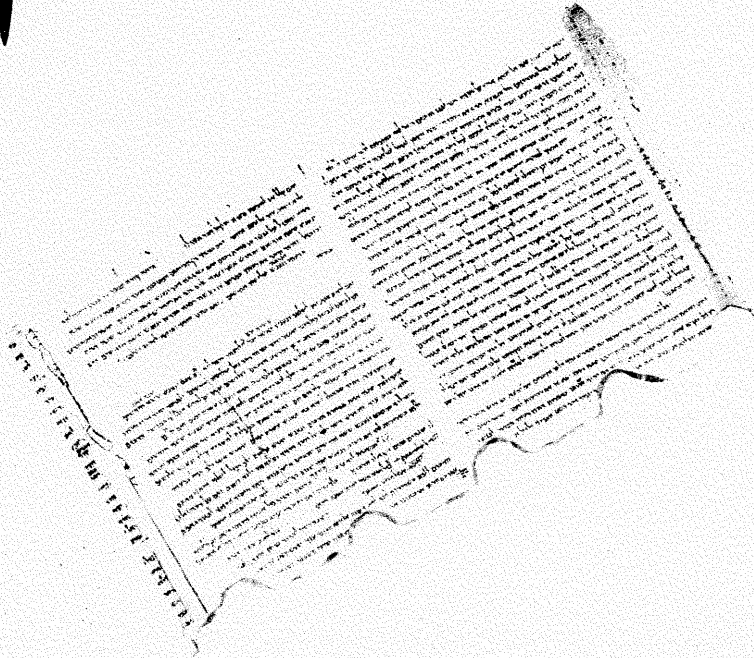
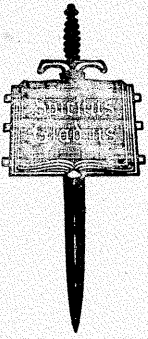


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THE MEANS OF GRACE IN SCRIPTURE, THE CONFESSIONS AND LUTHER

The topic assigned to me was "The Means of Grace in Scripture, the Confessions and Luther." In connection with this topic there was no mention of a particular problem for consideration. It was to be a general survey.

Dr. Francis Pieper draws attention to the fact that the Means of Grace must be connected to the universal redemption of the world. God, who saved the world by His Son, somehow must come to us with this good news, or to put it another way, He must bring us to Himself since He also wills that this salvation must be accepted by faith. In order that man might receive this salvation, God has employed external, created means. These external, created means are called MEANS OF GRACE. The Augsburg Confession, Article V, which follows directly the article on Justification, says:

In order that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted. For through the Word and the sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given, and the Holy Spirit produces faith, where and when it pleases God, in those who hear the Gospel.
(Tappert, p. 31) (Emphasis added)

THE MEANS OF GRACE PROPERLY SPEAKING

Olaf Valen-Senstad distinguishes between the Means of Grace "properly speaking," namely Christ Himself, and the empirical Means of Grace, that is the Word and Sacraments. In his book The Word That Can Never Die, he writes:

In the proper sense of the term there is only one means of grace--the Word, Jesus Christ Himself. However, in order that this eternal, invisible, and glorious Means of Grace may come to us operationally and in a way we can understand, God Himself has ordained and instituted certain historical, visible, perceptible means--and He has promised to be present and to work personally through them. These visible means relate to the invisible Jesus Christ in a manner that resembles the manger, swaddling slothes, and straw which enfolded Him at His birth in Bethlehem. The manger was an ordinary manger like thousands of other mangers. The swaddling clothes and the straw were as swaddling clothes and straw normally are. Similarly, the visible, perceptible means of grace are human words as ordinary human words are. The water of Baptism is water as ordinary water is. The bread and wine are as they always are. However, as the manger, swaddling clothes, and straw housed God's eternal Son--and thereby became Christ's manger, swaddling clothes, and straw--so also the instituted, perceptible means of grace house God's eternal word, God's Son in person. Thereby they become God's means of grace: God's Word, God's water, and God's bread and wine. For where God the Lord connects His name to His means, there He Himself is. And where Christ, crucified for sinners, is proclaimed, there the exalted High Priest Himself is personally present. For the glorified One is both present and operative in the message about the work He performed in His state of humiliation.

Consequently, we have the one, eternal means of grace in four historical, visible, and perceptible forms: Scripture, oral proclamation, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. In our general linguistic practice we tend to

combine the first two and designate them as "the Word," while we designate the other two as "the sacraments." (p. 103)

THE EMPIRICAL MEANS OF GRACE

Since God has saved the world by His Son and has willed that the world accept this salvation by faith, it is therefore necessary for God to communicate and deliver this salvation to a world that is blind and unable to accept it. God chose for this external, created means. God could confront man in any other way he chose, but so that we poor sinners would know for sure that God has come to us he employs simple, unmistakable, outward, and ever visible means.

