



"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 19

DECEMBER 1979

NUMBER 4

ISSN 0361-1906

THE JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

VOLUME 19

DECEMBER 1979

NUMBER 4

CONTENTS

THE BOOK OF CONCORD AND ECUMENICISM	2
Paul F. Nolting	
DOCTRINAL THEMES IN THE BOOK OF CONCORD	29
Rollin A. Reim	
BOOK REVIEW: <i>Toward a Reformed Philosophy</i>	32
R. E. Wehrwein	
PANORAMA: On Honorary Degrees from Heterodox Institutions	43
John Lau	

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

Subscriptions: \$5.00 per year, \$9.00 for 2 years, payable in advance.

Issues are dated: March, June, September, December.

Editor: Prof. C. M. Gullerud
Immanuel Lutheran College
Eau Claire, Wisconsin 54701

Managing Editor: Prof. John Lau
Immanuel Lutheran College
Eau Claire, Wisconsin 54701

Staff Contributors: P. Nolting, C. Kuehne,
R. Wehrwein.

Correspondence regarding subscriptions, renewals, and changes of address should be directed to the Managing Editor. Correspondence regarding material published in the JOURNAL should be addressed to the Editor.

THE BOOK OF CONCORD AND ECUMENICISM

ECUMENICISM: Ecumenical, ecumenic, ecumenicalism,
DERIVATION and ecumenicism are all derived from the Greek word οἰκουμένη, meaning the inhabited earth or the world in the sense of its inhabitants, that is, humankind. In common usage it came to mean the Roman Empire. So Caesar Augustus made a decree "that all the world should be taxed," (Luke 2:1). Regardless of the pretensions of Augustus, the decree affected only those parts of the world controlled by the imperial legions. Paul told the Athenians that God had appointed a day on which He would judge the world, all humankind without exception, by the man He had ordained, (Acts 17:31). St. John describes Satan as the one whose business it is to deceive the whole world, (Rev. 12:9). We find the hyperbolic use of the word in Tertullius' pompous charge against Paul, alleging him to be "a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world," (Acts 24:5).

ECUMENICAL We also find the hyperbolic use of the
MOVEMENT word when it is used in its adjectival form to denote the movement among the churches known as the "ecumenical movement." That movement can be defined as the effort to achieve a universal Christian unity and church union through local, national, and international forums. The description of this movement as being "ecumenical" or universal constitutes a large degree of wishful thinking, since large groups of humankind are unaffected and even unaware of the movement, while smaller groups steadfastly resist the ecumenicity of the movement.

Among conservative Lutherans the ecumenical movement is looked upon as a manifestation of man's continuing rebellion against the Lord God, for it is an attempt to build an ecclesiastical tower of Babel. The scriptural prerequisite of confessional unity precludes the ecumenical movement, which despite its asseverations to the contrary, moves relentlessly onward, but not upward, in defiant disregard of the Lord of the Church Who is the Alpha and Omega of all revelation. Continuing in the

Lord's Word is incompatible with compromising that Word, manipulating it, and actually operating with a policy of ignoring it. The goal of the ecumenical movement does not justify the means being used to achieve it, namely, the sacrificing of the ecumenical Word of the Lord.

Article 28, "On Church Fellowship," of the *Brief Statement* rules out participation in the ecumenical movement as it manifests itself in the churches in our day. Unfortunately, the article, while retaining its position in the confession of conservative Lutheran synods, has lost its normative force in some of them. When the policies and resolutions of a church body conflict with its public confession, the church body has lost its confessional status and has become yet another victim of the current ecumenical movement, which, in turn, is part of the broader one-world movement.

BIBLICAL ECUMENICISM

When we disavow, guard against, and contend against the powerful tide that the ecumenical movement is in the churches, we stand squarely upon Scripture, for not a syllable of Scripture gives anyone license to yield one tittle or jot of the words of the Head of the Church in the interest of outward unity or peace. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts," (Zech. 4:6). But when or if we dismiss ecumenicism or ecumenical or universal from our thought patterns and modes of expression, we may well lose a valuable insight into the Scriptures and our Lutheran Confessions. For our preaching and teaching is to be the holding forth of ecumenical or universal truths. As we celebrate the 400th anniversary of the Book of Concord, we should participate in that celebration in the knowledge and with the conviction that the particular confessions of the Lutheran Church bear witness to truly ecumenical or universal doctrines of Scripture.

ECUMENICAL TRUTHS OF SCRIPTURE

All that Scripture teaches, including the creation of the special nation of the Jews and the granting to it of special spiritual blessings during the Old Testament era, is truly ecumenical or universal, not in any hyperbolic sense, but literally. Consider but

three teachings of the Scriptures: sin, grace, and the means of grace. The origin of all three doctrines goes back to Genesis 3. When Adam sinned, the human race sinned. The problem of sin from its inception was ecumenic, universal. That Paul teaches specifically in his Epistle to the Romans: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," (5:12). Previously Paul had affirmed: "We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin," (3:9). Sin is universal, truly ecumenical; all that Scripture has to say about sin, its origin, its effects upon man, its consequences for man, is applicable to each and every member of the human race.

Genesis 3 also brings the solution for the problem of sin in the protevangel. The head-crushing Seed of the woman was to and did rescue all mankind. The Gospel is thus also ecumenic or universal. The Seed of the woman Who was to come from the seed of Abraham was to be "a blessing for all nations," (Gen. 12:3). The prophets saw beyond the narrow limits of their countrymen's bigoted nationalism, beholding the Light that would lighten the gentiles, (Is. 9:2; 60:1-3; Luke 2:32). God so loved the world (John 3:16), that He gave His Son Whose righteousness brought the verdict of justification of life for all men, (Rom. 5:18). The ecumenical task of the Church is to proclaim the ecumenical Savior Whose doing and dying were truly universal in their effect, with no human being excluded.

But how is the ecumenical solution to the universal problem of sin to be made known to humankind? The message was first given in the garden in human words. Grace is channeled from heaven to earth in the flow of words, written and spoken. God spoke to Adam and Eve a word of promise. God's Son came as the Prophet of Galilee. The Spirit of God moved holy men to write, for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," (Rom. 10:17). The universal method by which God communicates with humankind is through words.

Thus the problem of sin is ecumenic, as is the solution and the means of conveying that solution, the Gos-

pel, to all humankind. This is scriptural ecumenicism.

I. THE BOOK OF CONCORD: ECUMENICAL IN INTENT

ECUMENICAL SCRIPTURES/ PARTICULAR CONFESSION

The Holy Scriptures are truly ecumenical, the Word of God to all mankind; its teachings

confront every single person with the truth, all of the truth. But the Book of Concord is a particular confession, the confession of the Lutheran Church. It was accepted in the year 1580 and contains, besides the three ecumenical creeds of Christendom, the six particular confessions of the Lutheran Church, produced during the span of half a century between 1530 and 1580. How do these six confessions relate to each other, and what is the relationship of the Holy Scriptures, written over a period of fifteen centuries for all mankind, to the Book of Concord, written principally over a period of fifty years for but one branch of Christendom, the Lutheran Church?

The "Preface to the Christian Book of Concord" states the relationship of the six particular confessions of the Lutheran Church to each other. The fundamental confession of the Lutherans was set before the Emperor at Augsburg in 1530. The following five confessions were reaffirmations of, elaborations upon, and defenses of the doctrines confessed at Augsburg, for

... it has never been our intention to wish to defend or spread any new and strange dogma, but that we desired, God aiding us, to constantly support and retain the truth which we professed at Augsburg in the year 1530. [Concordia Triglotta, p. 10-11. Note: all subsequent page references in brackets are to the Concordia Triglotta.]

... we are not introducing a new confession, or one different from that which was presented in the year 1530 to Charles V, of happy memory, but that we wished indeed to lead our churches and schools, first of all, to the fountains of Holy Scripture, and to the Creeds, and then to the Augsburg Confession, of which we have before made mention. [P. 21.]

The relationship of the three ecumenical creeds and the six particular Lutheran confessions to the Holy Scriptures is spelled out precisely in a concluding paragraph of the "Preface":

We indeed (to repeat in conclusion what we have mentioned several times above) have wished, in this work of concord, in no way to devise what is new, or to depart from the truth of the heavenly doctrine which our ancestors, renowned for their piety, as well as we ourselves, have acknowledged and professed. We mean that doctrine, which, having been derived from the Prophetic and Apostolic Scriptures, is contained in the three ancient Creeds, in the Augsburg Confession, presented in the year 1530 to the Emperor Charles V, of excellent memory, then in the Apology, which was added to this, in the Smalcald Articles, and lastly in both the Catechisms of that excellent man, Dr. Luther. Therefore we also have determined not to depart even a finger's breadth either from the subjects themselves, or from the phrases which are found in them, but, the Spirit of the Lord aiding us, to persevere constantly, with the greatest harmony, in the goodly agreement, and we intend to examine all controversies according to this true norm and declaration of the pure doctrine. [P. 23.]

