from the wheat, or, as if it were granted to him to bear the fan and to clear the

threshing-floor, should endeavor to separate the chaff from the wheat.....²⁸

It is not surprising then that, when Cyprian was called upon to approve Novatian's ordination, he refused to do so. And he would continue to refuse until such schismatics as Novatian would "lay aside their pernicious dissensions and disputes, and become aware that it is an impiety to forsake their Mother," for "if they confess themselves to be maintainers of the Gospel of Christ, they must return to the Church."²⁹ What Cyprian was saying, in effect, was that by his false teaching, Novatian denied himself membership in Mother Church and at the same time excluded himself from the privilege of being a bishop in the line of the apostolic succession. Nevertheless, we are told that the Novatian schism lasted until the seventh century. It was a lost cause, however, for Cyprian's view that the lapsed should be restored under strict conditions of penance received the endorsement of a synod in Rome in 251. This decision ultimately regulated Roman practice.

On the other side, Cyprian had to deal with the presbyters Novatus and Felicissimus. These advocated extreme laxity toward the lapsed, readmitting many of them without examination or proof of repentance. Novatus was a presbyter of Carthage, and while Bishop Cyprian was in hiding, he took it upon himself to readmit many of the Carthaginian lapsed. Cyprian dealt with this matter when he returned. He called a council which finally decided to readmit the lapsed to membership only after they showed due repentance and penance according to the offense.

Before his return, however, Cyprian dealt strongly with deacon Felicissimus, who was an extreme "rightist" of the same color as Novatus. Cyprian answered letters which he received from troubled members regarding the laxity toward the lapsed advocated by Felicissimus during

his absence. First of all Cyprian assured them that Felicissimus was acting out of order for "it was once arranged well by us... that no novelty should be introduced in respect of the case of the lapsed unless we all assembled into one place." ³⁰ (Succinctly stated, Cyprian's pride had been dealt quite a blow because he as bishop had not been consulted.) The next thing which Cyprian asserted is that Felicissimus had placed himself outside of the Church by his rash actions, and he warned that:

Whoever shall ally himself with his conspiracy and faction, let him know that he shall not communicate in the Church with us, since of his own accord he has preferred to be separated from the Church. ³¹

and-also that:

They (Felicissimus and his colleagues) are now offering peace who have not peace themselves. They are promising to bring back and recall the lapsed into the Church, who themselves have departed from the Church. ³²

Cyprian's strong denunciation of the extreme laxity advocated by Felicissimus was prompted by a genuine concern. He was concerned for the souls of those who were so quickly and easily readmitted into the communion of the Church. They were granted a "fallacious peace," as he called it, since they were encouraged to "leave off prayers and supplications, whereby, with long and continual satisfaction, the Lord is to be appeased." ³³ Cyprian also charged that Felicissimus "brought about the destruction of salvation" since, by his too swift readmittance of the lapsed, he encouraged:

...that God should not be besought, and that he who has denied Christ should not appeal for mercy to the same Christ whom he had denied; that after the fault of the crime, repentance also should be taken away, and that the Lord should not be appeased through bishops and priests..³⁴

This whole matter was resolved by the excommunication of Felicissimus. Another council at Carthage, headed by Cyprian after his return, ironed out the details as to what should be done with those readmitted too quickly to the Church.

Before leaving this study I would like to consider one other subject which Cyprian treated at great length in his writings. That is his view regarding baptism, especially as performed by those outside of the Church, by heretics.

To begin with, it should be noted that Cyprian "made contributions to the meaning of baptism that have always held a place in conservative theology."³⁵ As far as I could determine, I think Cyprian believed in original sin; and he therefore was on the right track as to the necessity of baptism, and also its efficacy. I refer the reader back to the first page where I quoted Cyprian concerning the profound change which his "new birth" had upon him. Note also the following testimony to regeneration:

How heavenly the protection in its perennial blessing—to be loosed from the snares of this entangling world, and to be purged from earthly dregs and fitted for the light of eternal immortality...it is a gratuitous gift from God, and it is accessible to all.....³⁶

But in regard to the validity of baptism Cyprian made some statements which can not be endorsed. Cyprian believed

that the bishops alone could perform valid baptisms since they were endowed with special charismatic gifts; and that only those bishops who belonged to the Church had those gifts. In just so many words, therefore, he concludes that the only valid baptism is that performed in the Church:

They strive to set before and prefer the
sordid and profane washing of heretics
to the true and only and legitimate baptism
of the Catholic Church. ³⁷

And implying a negative answer, Cyprian reasons thus: "Can anyone water from the Church's fountains who is not within the Church?" ³⁸ Statement after statement could thus be adduced from his writings to show Cyprian's erroneous idea. Hand in hand with this would go his idea of reserving the right to forgive sins to the Church alone. He says:

When we say, "Dost thou believe in eternal life and remission of sins through the holy Church?" we mean that remission of sins is not granted except in the Church, and that among heretics, where there is no Church, sins cannot be put away. ³⁹

The baptism performed by an heretic was therefore invalid, in Cyprian's opinion. Novatian was the center of his attack also here. And Cyprian insisted that anyone who had received baptism from Novatian (and other heretics) had to be rebaptized. (It is interesting to note that Novatian also insisted upon the rebaptism of those who were joining him.) Bishop Stephen also caused Cyprian much anguish with his belief that "the effect of baptism" is attributed "to the majesty of the name, so that they who are baptized anywhere and anyhow in the name of Jesus Christ, are judged to be renewed and sanctified." ⁴⁰ And for

contending that "sons are born to God from the baptism of Marcion" ⁴¹ Stephen was sternly upbraided by Cyprian.

