

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

I Timothy 4:15

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== ESSAYS AND ARTICLES ==

THE PLACE OF LUTHER'S TREATISE: "OF THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY OF THE CHURCH," IN THE REFORMATION SCENE.

The proposition that we now live in the 450th anniversary year of the Reformation rests upon an historical judgment that is both widely accepted and broadly acceptable. With publication of the ninety-five Theses Luther had indeed attacked the very foundations of Papacy; for the Theses pulsated with the evangelical spirit, the Gospel attitude so hostile and deadly to the power of the Antichrist. And although without doubt the instant popularity of the Theses and the furor they aroused grew chiefly out of their sensational attack upon a corrupt system which served large financial and ecclesiastical interests, it is equally certain that sensitive souls not totally ignorant of the essence of the Gospel found in them the characteristically "Lutheran" conviction that "...forgiveness of sins by God's Grace is a certain and independently constituted value which is conferred upon believers without the intervention of ecclesiastical mediators."1)

The trumpets had begun to sound; but the true import of their message was still largely unrecognized, even by Luther himself. A process of fermentation had been started; but the brew did not clear until three years later. It was in 1520 that Luther's theological concepts, cleansed of certain false presuppositions through a trial by fire in which the famous Leipzig debate with the abrasive wear and tear of conflict preceding and following it had served as principal fuel, approached their maturity and were announced by the triple trumpet blast of that summer in the publication of his Address to the Christian Nobility, On the Liberty of the Christian Man, and Of the Babylonian Captivity of the Church. All that had gone before was preliminary to these resounding proclamations with

which primarily he was to be confronted a year later at Worms. We would not wish to say that we are misdating the anniversary of the Reformation. But it is historically accurate to say that the autumn of 1520 pinpoints the emergence of the Reformation as a public phenomenon. We propose to enlarge upon this observation and point out the part played especially by the treatise on the Babylonian Captivity in the climactic time of the Church's deliverance.

I.

Introducing his tract, the Babylonian Captivity of the Church, Luthér wrote: "Some two years ago I wrote on indulgences, but in such a way that I now deeply regret having published that little book. At that time I still clung with a mighty superstition to the tyranny of Rome, and so I held that indulgences should not be altogether rejected, seeing that they were approved by the common consent of so many."2)

Luther was, in fact, one of the last in a line of theologians who had raised their voices against the indulgence trade. While the immediate occasion for his challenge in October of 1517 is found in the interference with his parish ministry caused by Tetzels traffic, Luther had long been aware of the evil, just as he was aware of the sharp attacks levelled against it by others before him. He knew the Dutch humanist and member of the Brethren of the Common Life, John Wessel Gansfort (d. 1489), and once said: "Out of Wessel's books did I become a magister." He was therefore most surely familiar with Gansfort's pronouncement: "Indulgences and excommunications are on the same plane with the authority or power of the keys. The pope has no more power in reconciling souls to God than in alienating them from Him. Indeed in excommunicating he has no power except, through an ecclesiastical court, publicly to exclude a person from the privileges of the Church. Similarly, in indulgences he can only free a person from the bond of the canons and from censure..."3) These words find a reflection in Luther's theses 20 to 22:

20. "Therefore the Pope, when he speaks of the Plenary remission of all penalties, does not mean simply of all, but only of those imposed by himself.
21. Thus those preachers of indulgences are in error who say that, by the indulgences of the Pope, a man is loosed and saved from all punishment.
22. For in fact he remits to souls in purgatory no penalties which they would have had to pay in this life according to the canons. "

Gansfort had an ardent admirer in Erasmus of Rotterdam, by whose friendship and wisdom even Luther was able to profit in the early formative years. It was Erasmus who had written a scathing rebuke of the indulgence racket:

"What shall I say of those who maintain the cheat of pardons and indulgences? That by these they compute the time of each soul's residence in purgatory, and assign them a longer or shorter continuance, according as they purchase more or fewer of these paltry pardons, and saleable exemptions? Or what can be said bad enough of others, who pretend that by the force of such magical charms, or by the fumbling over their beads in the rehearsal of such and such petitions (which some religious imposters invented, either for diversion, or what is more likely, for advantage), they shall procure riches, honor, pleasure, health, long life, a lusty old age, nay after death a sitting at the right hand of our Savior in His Kingdom, though as to this last part of their happiness they care not how long it be deferred, having scarcely any appetite for tasting the joys of heaven till they are surfeited, glutted, and can no longer relish their enjoyments on earth. "

"By this easy way of purchasing pardons, any notorious highwayman, any plundering soldier, or any bribe-taking judge, shall disburse some part of their unjust gains, and so think all their grossest impieties sufficiently atoned for; so many perjuries, lusts, drunkenness,

quarrels, bloodsheds, cheats, treacheries, and all sorts of debaucheries, shall all be, as it were, struck a bargain for, and such a contract made, as if they had paid off all arrears, and might now begin upon a new score."4)

Not only were condemnations of the indulgence traffic not new to the Christian world in 1517; they were not even recent in Luther's own public teaching. In his lectures on the Psalms between 1513 and 1515 we find this vigorous sentence:

"Popes and bishops are flinging about graces and indulgences. Here come religious men and flaunt their indulgences at every street corner, only to get money for food and clothing. Oh, those begging friars!"5)

Essentially the 95 Theses do not go beyond such earlier complaints, by Luther and others. It is widely assumed and frequently claimed that indulgences were officially offered as granting full remissions of sins, and that Luther attacked this heresy in this Theses. The well-known Luther film of some years ago helped to strengthen this impression. But the fact is that Luther did not refute such a claim in his Theses because the claim was never actually made by responsible ecclesiastical authorities. True it is, as J. P. Koehler points out, that some dealers over the counter, such as Tetzel, overstated their powers, and that the common people could and would quite naturally gain the impression that forgiveness was available for cash. But we may be sure that, had this been the true offer, the October Theses would have sounded quite differently. As it was, in a letter to a friend dated March 5, 1518, Luther wrote: "I did not wish to have my theses widely circulated. I merely intended to submit them to a few learned men for examination, and if they approved of them, to suppress them. As yet I am still uncertain as to some points. I purpose issuing a book on the use and misuse of indulgences. I have no longer any doubt that the people are deceived, not through the indulgences, but through using them."6)

In this conviction Luther could only have been strengthened by the appearance eight months later of the papal bull "Cum Postquam", which said in part:

"And lest in the future anyone should allege ignorance of the doctrine of the Roman Church concerning such indulgences and their efficacy, or excuse himself under pretext of such ignorance, or aid himself by pretended protestations, but that these same persons may be convicted as guilty of notorious lying and be justly condemned, we have decided that you should be informed by these presents that the Roman Church, which the other churches are bound to follow as their mother, has decreed that the Roman Pontiff, the successor of PETER the key bearer, and the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth, by the power of the keys, to which it belongs to open the kingdom of heaven, by removing the obstacles in the faithful of Christ (namely the fault and punishment due to actual sins, the fault by means of the sacrament of penance, but the temporal punishment due for actual sins according to divine justice by means of the indulgences of the Church) for the same reasonable causes can concede indulgences from the superabundant merits of Christ and the saints to these same faithful of Christ And for that reason that all, the living as well as the dead, who have truly gained such indulgences, are freed from such temporal punishment due to their actual sins according to divine justice, as is equivalent to the indulgence granted and acquired. . . . "7)

Thus in the view of the papacy indulgences were designed merely as a substitute for works of penance after sins were forgiven. And Luther operated from this premise. He recognized in the papal bull a repudiation of the misrepresentations of Tetzl, and made no great issue of them. Among the theologians it was common knowledge that sins had to be forgiven before there could be any question about indulgences. There was no point in talking about confession, since everyone knew that this came even before absolution. Indulgences could never render confession superfluous.