The Holy Scriptures are the norm for all ecumenic teachings in the church; the confessions are particular witnesses to those ecumenic teachings.

THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION

The Augsburg Confession was the first of the particular confessions of the Lutheran Church. It was prepared for the diet summoned by Emperor Charles V, one purpose of which was to settle "dissensions in the matter of our holy religion and Christian Faith," [p. 39]. It was the hope of the Lutheran princes and their clerical leaders that

... these matters may be settled and brought back to one simple truth and Christian concord, that for the future one pure and true religion may be em-

braced and maintained by us, that as we all are under one Christ and do battle under Him, so we may be able also to live in unity and concord in the one Christian Church. [P. 39.]

Certainly there is manifestly an ecumenical ring to those words. The Lutherans had no intention of being schismatic, but rather were dedicating their efforts to the restoration of the "simple truth and Christian concord" of the "one Christian Church." Both Catholics and Lutherans had the same ecumenical aim, the Catholics defending the doctrinal *status quo* as being the ecumenical voice of the Church, the Lutherans insisting that the former unity had been destroyed through the intrusion of error and that hence a restoration was necessary. The Lutherans expressed the hope that

... the dissension, by God's help, may be done away and brought back to one true accordant religion; for as we all are under one Christ and do battle under Him, we ought to confess the one Christ, after the tenor of Your Imperial Majesty's edict, and everything ought to be conducted according to the truth of God; and this it is what, with most fervent prayers, we entreat of God. [P. 41.]

These words are not the prayer of fanatics and schismatics, but of men filled with an ecumenic spirit, contending for the universal truth of God's Word.

The individual articles of the confession carry the ecumenical theme through, always identifying with the ancient confessions of the Church and opposing ancient errors that had been condemned by the Church in the past. For example, Article I: "Of God" confessed both "the unity of the Divine Essence" and the plurality of "the Three Persons" with the Nicene Creed, confessed by the Church in 325 A.D. The Trinitarian and Christological heresies of the past were condemned.

Rome saw the Lutherans as new heretics, departing from the ecumenical confession of the Church; the Lutherans saw the Anabaptists in that role and so condemned them in Article V: "Of the Ministry"; Article IX: "Of

Baptism"; Article XII: "Of Repentance"; and Article XVI: "Of Civil Affairs." Twenty-one articles of faith were presented. They were brought to a conclusion with this testimony:

This is about the Sum of our Doctrine, in which, as can be seen, there is nothing that varies from the Scriptures, or from the Church Catholic, or from the Church of Rome as known from its writers. This being the case, they judge harshly who insist that our teachers be regarded as heretics. [P. 59.]

The Lutherans had no new doctrine to introduce. Their cause was simply and purely reaffirming the old ecumenical truths. Hence they disavowed the charge of heresy.

The Augsburg Confession also contained a section of seven articles on abuses that had been corrected in the Lutheran churches. That section begins with a reaffirmation of ecumenicism:

Inasmuch, then, as our churches dissent in no article of the faith from the Church Catholic, but only omit some abuses which are new ... [P. 59.]

Then follow the articles on the abuses. The new usage, introduced in the Lutheran churches, constituted a return to the old, ecumenical usage of the Church. For example, Article XXII: "Of Both Kinds in the Sacrament" — 1) This is the command of Christ, and 2) "this usage has long remained in the Church." Appeal is made to Pope Gelasius who "commands that the Sacrament be not divided," [P. 61]. (Note that the modern Catholic Church is in some areas returning to both kinds.) Article XXVI: "Of the Distinction of Meats" — First the confession points out that the doctrine of grace and of the righteousness of faith has been obscured by the introduction of new ceremonies. Then the confession points out how over the years the accumulated traditions had obscured the commandments of God. [P. 71.]

Thus in one way or another the ecumenical truth of Scripture was confessed and identified with the confessions and practices of the ancient church. The "new"

forms, which were the object of attack by Rome, were in fact a return to the practices of the ancient church.

THE FORMULA OF CONCORD From 1530 until the death of Luther in 1546 the Lutheran Church experienced development, consolidation, and expansion. The thirty years following Luther's death were marked by internal dissension that threatened the loss of the eternal, ecumenical truth restored and brought to light again at Augsburg. Through the heroic efforts of Spirit-led leaders supplied by the Head of the Church in the persons of Jacob Andrea, Martin Chemnitz, David Chytreus, Nicholaus Selnecker, and many other lesser men the Lord restored unity of confession to the Lutheran Church. That confession, however, was not intended to be, nor was it in fact, sectarian, but rather ecumenical.

The introductory paragraphs of the Formula state the intention of the confessors to abide by the Augsburg Confession, not to recede from it, nor "to propose another or new confession." There follows then a section entitled "Of the Comprehensive Summary, Foundation, Rule, and Standard Whereby All Dogmas Should be Judged according to God's Word, and the Controversies that have Occurred Should be Explained and Decided in a Christian Manner." Note the breadth of "All Dogmas." The opening statement expresses the goal of the modern ecumenical movement but with a means of gaining that goal unknown or rather rejected by the current movement:

Since for thorough, permanent unity in the Church it is, above all things, necessary that we have a comprehensive, unanimously approved summary and form wherein is brought together from God's Word the common doctrine, reduced to a brief compass, which the churches that are of the true Christian religion confess, just as the ancient Church always had for this use its fixed symbols ... [Pp. 849-851.]

Then follows the basic norm for all doctrines in the Church:

First, then, we receive and embrace with our

whole heart, the Prophetic and Apostolic Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the pure, clear fountain of Israel, which is the only true standard by which all teachers are to be judged. [P. 851.]

"All teachers and doctrines" is ecumenical, not in the hyperbolic sense of the word, but in its true and widest meaning. As the Scriptures were given for all men and its teachings fit all men, so the Scriptures are the ecumenic norm for any doctrine or teaching that comes from the pen or lips of man.

In the centuries after the apostolic era and before the Reformation the Church bore witness unto the ecumenic truth through the "three Ecumenical Creeds," namely, "the Apostles", the Nicene, and the Athanasian." Then, because of further departures from the ecumenical truth of Scripture during the centuries preceding the Reformation, additional confessions became mandatory: the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology, the Smalcald Articles, the Small and Large Catechisms of Dr. Luther, and finally the Formula of Concord. All of these confessions are witnesses to the ecumenical truth, while the Word of God (the Holy Scriptures) "alone should be and remain the only standard and rule of doctrine," [P. 855].

II. THE BOOK OF CONCORD: ECUMENICAL IN FACT

SIN The human race has descended from one man, then one pair, Adam and Eve. What they experienced in the garden has become the legacy of all mankind. They sinned; they fell; and with them all mankind. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," (Rom. 5:12). All mankind, the totality of the billions of individuals born on this earth and yet to be born, is equally and utterly fallen, under sin, condemned to death. What Scripture says of sin, its origin, manifestations, effects upon man, and consequences here in time and eternally is ecumenical in the fullest sense of the word. If the confessions are to be ecumenical, they will have to treat the universal problem of sin. If what the confessions say of man, the sinner, is in line with Scripture, the confessions are ecumenical in their testimony.

AUGSBURG CONFESSION

The order of the articles is significant: God, sin, Son of God, justification, ministry, new obedience. God first, then the fall from God, next the Mediator, then His effective solving of the problem of sin, how that message is brought to us, and what effect it has upon us. Article II: "Of Original Sin" is brief, but ecumenical: "All men begotten in that natural way are born with sin." That state or condition is defined with two negatives and a positive: "without fear of God, without trust in God, and with concupiscence." The effects are uniform: "even now condemning and bringing eternal death upon those not born again through Baptism and the Holy Ghost," [P. 43]. There are no exceptions. The confession has a claim on the assent of all who acknowledge the authority of the Bible and bear the name Christian. But all such have not always assented. So the article condemns the Pelagians who deviated from the ecumenical truth by denying that original depravity is indeed sin.

Article XVIII: "Of Free Will" takes a stand against an error that has plagued the Church since the days of Christ. It was responsible for the rejection of the Messiah by His own people, namely, the conceit that natural man, despite the fall, still has residual spiritual powers that enable him to produce a righteousness that will satisfy God. If that is true, then God's Son came, suffered, and died in vain. Natural man "has no power, without the Holy Ghost, to work the righteousness of God, that is, spiritual righteousness; since the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, I Cor. 2: 14," [P. 51]. Again the Pelagian error is condemned.