Cyprian did not insist upon rebaptism in every case. It was not necessary under the following circumstance:

That all who are converted from any heresy whatever to the Church must be baptized by the only and lawful baptism of the Church, with the exception (my emphasis) of those who had previously been baptized in the Church. ⁴²

It is too bad that Cyprian did not realize how close to the truth Stephen was. The whole trouble of Cyprian stemmed from his belief that the faith of the one administering the sacrament was the all important thing. He did not believe that the power of baptism lay in the words themselves, and that the faith of the administrant or of the one baptized in no way affects the objective validity of the sacrament. Cyprian was right whe he said that "water alone is not able to cleanse away sins, and to sanctify a man, unless he have also the Holy Spirit." ⁴³ But he did not understand that the Holy Spirit works through and by the Word itself. It is no wonder then that he taught that the baptism of heretics was invalid.

I entitled this paper: CYPRIAN—THE GREAT HIGH-CHURCHMAN OF THE ANTE-NICENE PERIOD. I sincerely hope that I have gathered enough evidence to show the man worthy of such a title. Cyprian was way off on the doctrine of the Church and on the true essence of the Una Sancta, for he held it to be a visible assembly dependent upon the unity of the episcopate. And though he claimed correctly that neither he nor any other bishop could "scrutinize the heart" because "concerning these the Discerner and Searcher of hidden things judges," yet he was guilty of doing just that. One had to belong to the Church if he was

to be saved (the Church as a visible body). That is an error with far-reaching implications, for it limits God's grace and mercy; it limits and restricts the work of Christ, through whom God was reconciling the whole world unto Himself; it limits the working of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men. And try as they may to absolve Cyprian of blame for such perversions of the Gospel, yet I believe that he planted the seed for many of them. It is almost incredible that hardly two centuries after our Saviour walked on this earth, such false doctrine was being propagated and Antichrist himself was already rearing his head, all under the guise of apostolic succession. These seeds of false doctrine and of Antichrist grew rapidly, until they finally achieved their full growth at the Council of Trent (1545-1563). Thanks be to God for the great gift of the Reformation; for leading Dr. Martin Luther to uncover the wickedness of the Roman Catholic Church and its Papacy, and to bring people back to the Bible. May God in His grace preserve us in the confession of Peter: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Upon such faith is the Church built, and upon nothing else. And all who confess such a faith make up the Church, the Una Sancta, and shall receive a glorious inheritance.

Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, died as a martyr to his faith. We can only hope that the faith for which he died was the true faith. Whether or not it was we dare not judge, even on the basis of his writings. Concerning this thing the Discerner and Searcher of hidden things must judge.

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FOOTNOTES

- 1 This appellation for Cyprian, which I also chose as the title for this paper, is adopted from the article on Cyprian in the LUTHERAN CYCLOPEDIA, p. 277 f.

- 2 Epistle 1, paragraph 2, THE ANTE-NICENE FATHERS. Vol. 5, p. 275. Since there seems to be a discrepancy in the numbering of the Epistles, it is important to note the source used. (Hereafter these references will be abbreviated thus: Ep. 1:2 ANF5 p. 275.)
- 3 The letter referred to wherein Cyprian's reason for retirement into hiding is explained is Ep. 2. ANF5 p. 280. But cf. also Ep. 5. ANF5 p. 282.
- 4 Thomas M. Lindsay. THE CHURCH AND MINISTRY IN THE EARLY CENTURIES. p. 287
- 5 Philip Schaff. HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. Vol. 2, p. 847
- 6 For Pontius' account of the events which transpired on the day of Cyprian's martyrdom, see his biography (THE LIFE AND PASSION OF CYPRIAN, BISHOP AND MARTYR) as found in ANF5 p. 267ff; note esp. paragraphs 16-19
- 7 Philip Schaff. loc. cit. p. 845. Except for those parts otherwise designated, most of the historical data on Cyprian's life were gleaned from this book by Schaff.
- 8 Ep. 39:5 ANF5 p. 318
- 9 Ep. 54:5 ANF5 p. 340
- 10 Ep. 51:24 ANF5 p. 333
- 11 Ep. 75:1 ANF5 p. 397
- 12 Ep. 61:4 ANF5 p. 358
- 13 Franz Pieper. CHRISTIAN DOGMATICS. Vol 3, p. 413 (Pieper quoting Luther)
- 14 L. P. Qualben, A HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, p. 95
- 15 DE UNITATE ECCLESIA: 5 ANF5 p. 423
- 16 DE UNITATE ECCLESIA: 4 ANF5 p. 422
- 17 LUTHERAN CYCLOPEDIA, p. 278
- 18 THE CATHOLIC CYCLOPEDIA, Vol. IV, p. 588
- 19- W. Walker, A HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, p. 70
- 20 L. P. Qualben. loc. cit. p. 98
- 21 T. M. Lindsay. loc. cit. p. 288

- 22 LUTHERAN CYCLOPEDIA, p. 809
- 23 T. M. Lindsay. loc. cit. p. 290
- 24 DE UNITATE ECCLESIA: 6 ANF5, p. 423
- 25 Ep. 12:2 ANF5 p. 293
- 26 Ep. 51:29 ANF5 p. 335
- 27 Ep. 53:3 ANF5 p. 337
- 28 Ep. 51:25 ANF5 p. 334
- 29 Ep. 40:2 ANF5 p. 319
- 30 Ep. 39:3 ANF5 p. 317
- 31 Ep. 37:2 ANF5 p. 316
- 32 Ep. 39:5 ANF5 p. 318
- 33 Ep. 39:2 ANF5 p. 317
- 34 Ep. 39:3 ANF5 p. 317
- 35 J. L. Neve, A HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN THOUGHT,
Vol 1, p. 154
- 36 Ep. 1:14 ANF5 p. 279
- 37 Ep. 70:1 ANF5 p. 377
- 38. Ep. 72:10 ANF5 p. 382
- 39 Ep. 69:2 ANF5 p. 376
- 40 Ep. 73:5 ANF5 p. 387
- 41 Ep. 73:7 ANF5 p. 388
- 42 Ep. 73:12 ANF5 p. 389
- 43 Ep. 73:5 ANF5 p. 388

