



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

I Timothy 4:15

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# EPIPHANY, ONCE AND AGAIN

THE LORD'S ANOINTED —

CROWNED WITH VICTORY

(A metrical version of the Second Psalm, by ER)

*Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well  
pleased.*

*Mark 1:11*

*Wherefore God hath also highly exalted Him, and  
given Him a name which is above every name: that  
... every knee should bow ... and that every  
tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is LORD,  
to the glory of God the Father.*

*Philippians 2:9-11*

(THE PSALMIST)

Why do the heathen rage,  
And why do nations plot in vain?  
The monarchs of the earth, they take their  
stand,  
Their great men put their heads together  
Against the LORD and HIS ANOINTED.

(KINGS and RULERS)

Up! Let us break their bands  
And fling their shackles far from us!

(THE PSALMIST)

But He who sits on heaven's throne — He  
laughs!

The Lord of all, He holds them in de-  
cision.  
Then He will shout at them His anger,  
His burning wrath will throw them into  
terror.

(THE LORD)

Yet I — I have installed My King  
On Zion, Mountain of My Holiness.

(HIS ANOINTED)

Now I will tell of a decree:  
The LORD has said to me:  
"My Son art Thou; this day have I be-  
gotten Thee."

(THE LORD)

Demand of Me, and I will give to Thee  
The nations for Thy heritage,  
For Thy possession — e'en to its ends —  
the earth.  
In pieces wilt Thou break them, with an iron  
sceptre,  
And as a potter's vessel Thou shalt shat-  
ter them.

(THE PSALMIST)

And now, O Kings, be wise;  
Do let yourselves be taught, ye judges of  
the earth.  
Oh, serve the LORD with fear;  
And trembling, shout for joy.  
Kiss ye the Son, lest He be angry, and ye  
perish from the way;  
For quickly will His fiery wrath consume.  
But blessed are they who put their trust in  
Him!

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# REFLECTIONS OF AN EDITOR

ON OUR FIRST FIVE YEARS AS A

JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

*Let no man despise thy youth . . . (I Timothy 4:12)*

With the sole exception of that first pair in Eden, no man can escape being young. Even our Savior shared that experience. As for us, no matter how long ago it may have been, there are always those first critical years that mean so much for one's subsequent development. This is equally true of every nation and every city, of every church and school. It is also true of a religious periodical like ours. We are young. But dare we apply to ourselves what Paul once said to his young helper: '*Let no man despise thy youth*'? These words are, of course, not meant as an invitation to carry a constant chip on one's shoulder. Rather, as the next verse shows, they are an admonition to conduct oneself in such a manner as not to give men occasion to despise one's youth. In this sense we not only may but should apply these words to ourselves, even though thereby we invite critical appraisal on the part of our readers. It is from them that the answer must come, not from us who edit and write.

But what we can and should do is to review our editorial policy and procedure, restudy it for ourselves, and at the same time spread it before our readers, for their information as well as for their better understanding of what our aims really are.

By its very name our Journal of Theology has placed itself into the category of professional publications. Our

mission is primarily to address ourselves to those who serve in the ministry of our church, be it by preaching or teaching. So we find ourselves, to begin with, under the obligation of informing both our teachers and preachers regarding matters that may be of importance to them in their respective fields. But unless the implications are obvious, we should offer this not merely as bits of news, but as something to which we have given serious thought and on which we are ready and willing to express an opinion, whether it be pro or con. Thus it will soon become clear whether we have the courage of our convictions and are willing not only to point, but to lead in the direction we should go.

Yet this leading dare not be simply a matter of our personal choice or preference. God's Word must supply the answers. Then, and only then, will these things begin to take on the character of marks of maturity, spiritual maturity. And though we are painfully aware of our inadequacy and resultant failings, yet these are the goals for which we strive and to which we dedicate ourselves anew. This is the standard by which we ask to be judged. We may recognize no other.

Another essential part of our policy is to provoke thought. The space at our disposal is so limited (though it seems large when we try to fill it) that we cannot even come near to really covering the ground, to do justice to the many items that should properly be discussed. This is why we must try to provoke thought with the limited material we are able to offer, thought by which the reader may be enabled to go more deeply into the things on which we do touch. At the same time, since one thought suggests another, he may (we hope) be moved to range farther afield and to penetrate more deeply into whatever it may have been that aroused his interest in the first place. It is by such processes that we may become enriched in regard to our work. — This is our goal. To what degree it

is attained, however, is determined only in part by what we offer. To an even greater degree it depends on the use made of it by those for whom it is designed, our teachers and preachers of the Gospel.

There are two ways of doing one's work. One man may say of his factory job, "I can do it with my eyes shut," and whether he admits it or not, they are shut. You may not notice it when you look at him, his eyelids may be open, yet he sees nothing. Another keeps not only the lids, but the eyes themselves wide open. He sees! He keeps his ears tuned, his mind working. Perhaps he can find a better way for what he has been doing. Perhaps he sees a wider use for what he has been making, perhaps a simpler form, or an opportunity to improve the quality. Not only does he find his work interesting — it is from such that improvements come in a steady stream.

This is equally true of our ministry. It may take a few years of intense work after receiving our first call before we master the routine of our preaching or teaching, as the case may be. Then comes the time when one becomes more or less proficient. We can get the work out faster. On the basis of experience and practice one may not only "get by," but even get credit for being an "efficient" teacher, and "effective" speaker, etc., *ad nauseam*. Yet that is precisely the point where growth, true mental and spiritual growth, stops, — unless we take to heart what Paul so earnestly impresses on his beloved Timothy, his young helper who was now left in charge of a field on which Paul had lavished so much of his precious time:

*Meditate upon these things (Literally, give careful thought);*

*Give thyself wholly to them (immerse thyself completely in them);*

*That thy profiting may appear unto all. (that all may note thy progress, thy growth — and that to their profit):*

the very words, I Timothy 4:15, which five years ago were chosen for the cover design of our infant Journal — a motto, as it were! With this as our editorial policy we need not look for a better one. And even though we know how far we are from measuring up to these ideals, yet we also know that our efforts to provide food for thought, sometimes even to provoke thought, can by the grace of God become a real blessing for our little church body, particularly if our readers will give thought to these things. And they who serve, who minister, will find their work increasingly interesting and absorbing, — a wonderful escape from the paralyzing effects of an unthinking ministry.

Nevertheless, if our policy were to rest content at this point, satisfied to have provided food for thought and willing then to let matters develop as they will, it would still be a sterile thing. For thought comes hard. Thinking is labor. It is so much easier spinelessly to surrender this vital function and to drift along aimlessly in the flood of "entertainment" that is offered in such quantity (but think of the quality!) in our day. To think, really to think under such circumstances calls for a strong incentive, an object of our thought which must not only be of absorbing interest but at the same time richly rewarding.