Article XIX: "Of the Cause of Sin" briefly states that the cause of sin does not lie in God but in the will of the devil and wicked men. Thus a dualistic concept of human history is disavowed, and the hope for an end to the reign of sin is assured.

APOLOGY The Catholic theologians of Charles V censured the Augsburg Confession's definition of original sin as the condition of being without fear of God, without faith, and with concupiscence. They contended that this was actual guilt, not original guilt.

Their definition reduced original sin from being a "depravity or corruption of nature" to a "blemish or imposed load or burden" upon the descendants of Adam. Original sin thus becomes an inconvenience, but not an impasse for spiritual activity on the part of man.

Therefore, when they speak of the sin of origin, they do not mention the more serious faults of human nature, to wit, ignorance of God, contempt for God, being destitute of fear and confidence in God, hatred of God's judgment, flight from God (as from a tyrant) when He judges, anger toward God, despair of grace, putting one's trust in present things (money, property, friends), etc. These diseases, which are in the highest degree contrary to the Law of God, the scholastics do not notice; yea, to human nature they meanwhile ascribe unimpaired strength for loving God above all things, and for fulfilling God's commandments according to the substance of the acts; nor do they see that they are saying things that are contradictory to one another. [P. 107.]

Melanchthon pointed out that if human nature possesses such strength and spiritual ability, there would be no need for the grace of God or for the Holy Ghost. The definition of the Augsburg Confession introduced nothing new, for its teaching had been the position of the church fathers, especially Augustine. Unfortunately, the Roman Church has pursued a policy of lauding Augustine and condemning Pelagius, while adopting the heresy of Pelagius and rejecting the teaching of Augustine. "The knowledge of original sin is necessary"; otherwise "the magnitude of the grace of Christ cannot be understood." How can anyone long for or appreciate the "great treasure of divine favor and grace which the Gospel offers, unless our diseases be recognized"? [P. 113.]

This vital matter of the capability of natural man, its limits, is taken up again in Article XVIII: "Of Free Will." It is freely granted that natural man does have the liberty to "render civil righteousness or the righteousness of works," [P. 335]. The Catholic theologians disavowed both the Pelagians and the Manicheans, but the Lutherans asked the question:

... what difference is there between the Pelagians and our adversaries, since both hold that without the Holy Ghost men can love God and perform God's commandments with respect to the substance of the acts, and can merit grace and justification by works which reason performs by itself, without the Holy Ghost? [P. 335.]

If these capabilities are ascribed to man's natural will, then neither the redemptive work of Christ nor the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost are necessary. Civic righteousness is within the capability of natural man; the righteousness that avails before God is beyond his capability.

Therefore although we concede to free will the liberty and power to perform the outward works of the Law, yet we do not ascribe to free will these spiritual matters, namely, truly to fear God, truly to believe God, truly to be confident and hold that God regards us, hears us, forgives us, etc. [P. 337.]

SMALCALD ARTICLES Luther treated the doctrine of sin briefly in Section III of the Smalcald Articles, prefacing his treatment with the remark that "the Pope and his government do not care much about these," [P. 477]. With his customary acute spiritual insight, Luther gave the reason why so much difficulty arises in connection with the discussion of original sin:

This hereditary sin is so deep and horrible a corruption of nature that no reason can understand it, but it must be learned and believed from the revelation of Scriptures ... [P. 477.]

Luther then listed and rejected the various attempts of the scholastic doctors to soften and in some way get around the hard truth of Scripture that the will of natural man is dead and hence impotent in spiritual matters.

SMALL CATECHISM In the Small Catechism Luther defines the Ten Commandments without giving special treatment to the doctrine of original sin. But in his classic definition of the Third Article of the Ap-

ostolic Creed he again states in childlike simplicity the fact that man's natural will is bound in spiritual matters:

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.

LARGE CATECHISM The treatment here is extremely evangelical and pastoral, the emphasis lying not on the bondage of man's natural will but rather on the effective working of the Holy Ghost, without which no one would or could ever come to faith. Here is how Luther put it:

For neither you nor I could ever know anything of Christ, or believe on Him, and obtain Him for our Lord, unless it were offered to us and granted to our hearts by the Holy Ghost through the preaching of the Gospel. The work is done and accomplished; for Christ has acquired and gained the treasure for us by His suffering, death, resurrection, etc. But if the work remained concealed so that no one knew of it, then it would be in vain and lost. That this treasure, therefore, might not lie buried, but be appropriated and enjoyed, God has caused the Word to go forth and be proclaimed, in which He gives the Holy Ghost to bring this treasure home and appropriate it to us. Therefore sanctifying is nothing else than bringing us to Christ to receive this good, to which we could not attain of ourselves. [P. 689.]

**FORMULA OF
CONCORD**

Both the importance and the difficulty of the doctrine of original sin, especially as to its effects upon the will of man in spiritual matters, dare not be underestimated. Despite the fact that the doctrine was treated in three articles in the Augsburg Confession (II, XVIII, and XIX) and again at length in the Apology, thereafter briefly by Luther in the Smalcald Articles, yet dissension broke out among the Lutherans in the thirty years after the death of Luther, which had to be settled by an

additional two articles in the Formula of Concord. Article I settled the issue as to whether fallen human nature was in itself original sin or whether original sin is to be separated from human nature, being "a horrible, deep, inexpressible corruption of the same," [P. 859]. The settlement of the dispute reads as follows:

But although original sin, like a spiritual poison and leprosy (as Luther says), has poisoned and corrupted the whole human nature, so that we cannot show and point out to the eye the nature apart by itself, and original sin apart by itself, nevertheless the corrupt nature, or essence of the corrupt man, body and soul, or the man himself whom God has created (and in whom dwells original sin, which also corrupts the nature, essence, or the entire man), and original sin, which dwells in man's nature or essence, and corrupts it, are not one thing; as also in external leprosy the body which is leprous, and the leprosy on or in the body, are not, properly speaking, one thing. But a distinction must be maintained also between our nature as created and preserved by God, in which sin is indwelling, and original sin, which dwells in the nature. These two must and also can be considered, taught, and believed separately according to Holy Scripture. [P. 869.]

Article II: "Of Free Will, or Human Powers" again took up the question of whether or how much original sin had affected the natural will of man in spiritual decisions, specifically

... what the intellect and will of the unregenerate man is able to do in his conversion and regeneration from his own powers remaining after the Fall: whether he is able, when the Word of God is preached, and the grace of God is offered to us, to prepare himself for grace, accept the same, and assent thereto. [P. 881.]

Article II confesses both the complete bondage of the will before conversion and the absolute monergism of grace in conversion, supporting both doctrines with num-

erous references to Scripture:

For, first, although man's reason or natural intellect indeed has still a dim spark of the knowledge that there is a God, as also of the doctrine of the Law, Rom. 1,19ff., yet it is so ignorant, blind, and perverted that when even the most ingenious and learned men upon earth read or hear the Gospel of the Son of God and the promise of eternal salvation, they cannot from their own powers perceive, apprehend, understand, or believe and regard it as true, but the more diligence and earnestness they employ, wishing to comprehend these spiritual things with their reason, the less they understand or believe, and before they become enlightened and are taught by the Holy Ghost they regard all this as only foolishness or fictions. I Cor. 2,14: The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him. I Cor. 1, 21: For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. Eph. 4, 17f.: They (that is, those not born again of God's Spirit) walk in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart. Matt. 13,11ff.; Luke 8,18: Seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand; but it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Rom. 3,11.12: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are all together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Accordingly, the Scriptures flatly call natural man in spiritual and divine things darkness, Eph. 5,8; Acts 26,18. John 1,5: The light shineth in darkness (that is, in the dark, blind world, which does not know or regard God), and the darkness comprehended it not. Likewise, the Scriptures teach that man in sins is not only weak and sick, but defunct and entirely dead, Eph. 2,1.5; Col. 2,13. [Pp. 883-885.]

Reason and free will are able to a certain extent to live an outwardly decent life; but to be born anew, and to obtain inwardly another heart, mind, and disposition, this only the Holy Ghost effects. He opens the understanding and heart to understand the Scriptures and to give heed to the Word, as it is written Luke 24,45: Then opened He their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures. Also Acts 16,14: Lydia heard us; whose heart the Lord opened that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. He worketh in us both to will and to do of His own good pleasure, Phil. 2,13. He gives repentance, Acts 5,31; 2 Tim. 2,25. He works faith, Phil. 1,29: For unto you it is given, in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him. Eph. 2,8: It is the gift of God. John 6, 29: This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent. He gives an understanding heart, seeing eyes, and hearing ears, Deut. 29,4; Matt. 13, 15. He is a Spirit of regeneration and renewal, Titus 3,5.6. He takes away the hard heart of stone, and gives a new tender heart of flesh, that we may walk in His command, Ezek. 11,19; Deut. 30,6; Ps. 51,10. He creates us in Christ Jesus to good works, Eph. 2,10, and makes us new creatures, 2 Cor. 5,17; Gal. 6,15. And, in short, Every good gift is of God, Jas. 1,17. No one can come to Christ unless the Father draw him, John 6,44. No one knoweth the Father, save him to whom the Son will reveal Him, Matt. 11,27. No one can call Christ Lord except by the Holy Ghost, I Cor. 12,3. Without Me, says Christ, ye can do nothing, John 15,5. All our sufficiency is of God, 2 Cor. 3,5. What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why doest thou glory as if thou hadst not received it? I Cor. 4,7. [P. 891.]