PREACHING THE WORD

MEDITATIONS IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL

INTRODUCTORY

The following, although based upon textual research and sermon preparation, is neither an exegetical study nor an homiletical treatment of the first nine chapters of Daniel. Rather, we are offering a series of reflections based upon those chapters, which present such cogent materials to the active Christian mind and heart in an age to which this sacred record speaks with particularly incisive and penetrating authority.

There is, of course, an underlying motive in presenting such non-technical meditations in a theological journal. It is hoped that this or that pastor might thereby be stimulated to the rewarding task of organizing sermons based upon these timely chapters of Holy Writ and sharing the forceful messages with their people. So much can be said that needs to be said; and never do pastors find a better occasion for such preaching than during the summer months and the Trinity season.

It may seem startling to suggest that it would be profitable to cover an entire chapter in one sermon, as these meditations do. Texts of such length are not common among us. Yet for that very reason it might be refreshing to a congregation to hear larger units treated in well-built sermons. The meditations provide seed thoughts toward such an effort. Doubtless it would be wise to invite the assembly to be seated during the reading of the chapter under consideration. It is also wise to avoid extensive re-reading of text portions during the sermon and to keep the sermon concise.

CHAPTER I.

BABYLON SEEKS OUR YOUTH

The shadows of the approaching end of this present world are deepening and the struggle between the Kingdom of Jesus Christ and the kingdom of Satan grows sharper even while we watch. The days that lie before us will most certainly be critical days for us; and although we sometimes seem to be asleep and unaware of what is going on, the Word of our God is there to rouse us again and again to our danger and our duty. It calls to us in urgent tones: "Rise to arms, with prayer employ you, O Christians, lest the foe destroy you." And nowhere does the tocsin ring more loudly than in the pages of Daniel's Book. For Daniel walks through the modern world with a living message.

In the opening chapter of this Book we see Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, surrounding and despoiling the city of God, Jerusalem. Having driven his way to the heart of the city, he takes from the Temple certain precious vessels used in the worship of the true God and sends them to Babylon where they are placed in the service of

his false god. Then he begins to draw the very life-blood from the veins of God's church on earth; for he takes the finest of the young people into his service. With every device and skill he tries to make them over, to convert them to the ways and fashions of Babylon. The youth is the future of the church. If the youth becomes Babylonian, there will soon be no more Israel.

This describes also the situation which we face today; and it would not do to hide that fact from our eyes. For Nebuchadnezzar must not win; and Nebuchadnezzar is still alive. You will not find the city of Babylon on a modern map; but if you are observant, you will see it. Luther wrote that the Book of Daniel is like a fine, clear mirror of the war between faith and the world, between Christ and Satan. Here is an ancient picture we see the constant conflict that is going on. Nebuchadnezzar is the world, the evil, cruel, godless world; Jerusalem is the Christian Church, and Nebuchadnezzar is at her gates. The old tricks are still being played. The world seeks to invade the Church, to suck out her life like a leech. Do we and our people understand what is going on? Do we see this conflict in its world-wide scope? Do we know what is to be done on our part? How needful it is to speak plainly, frankly and insistently the message that lies for us in the first chapter of Daniel.

1.

When Nebuchadnezzar wants to wipe out the people of God and the religion which sets them apart from the rest of mankind, he begins by making his own altar as attractive as possible. The king of Babylon worships an idol as wicked and vicious as himself; but he will want to make Israel feel at home in Babylon, to which he intends to deport them, and so he takes the outward signs of the true God, the vessels of worship, out of the Temple and sets them up on the altar at Babylon to make the idol look fa-

miliar and real. He disguises the false god to seem as the true God. That is part of the bait.

It is frightening to discover how well the evil world and its black prince has succeeded in making itself "religious." In the midst of its utterly corrupt civilization stand altars that bear the outward signs of the true God and of His Son Jesus Christ. These outward signs are simply stolen from the Savior's churches and are used as window-dressing. Behind them stands the devil himself. But from the front they look good, inviting to children of God. In the temples of the lodges you will find altars on which the Good Book lies. Christ seems to dwell there; yet Christ is blasphemed and His saving blood trampled under foot. The lodge is a temple for Pharisees and hypocrites. Behold the Scout organizations., The bait is beautifully arranged. The vessels are those of Christian living; the Scout oath and law sound like pages of the Scriptures until one looks closely and sees that Jesus Christ has been cut out, body, cross and all. Indeed, the world has similar altars amid all its myriad interests and endeavors. Even at National Political conventions, where Christians, Jews and Atheists meet, the proceedings are opened with long prayers that sound good, mean nothing, and cover up the depravity of drunkenness, carousing, scheming and slandering which go on behind the scenes as well as in public view and hearing. The world seeks to make itself respectable with stolen treasures of the House of God. There is almost nothing that Nebuchadnezzar does not plaster with the signs of truth, so that even a certain nightclub has been seen bearing the name; "God's own acre." It all helps! It helps in the effort of making Christians into Babylonians, that they might gain the whole world and lose their souls.

