



Lutheran Synod Quarterly

OPENING SERMON AT CONCLAVE OF THEOLOGIANS
BETHANY LUTHERAN COLLEGE, AUGUST 19-23, 1963

T. A. Aaberg, President
Evangelical Lutheran Synod

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 * LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY *
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DEVOTIONAL

(Sermon at the opening service of the Conclave of Theologians held at Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minnesota, August 19-23, 1963.)

Text: Matthew 5:13-16.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, Thou hast designated the Christian to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. We beseech of Thee a Pentecostal outpouring of Thy Holy Spirit, that filled with wisdom, courage and zeal, we may be just that, also in this assembly - salt to a corrupt earth, light to a darkened world, Amen.

Dear Friends in Christ:

It would be easy for us, meeting as we are under difficult inter-synodical circumstances, to be filled with a certain feeling of helplessness, if indeed not despair. We may now, or at other times during the week, find ourselves so weary in spirit that like God's people of an earlier day we hang our harps in the willows, unable to summon forth the strength and courage of faith to sing the Lord's songs or to do His work.

Brethren, if this be the case, it is the devil, the world and our flesh which have gotten the upperhand. Such thoughts are not wrought by the Spirit. No, the Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts calls for rejoicing in the task which lies ahead of us.

Wherein shall we rejoice these days? In this, that God "hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." II Tim. 1:9. If we are to be faithful stewards in our present task we must recapture in child-like faith the joy of our salvation in Christ, expressed in the simple words of Luther: "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 His innocent sufferings and death, in order that I might 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, this is most certainly true."

In the joy of our salvation we shall hear today the Savior's Great Commission with the same freshness as though we were standing with Jesus the day it was first given: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." For it is this commission which has brought us together in Mankato this week. We shall go about this task with joy, dedication and courage. That the Holy Spirit may bestow upon us such gifts for our difficult assignment, let us consider our text where the Savior says to you and to me:

"YE ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH. . . YE ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD."

The world laughs at what Jesus says in our text. The world may not be adverse to receiving a little salt and light, but that Christians should be that salt and light is to them amusing, if indeed, not ridiculous. For the world at best tolerates God's people, regarding them as harmless, innocent fools, and at worst kills them, regarding them as a plague upon mankind.

But for all of that, the Savior's statement stands: "Ye are the salt of the earth. . . ye are the light of the world." His words indicate clearly that the earth is corrupt and needs salting; that the world is in darkness and needs enlightenment. That the world does not recognize its need only testifies the more forcefully to its need. Scripture gives strong testimony on this matter, declaring: "We are all as an unclean thing. . ." (Is. 64:6) "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." (Is. 6:5) And concerning the spiritual darkness of the world, we are told: "the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people." (Is. 60:2.)

Again: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (I Cor. 2:14).

Let us beware of limiting spiritual corruption and darkness to that which is outside the visible church, that is, to those we would call heathen. Spiritual corruption and darkness, as evidenced by false doctrine and ungodly life, can roll in upon church bodies, congregations, and individuals, ourselves included. The Savior's word to the Church at Laodicea shows the inroads which the evil foe can make upon people who bear the name of Christ: "I know thy works, that thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." (Rev. 3:15-17). All of which leads us to exclaim:

"O God! how sins dread works abound,
Throughout the earth no rest is found;
And wide has falsehood's spirit spread,
And error boldly rears its head."

Therefore we must be ready to be a salt and a light not only to those who are without Christ, but also to those who bear His name, yes, and to our own selves as well.

What the world then needs, and needs most desperately in its corruption and darkness, is salt and light. We Christians are to fill that need. The Savior says: "Ye are the salt of the earth." "Ye are the light of the world."

What makes us salt and light? Not anything we possess of ourselves, but that which has been committed to us, namely, the Everlasting Gospel! It is the Gospel of Christ, whose words are spirit and life, which halts spiritual decay and even makes whole again, which dispels spiritual darkness and reveals Christ as the true and only Light.

It is as the Christian faithfully proclaims the Gospel, in word and deed, that he is the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

Oh, that we might grasp more fully the significance of the Gospel for the world, and thus be driven to a greater consecration in our calling. There is one thing which stands between the world in its spiritual corruption and darkness and the burning fires of hell, and that is the Christian holding forth the everlasting Gospel.

From our text we see that Jesus does not dwell on the good fortune of the world in having Christians in its midst, nor does he speak of the high honor of Christians in being designated the salt and light of the world. No, our Savior is concerned about a far more important matter, namely, that we Christians should be salt and light, and hence He admonishes on this matter.

He says: "Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men."

Two things stand out.

The one is this: "ye are the salt of the earth." Salt must reach the object to be salted. Since we are the salt of the earth, this demands of us that we reach the world, mix with the world, rub shoulders with it, yes, "be a friend to man." This requires great courage and bravery on the part of the Christian, for it most certainly means that he will be jostled and shoved around, figuratively if not also literally. But it must be done if we are to be the salt of the earth. This running off like a monk into the monastery, hiding our faces from the rest of mankind, failing to confront the world in its corruption is a denial of the Savior's word in our text.

