



Lutheran Synod Quarterly

1963 - 1563

B. W. Teigen

LENTEN SERMON THEMES

J. G. Anderson & G. E. Reichwald

BOOK REVIEWS

IN THE NEWS

WAS CIRCUMCISION A SACRAMENT, A MEANS OF GRACE?

A. T. Kretzmann

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1963 - 1563

Four hundred years ago (1564) the Council of Trent, which had met intermittently since 1545, came to a close. It is an anniversary that we have practically forgotten, although we should not have done so, for it was a milestone in church history. As a result of this Council, efforts at inner Catholic reform were initiated, Roman Catholic doctrine was defined, and of course, the Reformation was roundly condemned, especially the doctrines that we are justified by grace through faith in Christ without the deeds of the law, and the doctrine that Scripture alone shall establish articles of faith. Nineteen sixty-three and 1563 have some striking parallels.

No doubt we have been too preoccupied with the momentous decisions we have had to make during 1963 to appreciate the importance of 1563. This year has been a trying and soul-searching one for at least some Lutherans. Steps were taken which one could not take by counselling with flesh and blood. Since these have been detailed in other publications, it is necessary only to mention them here. Our Evangelical Lutheran Synod at its annual convention (June 20-26) resolved that, "With the deepest regret, but in obedience to the divine injunction given in I Cor. 1:10 and Romans 16:17, we solemnly declare the immediate withdrawal of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod from the Lutheran Synodical Conference."

And at its biennial meeting (August 7-14) the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod resolved that "In solemn protest against the departure of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod from the historical doctrinal position of the Lutheran Synodical Conference, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod now withdraw from said conference as it is presently constituted."

Church Politicking?

As one of those who has felt obligated to make such a decision, it is rather difficult to understand the words of one of the members of the Missouri Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations. Dr. J. A. O. Preus wrote: "Are all those who are making a mad rush to separate themselves from the Missouri Synod motivated entirely by a desire for sound doctrine, or is there a certain amount of church politicking and overconcern with questions of casuistry involved in their activities?" (From an editorial, "Lutheranism-Whither?" The Springfielder, Summer, 1963, p. 34) It is indeed unfortunate that a Missouri Synod member so highly placed should inject the suggestion that there was "a certain amount of church politicking." Dr. Preus' words are doubly difficult to understand when one considers that Dr. Preus himself declared in 1954: "Resolved that we suspend fellowship with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod" (A memorial from the floor of the 37th Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, see 1954 Report p. 91).

Overconcern with Questions of Casuistry?

Dr. Preus' words suggesting there may be an "overconcern with questions of casuistry" invite one to make a closer scrutiny of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod's recent actions. Has anything decisive happened since Resolution Nine was adopted at San Francisco (1959) to make one believe that the Missouri Synod has begun to swing back to the old conservative paths? Or, that the loyal conservatives within her fold have begun to regain their grip on things again? The Scharlemann papers go unrepudiated. The links with the NLC are still there and ready to be forged into a new combine. The take-over generation (Marty, Pelikan, et al) is getting a bigger play than ever. On October 31, 1967, Dr. Pelikan will be the lecturer at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, commemorating the 450th anniversary of the Reformation and the 125th of the founding of the Seminary. The Lutheran Witness glories in its new found freedom, it found the Cleveland Convention a "turning point," "an unprecedented opportunity for Missouri to bear a Christian witness that will be listened to and respected" (LW, August 21, 1962). In the October 29, 1963 issue, the Lutheran Witness editors suggest that a publication does not belong in the religious category if it "snipes at churchmen and harps on

the theme that the church is selling out to the devil, etc. Then in the November 26, 1963 issue, it was troubled about the polemical approach of a book which defends the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ, but it apparently liked the "gentle" and "far less Polemical" approach of a book which holds that there are "differences and contradictions not only in historical or geographical details, but even in the important testimonies of God's decisive utterances" in the New Testament. Dr. Pelikan's first book to tip his completely liberal theological position, From Luther to Kierkegaard (1950), was paperbacked during the past summer.

According to The Lutheran (Nov. 20, 1963) the LCA and the LC-MS congregations at Richmond, Virginia, held a joint Lutheran Reformation Festival, where "they worshipped together. An estimated 850 persons heard the Rev. William H. Kohn, President of the Missouri Synod's South-eastern District, preach on 'Christ's Work Finished, Our Work Unfinished'." One wonders if this comes under the Missouri Synod's current definition of "pulpit fellowship."

President Harms in his last episcopal letter (November 1963) takes issue with the reporters (religious and secular) who informed the public of the failure of the Helsinki Convention to reach agreement on justification. Not so, he says: "It was not the Scriptural truth of justification by faith alone that created division of opinion." At this date we have not had the opportunity to study all the documents, but one on-the-spot-observer, a solid Lutheran theologian, the Rev. H. A. Uppala of Finland, noted that "there was no consensus on justification." (See the Lutheran Synod Quarterly, September 1963, p. 24)

Now none of these things are very reassuring, and when one remembers that one of their most respected theologians, Dr. S. Becker, felt constrained to leave the Missouri Synod because of the false doctrine within it, the picture becomes very gloomy indeed.

"We Were Gratified"

Other events have occurred during the past summer which need to be evaluated and fitted into the present Lutheran picture. Twenty Missouri theologians went on a junket to Europe during July and August, stopping at Frankfurt, Helsinki and Cambridge. Mankato became host to the Theological Conference which was to be a continuation of the two Mequon conferences. Mankato hosted it only when it was not acceptable to have it in Europe. At this conference the doctrines of the Church and Ministry and Church Fellowship were further studied. The report was quite frank in revealing where there was agreement and where there was still some disagreement. Delegates from the WELS, the SELC, the ELS, Australia, Finland and Germany (Bekanntnis Kirche), were present, as was one official

observer from the Missouri Synod who was present for all discussions. In the pastoral letter already referred to, President Harms declared: "We . . . were gratified to note that none of the representatives of the European Free Churches attending our Cambridge meeting accepted the invitation to attend the theological conference at Mankato sponsored by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod." Presumably, President Harms was less than gratified when the Finns, the Australians and the Bekenntnis Kirche of Germany were represented.