But surely, we do not lack for that! As this is being written we have just been reminded that we know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (II Corinthians 8:9). Let our thoughts linger on the wonder of that. Let us immerse ourselves in the glory of this truth which God's grace alone has made known to us: that, though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich, rich with a wealth that will take

heaven an eternity to unfold. Or let Epiphany remind us who by ancestry are of the Gentiles, those very Gentiles of whom Paul says that they were without Christ, being alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world — and then think of what it means that now in Christ Jesus we who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:12-13). There we have food for thought, something to stimulate thought, something by which our thinking (meditate on these things!) is richly rewarded.

And now, as we turn to our slim little Journal, we are reminded that also here, and particularly here, we can do no more than merely scratch the surface. Yet we know that even this is worth the effort. For thoughts have a way of multiplying and progressively reinforcing each other. This is the wonder of the Pauline admonition that as we meditate upon these things, we find ourselves immersed in them, and thus arrive at a profiting, something by which we first are the gainers, and thus become profitable to those whom we serve.

There is indeed one kind of writing which is quite different in its nature, which seems to have nothing in common with what we have just been saying. It is certainly no pleasure to write in criticism of others, be they church bodies or individuals. And yet we have not only done this, but we must do so. For the truth of Scripture is so precious that it would be the gravest neglect of duty not to speak out clearly and strongly against anything by which the perfection of this God-given truth is impaired in any way. What the Lord told Ezekiel about the watchman who fails to sound the alarm when danger looms stands as a solemn warning for all who since then have come to share this responsibility, to the end of time. So we write also against this or that or the other thing, as the occasion may require — whether it be about the gross aberrations



of Anti-Christ, or perhaps some disquieting tendency that we note in our own midst.

So we write also concerning the restoration of fellowship with former brethren — with sincere desire that it may come to pass, yet with the earnest determination that if and when it does, it may not be at the expense of the truth. This is why we must stand in outright opposition to anything that would make a superficial thing out of an agreement that will be a true one only if the things that lie at the root of the difference are honestly faced and effectively removed. This is our policy. These are our objectives, our aim. By these we must be judged, even though they are far from being attained, as we frankly admit. Yet this is the direction of our effort, the goal for which we are striving.

May we at this point and in this connection be permitted to bring the entire membership of our C L C into the picture. For not only we, the editors, are on trial before our membership. In a wider sense all of us together stand before a far wider forum. For also as a church body we are still very young. That is not to be denied. But neither is it anything of which to be ashamed. The only question in this connection is whether we are in some way giving others occasion to despise our youth. Is our continued separate existence simply a childishly immature desire to seem important, or have we a valid cause for which we stand? In the inter-synodical differences referred to in the previous paragraph, will we be carried away by the specious attractions of a quick but superficial agreement which evades the real issue, or have we the maturity, the spiritual strength and determination to bear our cross of isolation until agreement, if it can be achieved, will by the grace of God be an agreement in truth?

We have a substantial number of laymembers who subscribe to our Journal. Of this we are proud, not merely

because of the moral and material support they are there-  
by giving our venture, but because of evidence that has  
come from time to time that they not only get, but read  
our Journal. May their influence, serving as a leaven,  
provide the final touch in the picture we have been pre-  
sented, one that certainly should not be overlooked.

And now — to revert to the text with which we intro-  
duced these reflections — let this as well as the other  
things mentioned decide whether we, not only our Jour-  
nal but our entire church body, are giving any man cause  
to despise our youth of five years, or whether the marks  
of maturity are indeed beginning to appear.

E. Reim

As we go to press, arrangements are being com-  
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our Journal at one place.

E. Reim, Editor.

# VATICAN II —

## A REFORM COUNCIL?

As this is written some weeks have passed since the Second Vatican Council became history. That it has made a profound impression on the world at large is obvious. Coming at a time when "ecumenicity" had become an accepted goal of the major part of Protestantism, even to the point where many of the churches appear ready to bury their differences rather than to try further to resolve them, a much wider horizon seemed to open when John XXIII called his bishops together for what was also to be an ecumenical council, the twentieth as Rome counts them.

This was the Pope who had welcomed a delegation of visiting Jews with a play on the middle part of his pre-Papal name, Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, with that much quoted greeting, "I am Joseph, your brother!" Few paused to think that by this allusion to Joseph in Egypt the visiting delegation (and for that matter all the "separated brethren") were being cast in the role of those sons of Jacob who had so grievously wronged the brother whom they envied by selling him into slavery. But the world was ready to be impressed, and marveled at this demonstration of a new spirit in the holder of an old title.

Arrangements were subsequently made not merely to accommodate visitors from other church bodies, but to grant the official "observers" some very special favors. They were to be supplied with advance copies of the various "schemata" as they would be coming up for discussion. They were to be admitted to certain otherwise confidential meetings. They were assured that whatever

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counsel they might wish to give would be received with careful attention. So it was being made quite obvious that the church which for so long had claimed to have a monopoly on the saving truth, which only a century ago had declared its Popes infallible and their decrees irreformable, which had denounced as heretics all who did not conform to its teachings and accept the Primacy of its Popes — that this church was showing signs of a thaw. No longer were the "heretics" anathematized. Now they were the "separated brethren." — That was the Council as conceived and conducted by Pope John.

There was indeed a time when even the bishops did not seem to know just where their new Pope, Paul VI, would stand. But after a period of uncertainty, not only among the "progressive" bishops but even on the part of the new Pope himself, it became clear that also this man would not reverse the new trend but follow through, and that the *aggiornamento*, the up-dating of the church, would go on. But gradually two things became clear. The first was that while minorities were to have a right to their opinion, yet every effort would be made to keep the number of dissenting bishops to a minimum, even if it had to be by what one news magazine called "the art of ambiguity." For this was to be the Council of the *aggiornamento*, the New Look. The other point to emerge was that the original program of John was to be continued. This was to be a Council of Reform!

This was by no means something new for Rome. In its long history the Papal church has had other encounters with reform movements. One was accepted. This was the movement that began at an obscure monastery in southern France, continued for the better part of the 10th and 11th centuries under the leadership of a succession of abbots of exceptional ability and determination, and did not rest until they had succeeded in capturing the Papacy itself for their own man, Hildebrand, who became Pope

Gregory VII. This reform was accepted because all Christendom had been shamed by the corruption that had prevailed in Rome. For this was the period that history speaks of as the Rule of Harlots, when men became Popes by the whims of their mistresses — and were in turn dominated by them in the exercise of their Papal functions. This was a reform that had to be accepted. But it was also one that men were willing to accept since it restored the church to its former prestige and power.