That sounds like a reasonable proposition. However, to a great many people the idea of external, created means is offensive. At the time of the Reformation the Roman Church put so much emphasis upon external things that some reformers came to see their task as being to get rid of anything external. The sacramental system of the Roman church was so totally outward that the sacraments were said to be effective even when not received by faith. They could even help the dead. And the services were mere outward ceremonies conducted in a language unknown to the people. Emphasis lay upon outward things such as relics, vestments, statues, etc. Köstlin remarks: "The spirit of the Reformation had broken through the barriers of outward ordinances and of the supposed human mediation of salvation, in order to place the believing soul in the immediate presence of its God and Savior." (The Theology of Luther, Julius Köstlin, Trans. Charles E. Hay, Lutheran Publication Society, Philadelphia, Vol. II, p. 22.)

The trouble is that Carlstadt, Münzer and the prophets of Zwickau overreacted to the point of

developing contempt for anything outward. Not only did they disrupt timid hearts with their smashing and removing of externals, but worse, they claimed that through their immediate fellowship with God they were receiving special revelations. These inner revelations became so all-important to them that even the Scripture, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper were subjected to their contempt. The outward word of the Scripture was to them a mere dead letter as compared with the spiritual inner word.

Ironically, though they cast aside one system of externals, they imposed a new one in reestablishing the Old Testament ceremonial and civil laws.

Later, Zwingli followed the same tack, arguing:

I believe, yea, I know, that all the Sacraments are so far from conferring grace that they do not even convey or distribute it... The Spirit.....needs no guide or vehicle, for He Himself is the Power and Energy by which all things are borne and has no need of being born. For have we ever read in the Holy Scriptures that perceptible things like the Sacraments certainly bring with them the Spirit. (quoted in Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, Vol. III, p. 132-133)

Luther did not overreact with respect to outward things. It would have been to his advantage to so completely break with the externality of the past, but Luther never did. There are at least two reasons. In the first place, Luther had too much respect for other people's feelings to upset them by suddenly removing things that are not sinful. The changes he introduced were only to eliminate abuses and ungodly ceremonies. The second and more important reason why Luther refused to cast aside all external things was his great respect for the external Word. He had already fully explored the territory of the inner word

which Carlstadt claimed to have discovered. He had learned the pitfalls of introspection. He never found peace until he came to appreciate the external, objective, unchangeable Word of the Scriptures. Luther always gives preeminence to the outward Word, the Scriptures, and his respect for the outward word determined his belief about the sacraments also. K stlin summarizes Luther's feelings about the way God deals with us as follows:

God, says Luther, deals with us in two ways, externally and internally--externally, through the spoken word and the Gospel and through the material signs, such as baptism and the Lord's Supper; internally, through the Holy Spirit and faith, together with other spiritual gifts; and He does so in conformity with the principle, that the external should and must always precede and the internal follow, the latter being mediated through the former, since He has determined that He will bestow the internal gifts upon no man save through the external. He will not grant the Spirit, nor faith, to anyone without the external Word and signs which He has instituted for the purpose, as He says in Luke xvi. 29: 'Let them hear Moses and the prophets.' Hence, St. Paul can call baptism a washing of regeneration, in which God richly pours out the Holy Spirit (Tit. iii. 5-7), and the preached Gospel a divine Word, which saves all who believe it (Rom. i. 16).
(Ibid, K stlin, p. 43-44)

This discussion over whether God uses external means to come to man is conspicuous also in the Lutheran Confessions. The Augsburg Confession, Art. V, condemns all who claim the Holy Spirit works without means. "Our churches condemn the Anabaptists and others who think that the Holy Spirit comes to men without the external Word, through their own

preparations and works." (Tappert, 31) In the Apology (XIII.13) Melanchthon devotes plenty of attention to this problem saying: "It is good to extol the ministry of the Word with every possible kind of praise in opposition to the fanatics who dream that the Holy Spirit does not come through the Word but because of their own preparations. They sit in a dark corner doing and saying nothing, but only waiting for illumination, as the enthusiasts taught formerly and the Anabaptists teach now." (Ibid., p. 212-213)

In the Smalcald Articles Luther retraces the problem and refutes the claims of the enthusiasts:

In these matters, which concern the external, spoken Word, we must hold firmly to the conviction that God gives no one his Spirit or grace except through or with the external Word which comes before...God will not deal with us except through his external Word and sacrament. Whatever is attributed to the Spirit apart from such Word and sacrament is of the devil.