This brings up another important matter which our ELS must consider for the future, namely, our relationship to the Lutheran Free Churches of Europe. Not only in recent years have we prized their testimony and fellowship (the latter has been only somewhat occasionally practiced because of distance), but for many years past, our Synod has had a high regard for the German Lutheran Free Church. Dr. S. C. Ylvisaker never tired of telling how, despite the fact that he had had a rigorous Lutheran training at Luther College, Decorah, and Luther Seminary, St. Paul, he never fully learned to prize the precious heritage of his Lutheranism until he came under the influence of old Dr. Willkomm of the Saxon Free Church while he attended the University of Leipzig during the first decade of this century. In view of the last-minute refusals to come to the Mankato conference on the part of some of the European free church brethren, and in view of the statement in President Harms' November episcopal letter, one naturally wonders who dances when Missouri pipes.

There has been a rumor that the German Free Churches would like a meeting next summer in Europe with the Synods that left the Synodical Conference, apparently for the purpose of getting a clearer picture of what caused the breakup of the ninety-year-old church federation. The report carried in this issue of the Lutheran Synod Quarterly from the Reformation Day Synod convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church -- Synod of France and Belgium, states that this "Synod voted to work toward a federation of all Lutheran bodies willing to abide faithfully by the confessions." This sounds promising, and it certainly needs further exploration, but it is a little disturbing to read the next sentence in the report: "This is in the sense of a resolution passed in Cambridge last summer." It is somewhat disturbing, because according to news reports, President Fuerbringer of Concordia, St. Louis, is to be the chairman of the "continuation committee" of the so-called conservative Lutheran bodies that were present at the Cambridge meeting, to which meeting, apparently, the French Lutherans have reference. At the same time, however, news reports inform us that President Fuerbringer has been named chairman of a committee drawn from the LCA, TALC, and LCMS, to prepare recommendations on the organizational setup of the new proposed Lutheran cooperative agency to replace the old NLC. Even if President Fuerbringer is theologically ambidextrous

enough to keep both chairmanships in the air, it is certainly questionable whether one would care to become involved in this type of theological legerdemain.

Another factor which needs clarification has recently arisen. A correspondent from Sweden has sent us a clipping from the German Lutheran (Frankfort) Kirchenblatt, September 1963, which officially states that one of the German Free Churches, the Evangelisch-Lutherische (Altloth) Kirche has established pulpit and altar fellowship of some kind with the Vereinigte Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche Deutschlands (VELKD). This Free Church is one of the churches which has been in affiliation with the Synodical Conference. One doesn't just know what has happened, but the announcement gives rise for concern.

Meanwhile, the Synodical Conference president, John Daniel, is insisting on a business-as-usual pose. See the November 26, 1963, Lutheran Witness for an extended explanation by President Daniel wherein he states that the Synodical Conference will continue its work, carrying on its old theological tradition, and its effectiveness will not be affected by recent developments. One reads this statement and then rubs his eyes: it presents such an unreal picture, and it all sounds so quaint, as though President Daniel has just neglected to look out of the window to see what's been happening on the Lutheran scene. The American Lutheran Churches have continued to spout liberalistic views as freely as ever. Even one of the Missouri Synod's District Appeal Committees has admitted that there is a situation in the Missouri Synod which amounts to "liberality and treason." Some of the findings of the Free Lutheran Theological Conference held in Minneapolis, October 29-31, 1963 reflect the same concern. We list just a few fragments: "Whereas, it is now common knowledge that the heresy of liberalism known as 'Neo-orthodoxy' has infiltrated college and seminary units of most of our Lutheran Synods to the extent that recent graduates of the seminary hold views contrary to the confessions of the Lutheran Church;" whereas, "certain pastors and professors of the LCA, ALC and Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod publicly reject the historic Christian doctrine of the inspiration and inerrancy of the Holy Scripture;" whereas, "certain pastors and professors of the LCA, ALC and Missouri Synod claim that God used evolution to create the world, that man has progressed from some primary organism, thereby negating the historic doctrine of original sin, and removing the basic need for a divine Savior" etc. etc.

"Precipitous Unionistic Course"

About all one can do is re-echo what Dr. Robert Preus, now of the St. Louis Faculty, charged ten years ago (1953) in his own parish paper, The Harvard Street Lutheran Church Bulletin: "Missouri does not waver, not for a moment, from her precipitous unionistic course." He also stated

in 1954 that "The breakup of the Synodical Conference after many generations is something sad to envision. But we cannot compromise our faith for the sake of size, prestige, peace, former brethren, or anything else that seems important. Pray God to help us to restore our lost unity. We cannot limit His grace."

Considered from a human point of view, the possibility of restoring the Synodical Conference to its old position of sound Lutheranism is extremely dim.

But as we face another year, we need to immerse ourselves more deeply in Lutheran Scriptural theology that we may from our heart of hearts treasure our precious heritage. In actuality, there is very little difference in the issues that were at stake in 1563 and those that confronted us in 1963. It was difficult to be a true Lutheran during both these periods.

