

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

I Timothy 4:15

Journal
of
Theology

Church of the Lutheran Confession

VOLUME 10

OCTOBER 1970

NUMBER 4

ESSAYS AND ARTICLES

OF THE USE AND RELEVANCE OF DR. C. F. W. WALTHER'S "THESES CONCERNING THE MODERN THEORY OF OPEN QUESTIONS."

When we speak of "Theses" in theological discussions, we usually think of propositions drawn up in thetical and antithetical form for a specific purpose. Many a Lutheran Christian first heard the term used to describe the form of the proclamation which Luther posted on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg at noon on October 31, 1517. Entitled a "Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences," this document soon took its place in history as "The Ninety-Five Theses of Dr. Martin Luther." Its historical significance is too well known to require comment here. Yet it is often forgotten that, although because of circumstances their formal purpose was never attained, these Theses were actually designed to serve as basis for a theological debate among scholars. It is true that they were written, so to speak, at white heat, and that the issues they raised were by no means academic. Yet as propositions they were formulated in the traditional manner. Thus in their original form they were not intended to serve as final confessional pronouncements, but were considered subject to amendment by debate. We may add that no responsible Lutheran today would be prepared to accept their wording in its entirety.

Because of the convenience which such propositional statements of truth -- respectively error -- supplied for theological discussion by their precise delineation of the points to be studied in the light of God's Word, the practice of formulating theses continues among us to the present day; and certain sets of such theses have become historic landmarks also in the record of Lutheranism in our own land.

In the course of time the purpose which these were

originally designed to meet underwent a subtle change. As doctrinal clarity was restored to the churches through the Reformation and the labors of the dogmaticians of the 17th century, later thetical and antithetical formulations were at times simply presented as confessional declarations, not for trial in debate but as carefully worded restatements of principle and with a preemptory claim to orthodoxy. Such a tendency, however, ought to be firmly resisted. New doctrinal theses should continue to be offered to the Church only when supported by extensive exposition and subject to changes in wording, if not in substance.

It is important, moreover, to read and evaluate theses in the light of their origin. Formal doctrinal propositions rarely appear on the platform of theological discussion as purely academic statements. They usually grow out of the context of their times and are inseparately related to a specific development in the life of the Church. In this respect their wording and phrasing will be tendential, sharply bent and carefully tailored to address the relatively narrow issue in which a contest has arisen, and not necessarily accurate and incontestable as theses applied to other concerns. It would be a mistake to regard the wording of theses as necessarily definitive outside their immediate area of interest.

In recent years, embroiled in the conflicts occasioned by the modern upsurge of a false ecumenism and a rampant rationalism in theology, churches seeking to be faithful to their Lutheran heritage and to the principles of a now defunct Lutheran Synodical Conference have suffered greatly from dissensions caused in part by the intrusion of error that questions the Scriptural doctrine concerning the proper basis and exercise of church fellowship. More specifically, the debate revolves about the issue of separation, the termination of fellowship relations with persons or church bodies convicted of heterodoxy. At a certain point in the contest concerning this matter, the Wisconsin Ev. Luth. Synod introduced as supporting evidence a set of theses prepared by Dr. Walther and published in 1868 under the title listed in our heading for this article. The Theses

are reproduced in translation in the 1959 convention proceedings of the Wisconsin Synod, p. 208f. Our concern of the moment is with their relevance to the particular issue now in controversy and thus, of course, with the merit of introducing them for consideration in such a context. It is not our purpose to speak of this in a spirit of challenge, but in the interest of better understanding.

Since the text of the Theses is essential to an evaluation of the thoughts we wish to express, we reproduce them for our readers. The English translation here offered is composite. Substantially it follows the wording of a translation published in Concordia Theological Monthly, Volume XI, No. 4, p. 298f; but the undersigned has taken the liberty of occasional revision where a more precise rendering of the original seemed desirable. The German version is found in Lehre und Wehre, September 1868, p. 318f.

QUOTE.

Theses Concerning The Modern Theory Of Open Questions.

(These propositions drawn up by Professor Walther for the Pastoral Conference in New Bremen we herewith submit, since they may serve other conferences also as basis for a more extended discussion of this important question. - B.)

- I. It is undeniable that in religion or theology there are related questions which, since they are not answered in the Word of God, may be called open questions in this sense, that agreement in answering them is not an essential element of the unity of faith and doctrine required by God's Word, nor is it to be included among the prerequisites for church fellowship, ecclesiastical, fraternal or ministerial (kollegialisch).

- II. Even an error violating the clear Word of God, when entertained by an individual member of the Church, does not immediately in practice deprive that member of fellowship status, ecclesiastical, fraternal or ministerial.
- III. Even when an error contradicting God's Word raises its head in an entire church body, this does not of itself make that body a false church, one with which an orthodox Christian or church would be obliged to terminate fellowship relations.
- IV. A Christian may be so simple-minded that it is impossible to demonstrate to him the unscripturalness of an error, even in regard to a fundamental article of the secondary type. It may thus be that he entertains such an error and continues in it without necessarily being excluded by the orthodox church on that ground.
- V. The Church militant must indeed strive for absolute unity in faith and doctrine, but never attains to a degree of such unity higher than a fundamental one.
- VI. Even if errors not in respect to fundamental doctrines of the first and second order are found in the writings of now sainted teachers of the Church otherwise recognized as orthodox, such errors do not suffice to justify branding them as errorists or depriving them of the claim to orthodoxy.
- VII. No man can claim, and to none may be conceded, the liberty of believing or teaching other than that which God has revealed in His Word, whether it pertains to primary or to secondary fundamental articles of faith, to matters of faith or of life, to matters historical or otherwise subject to natural knowledge, to important or seemingly unimportant matters.
- VIII. Against every deviation from the doctrine of God's Word, whether on the part of teachers or so-called laymen, individuals or entire church bodies, the Church is required to take decisive action.
- IX. Those who in stiff-necked fashion depart from God's

Word in any respect are to be excluded from the Church.

- X. The fact that the Church militant cannot achieve a higher degree of unity than a fundamental one does not prove that in the Church any error against the Word of God can have equal standing with the truth, or demand tolerance.
- XI. The notion that Christian dogma is formed gradually, and that therefore teachings which have not as yet gone through this process of formation are open questions, militates against the doctrine that the Church is at all times but One Church, and that the Bible is the only and complete source of knowledge of the Christian religion and theology.
- XII. The view that those doctrines which have not been fixed in the Lutheran Symbols must be reckoned among the open questions ignores the historical origin of the symbolical writings, as well as the fact that these do not profess to present a complete system of doctrine, but at the same time do testify to the entire content of Scripture as constituting the object of the Church's faith.
- XIII. The notion, moreover, that those teachings must be considered open questions in which even teachers acknowledged to be orthodox have erred, violates the canonical authority and dignity of Scripture.
- XIV. The idea that there are Christian doctrines of faith in Holy Scripture which are not clearly, plainly and unambiguously set forth therein, and thus must be included among the open questions, militates against the clarity and thus against the purpose or the divinity of Holy Scripture, which professes to be the divine revelation.
- XV. The modern theory that there are open questions among the clearly revealed doctrines of God's Word represents the most dangerous unionistic principle of our time, one which necessarily leads to skepticism and finally to a purely naturalistic religion.

.....

In the reading of this document certain facts are immediately evident. One is that Dr. Walther in his Theses did indeed speak to the subject of church fellowship, including the element of separation. Equally obvious is the fact that Walther's major emphasis lay in dealing with a certain theory concerning so-called open questions. It is important to understand that he did not prepare the Theses primarily as a definitive presentation of the Scriptural directives concerning the exercise of church fellowship, but in polemical response to the demands of errorists claiming an unscriptural latitude in doctrine.