Then there was another reform movement which the Papacy outlasted. It came at a time when all Europe had been scandalized by the spectacle of rival Popes, sometimes two or three at a time, each claiming to be the head, and each with his own following in what called itself the One Church! Three Councils were held about the matter, each at the call of the current Emperor, all during the first half of the 15th century. Under the leadership of brilliant churchmen each of these Councils, Pisa, Constance and Basel, sought to make the synod of bishops the governing body in the church, to which the Popes were to be responsible. The Papacy rolled with the punch, promised everything — and did nothing! The Papacy had outlasted the zeal of the reformers.

Then there was Luther's Reform — the Reformation! This was something that the Papacy could neither bring itself to accept, nor could it outlast it. So this became the reform which the Papacy rejected. After the numbing effects of the first shock had worn off, after the Papacy had surveyed its losses, regrouped its forces, and reorganized itself, came the long delayed Council of Trent. There it was that finally, after years of deliberation, Rome rejected the Gospel of the Reformation with a flood of anathemas for which there is probably no parallel in history, anathemas which still stand in the record of that church.

Now comes Vatican II which, by allowing certain inno-

vations in the Schema on the Constitution of the Church has moved a progressive Catholic leader, Gregory Baum, an Augustinian Father of Toronto, to call it "the basic charter for the reform of the church in our century." The Council has indeed done things. But do they deserve so high a rating? — Historically the most significant act is probably the formal ending of the Great Schism of 1054, precipitated by the Clunians who were even then close to the peak of their power. This schism has divided Eastern (Orthodox) Catholicism from that of Rome for now almost a thousand years. What the result of this action will be, still remains to be seen. But one should not rule out the possibility that the Catholic Church may again become one. If so, we are sure it will be on the terms of Rome. At all events this will, unless renounced by one or the other of the principals, certainly be one of the milestones of history.

Next in importance are quite definitely the declarations that this Council has made concerning freedom of conscience and worship. The same church that once demanded unconditional acceptance of its doctrinal formulations and full submission to its autocratic decrees is now ready to recognize freedom of conscience and the right of men to worship according to its dictates. And yet, there is the disturbing postscript: — such a liberated conscience must nevertheless ultimately bring its owner to Catholicism, since that, according to the Council, remains the one true faith! We marvel that with all its interest and concern the secular press is still unable to see more in this than simply an involved reaffirmation of the old position, viz., that Rome is and remains the sole custodian of the saving truth. One step forward, and one step back!

Other "reforms" are the permission granted to render parts of the Liturgy in the vernacular instead of the traditional Latin (which still remains firmly entrenched

in the other parts of the Liturgy). Or one could go from the sublime to the ridiculous by citing the lifting of the ban on the eating of meat on Friday, something which has even Catholic fishermen and fish dealers moaning about the loss they will suffer in the sale of their captive market, while meat dealers, wholesale as well as retail, are gloating over this windfall in the sale of their pork and beef.

We may be charged with being trivial, even irreverent in our reference to all this. Yet these are the "achievements" of the Council up to this point! This is certainly still far from meriting the rating of a true "reform." In all this there is indeed an indication of an intense desire on the part of Rome to make itself acceptable to the times in which we live (again the '*aggiornamento*'), to get rid of the handicaps with which it has burdened itself by its inordinate adherence to the traditional past. This is indeed an expedient thing to do. But as for being what in the words of TIME is given as the view of many churchmen, namely that "the renewal achieved by Vatican II challenges Protestantism to put its own houses of God in order and revise its attitude toward the church against which the Reformation rebelled," that still depends on whether what has been cited actually constitutes a real Reformation. Even though Germany's Evangelical Bishop Otto Dibelius may say, "If the Roman Catholic Church had looked 450 years ago as it looks today, there would have never been a Reformation," and though Franklin Clark Fry may add his automatic "Me too" by saying "Thank God that the council responded to the leading of the Holy Spirit as far as it did," the real test of the Council as to whether this has been really a Reformation will be made only when we examine the attitude of the Council toward the Word of God. Since the Catholic press has been singularly reticent about this, and the secular press is hardly a source of dependable information, to say nothing of its evaluation, we shall defer this part of our study until we have the actual

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text of the Schema in question, Number XIII, at hand. For in our estimation the decisive question will turn first of all on what Vatican II has said by way of exonerating Jews from responsibility for the crucifixion of the Lord, and then on what it does not say about another even more important issue that we have in mind. But until we have the text of "Old 13," (as the bishops called it because of the frequency with which it had to be re-written), this must suffice.

E. Reim

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#### A STATEMENT BY THE EDITOR . . .

Those who attended recent conventions and conferences of our CLC will recall discussions concerning an article by John Schaller on "The Kingdom of God," published in translation by our Journal of Theology. These discussions as well as some memorials which had been presented showed that there were serious misgivings on the part of several members concerning the correctness of certain statements in the article. After thorough discussion with those who were present, these issues were clarified to a point where those who had been troubled stated that their misgivings had been removed. Only one point remained, raised by Pastor Gerh. Becker, dealing with the sin against the Holy Ghost. It was agreed that in this matter Pastor Becker would confer with our Board of Doctrine. This was done in a meeting on October 16. After thorough study of the several texts, particularly Matthew 12:31-32, mutual agreement was achieved, the substance of which is stated in the following points:

- A. That the statement in the article which had been challenged \* is capable of being misunderstood.
- B. That the text in Matthew constitutes a warning against the course the Pharisees were following



(cf. Mark 3:30, literally: "because they were saying: 'He hath an unclean spirit'."), a course that would eventually lead to that judgment of hardening which in this text is described as blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.

- C. That the moment when this stage is reached is discernible only to God, who then imposes His judgment by withdrawing His Spirit, thus ending the time of grace for such a person.
- D. That after the imposing of this judgment there is indeed no further room for repentance — not because the perfect satisfaction of Christ did not cover also this sin, but because repentance and faith, and thus also forgiveness of this sin, are impossible after the Spirit, "the Lord and Giver of Life," has been withdrawn.
- E. That until this judgment has been imposed, repentance and faith, conversion and ultimate salvation are by the grace of God still possible. Cf. Acts 6: 7, "and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."

E. Reim

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\* Referring to St. Paul's words in I Corinthians 6:9-11 the article states: "his statement about the works of the flesh visualizes basically the same situation described by Jesus in His remark about the sin against the Holy Ghost, for which there is forgiveness neither in this world nor in the next. Jesus too does not declare that persons lying in that sin cannot be converted and ultimately saved; but He assures us that they will vainly seek pardon if they disdainfully reject the one forgiveness that is offered by the Holy Ghost in the Gospel."

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# PAIDEIA

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## CREATIVITY . . .

So much has been said about creativity that one might think it is a thing to be found, an objective something that can be had in the schoolroom, like a blackboard or a teaching machine. Actually, it is more a state of mind than a thing to be touched. It is a response to opportunity.