The other thing which we must note is this: "Ye are the salt of the earth." As we live and move in the midst of a corrupt world, we are to be salt, real salt. We are not to lose our savour. "If the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?" Here is a warning against trying to accommodate our Christianity to the world. That will never do, for salt, real salt, stings and burns, and the Christian too, as he faithfully applies the Word of God to the corruption of the world, will bring about a stinging and a burning. This does not give the Christian license to be obnoxious and offensive, but rather points out a basic truth that there is no easy, painless way to apply the Word of God to the world, and if a Christian tries to do so through a compromise of doctrine or life, he has lost his savour. If we would quit worrying about what the world thinks of us, or what it might do to us, and rather be more concerned with the duty which Christ has given us toward the world, to be its salt, it would go far better both for the world and for us.

And note well what the Savior says about the salt that has lost its savour. "It is henceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." Here we recall the Savior's later word concerning false prophets: "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: Depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matt. 7:23)

Jesus goes on to say: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it

under a bushel but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men..."

Much of what has been said previously regarding the Christian being the salt of the earth no doubt could also be applied to the Christian being the light of the world.

But this picture of the Christian getting the light of the Gospel up high where everyone can see it, where its beams can spread everywhere, deserves an additional comment or two. The Christian who withdraws from the world is of course hiding his light under the bushel. Of that there can be no doubt. But what about the Christian who confronts the world on every corner, but is careful of making a full, forthright confession of faith, preferring rather to hold back part of the truth, and dwell only on those things on which there is agreement? Who of us has not done this again and again, remaining silent when he should have spoken, and that more fully? What else is it but hiding our light under the bushel? Jesus tells us: Get that light up there where it is visible to all! Let people know what you believe. Share the precious Gospel with them in all of its fullness and beauty!

We ought to take the time to recall briefly a few of the many Christians who stand out before us as true examples of salt and light.

There is Peter - there wasn't much salt or light in him the night he denied the Lord. But see him after Pentecost. Hear his faithful preaching to the Jews on that day: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." And when they cried out: "Men and Brethren, what shall we do?" he replied: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." That is being the salt of the earth and the light of the world!

Consider Paul. He says: "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countryman, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren..." (II Cor. 11:24-26). These things didn't come upon Paul because he was a "hail-well-met" sort of man, but because he was the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

Then there is Luther. He wasn't outlawed by the state and damned by the church without cause. He received such favors because he was truly salt and light to a corrupt and darkened church.

And we would be ungrateful indeed if we did not also recall the pious example of our forefathers in the Synodical Conference in what we would now term "the good old days." What distinguished the Synodical Conference from other similar church organizations? It was that free, full, forthright confession of the truth in word and deed. Opportunities for compromise in doctrine and life were not lacking in those days, but they were more concerned with following the Savior's word of our text: "Ye are the salt of the earth, ye are the light of the world," than with gaining the favor of men.

Shall not the Saviour's word and the pious example of these men from the time of the early Christian Church spur us on in our meeting this week to throw all caution to the winds that is prompted by the devil, the world, and our flesh, and fearlessly to proclaim the truth to the world?

An important question, however, remains to be answered, and that is this: What shall be our motive in all our testifying, and especially in the work of these days? Not self glory, not self-vindication, not synodical vindication, but God's glory and the salvation of souls.

"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works," says Jesus. But that is as far as you and I go, then we fade out of the picture. And what is left? Just this: That they may "glorify your Father which is in heaven." The motive, the purpose behind it all must be this that others, many others, may join us on the Last Day at the throne to hear the angels sing: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.." and to join in declaring: "Blessing and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." (Rev. 5)

Let us during this week-long meeting take heed to be what Jesus has designated us to be -- the salt of the earth and the light of the world, doing it with only one motive in heart and mind, that others also may glorify our Father which is in heaven, and then God will HAVE TO bless our conclave. Amen.

T. A. Aaberg, President
Evangelical Lutheran Synod

THE IMPORTANCE OF JOSEPHUS IN BIBLICAL STUDIES

Josephus is important in Biblical studies because he is one of the few writers of the period from the First Century B. C. to the end of the First Century A. D. Even though there is much doubt about the accuracy of his

historical works, he still remains the most authentic.

One reason why Josephus is important is because of his testimony concerning the Books of the Old Testament. In a long passage in his book "Contra Apion" he proceeds to point out the early origin and records of the Jewish nation against the objections drawn from the silence of the Greeks. With this object Josephus points out the late introduction of writing to the western nations, and the absence of early authentic registers of public events among them. In skill of composition, the East, he says, yields to Greece, but not in the accurate history of antiquity, and still less in the special history of different nations.

The following quotation from Josephus is of great importance: "I shall endeavour to show briefly that our forefathers exhibited the same care as the nations already mentioned in the record of events, for I do not stop to maintain that it was even greater as they enjoined this duty on the high priests and prophets, and further, I shall show how this custom has been preserved up to our time with great exactness, and to venture on a bold assertion, how it will still be preserved. For not only did we commit this charge in the first instance to the best men and those who were devoted to the service of God, but we also took care to preserve the priestly race constantly pure and unmixed. . . . even in Egypt and Babylon, and in any other place in the whole world, where any of the priestly race are scattered. . . . Our accuracy in this respect is most conclusively proved by the fact that the descent of our priests is preserved in our records by name from father to son two thousand years back. . . . Naturally, therefore, or rather necessarily (this accuracy is found in our Archives) inasmuch as the making the record did not rest upon the simple will of any, and there is no discrepancy in the facts recorded, but the prophets only (composed our annals) who narrate the most remote and ancient events through the inspiration of God, and compiled exactly the history of the occurrences of their own time."

