



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

I Timothy 4:15

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IN MEMORIAM

Professor Edmund C. Reim, 1892-1969.

Pastor, teacher, scholar, student, gentleman, friend---Professor Reim was all of these. But above all, he was a Christian man who gave all glory to God through the grace that is in Christ Jesus. We knew him as a gifted man upon whom God had bestowed talents in goodly measure. He was not a man who claimed to be free from sin or devoid of weakness; but he had learned to say with the Apostle Paul: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me." Gal. 2:20. While we found him to be a man with a wide range of knowledge and an encyclopedic mind, the outstanding aptitude that was his was the *HABITUS* that we are accustomed to call *θεόδοτος* (God-given). He was a theologian. It was not long before the Church recognized his talent and called him to the position of theological professor. As such he served in the Wisconsin Synod for many years and then in the Church of the Lutheran Confession.

Some may have called him a polemicist. And indeed he was, if by the term is meant one who exhorts and convinces the gainsayers. But if it be said that he was polemical by nature, this would be an untrue evaluation of Prof. Reim. For his greatest joy was in the proclamation of the Gospel, and polemics entered into the picture only because of a desire to keep that Gospel pure. He served the Wisconsin Synod for many years as secretary of

the Standing Committee on Church Union. In this capacity he rendered great service in those troublous years in the Synodical Conference when the liberal spirit was showing itself particularly in the sister synod of Missouri. The hours of meetings in an attempt to stem the tide can scarcely be numbered. The toll that it took in terms of strength and energy cannot be estimated. The testimony given in oral word and on printed page displayed an irenic tone which should have made it abundantly clear that, far from desiring the satisfaction of polemical victory, Prof. Reim was concerned that men might continue in the truth and thereby be recognized and acknowledged as the true disciples of Christ and brethren in the Lord. This writer can say this from personal knowledge gained from association with the brother for many years as a fellow-member of his on the Intersynodical Relations Committee of the Synodical Conference. As we look at the record we find that Prof. Reim laid down some telling testimony, not only in committee but also in a series of articles published in the Northwestern Lutheran under the title, "As We See It" and in a 64 page booklet, "Where Do We Stand?", an outline of the Wisconsin position.

But there came a time when Prof. Reim was convinced that his synod was temporizing, using time for admonishing an erring church body when the Word of God called for separation; and so the painful hour came when, in obedience to Scripture, he withdrew from membership in the Wisconsin Synod. This brought to an end his tenure as theological professor at the Thiensville Seminary and as its president although he had not resigned from these offices, which he held by virtue of a

divine call. The validity of such a call is not contingent simply upon synodical membership. Nevertheless the Seminary Board of Control declared Prof. Reim's call terminated, holding that under the circumstances he could no longer serve in his office, yet offering neither a charge nor evidence of any guilt of false doctrine or malfeasance as basis for the action. The pattern of this procedure was followed with some variations again and again in the Wisconsin Synod as well as in cases that came up in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Withdrawal from the synod became the cause for the setting aside of many calls.

This now, for Prof. Reim, was the opening of a new era and the Lord used him in the months following as a salutary influence among those who, for reasons similar to his, had withdrawn from their synodical affiliations.

When the Church of the Lutheran Confession was organized he served in many capacities: as Dean and Professor of its Theological Seminary which he had helped establish, as editor of its Theological Journal, as essayist at conventions and pastoral conferences, as member of the Board of Doctrine, as counsellor and Christian brother. The church body which was born out of tribulation and exists only by the grace of God has sufficient reason to be grateful to the Lord for this gift to the Church. Now this servant has departed to be with his Lord and his God. And those of us who remain to this present day pray God to keep us all faithful in the Word to our end.

C. M. Gullerud

SERMON AT A CHAPEL MEMORIAL SERVICE

for

PROF. E. REIM

Text: Hebrews 13:7.8. "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever."

Dear Fellow-Redeemed:

In the well-known eleventh chapter of Hebrews we have a catalogue of saints "who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises." Here are listed the names of men and women of God who lived in faith and of whom it is said that they died in faith. Here appear the names of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Jacob, Rahab, Moses, Gideon, David and Samuel and others. Of one it is said that "he looked for a city which hath foundation, whose builder and maker is God." Of another it is said that "he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." Of some it is said they submitted to torture rather than to accept deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.

All of these are dead and have been absent from this earth for centuries. Though they are dead, they speak to us with the language of faith preserved for us in Holy Writ, and we are in their debt because of the examples of faith they left us as an inheritance. We are profited thereby and carry from their lives of faith a treasure of precious memories which point in one direction---to the Christ of God Whom their hearts embraced, although in their lifetimes the promise of His coming had not yet been fulfilled. In Him they found their strength and in Him their hope. Through Him their trials and afflictions dissolved as the better thing, the better country, the heavenly, stood before

their eyes.

After this cataloguing of faith and hope has been completed the sacred penman records these words of God, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." Indeed these heroes of faith surround us, as it were, with the testimony they bore, and we are reminded that, as they reached the heavenly goal, so should we put aside all things which stand as obstacles to the Christian course which lies before us. Every unholy and improper attachment and fellowship is to be set aside, every bit of pride, of vanity, of worldliness is to be cast off, for these are weights which impede us in the race we are running. Nothing must remain to turn our gaze from Him Who is the author of our faith as well as its perfecter, Jesus Our Redeemer and the friend of sinners.

It is fitting and right in this connection that we should speak words of thanksgiving for all those who have served us with the Word which has kept us free--the Word which has kept us looking at Jesus Who is the same yesterday, today, and for ever. We do not intend to raise up shrines to the memory of an Abraham, a Moses, a David or for any church leader, for to do so would not be a following of their faith. Rather it would be a desecration of their memory. Properly to remember them is to take to heart the word of their Christian testimony and to consider that they died in the faith which they preached and by which they entered into the eternal rest which remaineth unto the people of God. Yes, this is what our text is saying: "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and for ever."

It is fitting and right that we should, in this remembering, in this memorial service for our teacher and colleague, Prof. Edmund Reim, center our attention upon these truths. This is the way he would have had it. And

what better memorial can there be than to make this the occasion for the preaching of Christ in whose service our beloved teacher spent himself. This is to do honor to his memory. Many are the students, many are the former parishioners, many are the friends and associates as well as all the members of his family who will find occasion, on the event of Prof. Reim's passing to the Holy City above, to offer up a prayer of thanksgiving for the Word of spirit and of truth that he brought to them. It is an occasion, too, for remembering with gratitude to God the service which he rendered our school at its founding and through the years of its struggle to become established as it is this day. It took a special measure of dedication and self-sacrifice to make these things possible. In this I am sure there were no regrets. We shall carry in special memory the Christ-centered and Scripture-oriented messages which our brother brought to us through the years in this chapel of our worship.