Can creativity be taught? One wonders, as one wonders with Socrates whether virtue can be taught. One has reason to hope that it can be CAUGHT. So in the hope that something worthwhile can be said about creativity, let us look into some of the conditions for its existence.

Opportunities for creativity seem to have their basis in the creation, in the world so much around us, in life itself. The facts for use in invention have been there all the time. But it took some imagination (or was it accident?) to relate, for example, the lifting of a burden and an inclined plane. Was the wheel discovered or was it deliberately invented? In reality, it too was there all the time; only a creative insight made use of it. And when it was first used, many people must have stood around and asked, "Why didn't I think of that?" Yes, why not?

Necessity has been invented as the mother of invention. But who "needed" electric lights before the incandescent globe was created by a well-known tinkerer? Did we "need" television before creative minds put together thousands of previous "think-of-that"s?

And think of the emotional tone that goes with the acti-

vity we are describing. We are like the Greeks reported in the Book of Acts: "For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing" (17:21). A recent writer put it this way: "It is after we adopt an artifact and begin to think of it as a necessity that we no longer marvel at the wonder of it. Familiarity makes it commonplace; we lapse into a supercilious indifference, and tend to stand in awe of nothing but novelty." The writer, Leonard E. Read, by the way, was himself "creative" enough to state on the title page of his book, "Permission to reprint granted without special request."

The remark is not for diversion here, but very much to the point in the thinking of a man who realizes that in all our creativity we stand on the shoulders of thousands who have gone before. We are not so original as we might think. It would be good for our humility to realize that most of our invention is based on insights and discoveries that one time were the sensation of their day.

It follows that for us to be creative where we stand we must first know what has gone before us. But how shall we recapture the emotional thrill that came with an original discovery? Our children today cannot understand the excitement we older ones enjoyed at the first sound of radio, nor appreciate that many of us drove miles to see the first television. And we already have many children in school who cannot grasp the tension of the first Sputnik or our own grapefruit-sized satellites.

Only those who remember have permission to enjoy the present. The rest seem condemned to supercilious indifference. This seems to be the explanation for the almost frantic attempt of teachers to give their students the thrill of being creative. They have solid reason for their concern. But they tip their hand to show their own ignorance of the principles of learning when they hand paper to

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their pupils and say, "Draw something," or "Write something."

No production can be expected where there is not first a planting. And planting is work, but our analogy limps. There is no way to know our cultural heritage other than through the hard work of learning it, much as that work can be lightened by contrived realism in the classroom. But it is a mistake to expect creativity to result automatically. That result seems to be reserved for the few. Have you tried to force a conversation with one who doesn't have it in him to respond?

We are of necessity led to a pretty dim view of creativity as a high goal either in the school or anywhere else. To try to make every academic man creative seems to be a violation of the secrets of nature. But all can and should work. That is the closest we can come to eliciting creativity in our classrooms. There is a tremendous distance between creation and making by method. Method can be made to entice creativity, but it is not a sure thing. Creativity can and should be a goal in school, but not a high expectation.

Partly because creativity is not so logical as humorless "scientists" might think. It is like with an artist. An artist is not a consequence of learning; you do not teach him; he appears, and he teaches you. Originality is more like misbehavior than it is logical sequence. He who breaks from what is accepted becomes the creator; and the break may come through "accident, self-contradiction, perversity, laziness, or folly."

In other words, creativity comes through those whose thinking centers in the behavior, "I don't know." Men "knew" for far too long that there was no connection between filth and the spreading of disease. They "knew" for centuries that the earth was flat, and that venturing far

across the world would be catastrophic. They "knew" that the spheres of heaven moved in perfect circles. It was those who didn't know these things that learned otherwise.

To be original and creative seems to require a strangeness of mind that is able to see into the scheme of things. The rest have to follow as best they can and try to think these men's thoughts after them. We see it in the large number of science students, who are taught so as to make them professionals; yet the smallest number develop competence as originators. And practically none of the men who made the original seminal discoveries on which modern technology is based had any important teaching from anyone; they came not from the schools or universities.

The spiritual analogy is close. Job appeared with his insights in opposition to the conventional wisdom of his time. Abraham had anything but a richly contributory background spiritually. And the sheepfold was the school for him who was Israel's king after God's own heart. The Apostle to the Gentiles was trained to oppose everything of which he became the most famous advocate, once his eyes were opened.

One can only speculate what would have been the consequences had man remained in his sinless state to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion" (Gen. 1:28). The human condition as we know it would not be there to cut anyone off from what has gone before; his memory and understanding would not have become darkened; what he knew of nature would obviously have been scientifically correct. And we can only dream of what might have been his happy estate in communion with his environment. The rolling back of the ensuing ignorance consequent upon sin has certainly been in the sweat of man's effort.

But that which has been allowed — can we not read it as a token and first-fruit of what fulness God will allow us in the next world? Life is learning and insight, or it is nothing. The lack of such activities may explain the fact that life is so burdensome as it is to so many now. But the Savior promises that we shall have life, and have it more abundantly. "To enjoy Him forever" will be our occupation, and it will not become monotonous because He is infinite. The stimulus of an everlasting present will remove the creation-attribute of time, before and after. Besides, it would be a blasphemous thought to suggest that the present world is more interesting than the one which is to come.

How sick, then, is much of the current striving to be creative: from the rejection of much that exists, simply because it is old and accepted, to that which has no basis in nature, even to the new morality. "As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient (fitting, decent)" (Rom. 1:28).

Not only have believers had the original head-start in creativity as it pertains to the world that now is, but they have the promises that unbelievers cannot so much as grasp: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Cor. 2:9).

Meantime, "ask ... seek ... knock ..." are as true for the invention of a better mouse trap and other daily problems as they remain true for that effulgence of life and glory that shall be ours in eternal life. As "it is the glory of God to conceal a thing," so it is "the honour of kings ... to search out a matter" (Prov. 25:2). God veils things; they are there all the time. It is the work of "kings" among men to invent and to be creative. Have at it, all!

Martin Galstad

# == PREACHING THE WORD ==

FROM ICHABOD TO EBENEZER

( A Series of Sermon Studies in the First Book of Samuel )

(Continued)

III.

THE TEXT: I SAMUEL 2:12-17. 22a. 23-25.

When Hannah, wife of Elkanah, stood at the temple door praying for the gift of a child, something happened that marred this picture of godliness and faith. Eli, the High Priest, seeing Hannah deep in prayer and watching her lips move as her heart spoke, came to her side and said: "How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee!"

A moment's reflection serves to make us realize that this startling interruption was an indication of a state of affairs in Israel. Why should a priest of God think or suspect or fear, when he sees a humble woman bowed in prayer, that she might be drunken? How could he come upon such an idea? Had he had some sad experiences? What was going on?