SUMMARY The confessions define original sin (without fear and faith; with concupiscence), trace its origin to the devil, and detail its effect upon the will of natural man at length as making man dead spiritually and so unable to begin or effect his own salvation, as the two final lengthy quotations show. Many other aspects of the doctrine of sin, as they are systematically

discussed in dogmatics textbooks, are mentioned but incidentally or passed by. The main thrust of the confessions is on the bondage of the will in spiritual matters. The Augsburg Confession and Apology precede and the Formula of Concord follows Luther's "You have seized me by the throat" conflict with Erasmus over this life or death issue. The spiritual bondage of the will applies to every single naturally born person on the earth. The teaching is absolutely ecumenical. It is one of the hardest of hard sayings of the Scriptures, because it takes all glory for salvation from man and gives it to God alone. The religious establishment at the time of Christ rejected the doctrine; consequently they crucified the Lord of glory. Pelagius introduced the virus of the heresy into the Catholic Church; it has, as semi-Pelagianism, leavened the whole body of Roman dogma creating the kingdom of the Anti-christ. Melancthon introduced the same virus in the form of synergism into the Lutheran Church, thus undermining the very work of the Reformation and paving the way for the return to Rome as is coming to pass in the modern ecumenical movement. Reformed theology is, for the most part, characterized by the same virus in the form of Arminianism, the delusion that natural man has the ability to respond to God's grace. Witness the highly emotional appeals to natural man to pray the prayer of grace, inviting the Lord Jesus into one's heart and life, to make the decision for Christ — all of which are beyond the capability of natural man and have the effect of making the sinner his own savior by virtue of his decision. All of these efforts to soften the fall into sin undermine the grace of God in Christ Jesus, nourish subjectivism rather than the objective grace of God, and thus lead the sinner to trust his personal decision-making rather than the doing and dying of his Lord and Savior. Over against all these variations of the same heresy the Lutheran Confessions have stood as a bulwark, contending for the universal truth of man's impotency in spiritual matters, which paves the way for the glorious truth of God's ecumenic grace in Christ Jesus.

JUSTIFICATION There are only two possible solutions to the universal problem of sin. Either each individual has to solve that problem for himself, or God must provide the solution for all men. The former

is paganism, which manifests itself in an endless variety of man's doing and leaving undone to propitiate his God. This *opinio legis* is as natural, universal, and consistent in man as the law of gravity is on earth. For that reason self-saving keeps on reasserting itself within Christian churches, even as the tendency never departs from the Christian since it is imbedded in his flesh. On the other hand, salvation from God in Christ Jesus ever remains an offense to the minds of man, a stumbling-block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles, (I Cor. 1:23). During the centuries following the apostolic era to the time of the Reformation "the mystery of iniquity," which was at work already at the time of the apostles, thoroughly permeated the doctrine and life of the church, obscuring God's ecumenic solution to the ecumenic problem of man's sin. Luther suffered acute agony of soul until the Spirit opened his eyes to the glory of the righteousness of God in Christ that becomes man's righteousness by faith. While Luther was taking the cause to the Lord of the Church in prayer at the Coburg, Melancthon was formulating the Lutheran confession of the ecumenical gospel of salvation. Article IV: "Of Justification" stated the truth briefly, but both negatively and positively:

Also they teach that men cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works, but are freely justified for Christ's sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor, and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who, by His death, has made satisfaction for our sins. This faith God imputes for righteousness in His sight. Rom. 3 and 4. [P. 45.]

That one brief article sets the tone for the entire confession, yea, for all the confessions of the Lutheran Church. A brief survey will show how the formula "by grace through faith in Christ, not works" is carried through.

Article V: "Of the Ministry":

... faith ... that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ's sake, justified those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ's sake. [P. 45.]

Article VI: "Of New Obedience":

... faith is bound to bring forth good fruits, ... but that we should not rely on those works to merit justification before God. For remission is apprehended by faith ... [P. 45.]

Article XII: "Of Repentance":

... faith, which is born of the Gospel, or of absolution, and believes that, for Christ's sake, sins are forgiven ... [P. 49.]

Article XV: "Of Ecclesiastical Usages":

They are admonished also that human traditions instituted to propitiate God, to merit grace, and to make satisfaction for sins, are opposed to the Gospel and the doctrine of faith. [P. 49.]

Article XX: "Of Good Works":

... that our works cannot reconcile God or merit forgiveness of sins, grace, and justification, but that we obtain this only by faith, when we believe that we are received into favor for Christ's sake, who alone has been set forth the Mediator and Propitiation, 1 Tim. 2,5, in order that the Father may be reconciled through Him. [P. 53.]

... this doctrine ... brings the greatest consolation, because consciences cannot be set at rest through any works, but only by faith, when they take the sure ground that for Christ's sake they have a reconciled God.

... the term "faith" does not signify merely the knowledge of the history ... but also the effect of the history — namely, that we have grace, righteousness, and forgiveness of sins through Christ. [P. 55.]

Furthermore, it is taught on our part that it is necessary to do good works, not that we should trust to merit grace by them, but because it is the will of God. [P. 57.]

Article XXI: "Of the Worship of the Saints":

... But the Scripture teaches not the invocation of saints, or to ask help of saints, since it sets before us the one Christ as Mediator, Propitiation, High Priest, and Intercessor. [P. 57.]

Article XXIV: "Of the Mass":

Scripture also teaches us that we are justified before God through faith in Christ, when we believe that our sins are forgiven for Christ's sake. Now if the Mass take away the sins of the living and the dead by the outward act, justification comes of the work of Masses, and not of faith, which Scripture does not allow. [P. 67.]

Article XXV: "Of Confession":

Our people are taught that they should highly prize the absolution, as being the voice of God, and pronounced by God's command. ... that God requires faith to believe such absolution as a voice sounding from heaven, and that such faith in Christ truly obtains and receives the forgiveness of sin. [P. 69.]

Article XXVI: "Of the Distinction of Meats":

... that new ceremonies, new orders, new holy-days, and new fastings were daily instituted, and the teachers in the churches did exact these works as a service necessary to merit grace ...

First, the doctrine of grace and of the righteousness of faith has been obscured by it, which is the chief part of the Gospel, and ought to stand out as the most prominent in the Church, in order that the merit of Christ may be well known, and faith, which believes that sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, be exalted far above works. [P. 71.]

Article XXVII: "Of Monastic Vows":

... monks have taught that services of man's making satisfy for sins and merit grace and justification. What else is this than to detract from the glory of Christ and to obscure and deny the righteousness of faith? [P. 81.]

... Christian perfection is to fear God from the heart, and yet to conceive great faith, and to trust that for Christ's sake we have a God who has been reconciled ... [P. 83.]

Article XXVIII: "Of Ecclesiastical Power":

... It is necessary that the chief article of the Gospel be preserved, to wit, that we obtain grace

freely by faith in Christ, and not for certain observances or acts of worship devised by men. [P. 91.]

APOLOGY If the Papacy is The Great Antichrist, as the Lutheran Confessions solemnly testify, the Lutherans could expect from the Catholic theologians a concentrated attack upon the solution to mankind's problem of sin in the ecumenical grace of God in Christ Jesus. Article IV (II): "Of Justification" verifies this expectation. Melancthon began the article by revealing how broad the counterattack of the Antichrist was, and how deadly to the gospel:

In the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and, below, in the Twentieth Article, they condemn us, for teaching that men obtain remission of sins, not because of their own merits, but freely for Christ's sake, through faith in Christ. (They reject quite stubbornly both these statements.) For they condemn us both for denying that men obtain remissions of sins because of their own merits, and for affirming that, through faith, men obtain remission of sins, and through faith in Christ are justified. But since in this controversy the chief topic of Christian doctrine is treated, which, understood aright, illumines and amplifies the honor of Christ (which is of especial service for the clear, correct understanding of the entire Holy Scriptures, and alone shows the way to the unspeakable treasure and right knowledge of Christ, and alone opens the door to the entire Bible), and brings necessary and most abundant consolation to devout consciences, we ask His Imperial Majesty to hear us with forbearance in regard to matters of such importance. For since the adversaries understand neither what the remission of sins, nor what faith, nor what grace, nor what righteousness is, they sadly corrupt this topic, and obscure the glory and benefits of Christ, and rob devout consciences of the consolations offered in Christ. [Pp. 119-121.]