On the surface, then, there seemed at the time to be no unbridgeable gap between Luther and his critics or opponents. In his Sermon on Indulgences, published in April 1518 but believed to have been preached in the monastery chapel at Wittenberg on the very day of the

posting of the Theses, point 19 reads: "Indulgences are not commended, and not urged, but belong to those things which are permitted. Hence they are not the fruit of obedience, nor meritorious . . ."8) "I do not know whether souls are released from purgatory or not, and I don't believe it either. The Church has not settled that question. Hence it is better that you pray for it yourself, and act besides, for this is worth more and is sure."9)

Luther obviously did not consider his views heretical, as expressed in the Theses, just as his kind mentor Staupitz and the colleagues in the theological faculty at Wittenberg agreed with his propositions, believing that they expressed sound theological ideas and principles. Thus in his Indulgence Sermon Luther also said bluntly: "If some, for whom such truth is damaging to the purse, now accuse me of being a heretic, I pay little heed to such babbling because it will come only from benighted brains which have never sniffed at the Bible, never read the Christian teachers, never understood their own, but are almost decayed in their riddled and torn opinion . . ."10) He still feared the real heretics, as he wrote to friend Spalatin, Court preacher at Wittenberg, at this time: "It was never my aim to call the veneration of saints superstitious, even when they are invoked for the most worldly causes. For this is what our neighbors the Beghards of Bohemia think."11)

As late as April 14, 1519, Erasmus could write of Luther: "No one has shown his errors or refuted him, and yet they call him a heretic."12) Indeed, even in November 1520, Erasmus wrote: "Luther is so great that I shall not write against him. He is so great that I do not understand him: his value is such that I derive more instruction from a single small page of his than from the whole of St. Thomas."13)

But by this time the Reformation had left Erasmus far behind. As the great humanist himself admitted, he never did understand Luther. The Reformer, however, came to understand himself. Writing to friend John Lang back in October 1516, he had said of Gabriel Biel, with Occam one of the great humanists of the age: "I know what Gabriel

Biel says, and it is all very good, except when he speaks of grace, charity, hope, faith and virtue. He is a Pelagian.¹⁴⁾ At about the same time, Luther had conceived a distaste for Erasmus, even while that illustrious man was still trying to protect and shield him. He had sensed that same foreign element in Erasmus' theology which militated against the Spirit's enlightening labors in Luthers' heart; and by 1518, having drawn ever closer to St. Augustine's views and become estranged from humanism, he could write to Spalatin in 1518: "There are many things in Erasmus which seem to me far from the knowledge of Christ."¹⁵⁾ Yet in this widening rift between Luther and the essence of Roman Catholic theology the hour of his complete and conscious disavowal did not strike until the Reformer was compelled to meet the hard core of the issue head-on.

It was Professor Eck of Ingolstad who drove Luther to the open break with the Papacy; and the occasion was the famous debate at Leipzig. Throughout the confused furor and the numerous hostile maneuvers that had followed publication of the 95 Theses; at the Chapter meeting of the Augustinian Order in the Cloister hall at Heidelberg April 25, 1518; under the fierce threat of the Dominican Order issued at their meeting in Frankfurt; in the covering letter sent to the Pope with a copy of his "Resolutions concerning the virtue of Indulgences"; in the trap set for him at the Dresden banquet where, without warning or preparation, after having filled the pulpit in the Castle church upon invitation, he was involved in an argument with a scholastic debater imported for the occasion; in the perilous sparring sessions with Cardinal Cajetan; in confrontation with the foggy diplomacy of Cardinal Miltitz - throughout Luther had repeatedly and consistently announced his willingness to recant as soon as any churchman would demonstrate the errors in his theology on the basis of Scripture. Meanwhile the Roman curia, while of the conviction that Luther was indeed a heretic, nevertheless felt that sufficient evidence for a conviction was not yet available to them, and yearned for the day when someone would manage to goad the Wittenberg professor to self-incriminating utterance.

Johann Maier von Eck set out to achieve this end. It is well known, and need not be detailed here, that technically the famous debate was to have pitted Eck against Bodenstein von Carlstad, who for his own reasons had hastened to champion Luther's cause in a reply to Eck's vicious attack upon the Reformer in his famous Obelisks. But Dr. Eck's Thirteen Theses, published as the formal basis for the projected discussions, dealt with the subjects of penance, indulgence, good works, purgatory and papal power, although his developing quarrel with Carlstadt had been concerned exclusively with the freedom of the will and grace. Clearly he was sharpening his knife for Luther. The Reformer recognized this and met the challenge with Thirteen Theses of his own, and made arrangements to enter the debate personally.

It began with a week-long contest between Eck and Carlstadt which turned into a forensic shambles highlighted by the constant, persistent and profound sleeping of the contingent of Leipzig professors in the audience. As a preliminary bout it had the merit of preserving the technical proprieties: after all, the meeting so laboriously arranged over a period of more than a year had been advertised as an Eck-Carlstadt spectacular. But almost everyone, including Luther and Eck, were marking time until the main event could bring to the fore the real issues of the day, the chief of which lay centered in Theses 13 and concerned the primacy of the Pope and the Roman church.

This debate gradually progressed to a contest over the question of whether Popes and Church Councils are infallible, and this subject soon assumed concrete substance in references to recent history. Later, Luther wrote to Spalatin: "I proved to John Eck from the decisions of the Council of Constance that not all the articles condemned there were heretical and erroneous."¹⁶) And so he had; but this turned into a triumph for Eck because Luther, who had stated emphatically that he neither could nor wished to defend the Bohemian schism, had been trapped into defense of John Huss. The moment was sharply remembered by observers, one of whom later wrote of his impression:

"It happened in the presence of Duke George, who often attended the meetings and listened intently, that all at once Doctor Martin Luther, the saint, when pressed hard by Eck with reference to John Huss, said to Doctor Eck: "My dear Doctor, not all the articles of Huss are heretical!" Whereupon Duke George shouted loudly so it could be heard in the whole auditorium: "May the plague take him, " at the same time shaking his head and putting his hand into his side. "17)