To discuss the Theses in proper perspective one should be aware of the issues confronting the author and of the thought processes that gave rise to their formulation. Not only Walther's own development of the subject in essay form (Lehre und Wehre, issues of April through October 1868; reprinted in translation, Concordia Theological Monthly, issues of April 1939 and following), but also his Foreword to Volume XIV of Lehre und Wehre (translated in C. T. M. July 1946) contributes to an understanding of the historical context and the sequence of thought in the Theses. A brief article by Franz Schmitt in Lehre und Wehre of September 1867, entitled: "A Few Words Regarding The Projected Colloquium Between The Iowa And The Missouri Synods," should also not be overlooked.

In the main, Walther's Theses find ready and affirmative response among us even apart from the context in which they originated. But it cannot be denied that the wording of Theses II, III and IV in particular, and especially when their translation is not wholly accurate, could create tensions when read into the framework of the present-day controversy regarding the fellowship question. To discuss the problems in the wording, however, without attempting to judge it historically, would represent a culpable disservice to the cause of the truth. It is important, above all, that we try to understand Walther.

But this can hardly be fairly done without taking account of the nature of the doctrinal aberration against which Walther was taking a stand. The official position of

the Iowa Synod of that day on the subject of "open questions" and their bearing upon church fellowship may be briefly described by quoting from the so-called Davenport Theses (1873) of the former Iowa Synod. There we read in part:

- "16. The actual, fundamental difference separating Missouri and Iowa, as revealed in the course of the conflict between these church bodies, lies in the recognition of Open Questions, which we have established as valid, but which Missouri has emphatically opposed.
- "17. The term "Open Questions" is of course not intended to signify that the respective doctrines are of themselves doubtful or uncertain, and least of all that they may arbitrarily be accepted or denied, but merely that they are not to be regarded as church-divisive. From the very outset we defined Open Questions, in distinction from those doctrines of faith in which there must be complete accord within a church fellowship, as such doctrines in which there may exist a difference without a consequent suspension of fraternal relations or church fellowship." (Quellen und Documente, by Geo. Fritschel, p. 323).

Here we have the progenitor of the infamous dictum in the A. L. C. Sandusky resolutions of 1938, namely that "it is neither necessary nor possible to agree in all non-fundamental doctrines" -- as well as of the later argument that within the bond of fellowship there may rightfully exist "an allowable and wholesome latitude of theological opinion on the basis of the teachings of the Word of God" ... (1947). This is the theory, in less sophisticated form, which Dr. Walther was obliged to oppose even in his day.

In his Foreword (1868) to which we referred above, Walther defines the Iowan theory as justifying one of the three types of syncretism, or unionism, namely the "conservative" type, which he describes as follows: "The dissenting parties unite in one church despite the existing dissensions, and declare the points of difference as open

questions." Against such unscriptural practice he cites the 17th century theologian J. W. Baier as follows: "... the unity of the Church is disturbed by syncretism, or the religious union of dissenting parties in an ecclesiastical and brotherly fellowship inspite of dissension, so that either the error in doctrine on the part of the dissentients, or at least the erring persons themselves, are tolerated within the communion of the Church, and the latter are regarded as brethren in Christ and coheirs of eternal life. Either class of toleration, however, is sinful" (C. T. M. July 1946, p. 482).

Regarding the expression "erring persons" Baier has a further explanation: "From the point of view of syncretism these persons are indeed regarded as weak and erring; yet they are looked upon as brethren and as people who participate in the same divine service. In such cases it is certain that persons who because of their simple-mindedness and unconquerable ignorance have espoused certain errors in such a way that by the grace of God they still retain saving faith would have to be tolerated as weak brethren if they could be pointed out to us."

The final clause in Baier's statement above prompted Walther to supply a footnote of his own: "This, no doubt, is the meaning of Baier's words: The true Christians in the sects who indeed are our dear brethren in faith are unknown to us because of the false doctrine of the church body with which they are affiliated. Therefore it is not possible for us to enter into brotherly relations and church fellowship with them" (Op. Cit. p. 483).

When we now look again at the Theses, and particularly at the three which we previously checked for special attention, we are better prepared by the awareness that Walther's propositions were designed to zero in on the particular problem he faced -- a problem which (although calamitously resurgent in the 1938 union resolutions of Walther's once staunch Missouri Synod and in its present syncretistic fellowship with the A. L. C.) is not identical with the issues that separate the CLC from the Wisconsin and Evangelical Lutheran Synods. Overtly, at least, no

one involved in this unhappy dissension pleads the category of open questions as justification for unionistic fellowship practice. The unscriptural pronouncements and practices which occasioned the rift between the two synods and ourselves lies rather in the area covered by Romans 16:17-18, an area which in its detail lay outside the focal point of the Missouri-Iowa debate of a century ago. It is therefore important that we should not read Walther's terminology through the tinted spectacles of our immediate concerns and thus ascribe to his phrasing meanings which he did not intend.

We address ourselves now particularly to Theses II and III:

"II. Even an error violating the clear Word of God, when entertained by an individual member of the Church, does not immediately in practice deprive that member of fellowship status, ecclesiastical, fraternal or ministerial.

"III. Even when an error contradicting God's Word raises its head in an entire church body, this does not of itself make that church a false church, one with which an orthodox Christian or church would be obliged to terminate fellowship relations."

For the sake of full documentation we reproduce, for the readers with a knowledge of German, also the original text of these theses:

"II. Selbst der Irrtum eines einzelnen Gliedes der Kirche wider Gottes klares Wort macht dasselbe nicht alsobald tatsaechlich der kirchlichen, glaubensbruederlichen oder collegialischen Gemeinschaft verlustig.

"III. Selbst ein in einer ganzen Kirche auftauchender, Gottes Wort widerstreitender Irrtum macht dasselbe nicht an sich zu einer falschen Kirche, mit welcher ein rechtglaebiger Christ oder die rechtglaebige Kirche die Gemeinschaft abbrechen muesste."

As is so often the case, there are here certain sensitive decisions confronting the translator. Other ver-

sions available may read more smoothly than that being offered here; but sometimes they also overlook important features of the original text. For example, we have in Thesis II the peculiarly German concatenation of the words "nicht alsobald tatsaechlich." It is not enough to render this adverbial phrase with "not at once," or: "not immediately." That ignores the "tatsaechlich," which we believe in this context used by Walther in the sense of "in actual practice."

The best approach to Walther's thinking in these Theses is one which, first of all, allows him to speak for himself. We therefore quote on the following pages a few relevant portions from his essay: "The False Arguments For The Modern Theory Of Open Questions." We used the translation supplied by C. T. M., April 1939 and following issues. But where there are, in our judgment, substantial weaknesses in the translation, improvements are proposed by means of parenthetical insertions. Only in the first third of the essay does Walther elaborate upon the subject matter represented in Theses II through IX; and our quotations are drawn from that section. The bulk of the essay presents an extensive treatment of the nature of doctrine and open questions, with numerous references to the church fathers. For the sake of convenient reference in this article the quoted portions are arbitrarily given numbers which, of course, are not in the original and have nothing to do with the order in which the quotes are found in the text.

(1) QUOTE.

..... since the great majority of church-bodies are polluted with many errors, it is important to know in which of them, in spite of the existence of fundamental errors, one may still find (there may nevertheless yet be present) true believers and hence members of the true invisible Church. Furthermore, even in orthodox churches in which the Word of God is taught in its purity and the Sacraments are administered according to the Lord's institution, there are many that are weak in Christian understanding and still entertain erroneous views. Therefore it

is highly important to know whether such members may nevertheless be regarded as possessing true faith and, in spite of their weakness in spiritual understanding, be saved or whether all such weak Christians must be classed with the lost and condemned.