1563 - 1963

First of all, one must remain clear on the doctrine of justification. Rome in the Decrees and Canons of the Council of Trent officially cursed the Scriptural Doctrine: "If anyone saith that men are justified either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ, or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost and is inherent in them, or even that the grace whereby we are justified is only the favor of God, let him be anathema." The Lutheran World Assembly in Helsinki failed to arrive at a definition of justification by faith. This is not to be wondered at, since existential theology has such a hold on many modern Lutherans. Lutheran existentialists sometimes sound very disarming as compared to the old-line optimistic synergists of a generation ago. This is because the existentialists are quite emphatic in asserting the inadequacy of reason to deal with the real issues of life. They also sound fairly orthodox when they speak of the fear and trembling which take hold of man because he lives in a condition of alienation from God, and that man faces a hopelessly bleak future; but they do not accept the historic Scriptures as a source for theology, and they still ascribe to man the power to free himself from this black nothingness by the leap of faith. Man is free to find the ends of human existence and to live in that way. And, of course, the doctrine of the substitutionary atonement and the imputation of Christ's righteousness find little or no expression among such modern existential Lutherans.

Another area that needs careful detailed study is the doctrine of the source of Christian knowledge. The Council of Trent made it clear that Scripture is not alone the absolute source of Christian knowledge, but that tradition has equal authority with the Scripture. Modern neo-

orthodox Lutheran theologians have made it abundantly clear that they do not accept the sola scriptura doctrine of the Lutheran church, but have placed alongside it, and therefore above it, other sources of knowledge. Here is where the contemporary Missouri Synod theologians at St. Louis have fallen so far short of that which should be expected of an orthodox Lutheran theologian. They should have pressed the alarm bell long ago against this false position. Professor Pelikan has made two flank attacks against the Lutheran position on the source of Christian knowledge. The first attack was made in 1950 when CPH published his From Luther to Kierkegaard and, as already noted, re-issued it in 1963 as a paperback. The second attack was CPH's publication in 1959 of his Luther the Expositor. Dr. William Oesch seems to be the only one who has caught the significance of Pelikan's first book. He promised to analyze Prof. Pelikan's position in more detail in part 3 of Memorandum Inter Nos (see part 2, p. 50), but so far this work has not seen the light of day. It is now probably too late to save the Missouri Synod. As Dr. Oesch points out, the key sentence in Professor Pelikan's book is the one found on page 113: "A re-creation of classical Lutheran orthodoxy was impossible after Kant; he had destroyed the epistemological presuppositions upon which orthodoxy had built her system." Professor Pelikan thinks that he finds many affinities between Luther's theology and Kierkegaard's, and therefore "contemporary Lutheran theology could do much worse than to look more deeply into Kierkegaard for the categories into which to articulate its faith." (p. 118) Earlier (p. 114) Pelikan summed up Kierkegaard's position on truth by writing: "Truth is not a something with which I may deal as I choose, as though it were outside me. Truth is always personal, subjective."

Here is the battleground today. Modern theology has taken over the position that it is useless to speak of facts by themselves. Truth is not to be found independent of man. You cannot, they say, separate the facts from the principle of interpretation by which these facts are observed. Hence the Bible is described as man's response to God's revelation. Revelation, the modern neo-orthodoxists say, is really an interaction between God giving himself to man and man in turn giving himself to God. In this way Scripture was lost as an infallible authority.

Pelikan and Luther on the "Word of God"

The other book of Professor Pelikan which has been so disastrous to the old position of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod is Luther the Expositor. First, Professor Pelikan went up and down the Missouri Synod Districts delivering parts of this book, thereby softening up the Districts for the acceptance of his thesis that Luther did not identify Holy Scripture with the Word of God. This Professor Pelikan had to do in order to try to find some connection between Luther's position and

Kierkegaard's, who, as has been pointed out, did not regard truth as something outside himself.

Professor Pelikan attempts to convey the impression that Luther did not identify the Word of God with Scripture. Hence, he titled the third chapter of his book "The Bible and The Word of God" (p. 48). He speaks of "The Word of God and the Scripture" (p. 49). He intimates that according to Luther "The Word of God in the Church usually took the form of the oral word, the word of preaching" (p. 63), and finally he boldly declares that "the Scriptures were the 'Word of God' in a derivative sense for Luther -- derivative from the historical sense of the word as deed, and from the basic sense of word as proclamation" (p. 67).

It is, indeed, a bit of bitter irony that at the time CPH was publishing this liberally-oriented distortion of Luther's position (1959), a publishing firm in Denmark published a work with almost the same title: Luther Som Skriftfortolker (Luther As Scripture-Expositor). Under the direction of Prof. K. E. Skydsgaard, Dr. E. Thestrup Pedersen examined the same material of Luther as Dr. Pelikan did, but he came up with an entirely different thesis. Dr. Pedersen's 499-page book, however, makes a real study of the original sources, which cannot be said of Pelikan's which as usual leans very heavily on secondary sources. We shall give just a few key quotations from Dr. Pedersen's book. He asks: "Men hvad vil begrebet 'Guds Ord' sige? . . . Kirken's Ord er ikke højeste instans; det maa prøves. Ved hvilkenstans? Luther peger paa skriften; sola scriptura bliver for Luther den norm, der bedømmer all andre normer; ikke personlige oplevelser, ikke geyst, ikke fornuften, men alene skriften (p. 45). Luther kan direkte identificere skriftens ord med Guds ord . . . [Det er] Helligaandens eget ufejlbare ord . . . Alt i skriften er betydnings fuldt, selv de mindste ting deri har teologisk betydning" (p. 200). [But what will the concept "God's Word" convey? . . . The Church's word is not the highest court of appeal; it must be tested. But by what court? Luther points to Scripture; sola scriptura becomes for Luther the norm which judges all other norms; not personal experiences, not the spirit (spiritual feelings), not reason, but Scripture alone. (p. 45) . . . Luther can directly identify the Word of Scripture with God's . . . (It is) the Holy Spirit's own infallible Word . . . Everything in Scripture is meaningful; even the smallest matter in it has theological significance. (p. 200)]

No wonder that Dr. William Oesch at the Minneapolis Free Conference (October 31, 1963) emphasized that this book is one of the most significant books on Luther written in recent years. Too few theologians in this country have read it, but undoubtedly too many have uncritically read and accepted Dr. Pelikan's.