But of course the real program for the destruction of the Church is the attack being made upon its youth. Nebuchadnezzar has but one ambition. Everybody must serve

him, body, heart and soul. He is not satisfied with second place; he must have first place. So he sets out to train the youngsters. He takes them away from godly parents and their churches as soon as possible and fixes up a program which should at last make them ready to stand before the king. And he takes the best of them first, of course: the most gifted, those who could serve the Lord God with the largest supply of talents, those who would be leaders. Note the thorough way in which he immerses them in the spirit of Babylon. He provides special schooling so that they may learn the language of Babylon and forget their own, their mother tongue. He supplies special, rich food to develop their bodies for sensuous living at his court. New names he gives them, lest Daniel remember that his true name meant: "God is my Judge;" lest also the other young men recall that they were named after the God of Israel. The king uses every means in his power to wipe out, as with a sponge, the character of God's children.

The same campaign is in full swing in our modern Babylon. The world wants the youth in its service. Every where doors of opportunity are flung open. The imposing fronts of the universities beckon our children and point them to the seemingly limitless prospects of the atomic age. From many mountain-tops they are shown the riches of the world and its glory. We know, of course, that our children must make their way in the world, and we welcome the opportunities they have for advancement and achievement. But it is important that we know the whole story. Our Heavenly Father provides the opportunities, not the world. He opens the path of the future for our youth and bids them go forth in His fear. But the world has schemes of its own. It wants these young people to serve Babylon. Babylon wants Babylonians, not Christians. They must be fit to stand before the king of this world; whether they can stand before the Lord their God is something the world does not worry about. An elabor-

ate educational system is set up that is both costly and vigorous. In its technical facilities it is well equipped to prepare young men and women for their life-time occupations; but in spirit it is a system that will try to make a Belteshazzar of a Daniel, a man of the world out of a child of God. That is the long and the short of public education. Thereafter, the world teaches our youth to enjoy what the world enjoys, just as Nebuchadnezzar insisted that the young men eat the things of his table. And when truth has become to them an ambivalent thing, a chameleon that adapts itself to their convenience and desire; when they can dance and carouse, commit fornication, curse, drink, gamble and equivocate without qualm, then they are ready to stand before the king.

We know that this is Satan's sinister program and that it is being pushed furiously. But how many are deceived by good words and false altars? There are Christian parents whose attitudes suggest that they may be thinking as Nebuchadnezzar thought. They seem to believe that it is proper to offer their children to the service of the pomp and glory of the world. They have absorbed certain false premises. Thus, although in recent years many people have become disenchanted with the quality of public education, there are still Christian parents to be found who believe that schools accredited by the world are necessarily better educational institutions than those which are not. Moreover, in some instances one senses the unexpressed assumption that the thousands of dollars required annually for a career in the legal, medical or other prominent profession would in fact benefit young people most of all, and that the far less costly preparation for service in the church is a second-rate choice necessitated by economic considerations. We may be sure that such evaluations are carefully nurtured and fostered by the world. And those who have eyes to see what is going on, who know what Nebuchadnezzar is trying to do, will be ready to ask a question. What shall WE do?

2.

First of all, let us reach out for the comfort in this chapter of Daniel. In the midst of all the planning to make Daniel and his friends efficient servants of the devil, there was God. God is at court, too. God goes with our children when we send Him along and when they have learned to take Him along. He knew the children whom we love before Nebuchadnezzar ever saw them; for the Father in heaven knew them and ordained them, that they should be of His people. Those who watch with heavy hearts as the world tries to ensnare their children must not be unmindful of the fact that the Almighty has a plan too. There are, after all, some things which are greater than Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon; and the greatest of these is the love of God. He sent His Son to die for us and for our children.

We know that, for the most part, the Christian youth of our nation will be trained in secular professions and skills and will, by the Lord's guidance, take up their work in the midst of an ungodly generation; for they are to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. We know also that circumstances beyond their control, or that of their parents, may necessitate the use of the system of public education as the only means available to them. Nor would we deny that human wisdom, science and methods can offer them benefits which are of great value when rightly used. There is no reason for despairing of the youth that goes forth to work at the court of the king of Babylon; for they have first been received into the communion and the arms of their Heavenly Father through Holy Baptism. Their bodies and souls are of the Lord who bought them dearly. We need faith in this great Truth. Christ does not intend to surrender His children to Nebuchadnezzar. And God finds a way to keep them. To this end, however, He calls upon us to be true and brave servants who will bring our children pulse to eat in place of the wines and fats of the devil's table.

Here lies our responsibility, as we receive opportunity from the God of our children, to preserve them in His Truth and for His service, in whatever profession they enter. Failure lies with us. Failure will come because we thought ourselves wiser than God's Word and refused to heed it. We must ask ourselves whether and to what extent it is really necessary, or unavoidable, that our children be educated by the world. When Christian primary and secondary educational facilities are available, or could be made available, though at a financial sacrifice, we dare not hesitate. Our educational facilities may seem as pulse compared with the wines and meat of the world; but they nourish God's children unto genuine usefulness.

Even to Nebuchadnezzar. His purpose was defeated; yet by God's grace he profited from his defeat. For the young men who served him were his best servants because they remained true children of the Most High.

TO BE CONTINUED

PAIDEIA

EDUCATION FOR WHAT?

Our column is as interested in the paideia of our people as in that of the younger learners. Our readers must long since have sensed this, so surely as they have read us carefully. Nor do we understand our mission otherwise than as we have served it. Therefore, with the obvious amendments, we can subscribe wholeheartedly to the recent statement in a secular journal: "The only valid measure of a nation's schools is the economic, scientific, intellectual, and cultural well-being of the nation itself." Our concern is for the whole society that we serve.