After this introduction Melancthon systematically approached his subject matter, disavowing the righteousness of works as being unable to justify, extolling the

righteousness of faith, and showing how faith justifies as the organ for receiving the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. The lengthy discussion is brought to a conclusion with a reemphasis on the centrality of this doctrine:

Thus far, in order that the subject might be made quite clear, we have shown with sufficient fullness, both from testimonies of Scripture, and arguments derived from Scripture, that by faith alone we obtain the remission of sins for Christ's sake, and that by faith alone we are justified, i.e., of unrighteous men made righteous, or regenerated. But how necessary the knowledge of this faith is, can be easily judged, because in this alone the office of Christ is recognized, by this alone we receive the benefits of Christ; this alone brings sure and firm consolation to pious minds. And in the Church (if there is to be a church, if there is to be a Christian Creed), it is necessary that there should be the (preaching and) doctrine (by which consciences are not made to rely on a dream or to build on a foundation of sand, but) from which the pious may receive the sure hope of salvation. For the adversaries give men bad advice (therefore the adversaries are truly unfaithful bishops, unfaithful preachers, and doctors; they have hitherto given evil counsel to consciences, and still do so by introducing such doctrine) when they bid them doubt whether they obtain remission of sins. For how will such persons sustain themselves in death who have heard nothing of this faith, and think that they ought to doubt whether they obtain the remission of sins? Besides, it is necessary that in the Church of Christ the Gospel be retained, i.e., the promise that for Christ's sake sins are freely remitted. Those who teach nothing of this faith, concerning which we speak, altogether abolish the Gospel. But the schoolastics mention not even a word concerning this faith. Our adversaries follow them, and reject this faith. Nor do they see that, by rejecting this faith, they abolish the entire promise concerning the free remission of sins and the righteousness of Christ. [P. 155.]

The remaining articles of the Apology, enlarging upon the Augsburg Confession, emphasize the same theme from a variety of angles. Every article of the Apology, in one way or another, points to the ecumenical truth of the gospel that salvation is alone by faith in Christ Jesus, not by works.

SMALL CATECHISM

In his Bible for the common people Luther wrote one sentence which is the crowning jewel of the Book of Concord. It is his explanation of what it means to believe in Jesus Christ. Every saint of God can and does subscribe to the sentence, even though the words of Luther may in themselves be unknown to him:

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, in order that I may be His own, and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. [P. 545.]

Here is ecumenicism at its very best!

FORMULA OF CONCORD

That dissension should have arisen among the Lutherans over the chief article of the Christian faith, as restored to the Church by the Reformation, could be expected and can be understood when one realizes how relentlessly Satan wages war against this doctrine and that the gospel of salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus ever remains foolishness to the mind of man. Peace was restored in the Lutheran Church through the acceptance of the twelve articles of the Formula. All of these articles are either antecedent or consequent to the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus. The pattern of the Formula was as follows:

- I. "Of Original Sin": Original sin, a corruption of human nature, makes salvation necessary.
- II. "Of Free Will": Original sin made it impossible for natural man to save himself.
- III. "Of the Righteousness of Faith before God": That righteousness is not an attribute of God, but the righteousness lived by the God-man according to the law and bestowed by faith.
- IV. "Of Good Works": Good works are not necessary for salvation but are necessary as the voluntary fruit of those saved.
- V. "Of the Law and the Gospel": The holy gospel is not a preaching of repentance, but "properly nothing else than a preaching of consolation."
- VI. "Of the Third Use of the Law": The life which the law demands but cannot effect is effected by the gospel according to the standard of the law.
- VII. "Of the Lord's Supper": In the Holy Supper our Lord gives His body and blood, under the bread and wine, as a pledge of His forgiveness received by faith.
- VIII. "Of the Person of Christ": The Christ who saved is the God-man, in whom the divine and human natures are personally united.
- IX. "Of the Descent of Christ to Hell": Christ's descent into hell means for believers complete victory over the devil.
- X. "Of Church Rites": Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free, but do not misuse that liberty in the time of persecution.
- XI. "Of God's Eternal Foreknowledge (Predestination) and Election": Our salvation, already from eternity, is in Christ.

XII. "Of Other Factions (Heresies) and Sects": All and any errors which conflict with the gospel of Jesus Christ are rejected.

SUMMARY The Lutheran Confessions bear eloquent and consistent witness to the ecumenical truth that salvation for all is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. That salvation was first announced in grace in the form of a promise that could be received alone by faith. That promise was fulfilled in Christ Jesus who so poignantly taught salvation by grace through faith in the parable of the lost sons, (Luke 15:11-32). On the occasion of his initial contact with Gentiles Peter testified that "to Him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins," (Acts 10:43). Paul capsuled the ecumenic truth in his letter to the Romans, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law," (3:28). All preaching and teaching both publicly and privately should bear witness to the same ecumenic truth.

MEANS OF GRACE Sin is man's universal problem. Salvation in Christ Jesus is God's ecumenic answer to the problem. Words are God's single means for conveying His ecumenic solution to man in every age. The Lutheran Confessions take a stand against an error inherent in Catholic theology but which surfaced especially among the Anabaptists at the time of the Reformation, namely, "that the Holy Ghost comes to men without the external Word, through their own preparations and works," [P. 45].

Article V of the Augsburg Confession states how justification is conveyed to the individual sinner:

That we may obtain this faith, the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith, where and when it pleases God, in them that hear the Gospel ... [P. 45.]

In the Apology, Article IV (II), Melancthon made

this incidental statement: "God cannot be treated with, God cannot be apprehended, except through the Word." [P. 139.] That truth is strongly emphasized by Luther in the Smalcald Articles, Part III, Article VIII: "Of Confession":

And in those things which concern the spoken, outward Word, we must firmly hold that God grants His Spirit or grace to no one, except through or with the preceding outward Word, in order that we may (thus) be protected against the enthusiasts, i.e., spirits who boast that they have the Spirit without and before the Word, and accordingly judge Scripture or the spoken Word, and explain and stretch it at their pleasure, as Muenzer did, and many still do at the present day, who wish to be acute judges between the Spirit and the letter, and yet know not what they say or declare. For (indeed) the Papacy also is nothing but sheer enthusiasm, by which the Pope boasts that all rights exist in the shrine of his heart, and whatever he decides and commands with (in) the church is spirit and right, even though it is above and contrary to Scripture and the spoken Word. [P. 495.]

At the close of the article Luther reaffirmed this truth:

Therefore we ought and must constantly maintain this point, that God does not wish to deal with us otherwise than through the spoken Word and the Sacraments. [P. 497.]

SUMMARY God the Holy Ghost deals with the sinner only through the Word or the Word connected with an element, as in the Sacraments. This is an ecumenic truth that is of special concern to us in our day. On the one hand, we are witnessing the mushrooming of sects who glory in continued and progressive revelation, thus disavowing the apostolic Word by which the Church is to be built until the end of time, (John 17:20). On the other hand, we observe the charismatic movement breaking down all denominational barriers with a seemingly irresistible flood of spirit, firmly alleged to be the Holy Spirit. This new "spirit," believed to be the Holy Spir-

it, in fact operates contrary to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works on human hearts through the Word; this new "spirit" apart from the Word. The Holy Spirit leads all into the Truth; the new "spirit" away from the Truth. The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ and His redemption; the new "spirit" glorifies man and his experience. The Holy Spirit leads the sinner to rest his faith on the objective facts of his redemption and justification in Christ; the new "spirit" bids the sinner leap into the limitless sea of subjective emotionalism. Over against the modern enthusiasts the Lutheran Confessions hold fast to the ecumenic truth that the Spirit of God communicates with the sinner and imparts the blessing of forgiveness, life, and salvation through the Word of grace, given and recorded in the Bible.

Paul F. Nolting



DOCTRINAL THEMES IN THE BOOK OF CONCORD

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Is it good to feel bad about something you've done?
Is it healthy to foster a sense of guilt in people?

One psychoanalyst, Dr. Theodore Rubin, calls it "a destructive form of self-hate." Another, Dr. Willard Gaylin, characterizes guilt as "guardian of our goodness." Most clinicians, however, distinguish between guilt that is normal and that which is neurotic. The one is a sign of health, the other a hazard to emotional well-being. Guilt gone underground, they say, may emerge as anxiety, a sense of worthlessness, fear of impending disaster, or simply a general feeling of discontent.