This explosion of the princely host at the debate must have sent an icy shudder over Luther. He was appalled by the climax to which the discussions had led, yet at the same time must have recognized with increasing clarity the inevitability of the collision, and promptly went on to prove the orthodoxy of some of Huss's views. For this he was relentlessly pressed with the charge of being a "patron of the Hussites." Against this Luther protested bitterly. Yet by Feb. 1520 he was writing to Spalatin: "I have taught and held all the teachings of John Huss, but thus far did not know it. John Staupitz has taught it in the same unintentional way. In short, we are all Hussites and did not know it. Even Paul and Augustine are in reality Hussites. . . . I am so shocked that I do not know what to think when I see such terrible judgments of God over mankind, namely, that the most evident evangelical truth was burned in public and was already considered condemned more than one hundred years ago. "18)

During the Leipzig disputation Luther had been visited by a member of the Hussite church in Bohemia and had requested from him a copy of Huss's writings. He was given the treatise "De ecclesia." Herein he found his own views reflected. It must be said that Luther later realized that, despite a strong affinity with the Bohemian, he could not possibly identify himself with the contemporary Hussite sect. But there can be no doubt that the goose at Constance, from his stake, helped to manifest the Lutheran swan to the world. Without question, it was the debate with Eck which precipitated the break with Antichrist and led to the liberation of the Church. Schwiebert writes:

"What he (Luther) and his contemporaries had not realized was that, in his search for truth in support of his stand on indulgences, he had discovered equally disturbing issues which were now leading the controversy between Luther and Rome into new and dangerous channels. Luther had sought at Leipzig to restore the Scriptures to their rightful preeminence in the teachings of the Church, and to strip from them the shrouds of medieval interpretations with which they were clouded. . . . If the officials of the Church had hoped the debate would silence Luther and scatter his followers, they, too, were doomed to disappointment."¹⁹⁾

II.

Thus we come to the eventful autumn of 1520 during which, with a fanfare of three trumpets and a bonfire, the release of the Gospel from its thralldom was announced to the world. The first trumpet, as nearly as their order can be determined, bore the title: "An address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation." It blew down the three walls of the Romanists behind which they sat entrenched: "1. If pressed by the temporal power, they have affirmed and maintained that the temporal power has no jurisdiction over them, but on the contrary that the spiritual power is above the temporary. 2. If it were proposed to admonish them by the Scriptures, they objected that no one may interpret Scripture but the Pope. 3. If they are threatened with a Council, they pretend that no one may call a Council but the Pope."²⁰⁾ Against these self-serving and interlocking bastions of power Luther addressed himself with gusto and riddled them. In the process he further exposed the corruption of the Papal system, and finally proposed a series of reforms.

The third trumpet was labeled: "On the Liberty of the Christian Man." Since the precise date of publication of this treatise cannot be determined, one cannot be entirely certain of the order in which the trumpets sounded; but we may safely assume that, though not the loudest, this was the final note of the fanfare. By comparison with the

others, it was gentle, persuasive and calm, and befitted the subject matter. For herein Luther sings of the justifying grace which sets sinners free from slavery, and at the same time binds them to a life of sanctification and loving service to his Savior and his fellow-man.

Our attention, however, centers upon the middle trumpet, the loudest of the three. Boldly it announced itself as heralding the end of "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church," and appeared on October 6. It must be said that the title has a nationalistic overtone. Luther did not hesitate to take advantage of the feeling of Germans toward domination by an Italian-centered hierarchy. He had done so in his Address to the Christian Nobility; and the heading of this later tract, in similar manner, included the thought that, as Schwiebert puts it, "the souls of the German people (that is, the Christians) were in bondage. . . . in spiritual slavery to a modern Babylon."²¹) But the content of the message bore no trace of nationalistic fervor. It levelled its attack upon the inner fortress of the Papacy by assailing its sacramental system, proposing that the seven sacraments be reduced to three, baptism, penance and communion.

By way of introduction Luther remarks somewhat wryly that of late Sylvester Prierias, Eck, Emser and Co. had served as his theological instructors; not, indeed, as persuasive counsellors who brought him back to the Roman fold, but as goads which forced him into Scripture and thus led him to freedom.

Thereupon the Reformer launches immediately into the subject of the Sacrament of the Altar and makes an issue of the withholding of the Cup from the laity, an action which he calls impious. Accordingly he lists a threefold captivity of the Sacrament.

1. The denial of a part of the Lord's Supper to believers.
2. The teaching of Transsubstantiation.
3. The conversion of the Sacrament to a sacrifice.

We shall sample a few of his observations in each division and make comments as needed.

1.

"But imagine me standing over against them and interrogating my lords, the papists. In the Lord's Supper, the whole sacrament, or communion in both kinds, is given either to the priests alone or else it is at the same time given to the laity. If it is given only to the priests (as they would have it), then it is not right to give it to the laity in either kind. For it must not be given rashly to any to whom Christ did not give it when he instituted the sacrament. Otherwise, if we permit one institution of Christ to be changed, we make all his laws invalid, and any man may make bold to say that he is not bound by any other law or institution of Christ. For a single exception, especially in the Scriptures, invalidates the whole. But if it is given also to the laity, it inevitably follows that it ought not to be withheld from them in either form. And if any do withhold it from them when they ask for it they are acting impiously and contrary to the act, example, and institution of Christ.

"I acknowledge that I am conquered by this argument, which to me is irrefutable. I have neither read nor heard nor found anything to say against it. For here the word and example of Christ stand unshaken when he says, not by way of permission, but of command: "Drink of it, all of you (Matt. 26:27). For if all are to drink of it, and the words cannot be understood as addressed to the priests alone, then it is certainly an impious act to withhold the cup from the laymen when they desire it, even though an angel from heaven (Gal. 1:8) were to do it. For when they say that the distribution of both kinds is left to the decision of the church, they make this assertion without reason and put it forth without authority. . . . ,

"This is what has prevented me from condemning the Bohemians, who, whether they are wicked men or good, certainly have the word and act of Christ on their side, while we have neither, but only that inane remark of men: "The church has so ordained." It was not the church which ordained these things, but the tyrants of the churches, without the consent of the church, which is the people of God. . . .

"The first captivity of this sacrament, therefore, concerns its substance or completeness, which the tyranny of Rome has wrested from us. Not that those who use only one kind sin against Christ, for Christ did not command the use of either kind, but left it to the choice of each individual, when he said: "As often as you do this, do it in remembrance of me" (1 Cor. 11:25). But they are the sinners, who forbid the giving of both kinds to those who wish to exercise this choice. The fault lies not with the laity, but with the priests."²²⁾

It is manifest, on the one hand, that Luther is not yet out of the theological woods, and does not yet insist upon the celebration of the Sacrament in both kinds as he later will. But it is also clear that the impact of his treatise was felt at the heart of the Papacy; for he gives short shrift to the papal doctrine of the church and to the claims of authority advanced in behalf of tradition, church councils and clergy. In the matter of the first captivity, at least, this is certainly the main thrust of his rebellion.

2.