Where the goals and spirit of education are right, the problem of general method and specific technique can well be handled by the members of the profession if they will but take pains (not always a safe assumption). The professional journals are rich with specific suggestion and helpful hint for a better way; they detail the tools and machinery for bettering this education business.

A friend in the field, a professional operative in the hardware of the classroom, but withal a man most concerned with aims and ends, wrote recently:

"We encounter with all-too-frequent regularity those who have nothing to say, but who insist on saying it in the grandiose multi-mediate manner. To ask what their message is, is akin to sacrilege.

"I'm reminded of the story that Addison Leitch tells about that little old lady on a guided tour in Westminster Abbey. There, surrounded by noble and ignoble monuments and competing guides, she asked a ridiculous question.

" 'Tell me,' she demanded a little nervously and therefore a little louder than she had planned, 'has anyone been saved in this church lately? '

"Sometimes as I look at our impressive conventions and exhibits, when I survey our departments of instructional technology, when I admire our displays and our dioramas, our projectors and our recorders, our teaching machines and our language laboratories, I become a bit apprehensive lest some little old lady make that devastating inquiry, 'Has anyone learned anything here lately? '

"Or maybe we need more little old ladies-- little old ladies who haunt us day by day and hour by hour with that persistent demand, 'What are you teaching and who is learning it?' Maybe we need someone to keep our attention focused on the purposes of education lest we abuse rather than use the marvelous tools which science has placed in our hands.

"I'm not at all certain that Thoreau was the first to bewail the incongruity between marvelous inventions and the trivial uses to which they are put, but his term for it is classic: 'improved means to unimproved ends.' When the air was filled with applause over the newest marvel in the field of communication, the transatlantic cable, his sardonic comment was, 'Yes, and the first news that comes over it will be that the Princess Adelaide has the whooping cough.'" (Vernon S. Gerlach in Audiovisual News, March 1964.)

We expect our teachers ever to be alert to any tool or technique that can better enable them to make the strongest impact on the powers of the learner. They will test the new electronic devices, programed instruction, team-teaching, and whatever. We expect them to be intelligent enough to follow the findings of research, their own or that of others. Even when the familiar and the old feel comfortable and safe, they will sacrifice their complacency and prove all things and hold fast that which is good. They will surely add to their own skill by consulting those who are competent in the field of practice.

But, as with an iceberg, the most of its mass lies undisclosed beneath the surface. That unseen bulk holds power for good or ill. For those who must deal with icebergs, the hidden part is very much something to reckon with. Even as education deals with life, or it is as nothing, so there are unseen elements in the business of education for living that we ignore to our peril.

The business part of life has from of old been largely visible: the struggle to stay alive by providing food, clothing, and shelter—God's people always remembering, of course, that man does not live by bread alone; some pagans often sensing something a bit analogous to that.

We are living in a time and in a culture in which a big change has taken place in these matters. Many men's lives now have many hours available for living (the verb) after having made their living (the noun.)

Ever since fallen man got the assignment to eke out his bread in the sweat of his brow he has become accustomed and adjusted, in the main, to equating life with the pursuit of its necessities. In that situation he was deprived of the central purpose for which he was created: joy in living and obedient service to his Creator. Labor

and toil became his daily bread. Deterioration and disease laid him low. The length of his days became great weariness to the flesh. Only by the use of his brain to devise tools and inventions did he finally find a little time to rest and relax. Nor was he forbidden to make these aids by which to lift the burdens of daily life. By putting his mind to the problems of illness he discovered much that he could do to relieve the curse that he had brought upon himself. He found anaesthetics to help him bear pain, invented surgery to remove malignant parts, and devised wholesome practices for avoiding some of the consequences of sin that lay dead ahead. Jesus did not call himself a physician, but He did not disparage the profession. With God's permission man invented the vast array of labor-saving devices that filled world's fairs for their exposition.

Thereto attach the changed conditions which prompt the observant student of our times to see with new urgency the need of an education that should prepare us simply to live—not to live simply, but simply to live; not to live-it-up, but to live. We hasten to declare our awareness that this has not become the privileged position of millions in the world; but it has (and we choose the word deliberately) become the burden of millions in the Western Christian world.

Note well what that burden is: living —the high purpose for which the creating God formed us in the beginning. Does not this change show our complete and tragic alienation? It is final proof of break and breach from Him who made us to walk with Him and talk with Him in the calm and the cool of the evening.

How odd that when Western man has been allowed an increasing amount of leisure, he is now afraid of that gain! Many times he does not know how to use it. Too often he has fallen to suffering from boredom, which is called by

some a chief problem of our technological age, together with exploding population and nuclear weapons. Now that the people have affluence, they know not what to do with their abundance. People of plenty, they perish in spirit as they search for new ways to enjoy their goods. But we need not detail further the many consequences; they are the subject-matter of numerous books and the theme of current literature.

As we stated in the beginning, our interest is in the paideia of our people; if all were well there, the details of teaching would vex us much less. As should be well known to all, our education is committed to the furtherance of all knowledge under the aegis of the revealed Word, discussed at greater length in our previous installment on "Social or Sacred?"

But it may well be true that we have tried to oversimplify our tasks at times, assuming that for believing Christians the problems of our times do not appear—that being blessed spiritually and materially, we should have no difficulties. We can err in thinking that inner life constitutes the whole of reality. Or we may be tempted to think with the world that outer and social life is the key to reality, if not the whole of it. And if we have belittled the importance of external abundance, it may be that we have misread what God wanted us to have in the luxuriant paradise where once He put us. People once compelled to pinch their pennies easily find it wrong not to do so even when things have changed. But it is not good Christian thinking to require that evils and tribulations continue so that grief can be enjoyed. Such attitudes are sick.