The Christ he preached was the Christ He found in Scripture and the Christ whom through the Spirit he himself embraced in faith. The very last words I heard from his lips was a "thank you" for the word of prayer that the grace of God in Christ would remain with him to the end. And this is the way of faith, that our highest thanks is for the grace of God which is so abundant that it covers all of our soul's great need. Where sin did abound, there did grace much more abound. Because we have the assurance that he embraced this unchanging Christ, we can today think of Prof. Reim's death as a homecoming. There is joy in this and not gloom. As our brother was thankful for the grace of God so should we with a full heart say to Jesus:

For the joy Thine Advent gave me,
For Thy holy, precious Word;
For Thy baptism, which doth save me,
For Thy blest communion board;
For Thy death, the bitter scorn,
For Thy resurrection morn,
Lord, I thank Thee and extol Thee,
And in heaven I shall behold Thee.

This memorial service shall give us occasion, too, to consider what our being here at Immanuel is all about. Why are we here if not to extol our Savior Who redeemed us and gave Himself for us? And as one laborer in God's vineyard after another passes from this earthly scene, we are reminded of the need for replacements--the need for more pastors, more teachers to take the place of those whose labors are ended. It places us before a decision as to what we are to do with our lives, our talents, and our gifts. It offers occasion for us to give careful consideration to the choice of preparing for the teaching and preaching ministry. As we contemplate the passing of servants from this earthly life we are moved to think of our mission more in terms of the end of the road. We are reminded of the Latin maxim of an ancient church father: "Disce ut semper victurus; Vive ut cras moriturus." (Study as though you were going to live forever; Live as though you were going to die tomorrow.) When we look upon our studies from this view-point, our work here takes on special meaning and the urgency of the hour becomes more acute. Looking at life in this way our mission becomes clear--to spend ourselves in the proclamation of the message of Jesus, telling all men that He lived and died and rose again for them. This is the most timely thing we can do; for we preach a Jesus Who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. We preach a Jesus Who is the author and finisher of our faith.

May God keep us saying:
Grant me grace, O blessed Savior,
And Thy Holy Spirit send
That my walk and my behavior
May be pleasing to the end;
That I may not fall again
Into death's grim pit and pain,
Whence by grace Thou hast retrieved me
And from which Thou hast relieved me.
Amen.

C. M. Gullerud

—ESSAYS AND ARTICLES—

THE CHURCH, "INVISIBLE" AND "VISIBLE."

For generations, in former and present circles of true confessional Lutheranism, it has been an accepted practice to speak of the Christian Church with the use of both adjectives listed in the title of this essay. From the pulpit as well as in the instruction of our children reference has been made to the "invisible Church" and the "visible church." In printed form these terms have, as here, sometimes been distinguished by the use of an upper-case initial letter for the noun in the first, and of a lower-case initial in the second, in order to underscore a significant difference in the definition of the word "church." This method, however, has in most instances not been consistent enough to be even modestly helpful toward a precise understanding of terminology; and our literature has largely ignored the use of this device.

The several formal explanations of Luther's Small Catechism in vogue among us during the previous and present centuries have uniformly treated the doctrine of the Church under both headings. Leaving aside earlier versions such as the catechism of Konrad Dieterich which was in wide use in Synodical Conference parishes during the second half of the nineteenth century, we shall here limit ourselves to quotations from the catechisms remembered by people now living.

The so-called "Schwan" catechism of 1896,¹⁾ As translated into English in 1912, spoke thus:

185. What is the Church?

The congregation of saints, that is, all Christendom, the whole number of all believers; for only believers, and all believers, are members of the Church.

186. Why do we say, "I believe in the Church?"

1. Because the Church is invisible, since no man can look into another's heart and see if he believe;
2. Because we are, nevertheless, assured by Scripture that the Holy Ghost at all times gathers and preserves a congregation of believers.

191. Whom do we mean when we speak of a visible Church?

The whole number of those who profess the Christian faith and are gathered about God's Word, but among whom, besides the true Christians, there are also hypocrites.

192. Whom do we call the true visible Church?

The whole number of those who have, teach, and confess the entire doctrine of the Word of God in all its purity, and among whom the Sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's institution.

The "Gausewitz" catechism, officially adopted by the Wisconsin Synod in 1928 and re-issued in a revised English version in 1956, offers the following treatment of the subject:²⁾

237. What, then, is the Church?

The Church is the communion of saints or the congregation of all believers.

242. Why do we say, I believe in the holy Christian Church?

The doctrine of the Church is a matter of faith. We know from the Word of God alone that there is a Church; only the Lord knows who has faith in Jesus Christ. (The invisible Church).

245. Why do we also call any visible assembly or a denomination, in which the Gospel is preached and the Sacraments are administered, a church?

Such an assembly, or denomination, is called a church because in its midst there surely are members of the invisible Church, even though we do not know them. (The visible Church).

Finally, we have the "new" Synodical Catechism issued by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in 1943, ³⁾ which offers the following wording:

175. What is the holy Christian Church?
The holy Christian Church is the communion of saints, that is, the whole number of believers in Christ; for all believers, and only believers, are members of this Church. (The invisible Church).

176. Why do you say, "I believe" in the Church?

I say, I believe in the Church -

- A. Because the Church is invisible, since no man can look into another's heart and see whether he believes;
- B. Because we are nevertheless assured by the Scriptures that the Holy Ghost at all times gathers and preserves a congregation of believers.

177. Why do you say, I believe in "the" Church?

I say, I believe in the Church because there is only one Church; for all believers are a communion of saints, or one spiritual body, whose one and only Head is Christ.

180. Where is this holy Christian Church to be found?

This holy Christian Church is to be found wherever the Gospel is in use; for according to God's promise His Word shall not be preached in vain.

181. In which other senses is the word "church" used?

The word "church" is also used to denote -

- A. The visible Church of God.
- B. A denomination.
- C. A local congregation.
- D. A house of worship.

182. What is the visible Church?

The visible Church is the whole number of those who use the Word of God and profess the Christian faith, but among whom, besides the true Christians, there are also hypocrites.