"The second captivity of this sacrament is less grievous as far as the conscience is concerned, yet the gravest of dangers threatens the man who would attack it, to say nothing of condemning it. Here I shall be called a Wyclifite and a heretic by six hundred names. Some time ago, when I was drinking in scholastic theology, the learned Cardinal of Cambrai gave me food for thought in his comments on the fourth book of the Sentences (Peter Lombard). He argues with great acumen that to hold that real bread and real wine, and not merely their accidents (the qualities which, in medieval thought, were held to adhere to the invisible "substance", and, together with it, form the object.) are present on the altar, would be much more probable and require fewer superfluous miracles - if only the church had not decreed otherwise. When I learned later what church it was that had decreed this, namely the Thomistic - that is, the Aristotelian church - I grew bolder, and after floating in a sea of doubt, I at

last found rest for my conscience in the above view, namely, that it is real bread and real wine, in which Christ's real flesh and blood are present in no other way and to no less a degree than the others assert them to be under their accidents. I reached this conclusion because I saw that the opinions of the Thomists, whether approved by pope or by council, remain only opinions, and would not become articles of faith even if an angel from heaven were to decree otherwise (Gal. 1:8). For what is asserted without the Scriptures or proven revelation may be held as an opinion, but need not be believed."....

Again we see that basically Luther is inveighing against the fact that human authority has superseded the authority of the Scriptures in the papal and scholastic systems and is declaring his independence of such enslavement, the while he is systematically dismantling its faulty theological structure.

3.

Concerning the transition of the Mass to an act of sacrifice, Luther addresses himself in part as follows:

"Now there is yet a stumbling block that must be removed, and this is much greater and the most dangerous of all. It is the common belief that the mass is a sacrifice, which is offered to God. Even the words of the canon seem to imply this, when they speak of "these gifts, these presents, these holy sacrifices," and further on, 'this offering'. Prayer is also made, in so many words, 'that the sacrifice may be accepted even as the sacrifice of Abel,' etc. Hence Christ is termed 'the sacrifice of the altar'. Added to these are the sayings of the holy fathers, the great number of examples, and the widespread practice uniformly observed throughout the world.

"Over against all these things, firmly entrenched as they are, we must resolutely set the words and example of Christ. For unless we firmly hold that the mass is the promise or testament of Christ, as the words clearly say, we shall lose the whole Gospel and all its comforts. Let us permit nothing to prevail against these words - even

though an angel from heaven should teach otherwise (Gal. 1:8) - for they contain nothing about a work or a sacrifice. Moreover, we also have the example of Christ on our side. When he instituted this sacrament and established this testament as the Last Supper, Christ did not offer himself to God the Father, nor did he perform a good work on behalf of others, but, sitting at the table, he set this testament before each one and proffered to him the sign. Now, the more closely our mass resembles that first mass of all, which Christ performed at the last Supper, the more Christian it will be. But Christ's mass was most simple, without any display of vestments, gestures, chants, or other ceremonies, so that if it had been necessary to offer the mass as a sacrifice, then Christ's institution of it was not complete.

"What shall we say then of the canon of the mass and the patristic authorities? First of all, I would answer: If there were nothing at all to be said against them, it would be safer to reject them all than admit that the mass is a work or a sacrifice, lest we deny the word of Christ and destroy faith altogether with the mass."

After disposing of the subject of the Holy Supper, Luther turns to the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, which he treats with relative brevity, expressing satisfaction in the fact that he is privileged to say:

"Blessed be God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to the riches of his mercy (Eph. 1: 3, 7) has preserved in his church this sacrament at least, untouched and untainted by the ordinances of men, and has made it free to all nations and classes of mankind, and has not permitted it to be oppressed by the filthy and godless monsters of greed and superstition."

But the Reformer improves the occasion by taking off on a related subject. The baptismal vow has reminded him of other vows by which Rome had enslaved millions. He writes:

"One thing I will add - and I wish that I could persuade everyone to do it - namely, that ALL vows should be completely abolished and avoided, whether of religious orders, or about pilgrimages or about any works whatsoever,

that we may remain in that which is supremely religious and most rich in works - the freedom of baptism. It is impossible to say how much that most widespread delusion of vows detracts from baptism and obscures the knowledge of Christian liberty, to say nothing now of the unspeakable and infinite peril of souls which that mania for making vows and that ill-advised rashness daily increase. O most godless pontiffs and unregenerate pastors, who slumber on unheeding and indulge in your evil lusts, without pity for this most dreadful and perilous 'affliction of Joseph' (Amos 6:4-6)."

With a final promise to discuss vows at greater length on some future occasion, Luther now turns his attention to the sacrament of Penance. He does not object to calling it a sacrament, contrary to the biographer Bainton, who writes: "Luther with one stroke reduced the number of sacraments from seven to two." Let us hear Luther:

"In the third place, we are to discuss the sacrament of penance. On this subject I have already given no little offense to many people by the treatises and disputations already published, in which I have amply set forth my views. These I must now briefly repeat in order to unmask the tyranny that is rampant here no less than in the Sacrament of the Bread."

"The first and chief abuse of this sacrament is that they have completely abolished it. Not a vestige of the sacrament remains. For this sacrament, like the other two, consists in the word of divine promise and our faith, and they have undermined both of them. For they have adapted to their own tyranny the word of promise which Christ speaks in Matt. 16 and 18: Whatsoever ye bind, etc. and in the last chapter of John: If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven, etc. By these words the faith of penitents is aroused for obtaining the forgiveness of sins, But in all their writing, teaching and preaching, their sole concern has been, not to teach what is promised to Christians in these words, or what they ought to believe, and what great consolation they might find in them, but only through force and violence to extend their own tyranny far, wide and deep. . . .

"There is no doubt that confession of sins is necessary

and commanded of God, in Matt. 3: "They were baptized by John in the river Jordan, confessing their sins," and in 1 John 1: 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us.' But the institution of confession is proved most effectively of all by Matt. 18, where Christ teaches that a sinning brother should be told of his faults, brought before the church and, if he will not hear, be excommunicated. He 'hears' if he heeds the rebuke and acknowledges and confesses his sin.

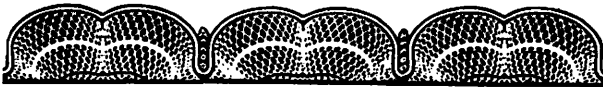
"As to the current practice of private confession, I am heartily in favor of it, even though it cannot be proven from the Scriptures. It is useful, even necessary, and I would not have it abolished. Indeed, I rejoice that it exists in the church of Christ, for it is a cure without equal for distressed consciences. . . . There is just one thing that I abominate, and that is the fact that this kind of confession has been subjected to the despotism and extortion of the pontiffs. . . ."

And Luther reaches his peroration with the words: "For these monstrous things we are indebted to you, O Roman See, and to your murderous laws and ceremonies, with which you have corrupted all mankind, so that they believe they can with works make satisfaction for sin to God, when he can be satisfied only by the faith of a contrite heart! Not only do you keep this faith silent with this uproar of yours, but you even oppress it, only so that your insatiable bloodsucker may have those to whom it may say, Give, Give (Prov. 30:15) and may traffic in sins."