Christian synthesis is indicated: schooling ourselves to live under the abundance that God wants to restore to us, even as He once provided it in Eden. For if we cannot use it without abusing it, we are ill prepared to live as the kings that we shall once be in the restoration

of all things. The man who is miserable unless he is working in the sweat of his brow had better ask if there are not some aspects of Christian living that he has not learned: love and helpful kindness to others, and not only to the brethren; joy and participation in the creations about us in nature, not only in working them into products and profit; understanding and tolerance of sinners with an effort to remedy, not only knowledge that they are accursed if they are not as we are. It is not irreverent to insist that we must not only be a good people-- we must be good for something. We now have more time for these good things than ever before. Automation's "calamity" can become Christian opportunity. "Education for what?"

We must learn to live, and not only to earn; we must energize and contribute with our whole being to God and mankind, or the idea of eternal life will be alien to us. Eternal rest will be rest from the afflictions of sin and its painful sweaty consequences; but its joy (its "work") will be life with the redeemed in environments infinite and eternal. It has been well said that if one will be comfortable in heaven, he will be there-- a bit poetic for the work of the Spirit in us, but as true as it is striking. Paideia is training for the ultimate events.

Martin Galstad

== P A N O R A M A ==

A NEW CHURCH BODY IS BORN

In a special news release to LUTHER-
AN NEWS it is reported that on April
28 and 29 a federation of former

Missouri Synod congregations was organized in Emmaus Lutheran Church, Chicago, Illinois. From the news release one gathers that the organization prefers to be known as a federation or association of congregations. However, also pastors and teachers are eligible for membership. The official name is LUTHERAN CHURCHES OF THE REFORMATION. The report indicates that the present membership is made up of congregations which have withdrawn from the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod because of its continued toleration of error. The organization is specified as "a uniting service organization for Lutheran congregations which accept without reservation the confessional standards of Article III" of the constitution. This article is quoted as follows:

"This organization accepts, holds, confesses, and teaches that (1) Holy Scripture, both Old and New Testament, is the very Word of God, His infallible revelation given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, in all its parts and words recorded without error in the original manuscripts by the Prophets, Apostles, and Evangelists; (2) The confessions contained in the Book of Concord of 1580... and 'A Brief Statement' of 1932 are true and correct expositions of the doctrines taught in the Scriptures."

Among the purposes outlined in the constitution the federation declares its determination "to maintain a pure teaching of God's Word" and "to do all things necessary for the furtherance of the Lord's work among men."

It is evident from the report that this statement of purpose tied in with a discussion of the doctrinal position of other Lutheran bodies, a discussion which was a part of the agenda in the April meeting. Related items on the program included a discussion of "Educational facilities to be employed for the training of pastors and teachers, and a survey of mission fields." One wonders if these plans will be coordinated with the selective support of certain missions within the Missouri Synod by the "State of the Church" people. It is no secret that considerable friction has developed because a certain determined group within the Missouri Synod has withheld funds from the general work of the church body and has reserved its support for those who are known to be actively protesting the liberal trend in its synod. Officials of the Missouri Synod consider this an undercutting of the program laid out by the church body. The question arises if one can dissociate oneself from the work of his church body simply by withholding funds. The organizers of the "Lutheran Churches of the Reformation" have indicated by their severance that they could no longer continue in fellowship with the Missouri Synod even on a restricted basis. And certainly in this they were right for there can be room for doubt regarding the direction of that church body. In spite of an endless stream of memorials and protests Missouri has persisted in its unionistic way and has given no indication that it is about to change its course.

What will be the practice of the "Lutheran Churches of the Reformation" over against the "State of the Church" people who still maintain their Missouri Synod affiliation? If the ordination service of Pastor Mark Bartling at Crete, Ill. on May 3 is an indication then one may conclude that fellowship practice will cut across Missouri Synod lines. On this occasion pastors from the Wisconsin Synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, as well as the Missouri Synod took part together with members of the new church body. Evidently Article IV section 3 meant to cover such instances:

"congregations, pastors, and teachers who without reservation accept and practice according to Article III shall be considered as being in fellowship with this organization." Do the "Lutheran Churches of the Reformation" consider themselves in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession? Do the above mentioned acts of fellowship between the "Lutheran Churches of the Reformation" and the Wisconsin Synod mean that they have at last reached agreement on such matters as "Church and Ministry"? Indeed, this fellowshiping raises the hope that perhaps the emphasis on federation, association, service organization and possibly the use of the plural (Churches) in the federation's name does after all not indicate a shying away from the thought that a synod is "Church".

The organizational set-up for the "Lutheran Churches of the Reformation" indicates a Board of Directors form of church government. The chief officers are given titles not commonly used in our circles: Administrator, The Rev. Cameron A. MacKenzie; Coadjutor, the Rev. Harold W. Romoser. Mr. Authur O. Kiesgen is the secretary and Mr. Mark A. Nelson is the treasurer. Individual council members are designated as chairmen of committees on Doctrine and Practise, Colloquies and Constitution, Missions, Education, Publication, and Finances. One member is appointed as legal consultant. Inquiries are invited and are to be addressed to the Administrator, Pastor C.A. MacKenzie, 4430 St. James St., Detroit, 10, Mich. or the Secretary, Mr. A.O. Kiesgen, 79 W. Monroe St., Chicago, Ill.