This passage is important because it testifies to the following:

- a) the fact that records were carefully written down 2000 years before Josephus, thus showing the ancient origin of their writings.
- b) Josephus believed that the prophets were inspired by God and that when they recorded the events of their nation's history they did so accurately and without discrepancy.

We continue the quotation as it now deals with the Canon of the Old Testament: "For we have not tens of thousands of books discordant and conflicting, but only twenty-two, containing the record of all time, which have been justly believed to be Divine. And of these five are the books of Moses, which embrace

the laws and the tradition of the creation of man reaching up to his (Moses') death. This period is little short of three thousand years. Next, the prophets who succeeded, compiled the history of the period from Moses to the reign of Artaxerxes the successor of Xerxes, King of Persia, in thirteen books, (relating severally) what was done in their times. The remaining four books embrace hymns to God, and practical directions for men. From the time of Artaxerxes to our own time each event has been recorded; but the records have not been deemed worthy of the same credit as those of earlier date, because the exact succession of the prophets was not continued. But what faith we have placed in our own writings is seen by our conduct; for though so long a time has now passed, no one has dared either to add anything to them, or to take anything from them, or to alter anything. But all Jews are instinctively led from the moment of their birth to regard them as decrees of God, and to abide by them, and, if need be, gladly to die for them. So ere now many of our captive countrymen have been often seen to endure tortures and all kinds of deaths in theatres, that they might utter no word against the laws and the records which are united with these. And what Greek would endure such a test in a like case? Nay, rather, no Greek will endure even an ordinary loss to save the whole literature of his nation from destruction."

Even making allowances for the rhetorical character of the passage and the evident desire of Josephus to adapt his statements to the feelings of heathen readers, several important conclusions may be drawn from it.

- 1) The Sacred Writings were distinctly limited in number; and this number (it appears) was admitted by universal consent.
- 2) The reign of Artaxerxes (c. 450 B.C.) was regarded as the extreme limit of the Divine history (i.e. according to Josephus, the Book of Esther).
- 3) The Books were esteemed Divine, and this without any distinction between the three classes into which they were divided (Law, Prophets, Psalms, or, to use the technical term, Hagiographa).

An important fact to note here is how Josephus arranges the Books and how many he includes in those recognized as Divine. Some doubt has arisen as to the way in which he reckoned up his thirteen books of the prophets, and four books of the Hagiographa. The usual enumeration gives eight books of the prophets (Joshua, Judges, and Ruth; 1,2 Samuel, 1,2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Lamentations, and 12 minor Prophets), and reckons the remaining nine as Hagiographa. Sometimes Ruth and Lamentations are reckoned separately, and added to the Hagiographa, in which case the total number of books is 24 instead of 22.

Josephus follows a different arrangement; and if we observe the peculiar definitions which he gives of the two classes, it will appear that he necessarily includes all the historical books among the writings of the prophets, so that the book of Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther, as well as Daniel and Job, are included in the second class; while Psalms, Canticles, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes alone satisfy the description which he gives of the third class.

Thus the list of books of the Old Testament given by Josephus exactly coincides with our own; and there is nothing in his language to countenance the suspicion that he is expressing the opinion of one sect or country.

The casual quotations in Josephus give the same result. With exception of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Canticles, which furnished not materials for his history, and Job, which even if historical, lay without his scope, he quotes all the remaining books included in his list, either as divinely inspired or as authoritative sources of truth. On the other hand, while he uses the first book of Maccabees as the bases of his history of the period of which it treats, he definitely excludes it from the list of sacred books by the chronological limit within which he confines them. With the remaining books of the Apocrypha he shows no acquaintance; though Judith and 2 Maccabees must have been noticed by him, if he had known them and held them to be trustworthy. *Westcott, The Bible in the Church, p. 25 ff.

JOSEPHUS STATEMENT REGARDING CHRIST

In the Christian Church from the earliest times, due to a disputed passage in the Antiquities (XVIII. iii. 3), concerning the actions and character of Jesus the Nazarene, the works of Josephus have acquired an immense popularity. Repudiated by the Jews, he was adopted by the Christians as one of themselves.

The disputed passage runs as follows: "About this time lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed he should be called a man. For he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure; and he won over to himself many Jews and many also of the Greek nation. He was the Christ. And when Pilate, at the instance of the principal men among us, had sentenced him to the cross, yet did not those who had loved him at the first cease (to do so); for he appeared to them alive again on the third day, as the divine prophets had declared -- these and ten thousand other wonderful things -- concerning him. And even now the race of Christians, so named after him, is not extinct."

The genuineness of this passage was not questioned for 1200 years from the time Eusebius quoted (260-340 a.d.) it until the sixteenth century. And in fact, such a testimony coming from a Jew was extremely welcomed and treasured by the early Fathers. Indeed, it contributed not a little to exalt the reputation of Josephus in the Christian Church.

In the sixteenth century scholars began to doubt that Josephus was the author of the passage, particularly of the words, "He was the Christ." This controversy was carried on for three hundred years. In the seventeenth century the popularity of Josephus was yet so high as to induce Rembrandt to name one of his Jewish portraits after him. In the eighteenth century, most homes in England still possessed two books, a Bible and a Josephus. However, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries many scholars, both Jews and Christians have rejected him. The Jewish people have not had much love for him since his escapades as a leader of the army and since his friendship with the Romans.

The words, "He was the Christ", may have been inserted by another author, perhaps Eusebius himself. But the rest of the passage could very well come from the hand of Josephus. It is difficult to prove conclusively either way. *Magnus, Jews in the Christian Era, p. 14 ff.