After this blistering denunciation Luther proceeds to discuss the other alleged sacraments: Confirmation, Marriage, Ordination and Extreme Unction. But though his treatment is informative and trenchant, it is anticlimactic. The break with Babylon was complete and irrevocable. It is true that at a later date Luther looked back upon this period and from that vantage point considered his earlier views and expressions somewhat immature. But without doubt the trumpet call of the "Babylonian Captivity" signalled the full unveiling of the Reformation to the world.

E. Schaller

- 1) J. P. Koehler, Kirchengeschichte, #168.
- 2) Luther's Works, American Edition, 36, p. 11.
- 3) Hyma, New Light on M. Luther, p. 52.
- 4) Ibid. p. 53.
- 5) Ibid. p. 34.
- 6) Ibid. p. 80.
- 7) Denzinger, The Source of Catholic Dogma, p. 239.
- 8) Luther's Works, St. Louis Ed., 18:274.
- 9) Ibid.
- 10) Ibid. 275.
- 11) Hyma, p. 83.
- 12) Ibid. p. 43.
- 13) Ibid.
- 14) Ibid. p. 86.
- 15) Ibid.
- 16) Ibid.
- 17) E. Schwiebert, Luther and his Times, p. 408.
- 18) Luther's Works, American Ed., 48, p. 153.
- 19) Schwiebert, p. 420f.
- 20) Hyma, p. 91.
- 21) Schwiebert, p. 474.
- 22) Sections here and following are taken from the translation in Luther's Works, Vol. 36, p. 21ff.



== PREACHING THE WORD ==

THOUGHTS FOR REFORMATION PREACHING.

I.

JUDE 3-11.

The month of October marks the peak of the year's commemorative observance of the anniversary of the Reformation. This occurs in an era of much disturbance in the churches, where the gains that were won through the Reformation are vigorously and shamelessly being cast aside and in danger of being altogether lost in the pursuit of some existentialist theology or false ecumenism. Thus it is fitting, not only that in such a season one should devote more than the usual amount of time and thought to this subject, but that the customary anniversary Sunday be anticipated by a preparatory service.

This could well be done, and the thoughts of our people directed into the proper channels, by inviting them to receive and heed the first part of the message of Jude, the Apostle of our Lord. His words have particular meaning for Lutheran Christians.

That we are "Lutherans," we owe to the work of God; first in that by the Holy Ghost He called us unto His eternal kingdom and glory, and secondly in that He thus caused us to share in the blessings of the work He performed through Martin Luther and other heroic confessors. To be a Lutheran means to have and to hold the pure, clear truth of Christian doctrine as set forth in those Confessions which rest upon the open Bible. To be a Lutheran means to believe, not fiction but fact; not superstition, but the divine revelation of the way to eternal life. To be a Lutheran means to rejoice in having found the only way to the Father. And it means - to be careful!

We have a fight on our hands; a struggle against an enemy who has lain in wait for the believer since the be-

ginning but whose opportunities are greater in some seasons than in others, and are particularly great today. Against this foe Jude alerts us. He speaks of

OUR STRUGGLE AGAINST APOSTASY.

A. What is this apostasy?

Jude wrote a book of the Bible on a subject about which he had not intended to write at all. God the Holy Ghost caused him to change his mind and purpose, as he tells us in v. 3. ¹⁾ Jude had intended to write to the Church about the common salvation, that is, the salvation that belongs to all men through Jesus Christ the Savior. Just what kind of book that would have been, we do not know. It might have been another Gospel like those of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, wherein Jude would have told us more about the life, suffering and death of God's Son. How interesting that would have been, and how valuable. Jude was a close relative of the Lord Jesus according to His human origin; and to learn from him how Jesus lived and died for our sin would have been a precious bonus indeed. Or Jude might have written an Epistle, like that of Paul to the Romans, setting forth Christian doctrine in clear and orderly manner.

Certainly such inspired records of the common salvation are valuable also for the Christian's defense. Already in Jude's day the Church was beset by organized enmity

1) No attempt is made in this study to deal with or resolve the contention regarding the particular meaning of pistis in Jude 3. Those who on historico-exegetical grounds insist that the word cannot be here understood in the sense of fides quae creditur, a thing believed, a creed, have a strong argument. But whether one understands Jude to speak of objective or subjective faith, the exhortation of the Lord need not be weakened by either concept; and it seems best to center attention upon the tocsin that warns us against apostasy.

against the message of salvation by grace, through faith. We find the epistles of the other Apostles filled with strengthening against the hatred and falsehoods of the world and those who preached another gospel that was no gospel, the doctrine of salvation by works. Think of the attacks upon Paul's writings of sin and grace. How powerful against them would have been an epistle from a further witness, from Jude.

But he dropped such plans. He was led to see that, instead of further extolling the true faith possessed by the saints, he must write exhorting them to contend, to fight for it against another kind of enemy, the most insidious of them all, the most to be feared. The Christians had the Truth. They could do without another book about it. Against the attacks of the unbelieving world they had all the ammunition they needed. But the most destructive of foes lurked among them, in their very midst.

It was the danger of apostasy, of falling away. Jude saw it coming when he observed that what Peter especially had foretold in his epistles (2 Pet. 2) was happening, namely, that certain men had crept into the church unawares. Peter had written about them, and here they were. Jude describes them. vv. 4b, 8, 10.

We find it a bit difficult, at first, to understand how such people could be tolerated in Christian congregations. According to the description, we would at first glance be ready to suppose that they were openly corrupt people, living in gross sins, with mockery on their lips. Surely few Christians would be deceived by such overtly evil men. Why did not Jude simply say: Put them out from your midst? Have nothing to do with them! As we think about this and study the text carefully, we realize that Jude is describing, not the outward conduct of these ungodly people, but the state of their minds and hearts. Externally they conformed to the terms of Christian fellowship and participated in the celebration of the Lord's Supper (cf. v. 12). But inwardly they were apostates; they had fallen from faith. They had changed gods. They denied the Savior and followed the leadership of their sinful minds. That this was their sin we see from v. 11.

Note the examples here given. Consider Cain, the product of godly upbringing, outwardly still bringing sacrifices to God but inwardly serving the god of pride and vainglory. Remember Balaam. He was a prophet of God, commanded to bless Israel. But the enemy succeeded in bribing him to curse the chosen nation; and he who set out as though to bless carried a curse. Korah was the name of that family in Israel which attempted to usurp the office of Moses; allegedly for Israel's welfare but actually because it rejected God's leadership.

Now see this sin of apostasy. It assumes many forms; it has many colors; but it is always the same sin. It is a rebellion against the Word of God; but specifically it occurs when people set their minds against the things that they have learned and know to be true. It is a sin that can be committed only by those who have received the witness of the Holy Ghost in their hearts, who have been converted.