At the outset of this series of sermon studies we anticipated the day in which the word ICHABOD was spoken over the church of the Old Testament: The glory is departed. From that point we went back to see wherein that glory consisted, namely in the devotion and faith of the homes of Israel in the true God and His Word. We observed this glory in the home of Elkanah and Hannah. And we wondered: How did it come to Ichabod?

The remark of Eli puts us on notice. Something is not right in Israel! We shall now look into this matter as our text stands before us like the clouds of a gathering thunderstorm. The glory of Israel did depart. And here we shall see

## THE DEPARTURE OF ISRAEL'S GLORY FORESHADOWED BY A GROWING CONTEMPT FOR THE LORD'S HOUSE AND WORD.

### 1.

The sons of Eli, says our text, were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord. How fitting that it should have been the wife of one of these sons who, on her death-bed, first pronounced the sentence of Ichabod upon Israel; for here it had started, in her home and in the homes of her in-laws, although she herself may well have been a God-fearing wife. Her husband was a son of Belial, according to our version. The Hebrew BELIY-YA-H'AL came to be used as a proper name at a later date (cp. 2 Cor. 6:15). Here it is adjectival, and means, literally, without worth, that is, worthless, the equivalent of vile, wicked. "The sons of Eli were sons of wickedness." So God Himself characterizes them. Yet they were priests in the Lord's House.

At all times in the life of the visible church there are hypocrites and unbelievers in its midst who in their hearts despise the faith and life of true believers. There were wicked people in Israel before Hophni and Phineas were old enough to know what a priest was. But the presence of evil people in the church did not remove the glory. There is not and never has been such a thing on earth as a visible church body free of imperfections. But a true church deals with hypocrites and false brethren when they reveal themselves. Pastors and congregations have definite instructions from the Lord in this regard.



But Hophni and Phineas were living in contempt of God, His Word and His temple openly and in the crudest possible manner; and they were priests. When it is said that they knew not the Lord, it means that they did not acknowledge the Lord in their hearts and defied Him by their conduct.

There, at the very altar where people troubled by their sins brought their offerings according to the command and promise of God and sought the highest gift from Him, namely forgiveness of their sins through the merits of the promised Savior — there these young priests, members of the rising generation in Israel, committed their abominations. They were not devout in the temple and wicked when they were off duty; rather, in their official functions they openly showed their contempt for the holy relation between God and His people. Instead of accepting what was due them as priests by the Law of God which provided that His priests should live of the offerings, they turned God's House into a robbers' den. They came with grappling hooks and lowered them into the pots where the meat of the sacrifice lay. They took as much as they could hook of the best meat. If anyone complained, they threatened with their fists. Such and other shameful behavior not necessary to dwell upon here disgraced the service of God's House. (v. 22)

The result may well be imagined. When the glory of faith was so eclipsed by the leaders in the sanctuary, the corruption soaked down through the church. Our text declares: "Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord: for men abhorred the offering of the Lord." (v. 17) People began to turn away in disgust from that which they had learned to revere while yet at their mothers' knee. They were restrained by their aversion from making their peace with God. What kind of God is it that has such priests? They were offended — their faith caught in a death-trap. Hophni and Phineas poured the acid of their blasphemy over the hearts. Young people

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took them for heroes, laughed and followed their example.

If the obvious question is asked: Why didn't somebody do something about this? the text answers that somebody did. But it also reveals thereby what happens when the home breaks down. If the glory finally departed from Israel, it was not only because Hophni and Phineas were satanic; it was because their father Eli also despised God and His Word.

In what fashion had Eli reared his sons? This becomes evident when we observe how he handled the terrible conduct of these young priests. The rottenness of their hearts left its odor throughout Israel. Eli couldn't ignore it. How did he deal with it? He scolded a little. He gently urged them to remember how holy was the place where men were cleansed of their sins and made ready for the judgment. He pleaded with them not to destroy this way to salvation. The young men sneered at the admonition and went right on in their way.

Without doubt the pattern had been set early in their life by a father who "honored his sons above the Lord." (2:29). Eli had shamefully neglected his duty as a father and as a priest; and the boys had grown up doing much as they pleased. Now there would have been only one remedy remaining: That of unfrocking the apostate priests and punishing them to the full extent of the law. But the function of the leading home as well as the leading office in the land had broken down.

## 2.

This story has a nagging way of stirring up uneasy thoughts about our own circumstances. It may bring to mind this or that experience which we have had in our pastoral ministry, conjuring up visions of certain homes — perhaps including our own — in which we have observed

disturbing things. The question is whether there are also among us signs that foreshadow the coming of Ichabod by revealing a growing disdain for the sanctity of God's Will, of His House and of His Word. We and our people should be exhorted to face this question forthrightly while there is time.

It is not to be denied that in a growing number of homes the discipline of parents has broken down. Among grade school as well as high school pupils serious delinquencies are the order of the day, manifesting an evident lack of respect for superiors, for the rights of others, for what is proper. And these troubles do not arise merely with children from unchurched homes, but with baptized children in our congregations.

We all know, and it goes without saying, that any home may be afflicted with a wayward child. The best parents may suffer under such a cross. But such exceptions are not the causes of general disturbance. Our concern is occasioned by the ever-growing number of homes in which parents guide and rule their children as Eli did — with whining words, with empty scoldings, with inconsistency that betrays a lack of fixed standards. Although the blood of parents should run cold at the sound of youngsters talking back to them, sassing them and even venturing to call them names, many seem able to do nothing more than protest. To achieve a measure of peace they may buy the rebellious child off with suckers and lollipops until the teeth rot and the stomach is ruined and the child has become a son of Belial. Those who have said that there are no problem children, only problem parents, are significantly approximating the truth.

How many parents do we not find who show no aptitude for applying either the Law or the Gospel in the training of their children? The result is that a generation grows up, even in our churches, which does not truly know the Lord.

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Though children may have learned the Catechism by heart, this offers little assurance if homes fail by correct training to teach the children HOW to know and love their Savior.

Where is the result of such failure more evident than in the attitude of children and young people toward their church, toward the services of God's House, toward the preaching of the Word? If we see youthful worshippers gossiping, whispering and laughing during the service; when their parents simply ignore this conduct or fail to look into the matter; indeed, when they make it a policy of sorts to leave at least one or two of the children at home every Sunday, and defend such a practice; when the pastor, looking the assembly over, must ask himself again and again where all the children are who ought to be in the audience — then we are beginning to observe a contempt for the precious blessings of God's House which, if not checked, will certainly lead to Ichabod.

It is necessary to speak frankly and openly to our people about this, as Eli ought to have talked to his sons and did not. Let us read again and ponder the words of Eli himself, the best of the statements he made: "If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall intreat for him?" What happens to us, he means to say, when there is no altar of a forgiving God left to seek — when the open Throne of Grace has vanished from our midst? What will we do when Ichabod comes?