As we face 1964, let us hold fast to the same position of the Gnesio-Lutherans of 1564, namely, to be guided by Luther's dictum: "Deus Solus verax, omnis homo mendax."

B. W. Teigen

LENTEN SERMON THEMES

1. Ash Wednesday - Hebrews 1:1-4 - The Divine Savior.
The distinctiveness of this claim among the religions of the world.
The centrality of this claim in the Christian religion.
The proof of this claim.
2. 2nd Wednesday - Galatians 2:20 - The Self-giving Savior.
The wonderful, heart-warming fact of the love of God.
The wonderful, heart-warming results of this love of God.
The personal nature of the love of God.
3. 3rd Wednesday - Galatians 4:3-5 - The Virgin-born Savior.
The necessity of the virgin birth - our sin.
The fulfillment of the promise - the birth of Christ.
The results of this virgin birth - Jesus born under the Law - has redeemed us.
4. 4th Wednesday - Luke 19:10 - The Seeking Savior.
The bankruptcy of all religions of works.
The true condition of mankind - lost.
God's answer to our desperate state - Christ.
5. 5th Wednesday - II Corinthians 5:21 - The Sinless Savior.
The tragedy of mankind - the Fall.
The problem - the Law must still be fulfilled.
The answer - Christ's perfect fulfillment for us.
6. 6th Wednesday - Matthew 4:23 and 7:28-29 - The Teaching Savior.
The prominence of teaching in Jesus' ministry.
The necessity of such teaching.
The contents of His teaching - salvation is not by good works or good character - the centrality of the cross.
7. Wednesday in Holy Week - Matt 27:27-36, 45-46, John 19:28-30 - The Suffering Savior.
The universality of suffering -- as the result of sin.
The unusual character of Christ's suffering - He was totally innocent.
God's explanation of this -- Christ suffered for us - vicariously.
The blessed results of this suffering.

8. Maundy Thursday - John 15:45 - The Sanctifying Savior.
Our problem - sanctification.
Our impotence in this respect.
God's answer - the power of Christ -- through the means of grace.
9. Good Friday - John 1:29 - The Sacrificial Savior.
The Old Testament background - sacrifice.
Christ the Lamb of God -- the perfect sacrifice.
The significance and meaning of the cross -- all sins atoned for
-- yours included.

J. G. Anderson

Questions of the Passion

1. Matthew 26:14-16 - The Question of Judas Iscariot
 - a. What did Judas think of Christ that he could even ask such a question?
 - b. What did Judas really get?
 - c. What would satan have to bid to "buy" Christ from you?
2. John 18:17 - The Question asked Peter in the courtyard of Caiaphas
 - a. What a blessed accusation, to be accused of being with Jesus
 - b. How Peter tried to disprove it
 - c. How do we answer this question?
3. Matthew 27:4 - The Question of the Clergy
 - a. How could clergymen ask such a heartless question?
 - b. Do we as individual Christians ever shrug off our fellow men with the same question?
 - c. When we imitate the love of our Savior, we will be the opposite.
4. John 18:29 - The Question of Pilate
 - a. The answer - Christ made Himself a king.
 - b. If the answer had been honestly given, it would have been very different.
 - c. The defense we bring against these false charges against Christ.
5. Matthew 27:17 - The Question of Pilate, Barabbas or Jesus
 - a. The reason for the question: Pilate was afraid to face the issue.
 - b. The result was that he could not make the choice that should be made.
6. Luke 23:40 - The Question of the Malefactor
 - a. We see a man facing death.
 - b. We see this man, through his question, facing death in the fear of God.
 - c. Because of this, he also received the promise.

G. E. Reichwald

BOOK REVIEWS

Tjernagel, Neelak S., Editor, The Reformation Essays of Dr. Robert Barnes London, Concordia Publishing House Ltd., 1963. 112 pages. No price given.

Here is a little paperback (an original) which is delightful reading and which sheds considerable light on a chapter of Lutheran Church History which remains for the most part a closed book to many of us. Some may know that Dr. Robert Barnes was a Lutheran pastor who was burned at the stake in England in 1540, but very few would know that Martin Luther wrote of his martyrdom in these words: "This Doctor, I say, we knew very well, and it is a special joy to us to hear that our good pious, table companion and guest of our home, has been so graciously called upon by God to shed his blood for his dear Son's sake, and to become a holy martyr." (p. 17)

These essays of Dr. Robert Barnes which were addressed to Henry VIII are eminently worth reading today. Now that Helsinki has revealed the confusion on justification found among modern Lutherans, it is refreshing to read Barnes' sixteen page essay on this doctrine, which begins with the words; "In Holy Scripture, Christ is revealed as nothing but a Savior, Redeemer, and Justifier, a perfect peace-maker between God and man." (p. 20)

Another of his essays (published in 1531 in Antwerp) provides interesting reading today. Dr. Barnes defines the Church as the Communion of Saints which "stands in Christ's election, and not by yours." (p. 39) "The Church is spiritual and not an external thing." (p. 40) As Professor Tjernagel points out, Dr. Barnes is a little less precise than Luther in identifying the marks of the church. He not only included the Gospel, but also "where we see good works that do openly agree with the doctrine of the Gospel." It is instructive to note that three years later in defending his doctrine against Sir Thomas More, Barnes came much closer to Luther's definition. He was evidently still a student.

His article on "Free Will and Election," coming nearly 50 years before the Formula of Concord, makes interesting reading, especially for American Lutherans who remember the Predestination controversy of two or three generations ago.