Jude shows this further by means of other examples. He reminds us of Israel (v. 5). God had wonderfully saved them all and called them with an holy calling to be His people; and they had followed His call. Yet many of them were stricken in the wilderness - why? Because they turned against their faith, renounced it and longed for Egypt. Jude reminds us of the angels that sinned (v. 6). Think of them, living in their heavenly estate, blessed and happy - and then they rebelled. They would not have God be true (John 3:33).

So does the sin of apostasy lay hold on those who have enjoyed the possession of the Truth. They go back to their former nature. They cast off enlightenment and want to know only what they can know as brutes, what their natural mind and instinct tell them. Then they set themselves against the clear doctrines of God's Word. Little by little they deny the Lord Jesus Christ and reject His teachings. And the end is always the same. It is a swift road to eternal disaster, to fire. The apostate is led to the same end that befalls the heathen unbeliever, as symbolized by the catastrophe of Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 7).

B. How must we deal with the threat of apostasy?

Now we see what Jude means when he says: Contend for the faith! He is not speaking of defending it against the world! He means: Fight to keep it for yourself! Struggle against apostasy! And why must we deal with its threat?

Apostasy is the sin that lies nearest to us all. It creeps in upon us unawares. The enmity of the world against our faith is readily apparent. The unbeliever, the unregenerate, strives openly to destroy the validity of Christian truth and makes no bones about it. Communism proclaims its hatred of the Gospel. Well and good; here we know what to expect. But the falling away from the faith begins at home. It began in the midst of the congregation of Israel, among the heavenly host of angels, in the family of Adam, among the prophets of Israel.

It came in the Christian church of ages ago. Paul called it the mystery of iniquity and said that it was already beginning to work in his day. It slowly ripened into the institution of the Papacy, of Antichrist who sits in the temple of God and shows himself that he is God.

Today many Christian churches are filled with the sin of apostasy. Preachers with corrupt minds deny this Gospel truth and that. We are keenly aware that this is not merely something which is going on outside the safe walls of the Lutheran church. Where the richest blessings of the pure Evangel have been enjoyed we may look for a falling away; and we need look neither far nor intently. A deadly drift away from the Gospel is being fostered and encouraged by an apostate "Lutheran" scholarship operating in behalf of what it deceitfully calls a fresh approach, a re-study, a new hermeneutic or, more frankly, a demythologizing theology. Men of theological standing submit "for study and consideration" certain reappraisals of the doctrines of the inerrancy of Scripture, of the Virgin birth, of the survival of body or soul after death, of the divine Law and its prescribed morality - reappraisals in which such fundamental absolutes of Chris-

tian doctrine are not merely challenged, but denied, though sometimes with ambiguous phrases and by means of semantic legerdemain.

Our great concern is that the process may not begin in our own hearts. We are prone to underestimate this threat. Where people have been nearest to Christ, best fed and sated from the wells of salvation, there apostasy seeks breeding ground. Satan will seek to sow within and among us a discontent with clear catechismal doctrine. If our minds can be shaken free from obedience thereto, they can be made to run at liberty in their natural courses, on pathways of sinful reason or emotion that lead ever away from Christ Jesus. May the Lord of the Church grant us a spirit of watchfulness against the peril of apostasy and grant us deliverance from Satan's wiles.

II.

Jude 17-25.

If it were true, as is so widely believed by the uninformed, that Dr. Martin Luther was the founder of a new church, we could hardly celebrate a festival of Reformation, nor could we call Luther the great Reformer. For what does "reform" mean? It means to restore something to the form it used to have before it was deformed.

God brought Luther, and through Luther many others, back to the doctrine which the Lord and His Apostles had established for the faith of believers and from which so many had been led astray. What Luther taught was what the true Church always believed. In vain one searches through the writings of the Apostles for any sign that they believed in an adoration of Mary, in the infallibility of a Pope, in purgatory, in prayers for the dead or in salvation by works. Luther exposed these heresies in the brilliant light of Scripture and thus reformed the church, reaffirming the original Christian confession.

It was apostasy which had brought men to the loss of the Truth. In the early verses of his epistle Jude re-

minded us that we, too, must struggle against temptation which works to deprive us again of the blessed Truth which God restored to us. Strong forces are at work undermining that Truth in our day. Jude admonishes us to hold a firm line against them. But he does not merely warn; he encourages us by indicating wherein lies

OUR STRENGTH AGAINST APOSTASY

A. In a firm sense of danger. vv. 17-19.

In order that we and our church be strong against apostasy, it is necessary first of all that we be aware of our danger. At a seashore there is great power in the waves which come rolling in and wash up on the sand. But to the swimmer there is even greater danger in the strong suction that sets in as the waters run back into the deep. Every wave is followed by an undertow. This suction is not seen; it makes neither noise nor foam as does the wave coming in. But many an unaware person has been caught in it and drowned. Similarly in the church great waves of Gospel ministry may be followed in time by a back suction. The Apostles Paul and Peter warned the Christians of their day to be ready for this. From Pentecost onward the glorious Gospel of salvation washed over the earth. Congregations were established in many places, and they were strong in the Truth. But Satan was already preparing the reaction that would seek to draw men back into error and unbelief. Jude is reminding his readers of what Paul and Peter and John had written about this, trying to keep alive in the congregations a firm sense of danger.

Unless we, too, heed this warning, we shall be weak against apostasy. The Reformation was like a mighty wave. It spread far and wide with great power. But after it had spent its initial force, even before Luther's death, error was already gnawing at the vitals of the movement, with Melancthon, one of Luther's most learned associates, caught in the undertow. Must we not be fully aware that, after a century of wonderful Gospel purity enjoyed in our church affiliation we continue to face the

danger of the undertow? By the grace of God the preaching of the unadulterated Gospel of salvation has been preserved to us. Would it be surprising if Satan sought to awaken men who would undermine this message, becoming false to the doctrine? Yet too often Christians seem unaware of the immediacy of this peril. Somehow they feel very secure, as though such a thing as apostasy would be unlikely to occur among us. Indeed, those who warn against the danger may be regarded as disturbers of the peace.

On the other hand, where awareness of the danger is present and Christians are alert, we have real strength against apostasy. For in our previous study of the first portion of Jude's epistle we learned to isolate the germ of apostasy. We know what it is and how it acts. It is a rebellion against the Truth or any part of it, sponsored by the natural, sinful desires of the Old Adam, by pride and arrogance and lust. It appears among those who have the Truth, have learned it and confessed it.

When we are conscious of the consistent tendency of the flesh toward open rebellion against the Word of God, we will be on the watch for its influence. Thus the slightest retreat from the catechismal doctrine would be noted in our midst and regarded, not as a small thing to be ignored, but as a sign of danger. If, as may usually be the case, it proved to be nothing more than an inadvertent mistatement or the result of a misunderstanding of terms, the matter would be resolved through simple, loving correction and adjustment. But at all times we will be mindful of the possibility that we may suffer the sad experience described by Jude when he writes: "There be those that separate themselves." One who is caught in the drift away from the Truth creates a crack in the unity of the faith. Then apostasy has begun, and it is time for all to sound the alarm. No one will say: We are an orthodox church and will remain so. We shall rather say: "The Old Evil Foe now means deadly woe!"