OUTLINE OF THE WORKS OF JOSEPHUS

- I. "The Wars of the Jews", in seven books
 1. The first book begins with the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, 175-164 B.C. and reaches down to the death of Herod the Great in the year 4 B.C.
 2. The second continues the history down to the outbreak of the Jewish war against the Romans in 66 A.D. and gives an account of the first year of the war, 66-67 A.D.
 3. The third treats of the first Roman assault in Galilee in 67, where Josephus commanded the Jewish forces.
 4. The fourth treats of the continued course of the war down to the complete isolation of Jerusalem.
 5. The fifth describes the seige of Jerusalem.
 6. The sixth also describes the seige of Jerusalem.
 7. The seventh relates the events that followed the war down to the revolt and end of the fugitive rebels in Alexandria and Cyrene in the year 73 A.D.

In the Preface to the "Wars of the Jews" we are informed that it was originally written in the Semitic dialect, that is, in Aramaic or Hebrew, "for the Jews who lived among the Upper Barbarians," that is, in Babylonia, Arabia, Parthis and beyond the Euphrates, as a message of warning of the hopelessness of further revolt against the invincible power of Rome, and to allay the after-war thirst for revenge, which found vent thirty years later in the furious outbreak under Trajan and which was finally suppressed with barbarous cruelty by Hadrian in the year 117 A.D.

II. "The Antiquities of the Jews" in twenty books

1. The first ten books -- these repeat the facts narrated in the Old Testament from creation to the end of the babylonian captivity.
2. The next ten contain history from Cyrus down to the revolt against Rome in the year 66 A.D.

For the first ten books, as far as Nehemiah, Josephus had no other authority at his disposal than the O.T., especially the LXX translation. Frequently, however, he omits or modifies points, either not to give offense, or in order to render his history more palatable to the tastes of his heathen audience; at times he also supplements with such rabbinical traditions as were current in his time.

This great work was designed to magnify the antiquity and glorious past of the Jewish people in the eyes of the cultured Greeks and Romans, and also to refute the degrading and malicious accounts, written by a number of pagan authors, of the Jewish origin and religious system. Josephus' object for this work, as described by himself, was "to reconcile other people to us; to remove the cause of that ill-will which unthinking men bear us... and to inform them that they ought not to consider differences of certain institutions as sufficient cause of hatred, but join with us in the pursuit of virtue and probity, for this belongs to all men in common, and is in itself alone sufficient for the preservation of life and happiness."

The Antiquities was completed and dedicated to his learned friend Epaphroditus, in the thirteenth year of Domitian's reign, or 93 A.D. when Joseph was in the fifty-sixth year of his age.

III. The "Life of Josephus" in seventy-six sections

This work is almost exclusively a defense of his own conduct as Governor of Galilee, during the winter of 66-67 A.D., preparatory to the

arrival of the Roman Army. It was called forth by the publication of a history written by a learned Galilean revolutionist Justus of Tiberias, which represented Josephus as the actual organizer of the Jewish revolt against Rome, a charge extremely inconvenient to him, who by that time had attained a position of eminence in Italy. It was, therefore, never intended as a complete autobiography, the first six and the last two sections alone being of a biographical nature.

IV. "Josephus against Apion" in two books

This is Josephus' great Apologia for Judaism. It is not directed solely against Apion, as the name might imply, but rather generally against the venomous attacks and prejudices from which the Jews of those days suffered.

One of the writers who held up the Jewish people for scorn and criticism was named Manetho, an Egyptian priest during the time of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (308 - 347 B.C.). Manetho's works were later repeated, augmented and embellished by other writers, reaching the climax of virulence with the stories of the most malignant and most scurrilous of all, -- Apion, who in the year 40 A.D. headed the anti-Semitic deputation of Alexandria before Caligula, when Philo appeared in the defense of the Jews.

Apion was a most virulent enemy of the Jews. He invented the accusation of ritual murder which had first been used in Egypt against the Jews, then transferred from Jews to Christians and later again employed by Christians against the Jews. As quoted by Josephus, this author says, "at a fixed time every year the Jews catch a Greek foreigner, fatten him up, lead him to a wood where they kill him; sacrifice his body with their accustomed solemnities, taste his flesh, and take an oath upon the sacrificed victim that they would forever remain at enmity with the Greeks. The remains of the Greek are then thrown into a pit." (II Apion, 8, loosely quoted)

Apion had a low reputation amongst others in his own day also. Josephus describes him as a "Man of low character and a swindler to the end of his days."

The two other philosophers with whom Josephus deals are Posidonius and Apollonius Molon. Posidonius' great grievance against the Jews is their "not worshipping the same gods as others do." Apollonius Molon charges them with atheism, misanthropy and fanaticism, and upbraids them for having contributed nothing to general culture and for having no fellowship with persons who have different ideas than their own about God.

Another purpose of this book was to establish the fact that the Jewish people were of extremely ancient origin and deserved a place in history.

Owing to their non-conformity and general separatism the Jews appeared as enemies of public regulations and institutions. And, while such peculiarities as the practice of circumcision, abstinence from pork, the lighting of candles, observance of the Sabbath and the refusal to intermarry gave occasion rather for derision and reproach, their contempt for the national gods was assailed most bitterly. To refute these charges Josephus begins his actual Apologia, which forms the noblest part of the whole work.