#### IV.

THE TEXT: I SAMUEL 3:11-18.

When a true church of the Lord on earth, that is, a true visible church, is in danger of suffering the loss of its glory, there is no lack of advance warning. Not only

are there signs in the church which sound the alarm, but God lets His voice be heard in a way that cannot be misunderstood. When He has given to a church body such as ours the rich treasures of His House, the pure Word and the Sacraments in the proper form and administration, He leaves nothing undone to preserve them.

But sometimes a church permits the corruption to go on unchecked while the divine warning is ignored. The majority of its adherents refuse to believe that anything is critically wrong. So it was in Israel while Samuel was yet a boy; and the message of Ichabod was fulfilled which said: The glory is departed from Israel. This disaster might have been prevented even when the overt wickedness of Eli's sons began to destroy the faith of many and break down the stability of God-fearing homes. For until God stops speaking, there is time; when He is no longer heard in true repentance, the time has run out. If we have recognized danger signals in our own midst, if there has been evidence among us of a break-down in Christian homes and of a depreciating attitude toward God's Word and the treasures of His House, it is time to listen anxiously lest the hour strike in which we hear only the final word as it is recorded in our text. For now

#### THE DEPARTURE OF ISRAEL'S GLORY IS FINALLY FORESHADOWED BY GOD'S DREAD FORECAST.

##### 1.

"And the Lord said to Samuel . . ." That which we learn from this text grows out of these opening words. They are the key to what is happening. God spoke to Samuel in words that pronounced a dreadful future upon Israel as well as upon Eli and his house. But that God gave this forecast to Samuel is highly significant.

Samuel was still but a young lad and not a priest. He

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performed the lowliest duties in the temple as Eli's personal attendant. Even at night he was on duty, obliged to serve Eli if the high priest needed anything. Why should the Lord speak to this child? If He had a special message of profound and wide concern, why not address His highest servant, the high priest in Israel? Yet on that critical night little Samuel was awakened three times by the voice of the Lord. He was too young to realize who was calling him, and Eli at last had to tell him. But this served God's purpose; He wanted Eli to know what was happening — namely that the Lord was passing him by, that He was speaking to His high priest no longer. Thus Eli would know what time it was.

What God told Samuel was not a new message to Eli. It was a repetition of a previous notice. Some time before this the Lord had sent a prophet to Eli directly and had in great detail prophesied what was about to happen to him and to his sons, and to Israel. But that effort failed in its gracious purpose. Nothing changed. Even with doom staring him in the face Eli failed to rouse himself to his duty, and Israel continued to go down-hill. Therefore God makes a last effort. In the most obvious way possible Eli is shown that he has become separated from his God. A servant boy must become prophet and bearer of a final warning to the high priest. A warning it was. God indeed spoke in words which seemed to indicate that His judgment was fixed and settled. As matters stood nothing else was possible. Yet so long as God speaks about it, there is time!

"The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." How certainly is that true also of that nation, that church which He had so signally loved and preserved, defended and blest. Let Eli cleanse his house and the church of Israel while there is yet time. Radical and painful action would have to be instituted; Eli's sons must be stripped of their priesthood

and dealt with as the law required. But time is of the essence. How short is the season left for genuine repentance! The words of the Lord bear a message of hope; but there is no room for repetition.

As the Lord spoke to Eli through Samuel, so through other means He is also speaking indirectly to our church and our homes today. This is not to say that He has stopped addressing us in His usual manner; for we still have in our midst a faithful ministry of the Word, and continue to enjoy the intimate experience of which our Savior spoke when He said to His Apostles: "He that heareth you heareth Me." Although false prophets plague the people and have invaded many sanctuaries dedicated to the Truth with their blasphemies and corrupt practices even where sound Lutheranism once prevailed; although many homes seem to have lost touch with the Lord; yet there is no doubt that in our churches the Lord Jesus Christ is still in the pulpit and at the altar and His voice is coming to each of us. The final warning has not yet been spoken.

Knowing ourselves, however, as well as the times — for the days are evil — it behooves us by means of severe and constant self-examination to remain alert to the moment when God begins to warn us by means of His lesser servants. What outsiders say about us, what heathen judges may say about our youth and its conduct, what a community thinks about our church — these and other manifestations not only have a message for us but may very well become divine warnings indicating that something is amiss with us and in our midst. The Lord also knows how to speak in the voice of a storm, a drought, a calamity; and to a church or a home the message they proclaim can be a first faint whisper or a last great shout of Ichabod. To determine whether this be so requires no reading of God's mind; nothing is needed other than a relentless and honest probing of our own hearts and lives and an uncompromising appraisal of the state of our church. Such processes are

ever needful. If we have not been truly listening to our Lord as He communicates with us through His holy Word, addressing us as His holy children face to face, so that He must speak to us in other ways, it is not only a prelude to disaster but, above all, an extraordinary effort of deliverance. God seeks repentance and change, no matter how bad conditions have become. He strives to turn us again ere it is too late. He may then come in terror as the King of kings, in order that He may reveal Himself to penitent sinners, to a humbled church, as the merciful Savior Who has redeemed and claimed us all.

## II.

Alas, for Israel that warning, which should have been a message of hope, became instead a prophecy of doom.

If you want to see why Ichabod finally descended upon Israel despite the divine tocsin of alarm, behold how Eli received the last word from God. He took it like a man who wanted to die in the way he did ultimately die. Samuel had faithfully repeated to him each and every word of the message. But Eli said: "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." Was that the answer for which God was waiting? It sounds very pious. God is almighty, it says; there is nothing I can do if He has decided to destroy us. Here is a man who faces a destruction of his own making and says: I guess we will have to take it as it comes!

Surely the Lord had other things in mind. He wanted repentance. But repentance is not merely a few tears, a sad face, a humble confession; least of all is it utter resignation or acceptance of the inevitable. It is a resurgence of the spirit and a will to live. Eli was an old man, it is true; but by no means too old to get up, bind his priestly garments about his loins, march out and clean house. The day was far spent; but there was time to deal with the corruption that had begun in his own home, yea,



in his own heart. It would not be as easy as it might have been had he taken steps much sooner. The cost of repentance always grows as it is put off. But Eli did not want to repent. It was too hard. It meant to apply and enforce the Word of God, all of it, without fear or favor. Eli preferred to die in disobedience.

Here lies the critical danger also for us. We will know, if we sincerely seek them out, where lie the weak spots, yes, the evils that may be afflicting our church, our congregations, our homes, our personal life and our service as ministers of the Word and shepherds of souls. And first of all we will discover, perhaps, the unwillingness to repent because repentance means action. It means making real changes in our own home; it means insisting upon correction of mistakes; it means obeying each and every Word of the Lord, being faithful to it, confessing it in word and deed. It means separating from false brethren, even from those with whom we have strong personal ties.