Now let it be observed that Paul in I Cor. 3 by no means wishes to say that a Christian merely has to accept the articles that are fundamental, that everything else belongs in the category of open questions where there is liberty and that nobody should look upon a person askance or censure him when, in dealing with matters of this category, he either accepts or rejects what the Scriptures clearly teach. On the contrary, St. Paul and all other writers of Holy Scripture testify that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump, that no man has the liberty to add or subtract anything with respect to the Word of God, and that God looks upon him only (only upon him) as His child who trembleth at His Word, Is. 66:2. It is very evident, too, that our old dogmaticians, in pointing out that in respect to non-fundamental articles there may be a difference of opinion, do not wish to say that among the teachings clearly revealed in God's Word there are open questions concerning which a person may (without peril) under all circumstances take any view at all (p. 256).

(2) QUOTE.

How is that? we are asked. Do you really wish to excommunicate everybody at once as a heretic who errs in nothing but a non-fundamental article, and do you intend at once to sever fellowship with an organization which is guilty of (is stained with) such a non-fundamental error? That we are far from entertaining such a thought we have stated above. What we maintain is (rather) this: On the one hand, a non-fundamental error, even if it is contrary to (even the non-fundamental error, when it sets itself in opposition to) the clear Word of God, must not (must indeed never) be treated as a heresy, but in patient instruction it must be shown to be untenable, be refuted, opposed, and criticized. On the other hand, however, if a church has ex-

hausted all means of bringing such an erring brother to the acknowledgment of the truth, and his adherence to the respective error evidently is not due to insufficient intellectual understanding of Scripture-teaching, and hence through this non-fundamental error it becomes manifest that he consciously, stubbornly, and obstinately contradicts the divine Word and that accordingly through his error he subverts the organic foundation of faith (the Scriptures), then such an erring person, like all others that persevere in mortal sins, must no longer be borne with, but fraternal relations with him must be terminated.

The same thing applies to a whole church-body which errs in a non-fundamental doctrine. It is very true that in this life absolute unity in faith and doctrine is not possible, and no higher unity than a fundamental one can be attained. This, however, by no means implies that in a church-body errors of a non-fundamental nature which become manifest and which contradict the clear Word of God must not be attacked and that a church can be regarded as a true church and be treated as such if it either makes such non-fundamental errors a part of its confession and, with injury to the organic foundation, in spite of all admonition, stubbornly clings to these errors, or in a unionistic fashion and in a spirit of indifference insists that a deviation from God's clear Word in such points need be of no concern to us. ... (p. 261f).

(3) QUOTE.

..... That is also the only thing which we maintain, namely, that the time for separating from brethren on account of an error which doctrinally is non-fundamental has only then arrived when those who are erring stubbornly reject all instruction from the divine Word and thus become manifest as people who, though they apparently do not wish to violate the dogmatic foundation, the analogy of faith, nevertheless shake and subvert the organic foundation, Holy Scripture itself, as far as they are concerned. It is something altogether unheard of to say that everything which does not belong to the fundamental articles must be

put into the category of open questions. It may well happen that a simple-minded Christian will oppose some important secondary fundamental article and nevertheless possess true saving faith in his heart, while he who knowingly, contrary to Holy Scripture and the Confessions, would deny only that the sufferings of Christ took place under Pontius Pilate would surely not be a true believer. Through nothing does an erring person manifest more clearly that his error is of a fundamental nature than by showing that in his error he rejects the Word of God, a thing which may take place in opposing non-fundamental as well as fundamental Bible-teachings; in fact, the fashion in which he handles mere problems may bring this to light. . . . (p. 352f.)

(4) QUOTE

. . . . We are far removed from the position which severs fraternal relations with an individual and stops having church-fellowship with a church-body if in their understanding of Bible-teaching they are not dogmatically correct. We by no means consider such correctness a condition of fellowship. If that were our position, we should have to contend against ourselves; for while we notice incorrect views (such inaccuracies), that is, errors (therefore errors), in others, other people may notice such imperfections in one or the other of us. No; as soon as an individual or a whole church-body manifests the attitude of willingness to submit unconditionally to the whole Word of God and not to teach (not desiring to hold to) anything that opposes the foundation of Christian faith, be that the real or the organic foundation, we extend in every case with joy the hand of fellowship to such an individual, and we are altogether willing and ready to cultivate fellowship with such an organization. This, however, is our position and practice because we know that there are errors that proceed from weakness, just as there are sins that are caused by weakness, and that a Christian may intellectually err even with respect to a fundamental matter without subverting the foundation in his heart (p. 353f).

.....

As a study in how to deal in a particular doctrinal issue with an erring person or church body standing outside one's fellowship, in the atmosphere of the 19th century and its prevailing inter-Lutheran relations, Walther's work is unsurpassed. It is rich also for us in instruction regarding the controlling subject, that of open questions. (This was amply demonstrated by Prof. J. P. Meyer in a series of articles published in Volumes 35 and 36, 1948-1949, of the Northwestern Lutheran, a periodical of the Wisconsin Synod. It is to be regretted that by thought extensions and expansion some of the author's expressions were later diverted to the support of Scripturally untenable positions in the matter of fellowship.) The present question is whether the Theses can profitably serve us as a basis for discussion in our circumstances.

While from the records presently at hand the fact is difficult to establish (we have not ascertained the exact date of the "New Bremen Conference"), it appears that Walther's essay was published before he prepared and presented his Theses. At any rate, the author does not mention the Theses in his essay. Thus it is not possible to refer to a particular statement or paragraph in the essay as a calculated exposition of any one specific Thesis. But the material we have quoted certainly relates to Theses II, III and IV.

From our place in history it must be said that not only the wording of these Theses, but Walther's extended remarks concerning fellowship and/or termination thereof require clarification before they could be used as a basis for discussion in depth of Scriptural procedure in dealing with error, errorists and weak Christians, in the context of the last three decades. To the knowledgeable student it should be quite evident that some of Walther's statements are not dogmatically guarded against all nuances of error in the fellowship matter which have assumed critical proportions among us. Anyone who is at all familiar with the struggles at Wisconsin and Evangelical Lutheran Synod conventions of the late 1950's, and with the content of the discussions between representatives of the Wisconsin

Synod and CLC in the 1960's must, we feel, surely find it difficult to obtain clear answers to our problems in these propositions of an earlier century.

Quotation (1), for example, including the citation from Gerhard and Walther's comment thereon, is hardly germane to the current debate on Romans 16:17-18, a text which, however, would seem to bear on the statement of Theses II and III. For in (1) we hear Gerhard speaking of someone being "cut off from the body of the Church;" and Walther introduced the Gerhard quotation while speaking of the "Church militant" in a preceding paragraph.

Perhaps the Quote most responsive to our immediate concerns is (4). One must give very careful attention to Walther's mode of expression, and take into account the delicate problem of accuracy in translation. It seems clear that Walther is here speaking of what we have been calling "casual intrusion of error." He speaks of dogmatic incorrectness, as somehow distinct from doctrinal error, and frankly states that mistakes of that sort can be charged to the account of any one of us and of any orthodox church at one time or another. Not only in this passage, however, but frequently, Walther refers to an "attitude of willingness to submit unconditionally to the whole Word of God," or to erring persons who "apparently do not wish to violate the dogmatic foundation." With such values it is difficult to work in practice. As far as we were able to determine, Walther does not explain how it is possible to base procedure on someone's inner willingness.