184. Which denomination is the true visible Church?

That denomination is the true visible Church which has, teaches and confesses the entire doctrine of the Word of God and administers the Sacraments according to Christ's institution.

These records are quoted in order to demonstrate the simplicity in which this doctrine of the Church has been officially presented among us. With but minor differences in wording, word order and care for detail, our several books of catechetical instruction seem to affirm the same truths concerning the mystery of the Church as revealed in Holy Scripture and encountered in the experience of the saints on earth.

Let us say at once that it is entirely appropriate to require periodic, Scripture-oriented re-examination of traditional terminology, no matter how sanctified by ancient usage it may seem. It is therefore well that the dogmatic formulation of the doctrine of the Church should also be weighed most carefully. But of course such studies ought to be neither self-serving nor interested in mere logomachy. If the cause is godly, method and motivation should be equally so.

We are concerned here only with the reflections and writings of those theologians for whom the central truth concerning the Church remains beyond question, namely that the Church is nothing other than the spiritual body of Christ, consisting of all true believers. And it is not our purpose to duplicate the work of many others by offering a

full examination of the doctrine of the Church. We wish to investigate specifically the nature of the restrictions which some feel obliged to impose upon the uses of the terms "invisible" and "visible" as applied to the Church in our form of teaching. And our objective is to see a correct foundation established upon which practical questions involving the Church can be effectively discussed.

Our catechisms with one accord commit us to the declaration that the Church, the Communion of Saints, is "invisible." This is admittedly a term not specifically used by Scripture to describe the Church. Its justification lies in the manner in which the essence of the Church is defined by the Lord and His Apostles.

Is the Church really "invisible" in the full sense of that word? And is that what we intend to say when we ascribe this attribute to the Church? In an article in Concordia Theological Monthly⁴⁾ Dr. F.E. Mayer set forth the issue in this way, quoting Luther in preparation for his remarks:

"If the article - I believe the Christian Church, the communion of saints - is true, then it follows that no one can see or sense the Church. One does not see or experience what one believes, and again what one sees or perceives one does not believe." (St. Louis, XVIII:1349; cp. XIX:1081).

And again Luther states:

'Even as the rock is without sin, invisible and spiritual, so also the church which is without sin, is invisible and spiritual which one can perceive only through faith (sola fide perceptibilis) Therefore St. Matthew's words do not treat of the papacy and of a visible Church, on the contrary, they overthrow it and reduce it to a synagogue of Satan.' (St. Louis, XVIII:1445. Cp. also p. 1469; XVII:1338; XXII:603ff; 989.)

The term "invisible" (unsichtlich) as it is commonly used today does not do justice to Luther's concept. From the quotation above it is apparent that Luther

does not use the adjectives invisibilis et spiritualis in a quantitative or statistical sense, but qualitatively, sine peccato invisibilis et spiritualis sola fide perceptibilis. This is the sweetest Gospel, and it can be understood only by faith. The term "invisible" will lead to false conceptions if it is used in distinction to the Calvinistic concept of a visible Church. Luther's concept of "invisible" is best expressed in the thought that the true nature of the Church is hidden under the cross (*ecclesia abscondita, cruce tecta, latent sancti*)."

Since we are here concerned with the meaning and use of a dogmatic term, as we have pointed out, it is entirely fitting that the history of its use and its historical content in confessional Lutheranism should be considered. Obviously we are dealing with a question in semantics, first of all, one that at the same time involves a problem in precise translation of terms from one language to another.

It was out of the antitheses and confrontations of the Reformation period that the clearest, most detailed literature dealing with the Scriptural doctrine of the Church originated, supplying much of the terminology with which the Lutheran dogmaticians of the seventeenth century operated. It is thus logical that our attention should be centered in Luther's expositions and terminology.

To engage in an exhaustive research of this area in order to determine, for example, whether Luther always used the term "unsichtlich" rather than "unsichtbar" in this context and found a subtle distinction between them, would be a herculean task for which this Journal and its staff at present have neither time nor adequate access to sources. But perhaps this is just as well; for Luther's stand in the Scriptures finds such clear expression in his voluminous writings on this subject that he can hardly be misunderstood by those who share his convictions of sin and grace; and it is not really necessary to lose oneself in a welter of linguistic or documentary research.

What is it, according to Lutheran theology, that

causes the Church to be invisible? We note Luther's words as quoted by Dr. Mayer:

".... so also the church which is without sin, is invisible and spiritual which one can perceive only through faith (sola fide perceptibilis)"

For the sake of completeness we offer here the German text of this paragraph:

"Gleichwie nun der Fels, der ohne Suende ist, unsichtbar und geistlich ist: also muss auch die Kirche, die ohne Suende ist, unsichtbar und geistlich sein, die man allein durch den Glauben begreift. Es ist je vonnoeten, dass der Grund Einer Art sei mit dem, das darauf gebaut ist; wie wir auch im Glauben sagen: 'Ich glaube, dass Eine heilige christliche Kirche oder Gemeinde in der ganzen Welt ist.' Was man aber sieht von aussen scheinbarlich, das darf man nicht glauben, man erkennt es leiblich" etc.

This could perhaps be translated, and punctuated, more accurately thus:

"Now just as the rock, which is without sin, is invisible and spiritual, so also must the Church, which is without sin, be invisible and spiritual, which (Church) one perceives through faith alone. It is essential that the foundation be identical in kind with that which is built thereon; as we also say in the creed: 'I believe that in all the world there is One holy Christian Church or congregation.' But what one sees from the outside by appearance one need not believe, one recognizes it physically....."

The Apostle Paul writes: "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, things are new." (II Cor. 5:17). This is a description of the saint of God, the believer. It is a definition of the New Man who is "born of the Spirit," "born of God," righteous and without sin before God. He, and all of his kind, constitute the Church.

Let us hear Luther again:⁵⁾

"Whosoever would not go astray should therefore

hold fast to this, that the Church (Christenheit) is a spiritual assembly of souls in one faith, and that no one is reckoned a Christian for his body's sake; in order that he may know that the true, real, right, essential Church (Christenheit) is a spiritual thing, and not anything external or outward, by whatever name it may be called."