Dedicating this work to Epaphroditus, "And to all who, like him, may desire to know the truth about our nation," Josephus ends his noble Defense of Judaism.

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REFORMATION SERMON BY DR. C.F.W. WALTHER

(The following is the main content of a sermon delivered in 1849 and translated from "Licht des Lebens," p. 674 ff.)

The Church is a divine institution which always has existed and never will perish, nor can it perish. Right after the fall God called unto Himself a people who returned to Him and possessed His grace, served Him again, and whom He led to glory. That is the Church which has been at all times and will be to the end of days, yea, when there shall be no more visible heaven and earth, shall stand unshaken, and even then shall shine in its greatest glory.

That the Church shall never perish is a truth for which we have a three-fold guarantee: 1. The promises given to it; 2. the foundation on which it stands; and 3. the Head that has been given unto it.

1. The promises: In the O.T., Ps. 46, 2-5. In the New Testament, the word of Jesus to Peter: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16, 18)

2. The foundation: It is built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Cornerstone. (Eph. 2, 20) The Word is eternal. As impossible as it is for God's Word to perish, so impossible it is for the Church that is built on it to perish.

3. The Head: The Head of the Church is not a helpless, weak man, nor an angel nor archangel, but the almighty God-man, Jesus Christ, who says, "I and My Father are one" (John 10, 30); "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14, 9); "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28, 18). Even as it is impossible to dethrone Him whose throne is above all heavens, so impossible it is also to overthrow that Kingdom which He rules with eternal wisdom and protects with His divine omnipotence -- His Church.

When we know that Christ's Church cannot perish, then we know also that our Evangelical Lutheran Church cannot perish, because it is not a sect, built on human thoughts that err. We do not join ourselves unto a party in the church, but to none other than the universal Christian Church, established by Christ on the basis of His Word. Not we, but our opponents have called us Lutherans; we wish to be nought else than orthodox Christians. The name "Lutheran" may be destroyed out of the mouth and memory of men; her human ordinances and usages, no matter how glorious, may cease; in short, everything that is human in her may perish. But she

herself, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the real sense of the Word, cannot perish. No matter what name or usages the church may have in the future, she cannot have any other confession than that which God has given to our Lutheran Zion, and that has been deposited in her Confessions. For that is the old, immutable Christian faith, the imperishable Word of the eternal God.

But, many may say, why these great notions concerning our church just now when she appears to lie so low, in rubbish and ashes, and her friends, weeping, walk through her ruins? Because we today remember her Reformation; for the Reformation is not only the festival of remembrance of former times and the once great deeds of God, but also the festival of our hope for the Church of the present and future. Of this let me speak to you.

Text: Psalm 77, 5-20.

In this text David tells us how he comforted himself when it appeared as though God had rejected His Zion, as though He would no longer show any grace, as though the promises were at an end. What was it that filled him with hope? Vv. 10b-11. And, in the following he speaks of how God had gloriously helped the fathers and led them through the Red Sea while the enemy had perished therein. In these examples we see how God can help the Church also of our day. Let me therefore present to you:

OUR RETROSPECT UPON THE WORK OF THE LUTHERAN REFORMATION IS A LOOK WHEREBY WE GAIN HOPE FOR THE CHURCH OF THE PRESENT AND OF THE FUTURE.

Let me show you:

- I. How this retrospect enlivens our hope for the church now, and
- II. What we must do in order that we may be God's instruments in fulfilling this hope.

I.

If we did not have the more than 5,000 years of church history to look at with its changing scenes of set-back and resuscitation for the church we might be tempted to despair like Elijah did who fled into the wilderness and despaired of the Church. For, has the Church ever shown such an appearance of devastation as it does now?

Two-thirds of the people of the world are in heathenish darkness.

In the midst of Christianity, at many places the light of the Gospel has been extinguished and the night of heathenism has returned. And the

saddest of all is the fact that many baptized Christians count this night of heathenish unbelief and misbelief as light, and despise the Gospel as though it were a lie and deceit and an antiquated teaching of the dark ages.

The church is divided into many parties and sects that spread themselves ever farther and farther.

There is the papacy: while it loses at some places, it gains at others, and especially here in our country it threatens to engulf all.

On the other hand, there stands the large Greek Church, petrified as it were. And also there are the so-called Protestant sects, many of whose members burn with party zeal. In part, they are also richly furnished with monetary resources, supported by the elite of the world and equipped with the resources of science, having many able workers who everywhere find acceptance for their false doctrines and their false union, and they push their boundaries ever farther and farther among both the Christians and the heathen.

Among all these sects there stands the church that bears the name Evangelical Lutheran; but, alas! not as a blossoming rose among the thorns. Indeed, there are still millions that call themselves Lutherans. But alas! What has it come to? Most of their churches are taken over by such who reject her pure doctrine, even such who are declared enemies of Christ. Therefore, from many of her pulpits heathenish morality sounds forth instead of the pure Word of God, and in a great number of its many schools the children are given the poison of unbelief instead of the pure milk of the Gospel. Her glorious Confessions lie either antiquated and rotted in the dust or are opposed publicly by her own teachers as an intolerable human yoke, or are misinterpreted as dangerous errors by those who presume to be her most faithful confessors. Therefore, our Lutheran Church has become almost everywhere like a garden whose fences have been broken down and whose fruit trees every fool now can rob and whose flower-beds every animal may trample down and uproot. We must complain about our Lutheran Zion as Isaiah once complained about the Zion of the Israelites: Isaiah 1, 8.9.