Thus we also cannot accept without careful limitation a broad declaration made in the (3) Quote by Walther, namely, "that the time for separating from brethren on account of an error which doctrinally is non-fundamental has only then arrived when those who are erring stubbornly reject all instruction from the divine Word" ... etc. While it is possible to understand such a statement correctly, its terms have been so ill-used in more recent circumstances that they led to temporary or permanent disobedience toward the Lord's appeal that we should avoid those causing divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which we have

learned.

Yet certainly the principle Walther affirmed in Quote (4) is essentially correct. For the understanding of his view it is helpful to quote what he says three pages later: "As long therefore as the erring person has not been convicted of subverting the organic foundation through his error, and as long as he has not become stubborn in his attitude, no error constitutes him a heretic. The same thing applies to a whole church body. Yes, should the error pertain to less principal points clearly revealed in the Scriptures but of a non-fundamental character, then even a stubborn clinging to such points does not make a teacher a heretic but merely a schismatic, and his association does not get to be a sect, but a schismatic body." (Underscoring ours).

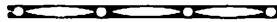
It would carry us too far, and indeed would contradict our purpose herein, to attempt a detailed analysis of Walther's words, even were we to limit our examination to the quoted sections. We make bold to express the conviction that, in the same setting which confronted us, and given the same historical premises and perspectives that faced us in the time period just past, Walther would have wholly agreed in substance with our evaluation of the situation, first in the Missouri Synod and then in Wisconsin, and would have concurred with our manner of expression. But this conviction is not subject to conclusive proof based on Walther's struggle against Iowa in the matter of open questions; and to debate it would be worse than futile.

But would it not seem to represent a sad bit of irony if Walther were made a spokesman and advocate for a view that holds the Scriptural doctrine of termination of church fellowship as an open question? And this would be done, we believe, if his Theses were used in support of the proposition that "Termination of church fellowship is called for when you have reached the conviction that admonition is of no further avail," as has been stated. This would make the timing of separation a matter of human opinion and thus reduce it to the status of an open question. But Scripture speaks precisely on that point. Romans 16:17

does not make termination dependent upon subjective evaluation of a state of admonition, but upon whether divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine are being caused. Where this is an ongoing state of affairs, the weakness of the guilty and the effect of previous admonition are both irrelevant to the timing of separation. We should have to protest if Walther were to be turned into a spokesman for majority-vote obedience to a clear Word of God.

Thus we suggest that it would be best to allow Walther's Theses and related writings to remain at rest in their context, rather than to use them as quasi-symbolic evidence pro or con in the current discussions. Even the practical basis for evaluating signs of "stubborn persistence" or "willingness to submit" etc. has by the force of historical developments in the churches changed from what it may have been in the pioneering days of the Lutheran church of a hundred years ago! But the Word of the Lord does not change; and in its clear instruction we must find God's answers to our questions.

E. Schaller



The JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY is published at Eau Claire, Wisconsin, by authorization of the Church Of The Lutheran Confession.

Subscriptions: \$3.00 per year, \$5.50 for 2 years, payable in advance.

Issues are dated: March, May, July, October, December.

Editor: Prof. E. Schaller, 513 W. Grover Rd.
Eau Claire, Wisconsin 54701

Editorial Staff: C.M. Gullerud; J. Lau.

Contributing Editors: A. Schulz; Geo. Tiefel.

All correspondence, including subscriptions, renewals and changes of address, should be directed to the Editor.

PREACHING THE WORD

CHRISTIAN CHRISTOPH ALBRECHT

1900 - 1970

In Memoriam. *

"I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep:
for Thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell
in safety." Psalm 4:8.

With this lovely evening prayer of David we shall dedicate today the grave which is to receive the mortal remains of Christian Albrecht, another man of God who, after seventy years of earthly fellowship and service among us, has asked for his release because he can no longer worship with us in person here and because the time of faith for him is over, the promises of God having been fulfilled in him.

The decision was not his. Without doubt he, like the Apostle Paul and most of us, was in a quandary, not knowing how to choose, whether to abide still in the flesh or to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. But we may be sure that when his Savior made the final appointment on earth with him, our dear brother not only bowed to the Lord's will but accepted it with joy. For, as David did and as we pray that all of us do, he sought to be ready to receive, whenever he took to his bed, whatever dawn the Lord Jesus might have waiting for him when he awoke. He lived and died trusting in what the Scriptures call the sure and certain mercies of David.

Therefore we find the evening prayer of our text rich in comfort for those who feel keenly the bereavement suffered through his departure. These tender words of faith

* Sermon delivered at the funeral service in Trinity Luth. Church, Watertown, South Dakota, Aug. 17, 1970, and reproduced here in response to requests. - Ed.

give to the grave of Christian Albrecht a voice, and clothe it in the beauty of life. It becomes much more than a shallow depth of earth and sand; it is turned by the wonder of Christian faith into

A BED-CHAMBER FOR A BELIEVER.

Our text suggests

- I. A vesper song to sing in it.
- II. A guard to keep its door.

I.

A song to be sung in a grave? A song to be sung by those who die in the Lord? What might be the refrain of such a hymn?

"I will lay me down in peace," says the child of God as he closes his eyes. It is well for us to consider that this is much more than many are able to say or think, who are pursued to their graves by the memory of a life spent in evil. "There is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked;" so declares the prophet Isaiah. It is quite useless to surround their tombs with the evergreens of hope or to cover them with wreaths of peace. For here are bed-chambers beneath the ground which are full of unrest. In them lie waiting the bodies of men and women who were at war with God on earth, fighting Him with stubborn hearts, resisting to the end the hand of mercy that would draw them to the great salvation through its glad tidings as preached in the world.

Often it is said that he who dies leaves the burdens of life behind; yet how important is that, if the greatest of all burdens remains? There is no burden like the load of sin, of standing guilty before God, of having offended and deserving divine wrath and punishment. Some may be quick to say in reply: Ah yes; and in this we are all alike, equally weighed down with such a burden! But that can be a dangerous half-truth. Sinners we all are, indeed, by nature and in thought, word and work. But we shall not

all appear as guilty ones before the Throne! There are those who shall have cast off this mark of the damned by the time they are carried to their graves; but alas, of many this is not true. And who can measure their misery? They may have heard the words, the glorious message of their justification; but they have refused to learn in life its melody:

My guilt, O Father, Thou hast laid
On Christ, Thy Son, my Savior.
Lord Jesus, Thou my debt hast paid
And gained for me God's favor.

To lie down in peace is entirely a matter of knowing how to sing, say, groan, whisper or sigh this 'song of Zion, of Gods' children. The issues of age, of deliverance from earth's sorrows, make small and empty talk at the bed of the dying unless both the dying and the living have learned to say: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy Word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." That man is prepared to descend into the dark chamber of the earth in peace who has found peace at the Throne of Grace prepared in Jesus Christ. The soul he yields up to his God is not only a redeemed and justified, but a sanctified soul that is in Christ, whom God hath set forth as a propitiation through faith in His blood.

So is the final and greatest burden of life lifted. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." To this faith our brother held throughout his life. This is the faith which he preached as a shepherd of the Lord's flock, most recently in this very church building and from this pulpit. To such a rest he often helped survivors carry their loved ones, pointing always to the peace of them that die in the Lord. And more.

Yes, more; for the song of the bedchamber is not done. The sweetest part is in the next line. David wrote: "I will both lay me down in peace, AND sleep." Peace was his joy; but sleep - that was his confession! When Jesus entered the house of Jairus, whose daughter he had come to heal, mourners came to tell Him that the girl had died.

But the Savior dismissed them with the words: "She is not dead, but sleepeth." For this they mocked Him and laughed Him to scorn.