The sinful flesh which still clings to a saint of God in this life has no part in the true ecclesia. It is not of the Spirit. It is the Old Adam, who must daily be drowned and die, who in the end must utterly perish. He is of the world, can never share in the Kingdom, refuses to let Christ be Lord. St. Paul cries out against him: "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24). This "flesh" plagues the believer in his earth-bound state. It sees him as the world sees him: Not as a living member of the body of Christ, glorious and without spot or wrinkle or any such thing (as he truly is), but as a creature made to enjoy and treasure the things of this world as his true heritage and actively to pursue them for their own sake; sees him as an Adam looking for new adventures and prepared to hide from God in the bushes where necessary, or plotting to come forth and confer with Him on a modus vivendi to be achieved through accommodation. For the Old Adam has not the remotest comprehension of a faith that is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). But the Christian is of the very essence of that faith. It is not only the thing for which he lives, but the life by which he exists.

Surrounded, then, by hostile foreigners, by the world and by his flesh, the saint is all alone; yet not alone at all. For he knows by faith that all about him there are multitudes of his own kind, a living host, not of imaginary beings that exist only in theory, but of true personalities like himself, individuals "created in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:10), "neither Jew nor Greek neither bond nor free neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). This is truly the "ecclesia abscondita," hidden as it were beneath the cross.

"Commenting on II Kings 6 - Elisha's prayer that his servant's eyes may be opened to see the accompanying hosts - Luther states that we must ask God to open our eyes of faith to see the Church round about us and then we need fear nothing."⁶⁾

"What does it mean to believe the holy Christian Church, if not the communion of saints? And in what do the saints have fellowship? Certainly, they share mutually all blessings and evils What does the small toe endure but that the entire body suffers? Or which benefit comes to the feet which does not gladden the entire body? We are one body. Therefore when we have pain and suffer, let us firmly believe and be certain that it is not we, or we alone, but that Christ and the entire Church suffer and die with us. Thus Christ has made provision that we do not enter upon the way of death alone, but are accompanied by the entire Church as we enter the path of afflictions and death. And the Church is able to bear a greater load than we."⁷⁾

We may now return to our question. Are we correctly responding to the Scriptural concept when we speak of the Church as invisible, and do we therewith mean what Luther meant with "unsichtlich" or "unsichtbar?" As to the first part, we can say with assurance that, if by "invisible" we mean to say that the existence of the Church, as well as its glory and the joy and comfort it brings, are perceptible only to the eyes of faith and completely beyond reach of the sight and comprehension of the world and the flesh (including our own), there is no need whatever to retreat from the use of the adjective. And to the second part of the question we reply that, as Luther so meant it, so do our catechisms when they ask and answer the question: "Why do you say, I believe in the Church?" For they are speaking of the true nature and essence of the Church, a basic concept toward which Luther was led by the grace of God as a chosen champion of the doctrine of justification through faith and, in necessary consequence, as an effective opponent of the prevailing heresy which designated the

Roman Catholic Church as the one true Church.

Whether as teachers in the Church we have always correctly or adequately represented what our catechisms teach in this point, whether indeed our prayers and the hymns we sing do in their wording never blur the image of the Church is, of course, another matter, one upon which we cannot elaborate here with profit. Let it suffice to say that here, as in every area of revealed truth, we all need to ask fervently and constantly to be taught by the Spirit of God. But we must now pursue other issues which are, in a certain sense, more complex than that which we have so far treated.

With one accord our catechisms also speak of "the visible Church." We mentioned above that this concept has been questioned by some and denounced by others as un-Scriptural. Dr. Herman Preus felt it necessary to write:⁸⁾

"It is evident that we are facing here the crux of our whole problem, the so-called question of the visible and invisible Church. It is the most difficult point of all. From Augustine down, theologians have wrestled with it and come to vague, conflicting conclusions. And when we consider that Luther had to tear himself loose from a conception which had been established and taken for granted for centuries by the whole Church (sic!), we can appreciate the difficulty of his task. Is there, perhaps, a mystery here that will never be solved? Is it as Kohlmeyer declares when he speaks of the relation between the "visible" and the "invisible" Church: 'From the necessary transition of the Church to this outward appearance and from the conflict between these two arise the insoluble problems in Luther's thinking on the Church'?"

Such a sense of difficulty may well be awakened also by some of the efforts of the Lutheran dogmaticians of the seventeenth century. As an example we could cite J. Gerhard from his *Loci*:⁹⁾

"We by no means introduce two Churches as opposed to each other, as though the visible and in-

visible Churches were contra-distinguished species; but we say that the visible and invisible are one and the same Church, with a diverse relation For the invisible assembly of the elect is comprised under the visible congregation of the called, because the elect are not to be sought outside of the assembly of the called, and the Church of the called is more comprehensive than that of the elect (Matt. 20:16). Whoever, therefore, belong to the invisible Church, i. e., all who are elect, are also the called, but not the reverse."

This sounds laborious indeed; and Gerhard seems to be suggesting the thought of the Church as the two concentric circles, the "ecclesiola in ecclesia", a concept so abused and distorted by the German pietists and others. Dr. Mayer categorically states:¹⁰⁾

"It is foreign to Lutheran theological thinking to compare or to contrast an invisible and a visible Church. To do so is a false antithesis, since the word Church has an entirely different connotation in each term: in the one it is the communion of saints; in the other it is a corpus mixtum, not even an ecclesia mixta, in fact, strictly speaking, no Church at all."

We can heartily concur in Dr. Mayer's complaint that 11)

"it is, of course, unfortunate that the ecclesiastical term Church has such a variety of meanings. It has caused a great deal of theological confusion."

But this multiple use has its history too, no small part of which was contributed by orthodox confessors in support of divine truth; and we are not in position to revert to a status quo ante, but must live with existing terminology as best we can. This also means that we should be careful not to read into the terms more or less than intended by speaker, writer or confessing Church, just as we do not condemn the language used by the Apology when it speaks both of the ecclesia proprie dicta and the ecclesia improprie dicta.¹²⁾

When we look into the excerpts from our catechisms as presented on the opening pages of this essay, we find in them, at least, no compelling ground for saying that they "contrast an invisible and a visible Church" in a manner "foreign to Lutheran theological thinking," although it is undeniably true that they carefully distinguish the two concepts. This, however, Luther did also, as Dr. Mayer himself points out when he quotes the Reformer.¹³⁾ We reproduce here only the most necessary portion of the quotation; and since the translation provided leaves something to be desired, the German is here re-translated with what we consider greater accuracy:

"Therefore, to promote a better understanding and for the sake of brevity, we shall designate the two Churches by names that distinguish between them. The first, which is the natural, fundamental, essential and true Church, we wish to call a spiritual, inner Christendom (Christenheit). The other, which is a product of external nature, we shall call a corporeal, external Christendom; not that we want to separate them from each other, but in the manner in which I speak of a man and call him spiritual as pertains to the soul, and corporeal as pertains to the body; or as the Apostle is wont to speak of an inner and an outer man....."