Yes, the Lord has left us a little remnant. But how divided! How lacking in knowledge! How poor in resources! How covered with shame and offence! She lies in the dust and her enemies triumph over her.

And should we still have hope for the Church of the future? Yes! We must have hope. Either the day of her glorification is at hand -- the last Day; or God will raise His Church out of the dust. Let us do as David says in the text: Vv. 10b-12.

Go with me now in spirit for awhile into the period before the Reformation, the memory of which we celebrate today. Did it look more hopeful to human eyes then than now? Certainly not. If there ever was a time in which it appeared that the gates of hell, contrary to Christ's promise, had overcome the church, certainly it was then. By the help of Satan and by human cunning and power the antichrist had, little by little, built an ever stronger throne for himself at Rome, the capital of the world, under the title of pope or the head bishop of all Christendom, claiming to be the successor of Peter and the vicar of Christ. From there he ruled almost all Christendom, forbade the reading of the Bible, and with the help of countless bishops, priests and monks, he brought in a terrible chaos of anti-christian doctrine, changed the institutions of Christ and put in their place his own inventions. Alongside of this there ruled gross unbelief, naturalism and atheism secretly, and sometimes also openly at the papal court and especially among the so-called higher spirituals (Geistlichkeit). Among others, Pope Leo X, who had put Luther under the ban on account of his alleged heresies, said to one of his cardinals even as he, the pope, lay on his death-bed: "O how much this fable concerning Christ has fetched us!" Another time, at a disputation between two philosophers who were disputing concerning the immortality of the soul, this same pope declared that he agreed with the one who denied the immortality of the soul because that gave him more courage. In 1522, a certain J. Faber, who later became bishop at Vienna, debated publicly in the city of Zurich on the theme: That one could live real peacefully and contentedly even if there were no Gospel in the world. When the spirituals were of this frame of mind, the poor people naturally heard nothing and knew nothing of the Gospel. In the pulpit they preached hardly anything but laughable legends about the saints. And, many preachers who wanted to count for something presented the moral philosophy of the heathen philosopher Aristotle instead of the gospels and epistles. As the doctrine was, so also was the life. Pope, bishops and priests lived in all sorts of sensual vices, namely, in greed after money and unchastity, and the people followed their shepherds in their more than heathenish ignorance, so that even Bellarmine, a famous papal cardinal and chief defender of the papacy, writes: "Some years previous to the arising of the Lutheran and Calvinistic heresies there was no rigor in the spiritual courts, no discipline in regards to customs, no knowledge of sacred things, no reverence of divine things; hardly was there anything left of religion."

But what made it so very bad, much worse than in our day, was the fact that it was so difficult to find the truth. Not only was the Bible at that time a closed and sealed book for the people; but also in those times there were not as yet Luther's glorious confessions of faith and those of other men of God, writings which we now possess and from which everyone may quickly come to a knowledge of the truth. And if one did find the truth by God's gracious guidance it was dangerous to confess it. The papal power had reached its zenith at that time and had overcome even its most dangerous

enemy, the councils. Nearly all rulers in Christendom at that time were ready, at the slightest behest of the antichristian bishop at Rome, to silence by force any one that dared to speak or write against the pope and his abominations, and, when it was considered wise, even to put them to death. The temple of the church of Christ had become, before the eyes of men, the kingdom of antichrist and thus a den of murderers in which the souls of thousands and millions were murdered and sent to hell.

At that time it certainly would not have been strange if the Christians had said with David: Ps. 77, 7-9. It looked as though God had forgotten His promises.

But what happened? On October 31, 1517, Luther posted the 95 Theses. They contained only some sparks of divine truths. But they were spread in all directions and they kindled a fire. And already 13 years later, in 1530, the power of the papacy was broken, whole lands were enlightened with the light of the Gospel, and many princes were along in confessing the Apostolic doctrine at Augsburg; and many were delivered from the tyranny of human doctrines and churches were established which possessed the pure doctrine.

Here we have irrefutable proof for it: The Church of Christ is a sun before which the world and hell may bring thick clouds, so that it looks as though the light has gone out; but God speaks a word, and quickly the clouds are banished, and the Church shines again in its full heavenly glow. It is like a golden city that at times may be so covered with the rust of human doctrine and the rubbish of unbelief and error that it may seem to have disappeared from the earth. But God raises up another worker and soon the golden city is uncovered and cleansed, and millions again enter through her gates, drawn by her brilliant, heavenly splendor.

So we shall have hope that God will again cause our Church to blossom. Let us not lose courage on account of the present false doctrines. God can send an angel to roll away the stone from the grave and prepare a glorious Easter festival for our Church.

II.

Let us now see what we must do in order to be instruments of the Lord in bringing this about.

What did Luther do? Did he formulate some clever plan by which to

overthrow the antichrist, get the princes on his side, and get the people to forsake their priests? And did he then afterwards put this carefully laid plan into operation? No! He preached the Word. He says: "All I have done is to set forth the Word, preach it and write it; otherwise I have done nothing further. That same Word has accomplished so much while I slept or was otherwise occupied, that the papacy has become so weak and impotent such as no prince or kaiser heretofore has been able to make it. I have not done it: the Word alone, preached and written by me, has accomplished this." (Op. 20, 23.24) Luther would hereby testify that he never had in mind to want to reform the Church; God alone had done that through the Word which Luther was coerced to confess.