But what shall we do then? What can we do? Let us rest assured of the fact that, if only we are aware of the

danger, we are within reach of safety. The Lord has placed into our hands the means of defense against a powerful foe. If we have been slow to arm ourselves with it as we should, our awareness of danger will press us to apply the strength that God has given us, which lies

B. In a purposeful use of the Word. vv. 20-23.

The great accomplishment of the Reformation lay in the fact that Luther placed the Bible back into the hands of the Christian. The Word of God provides and sustains that faith once delivered unto the saints. It is the sure and complete revelation of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, the grace which covers all our sins and has justified us, so that there is now no condemnation to them that are in Him. Any weakness of our church stems from an indifferent use of this Word. Indeed, we use it after a fashion; but one fears that we do not always use it with an earnest purpose. We listen to the preaching of it, but somewhat out of habit. We use it in our homes, but in some cases perhaps slightly or rarely. There is a tendency to coast along on the knowledge that we feel we already have.

But our strength against apostasy lies in the building up of ourselves on our most holy faith. That is, the inner man, the new man in us, must grow as a child would grow. We can be swept from our faith's foundation unless our faith grow strong and cling to the Truth.

Such growth is like the result of a building process. Our faith is kept in repair, anchored to the doctrine, as we use the Word of God purposefully. Faithfully hearing the sermons and reading the Word and attending the Table of the Lord is a binding, firming process which, with prayer to the Holy Spirit who works through the Word, keeps our hearts steadfast and the light of understanding burning. We are kept in the love of God, which is love of His Word. And when we love that, we shall be very quick to notice when something tries to move us from it.

But we dare not look only to ourselves individually. Our strength against apostasy must be used also in behalf

of our brethren who are confronted by the same threat facing all. Satan is going to pick off the weak sheep first, like any wolf. He will go after those who do not use the Word to build themselves up; those who think there is no danger and rest secure, those who are prone to depend upon men, upon Synod, to keep everything in good order. Despite their complacency doubt or error may assail their poor defenses; and we must look after them. Among them we must make a difference, as the Apostle says, in our dealings. We must seek to save back-sliders - save them with that powerful Word of truth; but we must also be careful lest, in our love for them, we are pulled along with them.

Every effort to save must be made. But the Apostle warns that we must never forget our hatred of the error which would enslave men. We cannot keep anyone with us at the cost of tolerating false doctrine. Our strength is in the Word; and our church will stand inviolable only so long as we continue in that Word faithfully. But doing this, it will surely stand.

In his closing words the Apostle tells us why. We know how feeble we are, as a church and as individuals, in the spiritual task just defined. But our ultimate strength against apostasy lies

C. In a confidence in the saving strength of God.

Luther's great power lay, not in his skills or learning, but in his trusting heart. He truly believed that his God was unto him a mighty fortress, a bulwark never failing, and that, though devils all the world should fill, they would not overpower him. Nor did they. Humanly it was quite unthinkable that Luther's reformatory labors could be crowned with success. The forces arrayed against him were overwhelming. And in our fight against apostasy, against falling back into the darkness of error and heresy, we face what is humanly impossible to prevent. But we remember the power of God who has done this very thing before and will do it again. He can keep us from falling.

His power is not only supreme; it is combined with the surgings of divine love. He wants to present us faultless before His throne. We can understand that majestic purpose. He aims not to lose us. Not because we are Lutherans, but because He has loved us and did not spare His only Son, but delivered Him up in our stead. It was by His great power that we received the true faith. Surely His purpose is clear; and His purposes do not fail.

One day, in the halls of eternity, there must be a vast host of the redeemed giving glory and majesty, dominion and power to the Lamb upon His throne. Whence shall all these jubilant people come? From earth, and out of great tribulation. They shall be those who have washed their clothes in the blood of the Lamb and have not accepted the mark of the beast upon their foreheads. Who has more reason than we, so richly favored in spiritual blessings, to be confident that we shall be among them? Let us remember the grace that has been shown us as unworthy inheritors of the Reformations's gifts; their abundance will cause us to say with confidence: Our God will see us through!

E. Schaller

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A CHAPEL ADDRESS

The Text:

"The officers answered: Never man spake like this man."

John 7:46.

About thirteen years ago LIFE Magazine printed an editorial which contained this tender and revealing sentence: "People have become weary of the words of man."

They have lost their confidence in man's ideas, man's programs, man's plans. They are hungry and eager to hear a voice from the other side - a voice of truth, a voice of authority whose ways will work in the lives of man. They are listening for a word from God."

That editorial, which expressed so well the hunger in men's souls, was never finished because it never got around to saying what so obviously needed to be said. To us it seems almost impossible that the writer would not have felt compelled to express the thought that immediately rises from our hearts. If men are disenchanted with the words of men and are listening for a word from God, that word has been spoken, and the winds of heaven have carried it about the earth. God "spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets" and "hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son . . ." Those who have truly listened to Him have learned to say with the officials who had on one occasion been sent to take Jesus into custody: "Never man spake like this man."

All who open their ears to Jesus will not grow weary and despairing of all words of other men. We say this to you who have come here to sit in classrooms and be addressed by those who are called as your professors. In the course of the coming months your ears and minds will be required to absorb hundreds of thousands of words on a variety of subjects. This is an infinitely difficult experience for such to endure who have never heard anything other than the words of men. What an empty and meaningless babble resounds in the voices of men speaking learnedly of things for which they know not the beginning nor the end, the meaning or the purpose. A critic is reported to have said of one of J. P. Marquand's books: "He has all the little answers: he does not have the big questions." The reason probably was that he did not dare because he did not have the big answers. But the world is full of education like that; and it is like getting fed on mouthfuls of cotton candy.

You can listen to your teachers here with joy and in contentment of heart, with great profit, simply because

you have heard and continually hear also and above all the Man who speaks as no other man. He is the master teacher; your professors listen to Him also, and it is only for that reason that they are worth hearing. They try to give you the little answers; but you and they already have the big ones.

To certify these for yourselves, you will turn again and again to the Master. There is no voice here that can take the place of His. He speaks with the authority that knows no substitute. Strangely enough, even the men who deny Him confirm His authority. A learned man of the world may explain why he does not believe in Jesus, his God and Savior, by saying: "I know God to be so immense, exalted and supreme that I just can't imagine Him being born of a virgin and dwelling among us." But if you ask how this wise man got his idea of God, you will find that it came chiefly from what Jesus told us. Another may say: "I can't believe that a good and loving God would allow so much suffering and pain in this world." But where did the man get his concept of a good and loving God? Certainly not from any natural religion. He got it through the message of Christ, whether he knows it or not.

All things, finally, are summed up and gathered up in Christ Jesus; and all knowledge makes sense and has purpose only in the light of His Gospel. We have no specific item in our curriculum labeled: "Course 200: Listening to Jesus." But we assume that your personal life will be filled with this activity and interest, as will all of your class hours. We count on it! We could not include a portrait of Jesus among the pictures of faculty members in the Lance. But the cross hovers over this school, and reminds you of the first call that must be issued to you here: "This is my beloved Son; hear ye HIM."