"Although this (latter) assembly (Gemeine) does not make a man a true Christian nevertheless it never remains without some who are indeed true Christians But those who without faith and apart from the first Church are in this second Church are dead in the sight of God, dissemblers and no more than wooden pictures of true Christendom....."

Luther is very explicit in explaining how he speaks of a "corporeal, external Christendom" as Church. Our catechisms uniformly try to exercise the same care. Although Luther here does not use the expression "sichtbare Kirche" ("visible Church"), substituting for it the term "gemachte Kirche", he is obviously referring to the Church

in an externalized sense. Our catechisms all accept as a valid concept the idea of a "visible Church." A careful examination reveals that they all use it in precisely the same sense, although they do not frame their questions in the same manner.

The old "Schwan" catechism asks: "Whom do we mean when we speak of a visible Church?" The new synodical (Missouri) catechism of 1943 is less discreet. Having told us that "the word 'Church' is also used to denote the visible Church of God," it bluntly asks: "What is the visible Church?" This wording can be understood to imply that it is dealing with a terminus technicus which has but one universally accepted meaning, an assumption which would unfortunately not be factual.

The answer and definition offered by both of the above catechisms is essentially the same. While we have no reason to think that it was intended to be so understood, this definition may invite the danger of having the ecclesia element of the visible Church improperly stressed. As Dr. Mayer would put it, the visible Church may be regarded as an ecclesia mixta, rather than as a corpus mixtum.

The revised "Gausewitz" catechism proceeds in a different manner. It asks: "Why do we also call any visible assembly or a denomination, in which the Gospel is preached and the Sacraments are administered, a church?" And the answer: "Such an assembly, or denomination, is called a church because in its midst there surely are members of the invisible Church, even though we do not know them. (The visible Church)."

We note that the question does not feature the term "visible Church," but speaks merely of "a church," with the noun initialed in lower case. It acknowledges the existence of visible assemblies or denominations characterized by the observable presence of the marks of the Church, Gospel and Sacraments. In the answer it tells us that in such assemblies "there surely are members of the invisible Church," but immediately adds that "we do not know them." In the parenthetic addition it indicates that this is the correct way, or at least its way, of using the term "visible

Church."

Gospel and Sacraments are not of the essence of the Church, but "churchly" marks indicating the presence of the Church which itself remains invisible.¹⁴⁾ Yet we cannot separate the doctrine of the Means of Grace from the department of ecclesiology and simply eliminate the concept of the "visible Church."

To suggest that this concept is un-Lutheran or, what is worse, un-Scriptural even if correctly used and applied would be unwarranted. That in some church bodies it has been, and continues to be, widely corrupted (as have many other theological terms, for Satan is not idle) is very evident; and the nature of this corruption, as well as its disastrous effects, are known to every Lutheran theologian worthy of his salt. One will grant that it were far better to have available a generally understood and valid substitute expression. There is none in our language and ecclesiastical vocabulary; yet the entity which the term seeks to define in Lutheran theology exists. There is a Something of churchly nature which is not the Church per se, a Something which the Savior, for example, depicts when He speaks of the kingdom of heaven as being like a net that gathered of every kind . . . good and bad (Matt. 13:47-50). There is a Something which Luther distinguishes from "die wirkliche Kirche" and calls "die gemachte Kirche" or, perhaps somewhat imprecisely and ambiguously, the congregatio vocatorum.¹⁵⁾ There is a Something called Israel which is not all "Israel" (Rom. 9:6). And this Something is, as our catechisms insist, "visible."

We quote Dr. Mayer again:¹⁶⁾

"The paradox of Luther's concept of the church is this: The Church is invisible, but manifests itself in a mask, in a veiled form. It is therefore contrary to Luther's thought to place the terms 'visible' and 'invisible' in antithesis to each other. The term 'visible' (sichtlich), which according to Luther scholars occurs only once in Luther's writings, denotes perceptible, recognizable (wahrnehmbar), not visible (sichtbar) in the commonly accepted

meaning. Luther knows only one Church, the congregation of believers. The true nature of the Church cannot be established empirically, but it is and remains an article of faith. And of this congregation he states that it is both invisible and perceptible."

The saints of God are the true believers. Their identification is the seal: "The Lord knoweth them that are his" (II Tim. 2:19). He knows and sees them as "chosen generation, royal priesthood, holy nation, peculiar people" (I Peter 2:9. - The original does not require an indefinite article. The epithets are qualitative.¹⁷) But while they are in this world and of this life, they are not disembodied spirits, nor are they intangible persons. They walk about in their bodies which still bear the image of mortality. They are burdened with the sinful flesh. Our eyes cannot behold them, our hands cannot touch them, except as creatures so encumbered. In this manner they must have their being with and among others, their faith hidden within and manifested to men only by its fruits.

But let us thank God - for is He not the God who also in this sense "setteth the solitary in families" (Ps. 68:6)? - that we may thus enjoy the fellowship of the saints, even though they appear, as Luther would put it, only "in a mask, in a veiled form."¹⁸) And if we describe such a relationship as a fellowship in the "visible Church," let no one becloud the joy by unnecessarily berating the use of the term. It is far more vital that we should, in holy jealousy for our privilege, be scrupulously careful not to presume upon it, whether by dealing with the visible as though it were the invisible, or by dealing with the invisible as though we could see it!

The one Church "manifests its presence on earth in assemblies of men where the Word is preached and the Sacraments are administered according to the Word of God."¹⁹) By such confessional activities we as saints deal with saints, both publicly and privately. But even when we are fellowshiping as true saints with true saints, we must regard one another as we are, veiled by the flesh. Here we

seek rightly to divide the Word of Truth while ministering to one another as mortals not yet unclothed, but still at home in the body (II Cor. 5).

Our exercise of fellowship is as with saints; and yet it is outwardly limited by the peculiarities of the "visible" Church. We have been instructed and know whom we may, and whom we may not, welcome into the bond of that outward fellowship. Here we have to do simply with the fruits of their visible life, specifically their confession to the whole Truth as evidenced in word and deed. To violate this principle in any way would indeed mean that we have confused visible with invisible and vice versa, and that we are menaced by the perils of antinomianism as well as of a confusion of Law and Gospel. From these preserve us, Heavenly Father!

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NOTES.