All these things are impossible for the flesh, difficult for the spirit, and harder to do for Christians who have neglected to do them in due time. Nor is it easy, after a home has been without devotion and prayers for months or years, to make a lasting change. It is not easy to put away the practice of old sins. But it is possible, while the time of grace remains, because God has promised His Holy Spirit to those who ask.

Let us beware lest we lose the power of repentance. "Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts . . . But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." (Heb. 3:7-8. 13.)

E. Schaller

## P A N O R A M A

WHY A REVIEW?  
WHY 1955 TO 1961?

More than two years have passed since the last meeting between the Wisconsin Committee-of-Three (representing that synod's Commission on Doctrinal Matters) and our CLC Board of Doctrine. That was the meeting at which we asked that the Agenda for the following meeting include a review of the history of the critical period from 1955 to 1961. What had been under discussion two years ago was an article on "Admonition and Romans 16," in the December 1962 issue of our Journal. Our reason for requesting a "Review" was our inability to reconcile the official record of those years with the assurance we were given by the Wisconsin representatives: that with respect to this article "we are aware of nothing in its exposition of scriptural fellowship principles to which we would have to take exception." Since it is of utmost importance in such meetings that we understand each other clearly, this further step in the discussions seems indispensable to us. Yet no further meeting has resulted so far.

In close connection with the foregoing is the request of our representatives for a broadening of the Wisconsin delegation to include, if possible, the entire Commission on Doctrinal Matters. Reason for this request is the fact that, as the following pages will show, one must inevitably touch on matters in which at least two of Wisconsin's Committee-of-Three are personally involved. We hope that it will be recognized that such a broadening of the Wisconsin representation will ease a situation which could otherwise defeat the very purpose for which such meetings are held, and thus contribute materially to the mutual blessings which should result for all of us, Wisconsin and CLC alike, from a successful out-

come of these discussions. We believe the cause warrants the effort.

Our issue of last October, pages 42 and 43, discussed these matters at some length, indicating in particular how the guarded statement of the Wisconsin representatives has grown in the re-telling until it seemed as though full agreement must be just around the corner, if not already an accomplished fact. Since this impression could easily lead to false conclusions and actions, the fact of our request had to be reported to our members. Since Wisconsin's answer to our request was still pending, our published report to our readers did not go into detail. That is simple courtesy when such sensitive matters are being discussed in good faith. Only when our request was interpreted as opening the door for "an emotional discussion of past grievances" did we issue an emphatic denial of such intentions.

So we practiced restraint and remained silent. But since this very fact may by some be taken as indicating that we really have nothing specific to offer and therefore actually have no case, we have decided to lay these things before our readers and let the facts speak for themselves. In doing so we shall be violating no confidences, since we shall be quoting from documents which are already a matter of public record.

1. What is this "exposition of fellowship principles" to which the Wisconsin representatives would have to take no exception? — Our answer shall be brief. The article stated a) that admonition is in place when brethren are, perhaps unwittingly, overtaken in a fault. It should be practiced in all patience and love. — We pointed out b) that if one is dealing not only with error but with errorists, with men who are determined to defend their error and to continue in it, a diagnosis of the situation will be both possible and positive. The continued

and perhaps outspoken rejection of the admonition will furnish the basis for the "marking" of Romans 16. — In conclusion the article said c) that when the "marking" has taken place, the passage adds only the one directive, "avoid them."

We are naturally more than a little pleased over this approval of our principles by the Wisconsin committee. And when they say that they "cannot, however, accept the references on pages 5 and 6 as presenting a position which is held by the Wisconsin Synod," we do not challenge their right to make this criticism. But whether the charge is true, whether we have or have not presented a false picture of the Wisconsin position, that will appear quickly if and when the "Review" for which we ask is undertaken. For the statements to which the Wisconsin representatives object are the very ones that will come under close scrutiny when the "Review" takes place. And we shall not fail to inform our readers of the outcome.

2. But what does the record show? — We begin with the 1955 Saginaw convention, which certainly was alerted to the seriousness of the situation created by Missouri's continued rejection of Wisconsin's admonition. We submit the following from the Wisconsin 1955 Convention Report: (all emphasis by the undersigned except where indicated.)

- a) After reviewing its work during the biennium the Standing Committee on Church Union had reported: "We have, however, arrived at the firm conviction . . . that further postponement of a decision would be a violation of Romans 16" (Report, page 79).
- b) The Standing Committee had prepared and submitted a resolution: "That with deepest sorrow . . . (we) declare the fellowship we have had with said synod to be terminated." (page 79).

- c) The President had stated his convictions in his President's Report: "The differences that have arisen between us, which we have been trying to face honestly and soberly, and to remove in an evangelical manner by the application of God's Holy Word brother to brother, have not been removed. They have increased. Things we consider contrary to God's Word have been defended with the statement, 'That passage does not apply in this case.' We have heard so often the expression 'Synod's interests are sufficiently safeguarded.' Matters which we named in our resolutions of 1953, which we considered dangerous to our souls' welfare, deterrent to our Gospel ministry, and detrimental to our fellowship in the Conference, have been and still are vigorously defended. The charges which we brought in an effort to do our brotherly duty before God, have been definitely denied. We have reached the conviction that through these differences divisions and offences have been caused contrary to the doctrine which we have learned. And when that is the case, the Lord our God has a definite command for us: 'Avoid them!'" (Report, page 13).

The warning note had been sounded, loud and clear. Yet a later paragraph seems to offer a choice: "We implore the Holy Spirit to guide and direct us as we try to decide in the face of all the reports whether the Lord would now have us apply His definite command 'Avoid them!' or whether we still have an unpaid debt of love to those whose fellowship we cherished so many years." (page 14).

- d) The Floor Committee prefaced its resolutions with a lengthy Preamble, from which we quote in part: "A church body which creates divisions and offenses by its official resolutions, policies, and practices not in accord with Scripture also becomes subject

to the indictment of Romans 16:17-18. The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod has by its official resolutions, policies, and practices created divisions and offenses both in her own body and in the entire Synodical Conference. Such divisions and offenses are of long standing." (page 85). It added a long paragraph specifying the "divisions and offenses" with which Missouri was charged, and culminating in the statement that this "has brought about a break in relations and that our Synod, bound by the Word, should now declare itself on the matter." This same committee even formulated a resolution, that "we, in obedience to the command of our Lord in Romans 16:17-18, terminate our fellowship with the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod." (page 86). The force of all this was fatally weakened, however, by the stipulation that this resolution be presented to a recessed convention in 1956. But the diagnosis had been made, on the basis of evidence that was nowhere spoken of as being incomplete. And so the fellowship ("vigorously protesting,") with constant negotiations ("admonition") continued through the inconclusive "recessed convention" of 1956, as well as the regular sessions of 1957 and 1959, until in 1961 the step of termination was finally taken.