The dying have no time to mock at the word "sleep;" and for the living it is getting very late for mocking. "The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth." And until then, they that are dead are asleep - all of them. Yet again there is a difference. Consider the sleep of the sick and the sleep of the healthy: is there not a difference? How restless and storm-tossed, hedged in by fear and dread, is the sleep of those who are drugged against pain. But how quietly sweet the sleep of the healthy child. So do all those beneath the ground sleep in their chambers; but it is not the same.

Today we close the door upon the bedchamber of a man who will sleep in peace and rest. He gathers strength for his coronation; and we shall quietly await, with him, the crown which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give him in that Day; and not to him only, but also to all them that love His appearing.

II.

What precious freight, then, the grave of a Christian believer holds. And no one is more aware of this than God, his Redeemer. To lie in the trembling ground of this perishing earth may seem a risky business. We might be uneasy at the thought of such a committal. How shall we guard that long slumber? How may the bedchamber be protected against the foes of God and man? The mind of man turns to his crafts; to steel vaults and lead caskets. But why? He who has closed his eyes in sleep, singing his vesper song, has already made the perfect commitment: "For Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety."

There, Beloved, you have a guard to keep the door of his bedchamber. Cemeteries often seem to us the bleakest, most lonely spots in the land; but only when we forget how God pictures them. Lift up your eyes, and see.

Let them recall the vision of Mt. Nebo, where Michael stands watch over the body of Moses. More mighty than the cherubim with flaming sword who guarded the way to the tree of life, infinitely mightier than the tired soldiers at the tomb of our Lord, stands the watchman posted by God beside the sleeping bodies of His sons whom He shall raise to glory. No man, says He, shall pluck them out of my hands!

Our brother knew this right well. He can now speak of safety as he could never speak of it so firmly and eloquently even with his loved Ones. Hands that sought to guard him in life, lovingly, were not as sure as those that preserve him now. The Lord remains his Keeper at his right hand. With long life He satisfied him, and will show him His salvation. Let us think of that Day, and thus complete the vespers of the sleeping one:

"I know of a morning bright and fair
When tidings of joy shall wake us;
When songs from on high shall fill the air,
And God to His glory take us.
When Jesus shall bid us rise from sleep -
How joyous that hour of waking." Amen.

E. Schaller



II.

Reformation Thoughts

The Text: John 8:39-40.

"If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

So spake the Lord Jesus to the Jews which believed on Him. Mindful of these words, we celebrate a festival of

the Reformation by which God through Martin Luther gave to His militant Church a new day of freedom; freedom from error and tyranny of conscience through a restoration of the rule of truth and light, namely of God's Word.

It is very clear, to those who know the facts, that Luther was a tremendous gift of the Lord to the Church and to the world. What this Reformer did is history. But not all people know the history. Many never learn it, and some do not want to learn it. Even many Lutherans are not as familiar with the details of Luther's work as they ought to be. And the enemy of the truth, the old evil foe, has taken advantage of this. History can be misrepresented and falsified. This has been done. Those who reject the pure Gospel which Luther proclaimed have often sought to put Luther in a false light and discredit his work.

What can we do about this? We cannot stop others from perverting the truth. We are not all able to write books to set the record straight. And after all, such books would be read by comparatively few people. What we need is a Lutheran church that holds fast to what God gave us through Luther and lives according to it. Are we doing this? That is a question which deserves serious consideration in this season, and by none more so than by those who have ventured to call themselves a "Church of The Lutheran Confession." Those who thus claim the mark of the Reformation ought to be setting the festival apart as

A time of self-examination for Luther's children.

I.

If we call ourselves "Lutherans," as we do, and if that is to mean anything significant, as it certainly should, then we are making a very strong claim that needs to be confirmed in action. Otherwise it would be dishonest to keep the name. In this respect we have something in common with the Pharisees of Jesus' day. Our hope and prayer should be that we may not have too much in common with them. In our text we find some of them engaged in a

bitter quarrel with the Savior. They are standing up to Him with angry hearts because He offered to make them free from sin and ignorance. This they would not have; for they prided themselves on an old inheritance.

"They answered and said unto Him, Abraham is our father."

Now if this was a proud claim, it was certainly also a wonderful one, and there was reason to be proud of it, if genuine. The name of Abraham will be glorious as long as the earth stands. For he was famous among the great believers of the Old Testament as the man hand-picked by the Lord, so to speak, out of all the inhabitants of the earth to be the bearer of the promise of salvation. God centered His plans for the future of mankind in him. By Abraham the Gospel was revived in a world that after the Flood had again reverted to spiritual ruin. What a privilege to be able to say: I belong to Abraham's family. This the Jews declared. Not only were they of Abraham's blood according to the flesh, but spoke of him also as their spiritual father, which was a much higher prerogative.

The name "Lutheran" ought to mean very much the same thing today. Into the silence of ignorance and evil in the Middle Ages came that voice proclaiming the sweet Gospel once more. Through Luther Jesus Christ and His saving truth became, as it were, reborn in the world. Luther was a man of faith more outstanding than any other since the days of Paul the Apostle. And when he stood before the world with the open Bible in his hand, our spiritual heritage was confirmed. What does it mean when we say: We are Lutheran? It means, among other things, that the pope is not our spiritual father, and that Calvin is not our spiritual father. We spring from the faith which Luther restored; we were laid into the cradle of Luther's Catechism; we are nourished by the pure milk of the Word.

That is Lutheranism in its highest endowment. There is nothing like it on earth. We remind ourselves of its two chief treasures. The best is, of course, that mightiest of all possessions: the firm and certain know-

ledge that our salvation is both complete and sure because mankind is justified before God, thanks to the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the power of His resurrection. This justification is apprehended by faith alone and without any merit of works, deeds or attitude on our part. The second treasure without price is the enjoyment of the Sacrament of Christ's body and blood as our Lord instituted it, wherein we are especially assured of the forgiveness of our sins and strengthened with might in the inner man. In no other confession is this Sacrament thus accepted and trusted. Because by his labors it was restored to our use, we rightfully regard Luther as our father in the faith.

From the very first it was not widely regarded as an honor to be Luther's children. The world as such never has and never will appreciate the Gospel which Luther preached. The true children of Abraham have always been a minority race on earth, too. Yet we thank our God for our Reformation heritage. Or do we only say so? Do we truly appreciate it? This is a time for self-examination in this respect. God granted us our place in the Lutheran church. Should we not ask ourselves: What is the Lord's judgment upon us as Luther's children?

II.

Jesus gave the Jews an answer to their claim against which they found it impossible to argue. Since they declared: "Abraham is our father,"

"Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham."

We observe at once the weakness in the position of the Jews. They were so busy looking at Abraham that they forgot to look at themselves. They thought of Abraham, gloried -- and said: There is the father of us all. Jesus answers: Yes, but what about YOU? Are you his children? Abraham cannot decide that; only you yourselves can. If you were his children, you would resemble your

father and do as he did.

Are we prepared to meet that same test? Let us consider what it is that the Lord would expect to find in us. Do we know the Luther whom we claim as spiritual father? Are we familiar with his story? With the sensitive conscience of the man, for instance? Hundreds of thousands of other men in his day lay in the same blindness and ignorance. But they were satisfied to follow the stream and let others do their thinking. Not so Luther. He had lived in torment of fear because of his sins and found no rest until he searched the Scriptures and found therein his very own personal Savior. The true mature Lutheran is a person very much concerned about his relationship with God. Therefore he does not blindly follow leaders or doctrines, but searches out the Truth in a study of the Word. The terrible power of his sin troubles him deeply. He longs for the peace with God that is found in the wounds of Jesus.