Thus it was indeed. Luther preached the Word without fear or favor. He did not ask what would follow upon his confession. For him it was sufficient that he did not deny the truth; then he let God take over. When Melanchthon was worried Luther wrote to him: "I know our cause is right and true, and what is more, that it is God's very own cause. Therefore, I am almost like an idle on-looker. If we fall, then Christ falls with us. Christ has indeed died for sin once; but for righteousness and truth He will not die, but He lives and rules. If that is true, why do we worry about the truth since He rules? "

Luther would not depart one iota from the Word. Often the whole Protestant Church was in danger of being overthrown by the enemy, and it appeared as though giving in on one point or another would turn away the danger and bring peace. How important it appeared to be that Luther should give in to the false teaching of Zwingli in the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. Then there could be common battle against a common foe. Even friends of the Gospel asked Luther to give in. But Luther would rather die than give in. He said: "We would like to have peace, if only we do not lose the peace with God which Christ has won for us. Where Christ keeps that which is His, we will gladly for His sake lose what is ours." Again: "The doctrine is not ours, but it is God's and He has called us only to be slaves and servants of it. Therefore we neither should nor can give up the smallest tittle or letter of it."

In this way Luther was the instrument in God's hands. And, if we are to be God's instruments we must do likewise.

First, we must allow ourselves to be filled with the light of God's Word; we must experience that the Word is the power of God to save all that believe. Then we shall confess with our mouth that which burns as a fire in our heart.

But we are often tempted to give up something of the pure teaching, too. Also now it would appear to be salutary for the church if we would

give up something of God's Word in order not to offend some. But let us remember that the work is not a human work, but God's. Here we are not to ask what reason would dictate or what our own heart advises. The only thing to do is to confess God's Word and cling steadfastly to it. Men may cast out our name as disturbers of the peace, but God will acknowledge us as His faithful ones and bless our faithfulness -- it may be in an invisible manner here, but hereafter in glory.

"The Word they still shall let remain," etc. Hymnal 262, 4.

Submitted by A. M. Harstad

A BIGOT TO LAXNESS

Today it is very much the thing to insist that no matter what the church's confession might be, the individual must not be held to it since that would curb, if not his freedom in Christ, at least his academic freedom and his freedom to pursue truth. In support of this view someone said that the church sorely needs a "Theology of Criticism." A few years ago (1959), when a certain Lutheran church tried to restore some semblance of doctrinal discipline within its midst by means of its "Resolution Nine," a magazine (Dialog, Spring 1962) declared that thereby this synod had "bestowed on itself virtual infallibility, not only regarding its past record, but also regarding its future declarations."

When, in the face of these and similar criticisms, this synod reversed its theological field by repealing Resolution Nine, its own official organ jumped on the popular bandwagon with its now famous editorial, "Turning Point." It rejoiced not only in the conviction that the "Cleveland convention had repudiated the legalistic tactics of a tiny segment which had troubled synod relentlessly for decades," but it was especially jubilant in the belief that men "capable of making creative contributions to the church" would no longer be "stifled by the knowledge that their work would undergo a scrutiny bent on exposing them as heretics or subversives."

All of these recent events and pronouncements turned our mind to some observations made one hundred and ninety years ago by Dr. Samuel Johnson of dictionary fame and an intellectual of no mean stature. In

August 1773, Dr. Johnson, together with his biographer, James Boswell made a walking tour of Scotland and the Hebrides. Arriving at the Village Cawdor (remember Macbeth?) as guests of the local pastor of the Cawdor Manse, they met several prominent men, one of whom was Mr. Macauley, (granduncle of Lord Macaulay) who had some rather decided opinions regarding theology.

But let Boswell tell it: "Macaulay began a rhapsody against creeds and confessions. Mr. Johnson showed clearly that what he called imposition was only a voluntary declaration of agreement in certain articles of faith which a Church had a right to require, just as any other society can insist on certain rules being observed by its members. Nobody is compelled to be of the Church as nobody is compelled to enter into a society. This was a very clear and a very just view of the subject. But poor Macaulay could not be driven from his track. Mr. Johnson said, well that he was a bigot to laxness.

Those churches whose members are suffering from theological professors who teach directly contrary to the historic creeds of their church and yet insist on remaining in these voluntary associations at a fairly respectable salary, ought to follow the tack of Dr. Johnson and point out where the bigotry really lies; it is a bigotry to laxness.

This, however, may not do much good; one regrets to report that on the day after the evening conversations just recorded, Boswell still speaks of Macaulay's "invincible adherence to his notions against creeds and confessions."

B. W. Teigen

IN THE NEWS

Mankato, Minnesota--Representatives of the Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia, the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Finland, and the Church of the Evangelical Lutheran Confession of Germany met at Bethany Lutheran College and Seminary, August 19-23. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss, on the basis of a number of questions drawn up by a subcommittee after a similar conference at Mequon, Wisconsin, last year, the doctrines of the Church, the Ministry, and Church Fellowship.

There was full agreement expressed on what constitutes the Una Sancta, but not on the usual questions of divine and human institution for the various forms in which the Church is manifest on earth. There also seemed to be substantial agreement on the doctrine of the Ministry.