- 1) Concordia Publ. House, 1912, pp. 98ff.
- 2) Northwestern Publ. House, 1956, pp. 144ff.
- 3) Concordia Publ. House, 1943, pp. 131ff.
- 4) "The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel And The Terminology Visible and Invisible Church," by F. E. Mayer: Concordia Theological Monthly, Vol. XXV, No. 3, pp. 177-198. - Since several references are to be made to this significant essay, they will hereafter be cited simply as "Mayer," with page number.
- 5) As quoted by H. A. Preus in "The Communion of Saints," Augsburg Publ. House, 1948, p. 81f.
- 6) Mayer, p. 192
- 7) Ibid. p. 188.
- 8) Preus, op. cit. p. 84.
- 9) Loci, as quoted by H. Schmidt, "Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church," translation of Hay & Jacobs; United Luth. Publication House, 1899, p. 594.
- 10) Mayer, p. 185.

- 11) Ibid. p. 186.
- 12) For example, Triglotta 226:5.
- 13) Mayer, p. 186. Luther's Works, St. Louis Ed., XVIII, 1018f.
- 14) Here, too, caution in expression must be exercised. It is inaccurate to speak as E. George Pierce does when he says of the Church: "Not only does it exist, but it can be recognized and found upon earth in the spoken, audible Word and in the visible Sacraments." (Concordia Theol. Monthly, Oct. 1954, p. 727).
- 15) Mayer, p. 192. See also J. Gerhard in Schmidt, op. cit., p. 591.
- 16) Mayer, p. 193.
- 17) Cf. Quartalschrift, Wisconsin Synod, April 1912, p. 95.
- 18) Mayer, p. 193. Cf. also excerpts from the systematic theologians as listed in H. Schmidt, op. cit., Chap. III, 56, (10), pp. 590ff.
- 19) Preus, op. cit., p. 89.

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E. Schaller



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CONCERN FOR THE FUTURE OF
THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

(A review of Samuel L. Goltermann's
article "The Future of Theological Education"
Concordia Theol. Monthly, XXXIX, No. 9)

An alert society will always be concerned about the future of the education of its community. The church, ever alert, will be intensely concerned about the future of theological education. And as long as it is the time of grace the church will educate in order to educate . . . that the deaf, blind, and dead society of mankind might hear, see, and live.

That is quite an educational order, even for theological education! But it is satisfied to perfection by the living Word. Let this absolute educational necessity (the Word) be neglected, despised, or forgotten by the educators and they become like the characters of T. S. Eliot's play, THE COCKTAIL PARTY: "They make noises and think they are talking to each other; they make faces and think they understand each other." At their greatest they are dead leaders of the dead.

But God, as always, is able to make the stones cry out to educate. So theological education does go on, it does have a future, . . . until the Word returns on the day that man must abandon for ever the past and future tense of life. Yes, the church has her stones who are called by God to cry out the Word of life (theological education). They cry out in the home, at school, in higher education, in specialized training for the ministries, in every field of private and public study. There can be no time, no place, no occasion where theological education is improper, irrelevant, or absent.

Our concern in this review is focused upon theological education in the narrowest sense - the training of our public ministers, teachers and pastors. The review will

ponder the concern expressed by Samuel L. Goltermann* in the CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY, Volume XXXIX, number 9, pages 597-606: "The Future of Theological Education".

Mr. Goltermann goes high, wide, and handsome in his analysis of the problem, yet his report is of some value to us. As educators we know that we need balance... the ability to recognize and receive good new things as well as to reject the bad; we need the ability to move quickly and gracefully into wholesome change as well as to resist change for the sake of change; we need the ability to ponder good thinking and new ideas, yet waste no time with such that cannot edify.

Mr. Goltermann bases his report on the findings of the special research committee, the Resources Planning Commission (RPC) of the American Association of Theological Schools (AATS) which includes almost all institutions of higher learning in the United States and Canada, Protestant and Catholic.

The RPC had been assigned nothing less important than to come up with directives as to what changes must be effected if Theological Education is to survive the great changes and upheavals in American culture (key words like "survive" push the oldest panic-button in the world!). History testifies that theological education has survived every great change in every culture of mankind. It has done so ever since that essential change, the Fall, brought about the life-or-death need for theological education.

The sum and substance of the AATS report pins down two essential causes for this struggle for survival: "ecumenics and economics". We might have guessed it, for theological organizations (establishments) of this world have been singing this theme since sin... the fear of walking alone and the fear of walking without bread. Apparently the lesson taught in the report of the 70 (Luke 22:35) never had relevancy for them: "...lacked ye anything? And they

*Assistant executive secretary of the Board for Higher Education - LCMS.

said, Nothing."

The members of the RPC expressed their fears in very practical terms: "...adequate training for ministry and priesthood must be ecumenical and, to be ecumenical, men of different confessions and traditions must be educated in a common setting."

The fear over daily bread is expressed as a need for structural changes before the seminaries will be forced to the bankruptcy wall: "The cost of merely staying alive, of conducting business as usual, without making any changes in the existing programs, will at least double again in the next decade; making any profound changes in the programs and methods, if undertaken by an individual seminary, seem likely to require operating expenditures which will be four or five times greater than those today..."

Unfortunately, Mr. Goltermann overlooked a significant statement in the above quotation: "The cost of merely staying alive, of conducting business as usual", so he falls in line with the AATS line of thought, although not without offering some criticism.

It should be obvious to the child-like believer that the cost of staying alive has been paid in full and receipted. Thereby both the fear of walking alone and the fear of walking without bread have been eliminated.

Mr. Goltermann reacts to the AATS fears with the vaporous consolation that the two Missouri Synod seminaries are exempt by reason of quantity. "The very comfortable size of the two Missouri Synod seminaries accounts in part, for their somewhat lower per student cost of operation... actually, the size of both of these seminaries makes them less susceptible to criticism for so-called isolation existence than other seminaries of much smaller size operating elsewhere in the nation."

Mr. Goltermann goes on to assure any concerned people that the above factors will not prevent the two Concordia Seminaries from moving toward greater involvement and cooperation with other theological schools than has heretofore been considered possible or appropriate.

While the fearful considerations before the AATS

commission have resulted in the now famous proposals for "theological clusters," Mr. Goltermann feels temporary relief from the fearful pressures because of the quantitative quality of his seminaries. Yet he is happy to note with haste that, while LCMS is not in emergency need of problem-solving remedies, she is already well positioned on the practical road to cluster salvation.