While most of the world followed after the wisdom and authority of men, Luther went to the Bible. There he found everything he needed so desperately; and therefore the Bible became everything to him. He would have scorned with devastating contempt a charge of "Bibliolatry," any accusation that he was making of the Bible a paper god. His outstanding theological mark was his great and intense loyalty to every word of inspired Scripture. He would rather have lost his life than to surrender a single statement found there. Indeed, his declaration to pope and emperor that his conscience was bound in the Word of God became the symbol of his fame among men. They might sentence him to death, excommunicate and cut him down -- but "the Word they still shall let remain." This spirit has ever marked true Lutheranism and will continue to do so.

If ye were Luther's children, ye would do the works of Luther. We may well hear this paraphrase of the words of the text addressed to all who claim the name. And we cannot escape the truth of it. When now our Savior looks down upon us, what does He find? We do well to recall with a shudder the indictment with which He dismissed the Pharisees:

"But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God. This did not Abraham.

How vain and empty, after all, had been the pretension of the Jews. Yes, how blasphemous; for their works were the very opposite of Abraham's. They claimed his name and planned to put to death Abraham's most illustrious Son, the very seed of Abraham and the heart of Abraham's faith.

Such would be the situation today where Lutherans permit the Gospel, for which Luther lived and died, to slip from their hands either by surrender to an encroaching liberal theology or through sheer neglect of the Word. Do we see signs of such neglect? Certain it is that there is among us something less than a brightly glowing fervor toward the very truths for which Luther so fiercely contended. Many hated him because he insisted upon sound doctrine and would not compromise with error in any form. It was a life-and-death struggle with him. Do we, against the very same enemies, sometimes take our responsibility for the preservation of sound doctrine rather lightly? Need there be some concern lest our Savior look upon a worldly atmosphere in our homes or a too feeble attendance upon the preaching and teaching of the Word in our churches and schools, and ask: Are you trying to kill me?

Where there is neglect of the Word, there is also a lessening of the force which once made Luther a blessing to the world. Where is the Lutheran influence of Gospel power to be found today? Is it perhaps to be sought within the misnamed "Lutheran World Federation," which in its fifth assembly during August last crassly deleted the word "Missions" from its official vocabulary by voting to re-name its Commission for World Missions the "Commission for Church Cooperation?" Which revised Luther's Scriptural distinction between God's kingdom of power and His kingdom of grace? Which declared the Lutheran Confessions to be "obsolete" in their denunciation of error? Is

it this federation of churches, claiming to represent some 95% of world Lutherans and yet unable in fact to represent a single genuine Lutheran confessor, that shall determine the features of the Lutheran image for our day?

Or shall it rather be OUR testimony which is heard and discerned as a valid voice of the Reformation? If so, let us not allow our witness to be muted by a sense of futility, or perhaps by some vague fear that forthright confession, though made in love toward the lost or the erring, might somehow alienate the "uninformed" or seem to be "unecumenical." As much as we pray for and seek out the fellowship and cooperation of all who like ourselves are committed to the uncorrupted message of God's Word, we must with equal sincerity refuse to permit a modification of sound Lutheran doctrine and practice in the interest of forging a broad conservative front. The only fellowship gained by such tactics would be that of sharing in a renunciation of Luther's name and cause.

May we rather be given grace and stout faith to continue in the open-hearted warmth of Luther's concern for the salvation of all sinners, as well as in his firmness in the truth. Thus will we truly bear the banner of the very Gospel which he preached to us, and effectively invite men to find shelter and peace in the shadow of its love.

E. Schaller



==== PANORAMA ====

THE MESSAGE OR
THE MEDIUM? ...

Pastors, educators and others involved in attempting to reach the young with their message cannot help being disturbed by what took place at the recent (August 18-23) convention of the ALC Luther League. Some 15, 000 of these teen-agers came to New York for a five-day gathering in which they intended to demonstrate that they "cared." They bore name tags with the inscription, "We say we care," and spent their mornings touring various welfare and social agencies. They also held mass meetings in Madison Square Garden, where they were addressed by a variety of speakers, who attempted to interpret to them their role of "caring" for the people of the world.

Two articles and one editorial in the September 13 issue of The Lutheran Standard, official publication of the American Lutheran Church, report on this convention. Strangely, neither of the two writers responsible for these three articles has much to say about the content of the addresses delivered to the youth. It is unfortunate that this official report does not include information about the addresses.

Whatever the talks may have been about, they did, apparently, have very little interest for the ALC Luther Leaguers. As a matter of fact, the young people showed such a lack of interest that "when two successive sessions at the recent Luther League convention 'bombed out,' the young people slipped away from the program in cavernous Madison Square Garden in bored platoons." The boredom became so great that even "Lutheran Dr. John Genzel, jazz pastor of New York City, and his cohort, Catholic jazz composer of Lutheran liturgics, Eddie Bonnemere" could draw fewer than 2, 000 of the 15, 000 registered delegates. It is reported that with these two leaders, the leaguers "heard and sang the Gospel story of Jesus and his love in the hard rhythm and beat they live by from their transistors," and it was with this music that the bogged-

down convention was restored to life again.

The hit of the entire convention, beyond all doubt, was Pete Seeger, called the Pied Piper by G. H. Muedeking, editor of The Lutheran Standard. He is pictured in the report as an "idol without any clay feet," greeting his enraptured audience; he could do no wrong: "anything that Pete Seeger sang or said, they agreed with." Between his tunes he spoke briefly, and there is no report that what he said had anything to do with the Gospel. (In fact, the Lutheran Standard reporter indicates that he "spoke no Christian Good News at all.") Nevertheless, they listened to him and gave every indication that they would keep on listening to him, and, in fact, refused to let the convention go about other business until the promise was made that the "Pied Piper" would return to sing to them again.

There were other performers there, and these, too, received the youngster's undivided attention. According to Muedeking, "these were the convention, finally. . . . Speakers came and went. Some, like Senator McGovern, were listened to politely. Others were ignored and even interrupted by impatient clapping and shouting that said, 'We're bored, get on with the show.' But anyone who spoke the Gospel to the beat of rock, or who spoke no Christian Good News at all -- but only led them into the mountain as he strummed his tunes and spoke his two-sentence sermons in between -- imprisoned the flitting attention span of our youth. The convention's clearest lesson for the ALC lies here. These were no pot-smoking Woodstockers at a pagan orgy. Here were your transistorized fellow believers. But it was the same abandoned sensate music."

The report becomes somewhat cloudy at this point. For instance, one report indicates that "everyone liked the music, any music, whenever it came on." However, the other account not only cites the New York Times report that "the Luther Leaguers did not like the hymn playing on the Madison Square Garden organ before and after sessions," but comments that in the reporter's opinion there was "a noticeable gap: a lack of our richest heritage, music." Perhaps, the disagreement in reports centers

around what the individual reporter regards as "music." I suspect that the disagreement is only apparent; that the truth of the matter is that "rock" and Seeger's style of "folk" music caught the youngster's attention and that any other kind of music, sacred or traditional, "turned them off." There is, perhaps, the same distinction to be made between one reporter's reference to those "who spoke the Gospel to the beat of rock" and the other's bald statement: "No one took the initiative to bring a Christian message through music . . ."

Finally, to complete the commentary, a startling revelation appears in one report of this convention of "Christian" youth: "They were openly glad that Bible study programs at various hotels had not materialized. They wanted to 'get away from it all.'" If the reporter has made the correct evaluation of these young people's motivations, how tragic that so many miles were traveled and so much money was spent to send Lutheran youngsters to a convention where they would want to get away from Bible study!