===== PANORAMA =====

YES, LET US
CELEBRATE

Among the many things that have been said in the broad area of Lutheranism about the coming 450th anniversary of the Reformation there is one, rather unimportant in itself, that sheds considerable light on the current scene. We forget who said it or where it was said, but somewhere someone wrote that since one does not "celebrate" a divorce, we should mourn rather than celebrate the anniversary of the Reformation because of the separation to which it led. One could dismiss this statement as inconsequential and inaccurate, since Reno and Acapulco supply only too many instances of divorces that are celebrated, often in a highly revolting manner and for rather transparent reasons. If nevertheless we take up this remark for serious discussion, it is not for any of these superficial reasons, but simply because we believe it to be a symptom of an incipient disease, a progressive deterioration that is disquieting, to say the least.

When men begin to question the propriety of "celebrating" this Reformation anniversary, is it not because they are losing sight of the greatness of our Reformation heritage? Take the Leipzig Debate, where Luther's opponent had shown from certain statements of some Church Fathers and from certain decrees of Church Councils that the position that Luther had taken and supported by Scripture did not conform to the tradition of the Church. There was a magnificent certainty about Luther's reply: that then it is certain that the Fathers and Councils have erred. But what has happened when Lutherans of today can become uncertain about the absolute truth of Scripture and begin to speak of its "conditioned" character as communicated in history through human language? (See JOURNAL, March 1967, p. 37) Does that not lose sight of the authority that Luther once attributed to Scriptura sola, to Scripture alone? And what has happened when Lutherans, even

while still rendering lip service to the Sola Gratia and Sola Fide of the Reformation, fail to remember that the anathema which Rome once pronounced over these doctrines still stands? Has the modern Ecumenical Movement softened up the convictions of these Lutherans to such an extent that they must apologize for the Reformation? Shall we humbly bow and scrape with them?

Not if we remember what the Reformation really means! Not if we understand how great our blessings really are, how glorious our heritage really is! So, as the anniversary draws near, let us approach it with heads held high and hearts filled with joy and gratitude. Yes, let us, without malice indeed, but with profound gratitude CELEBRATE this anniversary for the sake of the blessings of which it reminds us. Pray God we may ever hold them fast!

E. Reim

JAMES A. PIKE In the foregoing we resorted to a medical analogy
 A CASE HISTORY when we spoke of a certain statement as being a symptom of an incipient disease. As our heading indicates, we are still following the same line of thought, but this time with reference to a highly advanced case, perhaps even in a somewhat different area. We cite it as a rather striking example of what can happen nowadays.

For some time James Pike, then Bishop of California, had been disturbing his Episcopalian colleagues with some radically unorthodox statements. There were charges and counter-charges, leading eventually to the resignation of the Bishop who apparently was seeking a forum where he could express himself with greater freedom. Subsequently, however, he demanded that he be tried for heresy -- much to everyone's surprise until it became clear that this demand was meant as a challenge to his critics, a call for a showdown. The shrewdness of this maneuver became clear when it turned out that none of those critics who had cried

out so vehemently were ready to press charges. That must have been an embarrassing situation, to have a man who had flaunted his heterodoxy in the face of his colleagues demand a trial and then to find that there were no accusers. One may wonder whether the staid, dignified, tradition-bound Anglican Church had ever encountered anything quite like that.

The next step was, of course, a committee -- a committee to advise the church's presiding bishop "on the overall problem of freedom of inquiry within the church." The committee was organized in January, its report published in August, in preparation for the church's general convention this month of September. The document is a masterpiece of diplomatic verbiage. It advises against trying to hobble the minds of men or inhibiting their search for insights into truth. It would not only tolerate but actively encourage free and vigorous theological debate, etc., etc. Yet we are told that the committee by no means suggests that there should be no limits to theological inquiry. It insists that the individual right of expression must be balanced by the "right of the Church to maintain its distinctive identity and continue as a community of faith." In other words, the organization must be preserved.

There is more to the same effect, but apparently the "Right Reverend" (as TIME Magazine now calls the former bishop) is satisfied, though the report settles nothing. But he declares himself ready to withdraw his demand for a trial if the report is adopted. The convention will probably also be satisfied since in that case there will be no need for an embarrassing process where the plaintiff or plaintiffs must be recorded as being nonexistent.

But what about the issue? Was heresy actually involved in this case or not? Having deplored the "appeal to authority, especially institutional authority, in our time," the committee does not commit itself, nor does it show any awareness of another kind of authority, completely non-institutional, namely the authority of Scripture. At least there is no indication that the latter has been invoked at any point in this entire proceeding. But TIME renders a ser-

vice when in a follow-up article it does review the erst-while bishop's theological position, of which we offer just a few samples. For Pike the Bible is not only shot through with "superstition, sheer evil and flat contradiction," but did not even exist in its present form until several centuries after the founding of Christianity. Concerning the creeds he contends quite correctly that they did not take shape until several centuries after Christ, but adds that they "do not stand on their own feet," -- a neat diversion when the real question is whether they stand on Scripture! Still speaking of the same subject he adds that man today is forced to create his own creeds and dogmas on the empirical basis of what can be proved factually, in other words, on the basis of man's own experience and experiments.* As for the hereafter, he is ready to believe that "personal survival of death is a fact," but he believes this not because of what Scripture teaches, but on the basis of something that falls into his category of the "empirical," namely certain "experiments dealing with the plausibility of extra-sensory perception and clairvoyance." And finally, what about God? Pike does not rule Him out. He holds that man's "awareness of the amount of order there is, and of beauty, of joy and love" points to an ultimate Reality that is in the realm of the "empirical," and therefore acceptable to him. But according to TIME, Pike "firmly rejects the idea of a personal deity who answers prayers or somehow serves as an answer to the mysteries of life." He says, "There is no way that the 'God' whom we could alternately lean on and blame can be made credible again."

So much for Pike and his self-made religion. He is determined to believe what his reason (by "empirical processes") tells him can be believed. Scripture can tell him nothing. But for a church that has the Scriptures and

*) The former bishop's aversion to creeds is explained by an earlier remark to the effect that such dogmas as the Trinity and the Virgin Birth are beliefs that he can do without.

yet stands helpless before such a situation, quailing at the mere mention of a heresy trial, one wonders whether the whole body is not even more sick than this particular member!

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POSTSCRIPT: Why the above? If this were written for the satisfaction of pointing with selfrighteous pride to the failings of others, it should not be published. But if the reader will refer to the preceding article, he will find that there we spoke of a statement we consider a "symptom of an incipient disease, a progressive deterioration." The second of these articles with its pathological "Case History" means to show what happens when this "progressive deterioration" runs its course. The moral is obvious. The time to speak out is at the beginning of such a process. And the reason for doing it is that some Lutheran leaders are toying with just that kind of thinking, in spite of the fact that it has led to such tragic results in other church bodies.

Pray God that someone, somehow, may still call a halt!

E. Reim

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