(Tappert, p. 312-13. 3,10; see also 4, 13)

Again in the Large Catechism Luther takes the matter up saying: "The Holy Spirit reveals and preaches that Word, and by it he illumines and kindles hearts so that they grasp and accept it, cling to it, and persevere in it." (Creed, 42, Tappert, p. 416) This statement and the numerous others like it illustrate that Luther consistently viewed the Word and Sacraments as being the instruments of the Spirit and the instrumental cause for our regeneration and salvation.

The Formula of Concord again goes into the matter of external means saying: "God the Holy Spirit, however, does not effect conversion without means....Likewise we reject and condemn the error of

the Enthusiasts who imagine that God draws men to himself, enlightens them, justifies them, and saves them without means, without the hearing of God's Word and without the use of the holy sacraments." (Epitome, Art. II. 4-6, 13) The Solid Declaration, Article II, gives it even more extensive treatment. These are only a few of many possible citations from the Confessions.

The point at issue was not whether God could come to sinners apart from means. That everyone conceded. The point was whether God had promised his blessing apart from means. If it seemed to someone that God had come into his heart, how could he be sure? Luther knew, as we have said, the value of the objective word. He could no longer content himself with the meandering of subjectivism. For Luther certainty of salvation came from God's word while for the enthusiast it becomes a matter of personal preparation, personal discipline and personal works rather than a gift from God. This is ever the case when the external means of grace are rejected as we shall see later.

Luther argued for the instrumentality of the Word by referring to the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. When the rich man wanted God to go to his brothers, the answer was, "They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them." (Luke 16: 29) The Scriptures never promise that God will meet us elsewhere than in the Word and Sacraments. But, those who hear and learn the Word of God are called "Blessed." (Luke II:28) Furthermore, Jesus says that whoever listens to the apostles also hears Him. Presumably he is referring also to the written proclamations of the apostles. Likewise the blessing of the Spirit is promised in connection with the sacraments. So the problem resolves itself in this manner: The Spirit is promised through certain external means, (e.g., the Word and Sacraments) while there is no promise of regeneration and spiritual growth apart from these means.

WHAT ARE THE MEANS OF GRACE?

Before we fully examine the Scriptural promises connected to specific means, we need to determine just what these means are. For Lutherans today, the automatic answer is: The Word of God, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. Luther, however, stressed a greater variety of means. In the Smalcald Articles, (Part III, Art. IV) Luther says:

We shall now return to the Gospel, which offers counsel and help against sin in more than one way, for God is surpassingly rich in his grace: First through the spoken word, by which the forgiveness of sin (the peculiar function of the Gospel) is preached to the whole world; second, through Baptism; third, through the Holy Sacrament of the Altar; fourth, through the power of the keys; and finally, through the mutual conversation and consolation of brethren. Matt. 18:20, "Where two or three are gathered," etc. (Tappert, p. 310)

Luther and the Confessions attach great importance to the oral word. Fagerberg discusses this, saying:

There can be no doubt about the origins of this strong emphasis upon the oral Word. The Word is a means whereby God the Holy Spirit actively intervenes and works among us. When the Word of God as given in the Bible is set forth in preaching and in the administration of the sacraments, individuals and the church are born spiritually. When the Word, as Luther says in his catechism is 'in full swing,' im Schwang, it becomes living and active. (Holsten Fagerberg, A New Look at The Lutheran Confessions, Trans. Gene J. Lund, Concordia, p. 28)

Fagerberg also shows that the reformers recognized that in the renaissance of the spoken Word they were sharing in an activity that had continued since the time of Moses if not earlier (Ibid., p. 29). Furthermore, Fagerberg notes that Luther and the Confessions emphasize the oral assurance of forgiveness provided in the absolution. (Ibid.) We might add here that the spoken word was what was seen to give validity to the sacraments also. We have observed earlier that the Norwegian theologian, Valen-Senstad, makes of oral proclamation a fourth means of grace. (Ibid., Valen-Senstad, p. 102) It appears that the conservative Lutheran Church today has lost its appreciation for this concept. Perhaps we also fail to recognize the Gospel as a quickening power. We see the Gospel as a story about forgiveness or a word about salvation when in fact it is forgiveness and salvation. The Gospel isn't a lifeless story about forgiveness; the Gospel gives forgiveness. It is a powerful word, not just an informative word, whether in the sermon, the absolution, the benediction, conversation or whatever form.

The more liberal wing of the Church attaches itself to this "word in action" concept as an evidence that the conservatives are guilty of "Biblicism." At first there seems to be a strong case. Fagerberg credits a certain R. Josefson with the suggestion that "we misunderstand Luther and the Confessions if we identify the saving Word of God exclusively with the Scriptures. The Bible is not, in and of itself, a means of grace, but it becomes such only in connection with its proclamation." (Ibid., Fagerberg, p. 30)

Later, however, Fagerberg shows that for the Confessions the spoken Word was nothing other than the Word of Scripture.