Barnes publicly revealed his Lutheranism to the Cambridge University authorities on Christmas Eve, 1525, in a sermon preached before the assembled dignitaries. For this he was tried and jailed as a heretic. In 1528 he got to Germany and ultimately was able to study Lutheran theology at Wittenberg. He lived in the home of John Bugenhagen, and was a frequent guest at Luther's home. Presumably Dr. Barnes would reflect his masters' (Luther's) doctrine on Scripture. Many modern Lutherans would like to think that Luther did not believe in verbal inspiration, and did not identify the Word of

God with the Holy Scripture (e.g. Pelikan's Luther, the Expositor). But from these essays it is evident that Luther's student believed in the verbal inspiration of Scripture, and in its binding authority. This can be seen not only from his essay on the Holy Scripture, but from this collection of essays all of which breathe a real Scriptural tone.

These essays are written in vigorous early modern English prose. Reading Robert Barnes will be a stimulating and spiritual experience. There is much food here for private meditation and public preaching. We close this review with one of his prayers just before his death: "Lord, if Thou straightly mark our iniquity, who is able to abide Thy judgment? Wherefore, I trust in no work that ever I did, but only in the death of Jesus Christ. I do not doubt, but through Him to inherit the kingdom of heaven."

B. W. Teigen

A Grammatical Study of Romans 16,17, by Robert George Hoerber, Ph.D.; 32 pages; Lutheran Synod Book Company, Mankato, Minnesota, 1963.

This little monograph, which was originally published in 1947, still possesses a distinct value in Lutheran circles today, amply justifying its re-printing. In 1947 the author, Dr. R. G. Hoerber, was Professor of Greek and Latin at Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, Minnesota. At the present time he is Professor of Classics at Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri. Dr. Hoerber is also a graduate of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and is a member of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

The discerning reader must bear in mind that this pamphlet was called into being by the appearance, in 1945, of the document known as A Statement, signed by 44 prominent liberals of the Missouri Synod, and its accompanying apology, Speaking The Truth In Love. In these two documents the authors adopted a position on church fellowship and unionism which was directly contrary to the traditional Lutheran position, long held in the Synodical Conference. In defense of this new position they set forth certain arguments involving some rather finely-drawn points of grammar regarding the interpretation of Romans 16,17.

Against this background it is best to let Dr. Hoerber speak for himself. "The purpose of this study," he says (p. 32), "is . . . to clarify certain points of grammar which have been misconceived, incorrectly applied, and naturally have led to serious disagreement." He then goes on to discuss two specific questions which lie at the

heart of this disagreement, doing so in a very scholarly and impartial manner: 1) whether the phrase *παρὰ τὴν διδαχὴν* is used adverbially or adjectively; and 2) whether the articles *τάς* and *τά* are to be regarded as generic or specific articles. It should be added that this whole discussion, by the very nature of the case, moves far above the heads of the average layman, and can be appreciated only by those who have had a good training in the Greek language.

Dr. Hoerber's conclusions, however, can be understood and appreciated by anyone - particularly by the laymen, who may be somewhat confused by all these grammatical arguments. Again, we may let Dr. Hoerber speak for himself. "In conclusion, then," he says, "this grammatical study, which was begun and carried on without any pre-meditated goal and with a sincere attempt for scholarly impartiality, substantiates 'the fathers'' interpretation of Romans 16,17 . . . The articles *τάς* and *τά*, taken as specific articles, link their respective nouns to the phrase *παρὰ τὴν διδαχὴν*, and mean 'the divisions and the offenses contrary to the doctrine.' The specific article *τὴν* merely connects the noun *διδαχὴν* with the relative clause *ἣν ὑμεῖς ἐμάθετε* limiting the thought to 'the doctrine which you learned.' St. Paul is admonishing the Christians at Rome to avoid, not all who cause divisions and offenses, but those who cause the divisions and offenses contrary to the teaching - not contrary to any teaching, but to the teaching which they learned from him and the other apostles."

It goes without saying that every Lutheran pastor ought to have, and study carefully, this fine little monograph. The price is still a bargain - only 35¢, cash with order.

Julian G. Anderson

C. F. W. Walther. The Form of a Christian Congregation. Translated by John Theodore Mueller. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963. 200 pp. \$5.00

The name of Walther is very familiar to the readers of our journal; undoubtedly many have this book on their shelves in the German. Unfortunately German is somewhat of a language barrier today for many. Dr. J. T. Mueller therefore deserves the sincere thanks of conservative Lutherans for making this book available in English in a complete translation.

This book was originally written to inform the Lutheran congregations in the United States of their rights and privileges. But it certainly is not a legal book in that sense. Rather it is to serve as a guide for people whose

sense of responsibility in congregational life had been largely stifled by the state churches from which they came. Walther made generous use of Scripture, of Luther, and of the Lutheran Church fathers to guide his people. Of special interest for the reviewer was the way in which this book demolishes indirectly the theory that the conservative Lutheran Church was a sociological development in the United States resulting from immigrants reacting in a foreign environment, which supposedly would change when they became Americanized.

The basic presentation of this book is probably familiar to the readers from Dr. Dau's shortened form in Walther and the Church, so extended comments are not called for on the basic contents. However, Dau's abridgment, which lacks all of the lengthy quotations from Luther and the fathers, cannot serve as a substitute. Certainly every Lutheran pastor who calls himself a conservative and a disciple of Walther will want this book which so ably outlines the form, the duties, and the responsibilities of his congregation and office. He will be a better pastor for it.

One might have wished for an index to simplify the use of the book; on the other hand, the lack of an index forces the reader to read all of Walther, not just those parts which he wants to read.

Glenn E. Reichwald

Wendell Matthews and Robert P. Wetzler, Editors. Images of Faith. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963. 272 pp. \$4.95

The reviewer is usually a book salesman, but not in this case. This collection of sentiments, illustrations, and statements does contain some material of value, but not for the price. The contributors sent to the editor materials which they considered of value. The editors, both graduates of Northwestern Lutheran Seminary in Minneapolis, then selected what they considered to be best. Their selection was not always the best, for some of the material is rather turgid, chosen more for style than content. The reviewer is concerned more about the statement that the book contains "illustrations of the Christian faith by contemporary Christian thinkers," since the contributors range from modernists through neo-orthodox on to Billy Graham and finally to the clergy of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. One wonders why not a sufficient number of "images of faith" could not be found in their own body, without reaching out to the fringe.