Christian churches today seem unsure of themselves about this, an area in which they should be specialists. Sometimes you hear prominent preachers decry all talk of sin and guilt as being "negative" and "emotionally unhealthy." More often, the Law simply lies buried beneath a whip-cream overlay of positive thinking talk which has no reference to grace and forgiveness. Many a secular psychologist would chide them for this, and brand them as a threat to mental health, if not civilization.

THE PROBLEM FACED

The Reformation Fathers had to deal with the question carefully. Yet they faced it squarely, and the answers they formulated in our Book of Concord still serve us well:

Since absolution or the power of the Keys is also an aid and consolation against sin and a bad conscience, ordained by Christ Himself in the Gospel, confession or absolution ought by no means to be abolished in the Church, especially on account of tender and timid consciences and on account of the untrained ...

— Smalcald Articles, III, VIII

You can sense the pressures that would have done away with the practice of confession. And it is no won-

der. Like Luther, who wrote these words, most of the people concerned with the Book of Concord had cruel memories of the confessional booth, which was something like a modern traffic court. Plead guilty and you may get off with a lighter sentence. According to the common practice, the confessing Christian had been led to believe that he could expect forgiveness only of specific sins that were remembered and recounted, and for which suitable satisfaction was rendered. In this people could never find peace; for very many sins they neither see nor can remember.

FULL DISCLOSURE There is an answer to this problem.
The Augsburg Confession picked it up
from the venerable church father Chrysostom (347-407
A.D.), who had this splendid counsel:

I say not to you that you should disclose yourself in public, nor that you accuse yourself before others, but I would have you obey the prophet who says, "Disclose thy way before God." Therefore confess your sins before God, the true judge, with prayer. Tell your errors, not with the tongue, but with the memory of your conscience, etc. ...

So the Reformers protected confession from another kind of abuse, grandstanding. It is that style of "witnessing" which recounts in lurid detail all the bad things I used to do "before I took Jesus into my heart." Thus a shamefully wrong impression is given, namely, that I have no sin to confess since I was born again. This writer knew a Pentecostal missionary who would skip the Fifth Petition of the Lord's Prayer. That was for those who still had trespasses to forgive. Not for him!

Lutheran liturgical worship services enable the worshipper to make full disclosure. "I confess unto Thee that I am sinful and unclean, and that I have sinned against Thee by thought, word, and deed." This covers the whole sordid list of our falling short of the glory that God would rightfully expect of us. It grants that in my flesh dwells no good thing. And this is the honest truth of the matter. It witnesses to our sinnerhood, even as we would witness to the Saviorhood of Jesus. As

it should be.

MAKE IT PERSONAL To enjoy the saving health of such confessing, we need to practice being specific in our minds about our known failures. When David said, "I have sinned against the Lord," he certainly had the specific of adultery and murder in mind. Nathan had helped him become conscious of those particular sins with Bathsheba. It was necessary for him as it is for all of us to confront those particular sins which burden us with a sense of guilt. Here the practice of private confessing to a trusted Christian counsellor is often useful. For it allows for that which does the healing — the forgiveness.

THE FORGIVENESS The Reformation re-introduced what had been lost in Confession:

Confession embraces two parts; the one is, that we confess our sins; the other, that we receive absolution, or forgiveness, from the confessor, as from God Himself, and in no wise doubt, but firmly believe, that our sins are thereby forgiven before God in heaven.

— Small Catechism V

The second part, obviously, is the more important. It is the Gospel of forgiveness which does the healing, not our admission of wrong. Only when I am assured, authoritatively, that "the Lord hath put away your sin" (Nathan), am I relieved of the guilt-burden. Christian counsellors have the only truly effective therapy for the troubled spirit. May they use it with confidence!

The trouble is, we tend to be more occupied with what we might do (the confessing) than with what God does (the forgiving). Luther was so confident of the latter, that he announced (on Maundy Thursday, 1523) that the usual practice of confession would be suspended. Instead, communicants were to announce for Communion to the pastor for an examination of Gospel understanding. Luther declared, "I have said that the Sacrament shall be given to no one except he be able to give an account of what he receives, and why he is going." (Cf. F. Bente, *Historical*

Introductions to the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (St. Louis: CPH, 1921), p. 75.) Luther, apparently, believed in the practice of what we sometimes call "close" Communion. The concern was for the communicant, that he should not fail to find in the Sacrament of the Altar its glorious and powerful message of forgiveness. Away with the guilt!

Is a sense of guilt a good thing? Evidently it is, if it is properly resolved. For it is a guardian of goodness in the sense that brings some psychic pain to sinning. But it is a deadly thing, this guilt, if it is not dealt with in God's own way. The Reformers found that way again. They gave it to the world in their teaching and practice of Confession with Absolution. And we thank them for it today, when so many are disconsolate. They know guilt; let them also know grace!

Rollin A. Reim



BOOK REVIEW

Toward a Reformed Philosophy, "The Development of a Protestant Philosophy in Dutch Calvinistic Thought since the Time of Abraham Kuyper," by William Young, Th.D., Department of Philosophy, Butler University; Piet Hein, Publishers, Grand Rapids, Michigan, T. Wever — 1952 — Franeker; Reproduced by DUOPAGE process in the United States of America, Micro Photo Division, Bell & Howell Company, Cleveland, Ohio; 157 pages.

The following quotation is one of a number of passages in our confessions which refresh us by the breadth of historical view and the insight into the products of natural human thinking which are exhibited:

Accordingly, there have always existed in the world some who have taught this carnal righteousness alone to the exclusion of the righteousness of faith; and such teachers will also always exist. The same happened among the people of Israel. The greater part of the people thought that they merited remission of sins by their works; they accumulated sacrifices and acts of worship. On the contrary, the prophets, in condemnation of this opinion, taught the righteousness of faith. And the occurrences among the people of Israel are illustrations of those things which were to occur in the Church. ¹ (Our emphasis.)

Indeed, the points of resemblance between the two systems are so numerous and close that one might well view the Roman Catholic Church as a duplication of the Jewish "church" at the time of Christ. Roman Catholicism is Christianity lapsing back into paganism; it is knowledge of the Gospel succumbing to the onslaught of heathenism; it is the truth being warped, strangled, and buried by all the noxious outgrowths of natural, legalistic, work-righteous, ritualistic, human thinking. It thus presents before us the chief system in the New Testament era by contrast with which the true can be viewed more accurately and fully. Were it not so entirely natural, one would be tempted to consider it strange that men should permit that very system to rear itself again which had been so clearly and purposefully exhibited by the Spirit of truth on the pages of Scripture as the ultimate, devil-inspired development of fleshly tendencies, and as so antagonistic to the truth that it effected the murder of the Son of God.

From such a matrix emerged the bulk of our Lutheran confessions: the extraordinarily mild, restrained, and tactful Augsburg Confession, the somewhat sharper Apology with its thorough and elegant polemics, and the uninhibitedly sturdy Smalcald Articles with their tone of unyielding finality. Even the Large Catechism contains numerous passages directed against the prevalent Roman Catholic theology, particularly its preoccupation with humanly devised works. Evangelical theology, therefore, begins with a study of the break from Catholicism at the

time of the Reformation. Comparative symbolics has no other starting point. An extraordinarily rich set of events lies before our view in this portion of history, a set of events parallel in so many ways to what is portrayed in Scripture in the four Gospels and Acts.

But if our studies begin here, they do not end here. Reformed theology also emerged. Two major branches of the Reformation present themselves for our examination. Our analysis must penetrate further. The devices of the devil are more devious, his schemes more subtle and sophisticated. The resemblances between the true and the false are more numerous, the points of difference more elusive, more demanding of our closest scrutiny. Comparative symbolics advances to a deeper level. The truth is clear in opposition to the Roman system; the truth must now be grasped and vindicated in more detail over against the Reformed system. With Bible in hand and prayer in heart, the lover of the Gospel proceeds to intensify his searching and studying. Spiritual rewards in abundance await us, not only after careful analysis of Romanism, but also upon completion of the obviously necessitated additional piece of theological homework: comparative analysis of Reformed thought.

The formal principle of the true reformation, Scripture alone, is to be apprehended and vindicated, not only in opposition to Roman tradition and insistence on official interpretation, but also in opposition to the rationalizing, systematizing streak in Reformed theology. The material principal of the true reformation, salvation by grace through faith on the basis of the merits of Christ, is to be apprehended and vindicated, not only in opposition to crass work-righteousness, but also in opposition to a theology which has never grasped the sharpness and centrality of the Law-Gospel dichotomy, which indeed at times seems to exhibit a perverse preference of the Law over the Gospel, which restricts Christ's saving work to but a segment of the human race, which operates with an impoverished understanding of the communion of the two natures in Christ, which undermines a correct understanding and therefore use of the gracious means whereby salvation is dispensed to the receiving hand of faith, and which has always displayed a tendency to make the Kingdom

of God meat and drink. Some of the most finished and valuable products of Lutheran pens — the Formula of Concord, Walther's *Law and Gospel*, C. P. Krauth's *The Conservative Reformation and its Theology*, or Sasse's *Here We Stand*, to name a few — arose in great measure from the need and desire to draw the lines between Lutheranism and Calvinism.²

Something toward the objective of maintaining awareness of the larger motions in the Reformed camp may perhaps be accomplished through a survey of William Young's book, *Toward a Reformed Philosophy*.³ For it is a discussion of a major movement in Reformed theology. Acquaintance with the contents of this book will impress upon us the fact that the false emphases and unscriptural elements which we know to be existent in Reformed thinking are not lying dormant; rather, they are still bearing a sizable crop of fruit.