The editor of The Lutheran Standard, in his "Let's Talk It Over" column, comes to some disturbing conclusions. Summed up, he simply declares, "This generation will be led by music, its own music. . . . This new generation does not intend to think its way into the future; it expects to feel its way openly and extravagantly into the future. And it will do so through its own private music, hard, loud, mind-blowing." And the church's responsibility? Why, it must be to feed its children through their avenues of approach, their music! The Luther League delegates demonstrated their unwillingness to be approached through any other medium at their convention. And so The Lutheran Standard offers the challenge as it sees it: "If the church wants to bridge the generation gap, this is the medium. For to any communication by sensation, the medium is the message." And, even more, it amounts to an ultimatum. For, if it is true that the youth will follow music, its kind of music, wherever it leads, no matter whether the piper be a Pete Seeger, with what appears to be a leadership to nowhere, or a John Genzel, who appar-

ently at least tries to set the Gospel to jazz, then the church had better step in and provide the music for the youth to follow. The Lutheran Standard puts the ultimatum this way: "But make no mistake about it; this year's 15, 000 convention leaguers showed that they will follow the music, their own music -- either to oblivion or to eternal life."

This is heady stuff for those of us who have recognized the validity of Luther's remark: "I place music next to theology and give it the highest praise." We appreciate our heritage as a singing church, and it is certainly true that sacred music has been a great boon to believers. Many have learned to know their Savior through the Gospel's having been proclaimed to them in hymns; and who of us, who have learned to sing our favorite hymns at our mother's knee, would willingly sacrifice them?

Indeed, music very early in history found its proper and improper use. These uses are mentioned in two chapters in the book of Exodus, not far removed from each other. Chapter 15 records for us that Moses and the children of Israel used music to praise God for the deliverance from the pursuing Egyptians at the crossing of the Red Sea. This was truly God-pleasing, edifying music, in which we can be sure the children also joined. But not long afterward, as recorded in chapter 32, there was a music which was altogether different. It seemed to Joshua like the noise of war, but Moses, as he came down from the Mount, recognized the sound as the "noise of them that sing." It was the music of disobedience, of playing before the golden calf, that sounded so cacophonous to Joshua's ears.

Luther knew that music speaks to and plays on human emotions. He declared that "by these emotions men are controlled and often swept away as by their lords." And, knowing this, the reformer urged that Christians should train their young in music which serves and pleases God. He well knew that the kind of music which serves golden calves is all too prevalent, and needs no instruction, for the natural man will follow after it without urging from anything other than his own flesh. And so it was Luther who wrote, in an introduction to the 1525 hymnbook

of Johann Walther: "I greatly desire that youth which, after all, should and must be trained in music and other proper arts, might have something whereby it might be weaned from the love ballads and the sex songs and, instead of these, learn something beneficial and take up the good with relish, as befits youth. Nor am I at all of the opinion that all the arts are to be overthrown and cast aside by the Gospel, as some superspiritual people protest; but I would gladly see all the arts, especially music, in the service of Him who has given and created them."

There is always the kind of individual who feels that the Gospel can have no real effect in its simple presentation, and that the proclaimer must help it along by presenting it by means of the most acceptable media. While admitting the validity of the argument that the proclaimer of the Gospel should use the best available media in keeping with his glorious message, we believe that it is emphatically the message and not the medium that creates believing and sanctified hearts. If the youth are to be reached and brought to the knowledge of salvation, then it is the Gospel, in whatever form, with its message of forgiveness of sins through the death of Jesus, that will reach them. And the believing young will not close their minds and hearts to the repetition of the message, no matter how often they hear it.

Since the accounts of the convention that have reached us do not really indicate what the speakers had to say, we cannot judge what was said or come to an opinion about it. But with the confused message the ALC has been bringing to the world in recent years regarding a good many teachings of Scripture, and in view of the unionistic approach used in selecting convention speakers, I suspect that much of what was told the Luther Leaguers regarding what it means to care would have turned me off, too. What truly possesses the power to "turn men on" is that same power that, beginning at Jerusalem, has turned the whole world upside down: namely the miracle of Calvary.

Most of the hymns we hold so dear were written to melodies already in existence, and many of those melodies were folk melodies which were well known to people. But

they were tunes which were not new and which had stood the test of time. Their raw edges had been worn off, and they possessed a melody and a rhythm which was enduring. There have been no hymns written within the last hundred years or so which have found broad acceptance in the church. There are some that have not yet made their way into the hymnological "canon," but are worthy to be received. What makes hymns precious is their spiritual content, and we Lutherans value our hymns in direct proportion to their proclaiming the truth in its purity.

Many years ago, Isaiah invited us to "sing unto the Lord a new song." The newness of the song we are to sing is not in its rhythms or harmonies, but in its message of the "servant" whom Isaiah proclaimed: the Son of God who was to come. As long as our singing is of Him, it will always be new, and the believing child of God will love to sing.

J. Lau

.....

WHO IS We thought we knew who a Jew was. We
A JEW? thought of Jews as being the chosen people
 of God in the Old Testament, about whom all
history centered. In New Testament times we think of Jews
as people who, in their religious beliefs, accept only the
Old Testament writings, reject Jesus as the long-awaited
Messiah, and observe the Sabbath and other traditionally
Jewish festivals. We have thought of Jews as being those
people who say today as they said to Jesus: "We be
Abraham's seed... Abraham is our father," John 8:33, 39.
In answer, Jesus said: "If ye were Abraham's children,
you would do the works of Abraham," v. 39.

By the will of God the Father, the Lord Jesus was born of Mary, a Jewess. The apostle Paul was a pure-blood Jew (Acts 22:3), of the tribe of Benjamin (Rom. 11:1), and was naturally considered to be such also by the Jewish leaders. Yet he was not born in Palestine, but in the

Gentile city of Tarsus in Cilicia. Paul was proud of his Roman citizenship, and on occasion put it to good use, Acts 16:37f.

Paul was a Jew not only by birth, but also by religious conviction, Gal. 1:13f. He said of himself: "After the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee," Acts 26:5. His violent opposition to Jesus and His followers was welcomed by the Jewish leaders, who willingly sent letters with him, authorizing him to punish the hated Christians in other cities, Acts 9:2.

It might therefore be said that we consider a Jew to be a person who is of Jewish descent, but above all one who adheres to the traditional Jewish beliefs. - Now we find out that it is not all that simple. We noted with mild interest recent network news broadcasts as well as magazine articles (LOOK, June 16, '70) which spoke of a momentous decision of the Israeli Supreme Court. A Jewish naval officer, married to a non-Jew (both of them being agnostics), wished his two children to be registered as Jews. This raised the question which was heatedly debated: "Who is a Jew?" The Court, by a 5 to 4 margin, decided in his favor, thereby defining a Jew as any person converted by any method, even without circumcision. Debate continues as to whether a religious or a legal definition is the best way to define a Jew.

Enlightening as far as we are concerned were the words of Chief Rabbi Issar Yehuda Unterman of Israel, who stated: "The Jewish religion never sent out missionaries. We are not anxious to persuade people of other denominations to embrace our faith. Let them follow their own. If someone comes and asks to be converted, we can't simply refuse. We give him a book to read, let him get acquainted with Judaism. If he comes back, we give him another book to read. If it happens he does not return, that's fine. But if he comes again and again, we will accept him.... We don't believe in conversion that does not even include circumcision, the bloodless conversion."

We would have to consider all of this debate to be merely academic. Whether a person is a Jew according to

the legal definition or the religious definition will in the end bring him no closer to eternal salvation. Jews by any definition, when rejecting Jesus as the promised Savior, are "aliens from the commonwealth of (the true spiritual) Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world," Eph. 2:12. Their religious tenets, from conversion on, are still based only on fulfilling the Law, with no Savior-substitute to bring true comfort and forgiveness of sins. Such a religion can bring no one to heaven. Are we doing all we can to help these people become true children of Abraham? Romans 4:1-5.