Glenn E. Reichwald

F. F. Bruce. Israel and the Nations. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963. 254 pp. \$3.95

Dr. Bruce is perhaps familiar to our readers from his writings on the New Testament, particularly in exegesis. In this book he surveys the history of Israel from the Exodus to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. In his approach to the Old Testament Dr. Bruce takes a naturalistic view in certain instances, e.g., the falling of the walls of Jerusalem; he also dates Daniel later than usual, in the period of the Seleucids. Thus it becomes a commentary on the times rather than a book of prophecy. In spite of these flaws Dr. Bruce achieved his real purpose very well, the writing of a political history of Israel. Those wishing to have a book that covers the establishment of the United Kingdom, the divided kingdoms, the fall of these kingdoms, and all of the history that follows as conqueror after conqueror came to the Holy Land, would have to look far to find a book which covers the material so simply and completely.

Glenn E. Reichwald

Paul M. Krause. Planning a Wedding. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963. 24 pp. \$.50

Weddings are "exciting" events. The bride, the groom, and the parents suddenly have thrust upon them this very important event. They naturally will look to the pastor for suggestions. This very simple paper-bound booklet will be a great help to the pastor, for he can give a copy to the couple for guidance in planning their wedding. Suggestions are made on music, attendants, scheduling, and a host of details. Furthermore, the wedding service is explained briefly, so that the pastor, using it as a guideline, can expand it where needed. A convenient check list is also included to furnish a final check on arrangements. Those who make use of these, the reviewer feels, will not be disappointed.

Glenn E. Reichwald

Roland H. Seboldt. Christ or Mary. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963. 60 pp. \$.50

This paperback, in a popular but well-documented way, traces the development of the position of Mary, the mother of our Lord, in the Roman Catholic Church from a legendary position to a high place of honor in its dogma: coredematrix. At a time when the Roman Catholic Church has adopted a seemingly friendlier attitude towards the Protestant Church, it is well to be reminded of this fundamental difference.

Glenn E. Reichwald

Book Notes

Attention of our readers should be called to two recently published books. Augsburg Publishing House has reprinted Charles Porterfield Krauth's Lutheran classic, The Conservative Reformation and Its Theology. This classic, first published in 1871, has been out of print for a number of years. Readers who have been trying to purchase a copy through used book stores unsuccessfully for years, will be happy to know of this new published edition. It has also been reported that Northwestern Publishing House has published Prof. John Meyer's commentary on II Corinthians. Since we receive no review books from Northwestern Publishing House, no further information is available. Both of the above books can be ordered through our Lutheran Synod Book Company in Mankato.

GER

Pastors are often disgusted with the canned Lenten sermons which are produced by the publishing companies, for they often find out that the sermons do not fit their particular needs. Thus they end up being forced to prepare their own series of sermons. A helpful book here is R. E. Golladay's Lenten Sermon Outlines. This helpful book, available from the Lutheran Synod Book Company for \$4.75, contains nine series of outlines. The outlines are rather complete and are supplemented by illustrations and useful quotations. It has been reprinted a number of times, which shows its value.

GER

NEWS

Schillersdorf/Ingwiller
Bas-Rhin, France
November 9, 1963

At its convention in Mulhouse, in southern Alsace near the Swiss border, held from October 31st to November 2nd, our synod (Evangelical Lutheran Church - Synod of France and Belgium) voted to work toward a federation of all Lutheran bodies willing to abide faithfully by the confessions. This is in the sense of a resolution passed in Cambridge this past summer, similar to an earlier one in Uelzen in 1952. We are convinced that in this way we can best give testimony to Christ, the only source of man's salvation. A theological committee was appointed which is to concern itself with matters that led to the

rupture in the Synodical Conference. This committee has been instructed to seek contact with similar doctrinal committees in sister churches. Pastor Fr. Kreiss of Strasbourg was again elected president, Pastor B. Galicher of Paris, vice president, and Pastor J. Bricka of the host congregation in Mulhouse, secretary. The Paris pastoral conference was asked to look into the possibilities for launching a new mission in one of the city's suburbs. Pastor Splingart reported that there was an average attendance of twenty at La Varenne where work was started last fall. Two theological candidates will soon be available: M. Claude Ludwig, who will be finishing his military service in February, but who would first like to get an insight into the work of our British sister church before he accepts a pastorate in our midst; and M. Jean Boos who is in the process of completing his university studies started at an earlier date. Pastor Galicher delivered the synodical sermon in the French language, while Pastor G. Hoffmann of Oberursel preached a German Reformation sermon. Both languages were heard at the meeting along with an occasional English phrase, although French was the official medium.

The Rev. John Sullivan

WAS CIRCUMCISION A SACRAMENT, A MEANS OF GRACE?

(Prepared for the Lake Michigan District Pastoral Conference of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod held at St. Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, Chicago, Ill., October 29 and 30, 1963, by A. T. Kretzmann.)

We begin our study of this topic by considering what our Lutheran Confessions have to say about circumcision. The only references to it in the Confessions are found in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the first time in Art. III.¹ It is stated there, that since Abraham and David had the command of God concerning circumcision, if any works justified, this would also be true of circumcision but that instead it is stated of them that they were justified not by the precepts of a good life, but by faith in Jesus Christ. In the same article,² the point is made that according to Gal. 5:6 circumcision avails nothing, but faith which works by love, a passage adduced by the Confessions to show that love ought to and must follow faith, even tho that love in no way justifies. Later on in the same article, the Apology³ points out that according to Romans 4:9, "Abraham received circumcision, not in order that by this work he was accounted righteous. But circumcision was added in order that he might exercise faith and by which also he might confess his faith before others, and, by his testimony might invite others to believe."