It is not imagination if we feel the heat of the branding iron labeled "naive" when we say that the cost of staying alive has been paid in full and receipted. But this absolute truth is the most practical thing in this life, the only really practical solution of all our problems. When this evangelical truth is abandoned, then truly even theological education becomes "doing business as usual," involving all of the material fears and economic frustrations so common to mere men!

What a blessing if once again the faith of our founding fathers could evaluate present-day theological education problems. If only we could still read history: the history of the Perry County Seminary, Missouri; Concordia, Springfield; Northwestern, Watertown; Wauwatosa Seminary; or Immanuel, Mankato. The obstacles were greater then than now, but fears were absent in the presence of a faith that counted on God's love, not numbers; on His love, not dollars; on His Word of love as the means for theological education, not man's theologically phrased lusts. And God's love proved prosperously practical.

To sum up briefly the lesson of history from Adam to Goltermann: God's Word of love has ever been the means and the future of theological education. It alone has overcome all fears, all problems, and satisfies all needs. That is the highest goal of any educational endeavor.

But back to Mr. Goltermann's report. With a feeling of relief we hear that "Actually, much more needs to be said about the future of American Theological Education which does not involve the location and form of seminaries, but which may in the long run be more important."

The first point set forth concerns curriculum and instruction. Quite wisely Mr. Goltermann is reluctant to

agree with so many today "who insist that the so-called 'classic' or 'standard' seminary curriculum is in need of drastic revision, that it is in fact outright obsolete." He concurs, however, that "it does not seem unduly negative to agree that theological education has probably been unnecessarily bound by such forms as the four-discipline structure (exegetical, systematic, historical, and practical divisions), the lecture system, traditional course and subject sequences, and an unusual rigidity in terms of course requirements."

Mr. Goltermann also makes this worthwhile observation: "New attention will certainly need to be given to a basic canon of education, namely, that instruction should start from where the student is. This implies a recognition of his present needs, concerns, interests, doubts and anxieties, and assisting him to grow, to find answers, to gain assurance and commitment, and to develop dispositions and skills for ministry. The profound implications of this curricular principle can scarcely be overemphasized, and the obligations within it must be impressed upon teachers not only at the seminary level but indeed at all levels of education. It needs to come as a serious critique of all those course outlines which have, without serious examination, proceeded simply from 'A' to 'Z', from the early to the late, from the simple to the complex."

Another observation worth pondering is this: "... practically every course and every program will not only be challenged but will also be changed, both by reorganizing the content and revising the method. Theological problems will be studied by a cross-disciplinary method which involves invoking the Scriptural witness, of course, but also studying the historical context and human situation in which the theological fact or truth is to be taught and communicated. This will mean less 'learning' of theology (especially as propositions and theses) and more 'doing' of theology in the sense of forming theological statements and understanding as a product of applying the Word of God to present situations and structures. All of this may require substantial changes in method, from traditional lecture, reci-

tation, and propositional modes to problem-centered and case-history approaches which enable the student to operate in the classroom in a manner very similar to the way in which he will have to do theology in the ministry to which he will soon be called."

However, in the zeal for perspicuity, Mr. Goltermann offers examples. The examples go drifting from the wholesome use of some of his proposals into the danger area. When he speaks of making allowance for "human considerations" and "the intimate impingement of the major nontheological disciplines upon the theological" we have good cause to get nervous. While Mr. Goltermann could perhaps clarify the intent of his remarks, he does leave the door open for something more than the proverbial "cart before the horse" or Volkswagen revolution.

In the case of transportation engineering it is recognized that the source of torque (power) can be situated at either push or pull position, but at no time does the wagon do the pushing or pulling in relationship to the torque. Applying this to the torque of theological education, we must recognize that the source of power (the Word from God) can be situated at either end of the educational wagon... at times it effectively pulls the subject - at times it more effectively pushes. But at no time does the subject supply the torque, only the resistance.

To permit the torque of theological education to be powered in any degree by either human consideration or major nontheological disciplines is non-realistic engineering!

Mr. Goltermann also enters upon the so-called "field education" (better known as "clinical"). He reports: "There seems little doubt that it will be necessary to follow the lead of the medical profession in teaching more and more on ministry through clinical procedures rather than through textbook procedures." This observation is worth consideration, but with care not to swing to the other end of the pendulum and duplicate the rigid blueprinting of clergy forms by textbooks with clinical "procedures."

The report moves out of the curricular area into the

matters of recruitment, specialization and career contours. "There seems little doubt that recruitment is going to become more difficult, and the difficulty is going to be felt equally along quantitative and qualitative lines. While I do not want to minimize the continuing difficulty of the quantitative, I want to emphasize that as a church we shall have to concern ourselves more and more with the qualitative. By 'qualitative' I certainly do not mean sheer academic or intellectual prowess, but that whole set of qualities of person and character which involve skills of communication and of relationship and the disposition to place creativity and imagination as well as discipline into an effective ministry directed to real people."

"It is frequently said that theological education has erred seriously in that it has attempted to force all would-be clergymen into exactly the same mold, both in terms of life-style as well as of professional preparation." Mr. Goltermann expertly adds the balancing thought: "It seems obvious that the two extremes must be assiduously resisted: either making everyone take exactly the same program or, on the other extreme, permitting total and immediate specialization".

A significant trend proposed by Mr. Goltermann is interesting: "...theological educators will always have to distinguish between a basic curriculum, a semi-elective layer wherein a student may exercise choice which reflects his interest but where an adequate distribution is still required (so many courses in New Testament, so many courses in Old Testament, etc.), and finally an area of true elective choice which will permit the student to prepare himself particularly well for a form of ministry which he has in mind."

The proposal is also set forth "that a candidate might receive his call sufficiently early in his last year to be devoted almost exclusively to specific preparation for the kind of ministry he will be assuming. It may become more and more common for a candidate to spend the summer between graduation and the assumption of his ministry in specialized preparation."

We are grateful for the reminder Mr. Goltermann gives us when he calls into question the wisdom of permitting some kind of even more basic choice by the seminarian with respect to the nature and quality of his entire seminary career and subsequently of his ministry. He reminds us: "What restrains us, of course, is the longterm Lutheran tradition of a 'Scholarly ministry' which assumes an intimate union of theology and ministry in the lives of all those who accept ordination. We have always felt that the parish minister must be a theologian and a scholar in the preparation of sermons (even in the preparation of sermons for 'simple' people, which is probably the hardest kind of preaching and the one which requires the most professional know-how), in educational endeavors (such as Bible class and confirmation class), as well as in his analysis of personal and community needs. The theological professor, in turn, needs to be not only a theologian but a minister, both because he is bound by the nature of his office to be a true minister to his students, to see them as people and to share with them the nature of Christian theology as Gospel, and also because he is teaching theology for use in the ministry."