As such who have passed through similar experiences as have the members of this new church body, we can well appreciate the problems that call for a solution in this time of organizing and initial planning. We wish them well.

C.M.G.

REACTION TO
REVELATION,
INSPIRATION,
INERRANCY—
A REPORT

The report of the Missouri Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations on "Revelation, Inspiration, Inerrancy" has been before the synod's constituency for some time. Since it is presented as a study document it invites comments and

suggestions particularly from the members of the synod which it is intended to serve. It is understood then that this is not a final document but will be revised after responses have been studied and evaluated. However, members of the Commission in an interview reported in THE LUTHERAN WITNESS stated: "We feel we have met the requirements of the Cleveland Convention resolution with our first document..." (LUTHERAN WITNESS, June 9, 1964. p.6.) The report addresses itself specifically to the last Resolved of Resolution 3-19 of the 1962 Convention: "That the Synod request its Commission on Theology and Church Relations to address itself to issues raised by Dr. Scharlemann in his essays." (Proceedings of the 1962 Convention of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. p. 107)

The report is set up in two parts: "The Two Positions" and Part Two "A Statement by the Commission." Part One is the Commission's summary and evaluation of the two positions, "The position hitherto held by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and the position presented by the essays in an exploratory way (as posing contemporary theological questions to which the church should address itself.) "Reactions from within the Missouri Synod have shown that not all its members are ready to accept the Commission's formulation of the Missouri Synod position as being a fair presentation of the synod's official stand. One reviewer calls it a "downgrading" of the fathers. Whether or not Scharlemann and his supporters accept the Commission's summary of their position as being an accurate presentation of their stand is not known to this writer. However, in general, we are prepared to say that the old Missouri Synod position on revelation, inspiration, and inerrancy when taken as a

whole, was not as inadequate, incomplete and behind the times as it is made to appear by those who are currently posing contemporary theological questions for the church's consideration.

REVELATION

When the traditional position of Missouri on Revelation is tied to one statement by Quenstedt ("Special revelation is the divine external act by which God has disclosed Himself to the human race through His Word to give men knowledge of salvation") this is neither fair to the Missouri of old nor to Quenstedt. The observation of Dr. Robert Preus is here very much in place: "The theology of the orthodox dogmatists has often been studied piecemeal or locally; this is perhaps justified, but is at all times unwise when inquiring into the theology of those who used a local method of presentation." (The Inspiration of Scripture. p. 194) While Quenstedt did not speak of the revelatory character of the acts of God or of the relationship between Scripture and revelation at the specific place from which the report quotes, he did deal with these matters in the proper place. (ibid. p. 29ff.) as did also the Missouri Synod in its writings through the years. The same may also be said regarding the dynamic character of divine revelation. The Commission says of the definition: "Neither does it do full justice to the dynamic character of divine revelation."

Position Two places emphasis on revelation by mighty acts, cumulative revelation, and the historical character of the Scriptures. This is the so-called historical-critical method. The evaluation by the commission has correctly pointed up the omissions and gaps in Position Two by showing that "The God Who speaks" has been passed over in favor of "The God Who acts." However, in view of Scharlemann's position on the first chapters of Genesis one might expect that the Commission would make specific reference to God's Act of Creation at this point. This one

would expect since the historical approach is thus described in Position Two: "This means that the phenomenon of historical limitation and particularity have to be considered in any attempt to understand the Biblical revelation." We are especially concerned about the implications of "historical limitation and particularity" which leaves the door open for "capricious selectivity" in such matters as creation, the flood, the exodus etc. Here the Commission is treading all too lightly. The evaluation of the Scharlemann position on cumulative revelation and the Scriptures in their historical character is good as far as it goes. But here again one gets the impression that there is a hesitancy in coming to grips with the specific error. The Commission would have rendered the Missouri Synod a distinct service if it had fired point blank at concrete instances of aberration in connection with Scharlemann's approach to Scripture via the historical analysis route. Furthermore, one is left wondering about the limitations that may be implied in Position Two when it calls the Biblical documents simply "the inspired record of, and testimony to, God's revelatory act."

INSPIRATION

In summarizing Missouri's traditional view on inspiration the Commission has elected to present Position One on the basis of a one sentence definition by Baier ("Divine inspiration was that agency by which God supernaturally communicated to the intellect of those who wrote not only the correct conception of all that was to be written, but also the conception of the words themselves and of everything by which they were to be expressed and by which He also instigated their will to the act of writing.") The evaluation of Position One consequently is more or less directed to the area and scope of this definition "needs to be balanced and compensated by giving closer attention to the historical character of inspiration..." The Commission states that there is a tendency toward the intellectual and the impersonal in the formulation of the fathers. There seems to be a fear ex-

pressed here that somehow or other the fathers have become one-sided and have overlooked the "dynamic and creative character" of inspiration in their teaching of that doctrine. ("Dynamic character" seems to be a catch-all these days.) It is made to appear that this deficiency (if it is a deficiency at this point) calls for a fresh, a more comprehensive, a more balanced formulation of the doctrine of inspiration—one better suited to answer contemporary theological questions. The Commission in Part Two offers its suggestions for filling this void. In the last issue of the Journal (p. 26ff.) Prof. E. Reim made some very pertinent observations on this statement of the Commission. To get back to the fault that the Commission finds with the fathers' teaching on inspiration, one must realize that none of them presumed to say all that there is to be said on this subject. But they did make statements which were designed to provide such a concise Scriptural presentation of the doctrine of verbal inspiration that error would find no shelter and the truth would stand forth in no uncertain terms. Thus they dealt with the Scripture passages which present the doctrine under consideration and did not spread themselves out over areas that are adequately covered elsewhere. They did not try to discover the exact place where inspiration might fit into the total activity of the Holy Spirit nor did they panic when they were accused of teaching a mechanical dictation theory. The Commission does not help matters any when it insists that "the inspiration of the Scriptures should be considered in its larger theological context of inspiration generally and of the Word of God."