In Art. XIII of the Apology our Confessions again refer to Romans 4:9, indicating that Abraham was not justified by circumcision, but circumcision was rather "a sign presented for exercising faith."⁴ The fifth reference to circumcision in our Confessions is found in Art. XXIII of the Apology, where it is pointed out that in Acts 15:10 ff. the apostles "strove against those who required circumcision and endeavored to impose the Law of Moses upon Christians."⁵ The sixth and last reference to circumcision in the Confessions is found in Art. XXVII of the Apology, where it is mentioned merely in passing, the trend of thought at that point being that, "just as circumcision or the slaying of victims would not be a service of God now so the rite of the Nazarites ought not be presented now as a service, but it ought to be judged simply as an adiaphoron."⁶ It is evident then, that our Confessions do not specifically deal with circumcision as to its force and purpose in Old Testament times when the Laws concerning this rite had not as yet been abrogated, but refer to it merely to show that the act of circumcision was a fruit of faith and that, when considered as a fruit of faith or a good work required by God, it never served to justify, since also in Old Testament times the believers were justified by faith alone. Since that is all that our Confessions say about circumcision, they do not, even by implication, take a position on the question assigned to this essayist, namely, "Was Circumcision a Sacrament, a Means of Grace?"

II

Yet, the fact that the Confessions fail to touch upon the topic which we are about to discuss, does not mean that this is not a doctrinal matter, or that the Bible fails to answer our question. Our Lutheran Confessions never attempted to take a position on every teaching in the Bible, but only on those which the confessional writers considered necessary in fulfilling the purposes which the Confessions were to serve. However, once we have defined what we mean with the non-Scriptural term "sacrament", we will find that God's Word is very definite in answering the question: "Was Circumcision a Sacrament?" and that Scripture leaves no doubt as to where it stands on this matter. And since all of us, committed unalterably as Lutheran Christians and also through our ordination vows, as Lutheran pastors to God's Word as the norma normans, the primary and only real source and foundation of doctrine, it should not be difficult at all for all of us, without a single exception, to reach 100% wholehearted agreement on this matter and present a united front over against anyone who may try to break down the authority and perspicuity (clarity) of Scripture when it speaks on this matter. Here in a matter of lesser importance, as in every other doctrinal matter, Scripture speaks with such authority and clarity, that it requires of all of us full and complete acquiescence to what it teaches.

Here, too, we find a clear "Thus saith the Lord", and to that dictum of God Himself all of us should give our wholehearted and complete agreement.

Before taking up the question what the Bible does say in answer to our question: "Was Circumcision a Sacrament?", it would no doubt be best to define our terms, in this case, the word "sacrament". Since this word does not occur in the Bible, we have no right to insist on any particular definition as the only correct one. We know, of course, that the Reformed and Roman Catholic definitions of this word differ widely from our own. Most of us are no doubt acquainted with the fact that to the ancient Romans "sacramentum" meant a soldier's oath of allegiance, his vow of faithfulness; or it meant the earnest money or deposit of money put down by two men entering upon a court case; or in general, it signified the thing by which a person obligated himself; still later, it meant any vow or oath. The word "sacramentum" comes from the verb "sacrare", which means "to render sacred." It is helpful also to keep in mind the close connection which exists etymologically between the word "sacrament" and "sacrifice," both of which are sacred acts.

In church usage we find that the Roman Catholic Church employs the word in a rather loose manner, apparently unwilling to define their understanding of the term, the emphasis being mainly that there be seven sacraments, no more and no less, for no more reason than the one mentioned by the Jesuit writer Scherer who claims that there must be seven sacraments "because no man so far has cursed by fewer than seven sacraments." If there are other reasons why the Roman Catholic Church insists on seven sacraments, or any definition of the word "sacrament" as used by them beyond the vague claim that the Church (Roman Catholic) has decreed that there are seven sacraments⁷ and that this settles the matter, the writer is not aware of it. At any rate, the Roman Catholic position that there are seven sacraments is so important to them that to this day it still curses all who teach that there are fewer than seven.

While the Reformed Churches generally hold with us that there are only two sacraments, they define a sacrament as "an outward ceremony of the Church, ordained as a visible sign of an inward or spiritual grace; specifically, a holy rite regarded as a sign of the union of the soul with God," Winston. As all of us realize, this definition of "sacrament" as used by many of the Reformed, fits neither Baptism nor the Lord's Supper, and also explains how, in late years, especially many Methodist and other Reformed denominations in increasing numbers speak of matrimony as a "holy sacrament." The only reason why they encounter no difficulty in doing so is not that they are drifting toward the Roman Catholic Church with regard to their view of the sacraments, but because their rather arbitrary definition which reflects the Reformed stand on Baptism and Holy Communion, fits perfectly not only marriage, but also other religious acts

not even established by God, as marriage is.