Mr. Goltermann calls brief attention to two additional massive concerns of theological education: continuing education for the clergy, and the preparation of men for ministry among the ethnic minorities, chiefly in the black ghettos.

The first of these concerns must lie upon the conscience of every teacher and pastor. While we are quick to quip to others: "once you stop learning you have in effect died", we are slow to slip into this well-fitted shoe. This particular concern needs much more attention at study clubs, conferences, seminars...not only so that planned and prepared study is periodically available at such gatherings, but that good personal study habits prevail in the teacher's and pastor's private office.

The second concern deals with the headlines of our day (ethnic minorities), but we wonder how major the concern has to be relative to theological education. Is it to be any more than Paul's "all things to all men" in the service

of the Gospel? And does this require major educational involvements with the people as well as their problems before the formal public ministry can be effective among them? We think not.

There are those unfortunate instances in some of our own histories where a deliberate effort was made to remain ignorant of basic facts concerning a minority group only to discover, after a centennial of discouraging work, that a little information could have turned our "standard form" of ministry into a more effective means. But that experience alone should be enough to teach us that we must keep our eyes, ears, and minds open to information and facts concerning the people among whom we will labor, that we may intelligently be all things to them. Yet we need not insist on living experience in their midst as the only proper prerequisite for working with a specific people.

Mr. Goltermann finally includes in his report a concern for "the life style" of seminary students. "Our students are becoming increasingly heterogeneous on almost every scale, and they are also intimately involved in all the forces of change, of protest, of self-expression, of diversity and personalism which are making their impact throughout our society. Increasingly, they will not be fitting the stereotype and image which many of us continue to hold of the Lutheran pastor - in dress, social and recreational activity, modes of expression, and political and social philosophy."

We are not quite ready to consent to Mr. Goltermann's comment that there is much good in this. There can be, there should be some good in some of this, but only when those responsible for theological education count themselves counselors in the matter of "life-style" (not pattern makers, but counselors). To a great degree we tend to let theological education be something in and by itself while in effect we ignore the student of theology.

Mr. Goltermann concludes that "professional education, even more than general education, consists of more than programs and course sequences; it demands a total context or climate. It is a matrix in which persons are

being formed, an interactive and dynamic situation in which dispositions, attitudes, loyalties, and commitments are developed and altered. To be insensitive to these nuances is to court ultimate and total failure."

We gratefully acknowledge that Mr. Goltermann has provided a service for us in his report, a service which should cause an alert and a concern in the mind of the church. A seminary curriculum is not inspired, but that is no excuse for it to be uninspiring! We should be turned on to prayerful observation, reading, study, research, meditation, and discussion of all the issues involved, ever searching for good ways to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of theological education, yet ever confident that such education is more than "conducting business as usual". It is the only educational effort in this world which need not fear "the cost of staying alive".

G. Radtke

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==== PANORAMA =====

THE SAD AFTERMATH OF DENVER

The Denver convention of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has become an episode in history. Its most significant action - the declaration of pulpit and altar fellowship with the American Lutheran Church - received due publicity from all media of communication and by now is known to everyone who has a serious interest in such matters. The election of a new president by the convention did not result in a postponement of that step in church union for which the liberal element in Missouri has clamored so long and so vigorously. And it is well that the issue is settled. The synod will no longer be able to hide

its true colors behind a screen of orthodox-sounding resolutions, but stands now before the world clothed in the disavowal of its great heritage. It is obviously no longer a church of Walther and Pieper - or, for that matter, of Luther - which entered into this false union; and thousands of its membership are becoming aware of their loss.

The defection of Missouri and its irreversible plunge into the stream of a false ecumenism is tragic enough. The defection did not begin at Denver, of course. Missouri adopted a heterodox stance by means of the resolutions of the St. Louis convention in 1938, and its retrogression since then has been constant, if not always consistent. The outcome of the issue at Denver was predictable for those who can read the lessons of church history.

In the wake of this catastrophe, however, we observe secondary developments which are even more deplorable in the present context. It appears that a large number of those within Missouri who sought to avert the shipwreck are unable to disengage themselves from the sinking ship. Some of them said: Denver will be the hour of decision! They implied or stated outright, and properly so, that if their synod entered an un-Scriptural fellowship relation, they could not continue their affiliation. But now some of these, and others as well, are being diverted and confused by comrades-in-arms who say: Do not leave now! Stay in with us and let us seek with God's help to reverse the tide! Some are perhaps also beguiled by that iniquitous provision in the union resolution which, according to the Milwaukee Journal, "permits dissenting congregations of the Missouri Synod to deny fellowship (with ALC) in individual cases at their own discretion." (7/18/69). If this correctly reflects the sense of the resolution, the synod has made a mockery of I Cor. 1:10, and those who make use of the offer share in the guilt.

Be that as it may, there are within the conservative leadership of Missouri's minority those who are themselves forsaking the Scriptural principles of fellowship, who have indeed seemingly forgotten what the Church is. They have turned the struggle for the truth into a political contest,

seeking to outmaneuver the controlling liberals by holding rump conventions and planning campaigns. They count up what are called "conservative convention gains." One member of the minority is reported to be reading the Denver box score as "2 victories - 1 defeat." Another ventures the opinion that "the game is up" (for the conservatives) only "if there is no longer any means of spreading the truth in Synod in opposition to the error"

All of this is totally irrelevant and bound for disaster. Those who profess to defend Scripture are disregarding its provisions designed for the protection of the faith of believers as well as for the saving of what can still be reclaimed. "What communion hath light with darkness? Come out from among them and be ye separate!" "Avoid them," being mindful of the danger of "good words and fair speeches" whereby they "deceive the hearts of the simple." In the light of God's promises we could hope that the "true" Missouri would revive and survive in its children if the remnant obeyed the Will of God and severed its relation with the heterodox organization.

To stand apart from an association one has held dear through a life-time is not a simple, painless matter, as many of us have reason to know. But not to do so can be spiritual suicide. It is our prayer that the disaster at Denver be not followed by the ultimate betrayal of those who still revere the Gospel; that no myopic leadership should irrevocably bind itself and them to the searing arms of the Moloch of unionism. That would truly be the greater calamity.

E. Schaller



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