What can be regarded as an accomplishment of some significance was the adoption, by the group, of a definition of Church Fellowship -- "Church Fellowship in the external sense (Kirchengemeinschaft, Glaubensbruederliche Gemainschaft) essentially consists in the mutual acknowledgment and recognition of Christians (individuals, congregations, church bodies) as brethren in the faith. This mutual acknowledgment and recognition may designate a status (i.e., as being in church fellowship) or it may designate activities (i.e., altar fellowship, pulpit fellowship, prayer fellowship, joint mission work, etc.). True, God-pleasing church fellowship is present or practised only when those involved are in doctrinal and confessional agreement, leaving no room for any deviation from the pure Word of God."

An extra feature during this conference of theologians was a rather extensive report on the LWF assembly at Helsinki by Dr. Cl. Hoopmann, President of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia, who had just come from Finland.

Helsinki--(Though our Synod had no special observer at the Lutheran World Federation meeting in Helsinki, a number of reports have been received re this widely publicized Lutheran gathering. The report following has been received directly from A. Aijal Uppala (Wedelius), head of the Ev. Lutheran Free Church of Finland, who was well able to assess the assembly itself as well as the publicity accorded it.)

There was a gesture of self defense noted in that it was stated, "All the churches of the LWF have the same confession (in the Constitution -- de jure) -- only the theology differs." ... Now it has come so far that not only the theologians personally, but also the union of churches (LWF) want openly to demonstrate the other brand of their confession and theology.

The Doctrine of Justification:

This was the main theme of the general assembly. Actually not the doctrine but the concept "Justification" ... The consideration of this theme did not proceed from Holy Scripture but from rationalization. The following questions were treated: 1) Reformation -- the coming to terms with the Roman Church (it was stated that one could not today label the Roman Church as publicly false, unscriptural and unevangelical); 2) Development of literary and historical treatment of Scripture; 3) the erosion

of theological concepts in our time; 4) a change in the climate of our culture.

The whole business was a prattling or conversation on this theme. They spoke of it in the group discussions. And Bishop Lilje, with some colleagues, made a summary of these discussions. It was no theological declaration and was not to be adopted but only received. Although the summation did not appear in present-day terminology but sought to preserve the old concepts, it even after a lively discussion was not received but referred to the new Theological Commission.

Professor G. Gloege (Evangelical, Rhineland) gave the chief report on this theme, in which he maintained: Here the church stands in a triple dilemma: 1) Dogmatic formulation-- Paul and Luther expressed their personal understanding in a justification-doctrine. The life of the Gospel became rigid in dead doctrine. 2) Individualization -- it should not be "God and I" but "God and the world." Every private interpretation of justification means misunderstanding. 3) Spiritualization -- "The narrowing of the real justification process to the spiritual sphere of piety disavows the world-goal of the coming royal reign." "The message of the conquering righteousness of God was laid in the coffin of 'doctrine'." In conclusion he said:

"Once more, for a last time: God does not despair of the world. God despairs neither of mankind nor of the church. God believes in us. Where we were to delight in this faith of God in us the early light of God's grace would dawn for us. Our life would be fresh, as if we stood in the morning of time."

The largest Finnish daily paper (Helsingin Sanomat), in its lead article, wrote of this general assembly: "That one did not get a consensus on justification accepted showed -- so many representatives thought -- in a healthy way that the formulations and definitions of the 17th century are no longer applicable in the new ecclesiastical and theological situation. In the sphere of the Lutheran Church one sees that the old formulae have disintegrated and that people are not united on the new (cp. Kotimaa 13.8.1963)"

Under the heading "The Essence of the LWF -- Church or not Church" we can say that Dr. Cl. Nelson's presentation "The one Church and the Lutheran Church" was the most appreciated report. He received the most and longest applause. The presentation expressed the views and wishes of the general assembly. In the first part he rightly pointed out that one does not willingly use the word "Church" beyond the sphere of an ordinary church denomination... Then he came to the particular question, whether the LWF were a church or not. If the LWF is not a church, one should examine theologically the churches to which we belong. If the LWF is a church many questions should be answered ... Dr. Nelson maintained that the

Lutherans of the LWF "are persuaded to think of the church in world-wide terms."

Without being organized as a synod-conference the LWF is eo ipso a church federation. This churchliness was emphasized through brief amendments to the Constitution.

Before the full assembly the general secretary of the LWF, Dr. Kurt Schmidt-Clausen declared in an interview ("Kotimaa", 17.5.1963)... "that the LWF is not only a world-wide alliance, but it is a spiritual and ecumenical movement. The Lutheran Churches are truly one church, one family, and one body." (Emphasis by correspondent)

The general assembly quietly made a minor addition to the confessional paragraphs (II Art.) in that it included the 3 primitive church confessions. In practice this means nothing, as the nominal confessions (The Augustana and the Small Catechism) have been given the same innocuous treatment. The news release noted that these ancient church confessions are confessed also by the Roman and Greek Catholic Churches. A Bultmann can still belong to a member church as undisturbed as before. Doctrinal latitude is quite common in member churches.

Again to Dr. Nelson: In these ecumenical endeavors, said he, the Lutheran Church should, according to Phil. 2, 5-11, be ready to promote the modern ecumenical goal to the death -- to the death of the true Lutheran church. And the general assembly showed the greatest and most heartfelt approval. Dr. Nelson also said that now one had in Helsinki learned where the church of Christ is (the where underscored by Dr. Nelson). We could not explain this in any other way but that the "where" pertained to the ecumenical movement.

This appraisal of the Fourth General Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation is underscored by two other independent reports which we have had occasion to receive. Of one thing especially were we cautioned -- we were not to think as much progress had been made in Helsinki as the large delgation from the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod had been inclined to think and also reported in its official periodical.