However, it is not difficult to determine in what sense the word "sacrament" is being used in the topic assigned last October to the writer: "Was Circumcision a Sacrament?" If it had been meant in a very loose sense, or even only in the sense of an act ordained by God and nothing more, there would have been no need to ask a brother to prepare a paper on such a topic, since quick reference to a few passages in Genesis, especially Genesis 17:7 & 10 would have settled the matter in a few moments of time. No, it was rather the desire to determine whether circumcision was a sacrament on the sense in which we understand this word to apply it to Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which prompted the assignment of the topic of this paper. In other words, you have asked me specifically whether in Old Testament times circumcision fit the definition of "sacrament" found in our Synodical Catechism, namely, "a sacred act, ordained by God, wherein He by certain external means, connected with His Word, offers, conveys, and seals unto men the grace which Christ has merited." And, as I shall point out, especially toward the end of this paper, devoting a conference paper to this topic should by no means be placed into the category of rather useless or even dangerous striving about words against which the apostle warns, even though admittedly there are many other topics for pastoral conferences which certainly lie closer to the center of Christian doctrine than this topic does. However, the important Biblical teachings, as well as the hermeneutical principles which will have to be referred to and applied, will make this paper far more than simply an answer to an historical question about a rite which God Himself abrogated and abolished many years ago. But especially the fact that, in answering this question, it will be necessary to point out not only the self-evident points of similarity between circumcision and Baptism, but also the far more precious nature of Baptism in comparison with circumcision should help all of us ministers of the Word to appreciate and value more highly than we often do the sacraments in use in the New Testament times in which we live. Not only will we be encouraged by our paper to understand better how much clearer, brighter and richer, yes, how much more glorious the sacraments of the New Testament are than the means of grace with which the Old Testament ministers of the Word had to be content to operate and carry on their work. As in this paper we draw a comparison between circumcision and Baptism, and realize how much more richly we are blessed than the people of the Old Testament in being permitted to use the New Testament sacraments in connection with the work of our ministry, this ought to help us realize the greatness of the treasure we possess and which God Himself has asked us to distribute among those to whom we minister. Thus there should be instilled in us a much greater enthusiasm to bring home to our hearers with sincerest convictions as to their eternal value and worth

all the wealth of God's grace which has been entrusted to our weak hands in the Sacraments which we are called upon to administer. May the vastly superior riches and glory of Baptism and the Lord's Supper as compared with the Old Testament circumcision and Passover serve as a stern warning against the ever-present tendency to become professional, cold or casual in our administration of Baptism and Holy Communion. May we by God's grace catch a fresh realization of the unspeakable love of a God who has given us these mysteries of the House of God, so that we administer them with increased unction and fervor, and preach with a new and more winsome persuasiveness about the importance and eternal value of these sacraments, without, of course, detracting in any way from the preciousness of the written and spoken Word. I have purposely chosen to refer to these practical applications flowing from our topic at this point, rather than only at the end of the paper, so that all of us can remain conscious of these applications to our ministry as we develop our topic more fully and reach the conclusion which God's Word itself forces us to reach.

III

Placing ourselves obediently under the persuasion of God's Word, let us now proceed to find in the Bible itself the answer to the question: "Was circumcision a sacrament according to the definition found in our Synodical Catechism?"

Circumcision is referred to as a rite commanded by God Himself in Genesis 17:10 where the Lord says to Abraham: "This is My covenant, which ye shall keep, between Me and you, and Thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt Me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations." Surely, in these words it is stated clearly that God Himself instituted circumcision, and we know from numerous New Testament tests that it remained in force as a divine institution until the Lord Himself abrogated or declared it as no longer binding for New Testament Christians.

In the second place, as seen from this same text, circumcision involved a "sacred act" that of the surgical removal of the foreskin, "sacred" because God Himself commanded that it be done. In this connection it may be mentioned that in circumcision the earthly or external element was the foreskin which was to be removed, even as in Baptism the external means is water, and in the Lord's Supper, bread and wine.

In the passage referred to before, Genesis 17:10, we find these words: "It (circumcision) shall be a token of the covenant betwixt Me and you." Here is God's offering of a promise in the form of a covenant between Himself and the Old Testament believers, a covenant eternal in its nature and its

promises, since v. 7 of the same chapter states: "And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee." It must be remembered that when the Lord speaks of this "everlasting covenant," He makes very clear that the full Gospel promises of forgiveness of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and eternal life in heaven are included, as is evident from the following Old Testament texts:

Lev. 26:12 "I will walk among you and will be your God, and ye shall be my people."

Jer. 31:33-34 "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel -- I will be their God and they shall be my people -- they shall know Me from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

These truths of the Gospel as revealed in the Old Testament, are also set forth in New Testament texts as the sum and substance of God's gracious will for all men, a will which has remained the same, as indicated in such New Testament texts as Matt. 22:32: "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living," as well as in 2 Cor. 6:18: "And I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Since the Gospel promise was attached to circumcision, this Old Testament sacrament was not in-efficient, for concerning that Gospel, whether taught in the Old or in the New Testament, it is always true what Paul says of it in Romans 1:16: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe." The efficacious nature of circumcision is also emphasized by the fact that in Genesis 17:7 & 10, God calls this circumcision in the flesh an eternal treaty between Himself and men; and since God makes such treaties only with regenerate men and never with the unregenerate, it is evident that circumcision was an efficacious medium of regeneration and saving faith. This truth is also supported by the fact that in Genesis 17:14 it is stated that the despisers of circumcision were to be cast out of the assembly of God, implying that circumcision was a means by which the circumcised were taken into God's assembly and thus into the number of heirs to eternal life. We read there: "And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken My covenant." In that respect it parallels very closely what our Savior said about Baptism in John 3:5: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

That is was presupposed and understood that circumcision, even as Baptism in the New Testament, was not held to bestow its blessings "ex

opere operato," that is, through a kind of merit arising from the piety of the recipient, but that faith was necessary in order that the recipient could enjoy its blessings, is first of all evident from the fact that in Romans 4, especially in verses 9 and 12, Paul makes a special point of the fact that circumcision itself, apart from faith, did not justify Abraham, and that his circumcision was "a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised" (v.11) So also in that respect, as to the manner in which the spiritual blessings found in circumcision could be received by the persons to whom it was applied and enjoyed by them, the Old Testament circumcision is the same as in the New Testament sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

(To be concluded in the next issue)

Notes

1. Concordia Triglotta, 147, 87f
2. ibid. p. 153-155
3. ibid. p. 175
4. ibid. p. 313
5. ibid. p. 375
6. ibid. p. 439
7. Council of Florence, 1439