The book consists of a lengthy introduction, followed by four chapters: I. The Contribution of Abraham Kuyper; II. Between Kuyper and Dooyeweerd; III. The Foundation of the Philosophy of the *Wetsidee* (Idea of Law); and IV. Conclusion: Construction through Criticism. The key name is Herman Dooyeweerd. In 1926 he became professor of jurisprudence in the Free University of Amsterdam. His *magnum opus*, published in Dutch in 1935-36, was the 3-volume *The Philosophy of the Idea of Law*.⁴ Dooyeweerd was "the founder of a new school of Christian philosophy in the tradition of St. Augustine."⁵ Young is clearly much impressed with his work, regarding it as a highly significant advance in Reformed thought. Writing of himself in the preface, he states that he feels keenly "his indebtedness to what he is convinced is the first serious attempt in the history of Protestantism to give philosophic expression to the basic religious motif of the reformation." And the opening paragraph of the preface may be quoted in its entirety as a summary of the contents of the book:

Many persons of Reformed conviction as well as others in the English speaking world have heard rumors about the philosophy of "The Idea of Law." The present work seeks to present a discussion of basic

motives and fundamental principles of this new Reformed philosophy, with special emphasis on the historical background in Protestant thought generally and the Dutch Calvinist development in particular.

The introduction takes up the question of whether a "Protestant Philosophy" is possible. "By Protestant philosophy, then, we intend Reformation philosophy, *i.e.*, philosophy which gives expression to the profound religious motive of the Protestant Reformation," (p. 11). Etienne Gilson is quoted as a representative of the widespread belief that the Reformation selfconsciously condemned philosophy. But Young offers his dissent on pages 13-14:

Throughout four centuries of its existence, Protestantism seems to have failed to produce a philosophy truly and properly its own. The verdict of history would appear to be a unanimous denial of the possibility of a Protestant philosophy. The purpose of the following historical inquiry is to demonstrate that such is not the case. After tracing the relationship between Protestantism and philosophy to the end of the nineteenth century, we will seek to show that in the twentieth century there has appeared an attempt to create an authentic Reformation philosophy in certain Dutch Calvinistic circles. After the historical study, a few hints for the performance of the more arduous task of vindicating the foundations of a Protestant philosophy will be offered.

Dooyeweerd had concluded that "a genuine reformation of philosophical thinking cannot develop on Lutheran, but only on Calvinistic lines," (p. 26).

The remainder of the introduction is a survey of "Calvinism and Philosophy between Calvin and Kuyper." Various individuals pass before our view: Gisbertus Voetius, professor at the University of Utrecht and a prominent adversary of the philosophy of Descartes; Petrus Ramus, an opponent of Aristotelian Scholasticism; Johannes Henricus Alsted, who, in 27 books, produced a summary of all the scientific knowledge of the time. Brief com-

ments are also made on Bishop Butler, Charles Hodge, James MacCosh, Jonathan Edwards, Wm. G. T. Shedd, and others. Young's conclusion from his survey is that "at no point did Calvinism even display the consciousness that in its theological system were contained clues for the development of a radically unique system of philosophy." Instead, "we have found a series of compromises between Reformation Theology and various forms of secular philosophy," (p. 35). With a survey of the chief schools of theology in the Netherlands of the 19th century — Groningen School, Empirical School, Leiden School (under the leadership of Scholtens, one of Kuyper's teachers), and the ethical reaction to the determinism of the Leiden School — the transition is made to the first chapter.

Chapter I surveys Kuyper's spiritual development, glances at some of his central conceptions, and presents Dooyeweerd's evaluation of aspects of his thought. Young devotes nearly thirty pages to this chapter on Kuyper, believing that the germ of Dooyeweerd's system is to be found in his thought. Chapter II is chiefly a discussion of three thinkers: H. Bavinck, J. Woltjer, and Valentine Hepp. The nature of man's knowledge was a topic of central interest to all three. Woltjer, an aspiring idealist in his thought, is described by Young as a Christian Platonist. Hepp stressed the complete dependence of human knowledge upon God. He taught that the Holy Spirit guides all human thinking so that it runs according to a process and toward a goal. Space is given throughout the chapter to criticism and comments directed by Cornelius Van Til and Dooyeweerd to the work of these three men.⁶

Chapter III brings us to Dooyeweerd. He came to see the need of a radical revolution in philosophical thought and of a break with previous methods and systems. "Immanence philosophy" is his disparaging term for all thinking that "maintains the self-sufficiency of philosophical thought as against all divine revelation," (p. 104). He came to the conclusion that "the task of philosophy may be said to be theoretical regaining of the unity of naive experience, lost theoretically in the abstractions of the special sciences," (p. 102). As his starting point and the center of our consciousness, Dooyeweerd chose the

heart of man, rather than his reason or full selfhood. As the basic idea of philosophy, he operates with "the idea of law." "Law is here to be understood in the broadest sense, not as the moral law alone, or law in the sense of jurisprudence, or the laws of nature, but as an all-embracing cosmic order. ... The entire cosmos in every one of its aspects is ordered by laws instituted by its sovereign Creator," (p. 116). Fundamental to the working out of his conception of law and law spheres is Kuyper's principle of "*souvereiniteit in eigen kring*" (sovereignty in one's own sphere). The various law spheres (there are fifteen, but the list is not meant to be unchangeable) neither usurp authority over one another nor exist in complete independence of each other.⁷

Chapter IV presents criticisms of this philosophy. Besides Vollenhoven, Dooyeweerd's son-in-law and close collaborator, H. G. Stoker of South Africa and Cornelius Van Til of the United States have been the leaders in carrying on, working out, applying, and refining Dooyeweerd's general line of thought. Van Til's special area, for example, is apologetics. The comments of Stoker and Van Til are dealt with under the heading, "Constructive Critics of the *Wetsidee*." The attacks of Hepp and H. Steen come under the heading, "Destructive Critics of the *Wetsidee*." Dooyeweerd does at certain points depart from tradition. "The points at issue concern chiefly the immortality of the soul, the two natures of Christ, and common grace," (p. 139).

As perplexing as some of this might sound, it represents comments which have as their aim to convey a fairly accurate overview of the book while still by-passing more difficult and technical material. It is only fair to confess that there is much in the book which this reviewer does not understand. Heavy philosophical terminology obstructs the path. At certain points a page or set of pages has the clear potential to drive any but the most stout-hearted reader to despair. The following sentences may be exhibited as representative of the type of challenge with which the reader is frequently confronted: "The particular theoretical antinomy thus arises in the violation of the *souvereiniteit in eigen kring* of the non-logical meaning-aspects of the temporal cosmos by theoretical

thinking transgressing its inner boundaries. This violation itself proceeds from a misinterpretation of the cosmic continuity of the coherence of meaning of the law-spheres as a theoretical continuity of thought. The number of such particular antinomies is far greater than Kant supposed," (p. 125)! The prominence of epistemological considerations in the discussion does not help. It should come as no surprise to us that the new philosophy does have a reputation for obscurity and complexity, (p. 100).

However, we are not for that reason to suppose that the book is without its host of interesting facts, stimulating ideas, noteworthy comments, and thought-provoking questions. Have we ever pondered the effect of the loss of sympathy upon easy and accurate knowledge of the world, or attempted to categorize the noetic effects of sin? Restricting himself purely to the formal working of sin upon the mind, Kuyper comes up with eight points, (p. 57). He is quoted as follows on page 58:

Over against sin stands love, the sympathy of existence, and even in our present sinful conditions the fact is noteworthy, that where this sympathy is active you understand much better and more accurately than where this sympathy is wanting ... without this inclination and this desire toward the object of our study, you do not advance an inch.

The concept of aevum in the sense of "an intermediate condition between time and eternity" is discussed on page 111. Comments on the history of philosophy are made which are not at all without interest. The attempt by Bertrand Russell and Alfred North Whitehead at the beginning of the century to derive mathematics from logic is regarded as a violation of the principle of sphere sovereignty, (p. 121, p. 137).