In setting forth and evaluating Position Two the Commission has touched upon certain of its weaknesses but has failed in getting at the nub of the matter. For instance it is stated in Position Two: "The Scriptures may be spoken of as a revelation only in the sense that they are one of the means (Baptism and the Lord's Supper being the other two) by which we are brought into contact with God's mighty acts as we read them or hear their contents proclaimed." We find here

a typical neo-orthodox approach to Scripture and revelation and it should be so labelled and forthrightly rejected. According to this statement we can speak of Scripture as revelation only as we read and hear it and are thereby brought into contact with the mighty acts of God. The truth that Scripture is revelation objectively even though it is not read or heard drops by the wayside. The result is that verbal inspiration is discarded and all the passages which teach it are explained away. As for instance when the theopneustos of 2 Tim. 3: 16 is interpreted simply to mean that the Bible is a living book. We can well understand what lies underneath the further statement on theopneustos: "The application of this special term allows for the view that whatever went into the creation of the Biblical documents (oral tradition, literary sources) is part of inspiration in its wider sense." But the Commission did not come to grips with it. This wider type of inspiration which surely is not verbal inspiration leaves room for assuming factual errors by men who are by the neo-orthodox said to have written "in terms of the knowledge of their particular time." Among oral traditions men like Scharlemann include traditional stories of which he would say that they were not always factually precise but which were true for the writer and his readers. Scharlemann speaks of embellishments in the telling by a kind of hyperbole. Here the doctrine of inerrancy breaks down and the red flag should have been up. But all that the Commission had to say at this point was this: "That the Holy Spirit in His sovereign freedom did make use of oral tradition and literary sources is no doubt true. But since we have no access to any oral tradition behind the canonical books and in most cases have no direct access to literary sources outside the Biblical books themselves, both the oral tradition and the literary sources must be conjecturally reconstructed. And such reconstruction cannot be the basis for far-reaching theological conclusions. The canon remains the first and last business of the interpreter ministering in and to the church."

INERRANCY

The shortest section is on the "Inerrancy of Scripture" and this is surprising to say the least since this report is to be an answer to Dr. Scharlemann's essays, one of which has this opening sentence: "In this paper I propose to defend the paradox that the Book of God's truth contains errors." In this same essay entitled "The Inerrancy of Scripture" the author takes issue with the Brief Statement paragraph which reads: "Since the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, it goes without saying that they are in all their parts and words the infallible truth, also in those parts which treat of historical, geographical, and other secular matters, John 10:35." In his essay Dr. Scharlemann says: "I have quoted this particular sentence from the BRIEF STATEMENT because it rather accurately describes what actually passes for inerrancy in our circles. Putting it more specifically, inerrancy is understood to mean: 1. that the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, the Books of Samuel, and Kings, Chronicles and even the Gospels offer us genuine history; 2. that these accounts are historically accurate in every detail; and 3. that any secular matters described or alluded to contain no errors in fact." Dr. Scharlemann takes issue with the Brief Statement paragraph on the basis of his contention among other things that the writers spoke according to their "Weltanschauung," which was at times factually incorrect.

The Commission treads very cautiously in this part of the report. In dealing with the issues raised by Scharlemann's essays regarding inerrancy the report does not help matters any by saying: "One may legitimately raise the question whether a formulation like that of A BRIEF STATEMENT, which becomes specific only in dealing with inerrancy concerning 'historical, geographical, and other secular matters,' does justice to the rich variety present in the content and mode of the utterances of the Scriptures." When the Commission places such emphasis upon "The

various modes in which the inspired Word imposes upon believing readers the conviction of its indisputable veracity" the report is opening the door to Dr. Scharlemann's views rather than closing it against them. The very fact that the sentence of the Brief Statement regarding "Historical, geographical, and other secular matters" has drawn such fire from those who deny factual inerrancy to parts of the Bible points up the truth that the sentence has indeed served the purpose for which it was intended. For it is clear that the sentence was pointed at specific errors which threatened to overthrow the inerrancy of the Scriptures at the time it was written and it serves the same purpose today.

It is sad indeed that the Commission at this critical point did not sound forth clear and true. But here it has raised more questions than it has answered and has reserved for future study the very point that was so much at issue. This is definitely not the Missouri of old. Now how does the Commission regard the differences that have arisen on "revelation—inspiration—inerrancy"? In an interview with seven members of the Commission the question was asked: "Our strength in the Missouri Synod has been our doctrinal unity—that we all speak the same language doctrinally and that the same thing is taught in all of our colleges and day schools and Sunday schools and congregations. Are we still speaking with one Voice?" Answer: "In Synod we still enjoy, by the grace of God, doctrinal unity, that is, we are united in the profession of our faith. Whatever differences there are among us are in such areas as the interpretation of individual Scripture passages and their application to a specific situation." (LUTHERAN WITNESS June 9, 1964 p. 9) It is denied then that the difference between Dr. Scharlemann and others is a doctrinal difference. This attitude towards the issues raised by the Scharlemann essays explains why the Commission can proceed so leisurely and reserve certain sensitive issues for future study. While doctrinal unity is being proclaimed as the strength of Missouri

its very foundations are being shaken. The issue is on the doctrine of "Scripture." Shall it stand or shall it fall? It is that serious. Let men take heed before it is too late.

C. M. G.

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