A. Schulz

.....

BOOK
REVIEWS

1.

"Young's Literal Translation Of
The Holy Bible," by Robert Young;
Revised Edition of 1898; Reprint,
Baker Book House; Paperback: \$4.95.

In a day of proliferation of modern Bible translations the reissuance of a translation first published in 1862 calls for some explanation, if not for justification. We are not sure that the latter has been satisfactorily supplied. The explanation, however, seems to lie in the word "literal" in the title.

The translator is the author of the well-known "Young's Analytical Concordance of the Bible," a work long familiar and valued among us. The merits of his translation are less well confirmed. In the Old Testament he is much preoccupied with the tense values of the Hebrew verb, dissenting from the generally accepted understanding of the Waw Consecutive, or Conversive, which he decries as a fiction and to the rebuttal of which he devotes some very learned argument and adduces authorities in the opening pages of the book.

For the most part, as far as a superficial examination indicated, the author's approach simply results in a change from the past tenses found in the KJV to an extensive use of what we might call historical or narrative Presents. So Gen. 1:1: "In the beginning of God's preparing the heavens and the earth - the earth hath existed waste and void, and darkness (is) on the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God fluttering on the face of the waters, and God saith, 'Let light be;' and light is."

There are other, more recent scholars who question the traditional explanation of Waw Consecutive. For those interested, the arguments are presented by J. Wash Watts in his "Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew O. T." (Broadman Press, 1951); and a brief hypothetical explanation of this Waw by G. R. Driver is found in Weingreen's Hebrew Grammar, Oxford 1955, p. 252f. We venture upon no debate of the point here, except to concede that the term "Conversive" as applied to this Waw is a misnomer.

Dr. Young sees what he calls "lax" and "confused" renderings in the KJV; but we find some of his criticism unnecessarily stringent. There are, of course, interesting passages in which the "literal" translation brings out certain flavors in the original which are otherwise not discernable. This seemed particularly the case in the New Testament. But frequently the literalism is so overdone that the version cannot be recommended as a guide for the lay reader or for the pastor and teacher not trained in the ancient languages. The others should be able to prepare their own literal translation as needed.

For those who can profit by whatever light this version sheds on the ancient mode of speech employed by the holy writers, it has the redeeming feature of serving as an antidote to some of the modern, reckless paraphrases which are being passed off as translations in our day. The price is right. The binding, though perhaps not very durable, permits the heavy book to remain open on the desk without the irritating resistance so often encountered in paperbacks.

E. Schaller

2.

"Treasury of Great Gospel Sermons;"
Volume I: Classic. Volume II: Con-
temporary. First printed 1949. Baker
Book House; Paperback: \$2.95 per volume.

These sermons, though not always "great" in the best sense of the word, are each unique and characteristic of the style of the respective author.

Volume I brings us preaching associated with the famous names of men like Thomas Talmage, Charles Spurgeon, Dwight Moody, Gipsy Smith and Billy Sunday. Volume II contains messages of Billy Graham, Harry Ironside, Ben Jones, John Rice and others. The only Lutheran preacher included in the set is Dr. Walter A. Maier.

Many of the sermons are revivalistic in character, particularly those in the Classic volume. Others remind one of the Chatauqua-style oratory that was once so popular. Their fame is perhaps more to be ascribed to the fervor and personal charisma of the speakers than to the spiritual meat they offer. Sitting in their audiences, most of us would have been embarrassed and distracted by the often undignified and sometimes flippant rhetorical extremes of some of the more colorful among them. But there is in these collections also much that is gripping, thought-provoking, and evangelistic in the best sense. Naturally the Calvinistic view of Conversion, Sacraments and Eschatology is dominant.

E. Schaller

3.

"An Exposition Of The Gospel Of Mark,"
by Herschel H. Hobbs; Baker Book
House, 1970; 261 pp., Cloth: \$6.95.

From a commentary that respects the inerrancy of

the inspired Word a reader can always derive profit. This exposition belongs to that category of exegetical books. It provides some sound insights and pleasant experiences. Its treatment of the text is more popular than technical; yet the Greek is not neglected.

The Calvinistic persuasion of the author sometimes overwhelms both his Greek and his better judgment. Thus his definition of the word "baptize" is wrong, and as a consequence his comment on Mark 1:4-8 leaves something to be desired. His remarks on the meaning and nature of the Holy Supper are simplistically incorrect. Equally unattractive is his suggestion that the Cup at the institution of the Sacrament contained unfermented grape juice. The author wholly fails to refer to Jewish customs or to the Passover, which would determine the content of the Cup. This is hardly good exegesis. (p. 220f.)

In connection with Mark 12:17 Dr. Hobbs offers a conclusion for which he supplies no basis. He writes, correctly: "Unjust laws may be changed through legal processes. But as long as they are laws, where they do not affect one's relation to God, they should be obeyed. Government is ordained of God (Rom. 13:1ff.)." But then he adds: "Only in utterly extreme cases is revolution justified." (p. 192). One wonders on which Scripture such an exception is based.

When the author supplies what he calls a "literal" translation of a verse, it is not always truly literal. In Mark 13:32 he omits in translation a very important article, and the specific sense becomes vague (p. 208).

The discussion concerning the disputed passage Mark 16:9-20 uses the occasion to advert to the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, which the author rejects. The argumentation (p. 260f) is gratuitous, since the doctrine he questions does not depend for its validity upon Mark 16:16, and the passage itself is not proven spurious because v. 16 implies the saving power of Baptism. The author's handling of Greek prepositions at this point is especially arbitrary and self-serving. His all-too-great dependence upon A. T. Robertson in such matters is ill-advised.

Even at present inflationary levels this book seems excessively overpriced; and that is regrettable, for the work has merit which a more modest cost would make more readily accessible to pastors.

E. Schaller

Briefly listed without critical comment:

"General Introduction To The Study of Holy Scripture," by Charles Augustus Briggs; reprint, 1970, by Baker Book House from the revised edition of 1900; 669 pages plus index; Cloth: \$8.95.

This is a textbook in Biblical Hermeneutics, similar in scope though not in spirit to that of Milton Terry. A brief biographical introduction by Charles Pfeiffer informs us that the author "was a brilliant and controversial scholar whose reference works continue to be used and appreciated even by those who reject his theology."

Dr. Briggs was suspended for heresy by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in 1893, while he was teaching at Union Theological Seminary. The school nevertheless retained him as professor, and he later took orders in the Protestant Episcopal Church. Dr. Briggs espoused the views of the so-called Higher Criticism.

E. Schaller



C O N T E N T S

VOLUME 10

OCTOBER 1970

NUMBER 4

ESSAYS AND ARTICLES

- OF THE USE AND RELEVANCE OF DR. C. F. W.
WALTHER'S "THESES CONCERNING THE
MODERN THEORY OF OPEN QUESTIONS"..... 1
E. Schaller

PREACHING THE WORD

- C. ALBRECHT -- IN MEMORIAM..... 18
REFORMATION THOUGHTS 22
E. Schaller

PANORAMA

- THE MESSAGE OR THE MEDIUM? 29
J. Lau
WHO IS A JEW? 34
A. Schulz

BOOK REVIEWS:

1. "Young's Literal Translation of the
Holy Bible" 36
 2. "Treasury of Great Gospel Sermons" 38
 3. "An Exposition of the Gospel of Mark" 38
 4. "General Introduction to the Study of
Holy Scripture" 40
E. Schaller
-