3. An essential part of the record is the fact that during this entire process there was a tenacious and vigorous defense of the procedure being followed. The lines of this defense are indicated in the Post-Convention News Bulletin, which said: "Agreement on the fact that Romans 16, 17-18 applied to the situation in the Missouri Synod was almost unanimous. The divisions and offenses are clear. There was an honest difference of opinion on whether it was necessary to break relations completely with the Missouri Synod now or whether we, in the words of our Presi-

dent, 'still have an unpaid debt of love to those whose fellowship we cherished so many years'. The body, by a vote of two to one, decided to wait a year." (original emphasis).

4. The 1957 New Ulm convention presents a strange picture. Though the majority of the Standing Committee still saw "some reason to hope for the eventual settlement of the differences," thus allowing for further negotiations, the Floor Committee took the opinion of a dissenting minority which had pointed out that the answers given by the Missouri President to specific inquiries "had removed the basis for further discussion." The Floor Committee therefore presented a resolution calling for termination of fellowship with Missouri, which was defeated, however, by a 61 to 77 vote, with eight abstentions. In its place a resolution was adopted "that we continue our vigorously protesting fellowship, ... and that we continue our doctrinal discussions ... in an effort to restore full unity." (1957 Report, page 144).

5. The defense of this strange position fell to the lot of the "Protest Committee," which had in 1956 been appointed to deal with various objections that were raised against the postponement which had already, after 1955, deeply disturbed many members of the Synod, and which became an even greater problem after the confusion caused by the further deferment of 1956 and the eventual reversal in 1957. It is not for us to say just how this committee arrived at its final report. Their task was certainly not an enviable one. Nor is it possible to reproduce the entire line of thought, or even sum up the argument. It is enough simply to point out that it came to its climax in the following statement: "Termination of church fellowship is called for when you have reached the conviction that admonition is of no further avail and that the erring brother or church body demands recognition for their error."

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Whether this was meant to allow for indefinite postponement of any final decision is not now the point. We do not think so. Yet the fact is that it can be, even as it has been, employed for that very purpose.

These are some of the things of which we speak when we ask for a review of this troubled period. Many more examples could be supplied, — and will, if the requested review should ever come to pass. Can there be any assurance that Wisconsin and we are agreed in principle, as long as the record speaks as it does, condoning and defending the very opposite of the principles concerning which it is now said that we agree?

This is why we speak as we do when we ask for a review. This is not vindictiveness on our part. And though we are aware that many will call it smug and condescending when we say that this request is made for Wisconsin's sake, yet we know that this Synod which we still love cannot live with this split-personality problem without soon finding itself on that same slippery slope that leads to what is now happening to Missouri.

With this we rest our case — not as though there were not more that could and should and will be said if the opportunity will be provided, but with the assurance that what has been said here will demonstrate that we have a case, that there is reason, good reason for our request for a review and that the time given to this will be time well spent, far beyond anything that has previously been accomplished, either by the limited expenditure that has been ours, or the far greater investment of time that has been made by Wisconsin. In this way, by focusing our attention on the one point in which we both are equally interested, something could still be accomplished, when the Lord gives grace and men give penitent, sanctified hearts to the purpose.

E. Reim



OPEN HOUSE            One has come to expect a continuing drum-fire of propaganda in the form of news items, pictures and editorials promoting the cause of what is broadly called the Ecumenical movement. Only a few years ago the external manifestations of Catholic-Protestant-Jewish fraternization were limited to a few well publicized clerical get-togethers and an occasional ecumenical spectacular in the cosmopolitan centers of our nation. But of late it has become disconcerting to observe how the spirit of ecumania is filtering down to the grass roots of church life. In smaller cities and in county seats, in villages and in hamlets signs of the virulence are appearing.

The infiltration often proceeds gradually, even gingerly, capitalizing on the artlessness of the uninstructed or poorly indoctrinated church members, whose number is legion. As a rule it begins with no crass, overt display of syncretism in an unprepared community, but by inviting the public to participate in an adventure of discovery.

Thus one day, in our own typical mid-western community, the local press brought news of a church project scheduled for the dull days of January. Billed as a joint Jewish-Catholic-Protestant program called "Operation Understanding," it is very simple in its execution. On given dates certain Protestant and Catholic churches, as well as the local synagogue, would in turn announce "Open House." The invitation to the public could be characterized as a suggestion that one "come and see what we are like." Interest in this mutual act of self-display is further heightened by a press photo showing a Lutheran pastor, a Catholic priest and a Jewish rabbi, each wearing a skull cap, standing admiringly, if perhaps somewhat selfconsciously, before the ark of the covenant and related implements, symbols and vessels of synagogue worship. Assurance is solemnly given that "there will be no services during the open house periods." This comforts the timid and the

squeamish. At the same time it is called "worthy of note that there are probably more similarities than differences in the services of the three sects." (Sic!)

Christians can be enticed into such a crude snare only by the credulity of ignorance or of spiritual indifference. Ought they not readily see that Jews, Protestants, Lutherans and Catholics alike have been having "Open House" for centuries? Their God or their god, as the case may be, their profession of beliefs held, their position toward Holy Scripture, have been accessible to everyone by the public pronouncements of their confessional symbols, in the preaching and counseling of true and faithful ministers of Christ, in libraries and tract racks, by reliable cyclopedias and in exhaustive historical treatises. To those who avail themselves of these sources in a realistic "Operation Understanding" the antichristian dogmas of the Papacy and the rejection by Jewry of the one Name under heaven by which men may be saved are not merely detectable, but blatant and uncompromising. Can all this be swept out of sight and mind behind a display of church furnishings and an exchange of pleasantries? Yet the gullible will not suspect that in the flavorful cups of quality coffee in church parlors lurks the poison of unionistic death.

For those who are graciously preserved from the offense of false ecumenism there is a bright spot in the picture. For them these destructive goings-on in the churches are providing another kind of open house, described in Scripture as "an open door." Everywhere the Lord will have His remnant amid the ruins of outward Christendom; and bewildered souls whose churches have been plundered by the spiritual piracy of their leaders' syncretism will be seeking and waiting for "a word behind them saying, 'This is the way; walk ye in it.'" (Is. 30:21). May we and our own church body become increasingly

aware of the opportunities thus provided, and be ready to meet them by an aggressive Operation Understanding of our own.

E. Schaller

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A WORD OF APPRECIATION . . .

Due to the generous response to our request for certain back numbers of our Journal we have been able to complete the files of our Journal for our Seminary Library, even to use some of the extra copies as a reserve for future needs. We wish to express our thanks on two counts, first for the generous response, and then for this welcome evidence that our Journal was read, even to the last page!

The Editor.

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