It would be uncharitable to omit calling attention to such things, as it would also be to suppress our feelings of amazement at the penetration, diligence, single-mindedness, and enthusiasm alike of the author and of the men he is discussing. Nevertheless, the feeling which overrides all others is one of melancholy — the melancholy of Lutherans who could wish that others might find

their contentment and fulfillment in what we have, and who grieve to see them pursuing their course with, if possible, ever more persistence. For it is clear that fundamentally differing stances are involved. And it cannot be without sorrow that we take notice how the Reformed follow along their own self-chosen lines of permitting reason to nudge aside the Word of God — philosophy to get the edge on the Gospel; particularly when, as is so ironically the case here, this is being done in the name of placing divine revelation above any self-sufficient philosophy.

Reducing our overall reactions to specific points, we might organize our thoughts as follows:

1. True, there is high praise for Luther in the introduction, even from Dooyeweerd. But the clues are sufficiently clear that two sharply diverging paths are being followed. For the governing insight of Luther, the Law-Gospel distinction, is dismissed by Dooyeweerd in the name of retaining the boundaries between Creator and creature, boundaries which do not permit "Luther's exaltation of Christian freedom above the boundary of the law," (p. 23). And we find Young commenting that Luther did not escape "spiritualistic antinomianism," (p. 25).

2. Related to the previous point is Dooyeweerd's charge that Lutheranism operates with a "nominalistic dualism between 'nature' and 'grace,'" (p. 25). One is somewhat at a loss as to how to respond. Is it more to the point to ask (as though Luther perhaps taught a "Nominalistic-scholastic separation of faith and science," cf. p. 16) whether this characterization is really just and accurate, or to suggest that it represents a rather cavalier dismissal of another crucial and highly illuminating dichotomy brought to light by Luther: the two kingdoms, the left and the right hands of God? Let the reader ponder the statements by Young which pertain to both the preceding points: "If no Christian philosophical thinking and no Christian view of right (Recht) and the state, no Christian economy, no Christian art etc. is possible, then these territories of the temporal life are withdrawn from Christ. Then it is necessary anew to accept the unscriptural dualism between 'nature' and 'grace'

or between 'law' and 'gospel,'" (pp. 25-26).

3. Thus, we sense that the alleged external products of Christianity are given undue prominence. The outward is stressed to the neglect of the inward. Refreshing as are the insights into human thinking and psychology, the preoccupation with things intellectual soon becomes unsettling. One entertains strong reservations about the manner in which mental factors are so much in the foreground when the distinction between the regenerate and unregenerate is analyzed, almost as though the mind were the chief focus of the change. Perhaps here belongs the phrase used so much by Van Til: We are to "think God's thoughts after him."

4. And so we are led to the final point, which simply takes us back to the title of the book: *Toward a Reformed Philosophy*. That such a book could be written in the first place already, in a way, tells us more than we care to know. Luther, of course, is again guilty. "But nowhere in Luther," writes Dooyeweerd, "do we find the conviction that the Reformation from its religious root of life demands a radical transformation of philosophical thinking itself," (p. 16). We readily plead guilty with him. To the thrill experienced by Young at viewing the revolutionary advance made by Dooyeweerd, to his unconcealed excitement at tracing developments which finally culminated in an authentic "Protestant Philosophy," to his elation at the height which has been thus attained — we make our response: Is this really what you want? Are you sure you're not selling your theological birthright for a mess of philosophical pottage?

Let Reformed theology, if it will, develop toward Reformed philosophy. Let us, in line with what has been so graciously given us, heed the earnest calls of the Holy Spirit: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them," (Is. 8:20). "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ," (II Cor. 11:3).

R. E. Wehrwein

 FOOTNOTES

1. *Concordia Triglotta* (CPH), Apology, p. 225. Confer also p. 177, p. 197, and especially pp. 417 & 419.
2. Not to be omitted are the many sections in Pieper's *Christian Dogmatics*. Confer also the 3-part article by E. Arnold Sitz in the *Quartalschrift* (1946, 4; 1947, 1-2), "Calvinism: Its Essence and Its Menacing Impact upon American Lutheran Doctrine and Practice."
3. A valuable review of the book by Robert D. Knudsen, one quite favorable, appears in the November, 1953, issue of the *Westminster Theological Journal*, pp. 127-131.
4. The four-volume English translation (volume four is an index of the entire work) is entitled: *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*.
5. Frank N. Magill, editor, *Masterpieces of Christian Literature in Summary Form*, p. 1017.
6. Young writes on page 94: "We might venture to say that the organic and antithetic motives which we found to occupy a central place in the insights of Abraham Kuyper were to an extent weakened in the systems of Bavinck, Woltjer, and Hepp, but are re-asserted in even sharper form in the work of Dooyeweerd and Van Til."
7. The "fifteen aspects of the cosmos" are listed on p. 112: "Namely number, space, motion, energetic effect, organic life, feeling, logical analysis, historical development, language, society, economic valuation, aesthetic harmony, right (*Recht*), morality and faith." J. M. Spier wrote a popular exposition of the philosophy of Dooyeweerd, *An Introduction to Christian Philosophy* (Second Edition, The Craig Press, Nutley, New Jersey, 1966), which was included in the University Series, Philosophical Studies, of which Dr. Gordon H. Clark was the editor. Henry Meeter's *The Basic Ideas of Calvinism* (reprinted in 1975 by Baker Book House) may be consulted for evidence of the widespread influence of the Dutch thinkers. The index, by the way, of that volume (or the table of contents) displays an interesting disposition of emphasis: "State" has 14 lines, "Christ" has 9; "War" gets 18 and "Government" 26! "Law of God" merits 7 lines, but "Gospel" does not even get an entry!

=====PANORAMA=====

ON HONORARY DEGREES FROM HETERODOX INSTITUTIONS

In the June 14, 1979 issue of the *Lutheran Sentinel*, a publication of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS), it was reported that on May 18, 1979, Bjarne Teigen, Professor emeritus of Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minnesota, was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity by Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana. Concordia Seminary is an institution operated by the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod. Its president is Dr. Robert Preus, who was formerly a pastor in the ELS.

In the "decree" presented in connection with the award, Prof. Teigen is reported to have "distinguished himself as an educator, a theologian and a pastor ... as a Luther scholar" and as one "deeply committed to our Lutheran and confessional heritage." The statement is made that Prof. Teigen is "active in church life, seeking to improve relationships between those Lutheran church bodies which once made up the Synodical Conference." In addition, the document adds: "The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod looks forward to the time when bonds of fellowship between the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod can be reestablished." The honorary degree was granted to Prof. Teigen "in recognition of his services as an educator, a theologian, and a churchman."

In the June 18, 1979, issue of *Christian News*, on page 16, it is reported that Prof. Teigen indeed took part in the service in which the degree was presented to him. A picture of four men in academic caps and gowns has the following caption: "Four candidates were conferred with the Doctor of Divinity Degree — Honoris Causa — in the graduation service held on May 18 in Kramer Chapel on the campus of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana." The man on the far right is identified as Rev. Professor Bjarne W. Teigen.

In the Fall Issue, 1979, of the Bethany Lutheran College Report, Prof. N. Holte, president of the college,

is quoted approvingly as declaring that he was pleased that another institution had "recognized Teigen's work as an educator and active Lutheran church leader, as well as his unique accomplishments in the area of theological research."

We carry no brief for or against the granting and receiving of academic degrees, in general. We grant the B.A. and B.S. degrees at Immanuel Lutheran College to our pre-theology and education graduates, respectively. A number of our pastors and professors have advanced degrees, earned at public institutions. We really do not have any objection to honorary degrees, either, when they are granted by public institutions, or by institutions controlled by churches with which we are in fellowship.

We do, however, seriously question the willingness to accept "recognition, especially as a Lutheran theologian and pastor, at the hands of a seminary controlled by a church body with whom fellowship is no longer possible because it has become a heterodox church. The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod has been so identified by the ELS. There certainly is, to say the least, a danger that the acceptance of such recognition, as well as the actual participation in a religious service granting such recognition, will not serve to uphold the strong testimony that a firm separation provides; rather, it may well serve to weaken such testimony.

In this same context, we have at times wondered why Bethany Lutheran College, in arranging for speakers for its series of annual Reformation Lectures, has more than once given its platform to representatives of church bodies which the ELS has publicly identified as heterodox.

John Lau





JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY
CHURCH OF THE LUTHERAN CONFESSION
IMMANUEL LUTHERAN COLLEGE

West Grover Road
EAU CLAIRE, WISCONSIN 54701



RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED
ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

U. S. POSTAGE
Permit No. 34

PAID

EAU CLAIRE, WIS.
Non-Profit
Organization

Robert K Johnson
4145 Raymond St
Red Wing MN 55066