While they do not demand a literal repetition of the written Word, the content of

the preached Word is not to deviate from the Scriptures. So when the Confessions mention "the Word," they refer to the written Word as often as to the proclaimed Word. Melanchthon writes in Ap. XXIII 28 that the marriage of believers 'is pure because it has been sanctified by the Word of God.' If the functional view of the Bible were correct, 'the Word' here ought to refer to the spoken Word. But Melanchthon rather has in mind certain concrete Bible passages in which Christ and the apostles express their approval of marriage (Matt. 19:6; I Cor. 7:14; I Tim. 2:15; 4:5)" (Ibid., p. 31)

Again, Fagerberg says: "The spoken Word does not become a critical authority to be used in opposition to the Bible, but it is God's active Word in the present, precisely because it bases itself on Holy Scripture. The words of Scripture brought to life in preaching and the administration of the sacraments are the means by which God acts." (Ibid., p. 33)

A quotation from the Formula of Concord will banish any suggestion that the Bible itself was thought to be a lifeless thing. Further, it shows that when mention is made of the word, the confessions have in mind any proper use of the word. "It is God's will to call men to eternal salvation, to draw them to himself, convert them, beget them anew, and sanctify them through this means and in no other way--namely, through his holy Word (when one hears it preached or reads it) and the sacraments (when they are used according to his Word). (Tappert, p. 531; Solid Declaration, Art. II, 50) Interestingly, there is a footnote in the text which says: "The Torgau Book spoke of hearing, reading, and meditating on the Word, but the reference to meditation was deleted to avoid the implication that

an unconverted man could meditate on the Word in a salutary way." (Ibid.)

As stated earlier, the doctrine of the Means of Grace is the logical result of the Redemption of the world through Christ. St. Paul reveals this when he writes:

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (II Cor. 5:18-21)

The God who is reconciled to the world seeks to inform the world of this truly good news. So the first function of the primary Means of Grace, the Word of God, is to inform. The Holy Scriptures are said to "make you wise unto salvation..." (II Tim. 3:15). Accordingly the word gives assurance of eternal life. "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life," says John. (I John 5:13) Peter makes the great confession in John 6: "To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." (John 6:68) King David praises the Word of God for it is a "lamp unto (his) feet and a light unto (his) path." (Ps. 119:105)

Jesus Christ gave the Great Commission for the very reason that if the world is to benefit from the grace of the reconciled God, it must be informed through the preaching of the Gospel. And St. Paul argues, "And how shall they believe in Him of whom

they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?...So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." (Rom. 10:14, 17, NASB) The obvious implication: those without the word are in darkness and lost. As Dr. Pieper puts it, "personal communion with God is so inseparably bound to means that those outside the Church are described as people who 'obey not the word.' (I Pet. 3:1)" (Pieper, Ibid., p. 134)

Furthermore, the word is described as sufficient to lead us to Christ and to salvation through him. In the parable of The Rich Man and Lazarus, Abraham answers: "They have Moses and the prophets: let them listen to them". (Luke 16:29) And when St. Paul explains where Christ and his righteousness are to be found he argues for the all sufficiency of the word saying:

But the righteousness that is by faith says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down), or "'Who will descend into the deep?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart"; that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:6-9)

(See also John 8:31-32 and Isaiah 55:11)

But even more than its informative function, the Word of God is a means of Grace because it conveys the grace of God. Through the Word, God not only informs us of his grace, but he conveys that grace to us and gives us the strength to believe and accept it. Apart from the Word and sacraments, there is no Promise of the Spirit working but in the word and sacraments the Spirit is at work to overcome our

unbelief and lead us to Christ. Luther confesses both the depravity of man and the work of the Holy Ghost through the means of Grace when he says:

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. (Catechism, Third Article)

The Holy Spirit works this new enlightenment, strength and faith through the very same Word. The preposition DIA used so often in the Scripture indicates the instrumentality of the Word. Through the Word the Holy Spirit comes and works in our hearts: "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." (I Thess. 2:13 AV) "While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message." (Acts 10:44)

So far as its role in conveying to us the blessings of Christ's redemption, Peter says that through the Word the Spirit regenerates us. "You have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God." (I Pet. 1:23) Jesus speaks of the Word as the agent of sanctification: "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth." (John 17:17 AV) In his highpriestly prayer, Jesus speaks of the Word as the means of gaining faith: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." James exhorts us to "receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save your souls." (James 1:21 AV) And the most common of all the passages is that from Romans 1:16 where Paul confesses:

"I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation." (AV)
(See also I Cor. 1:18-21)

Furthermore, the Word of God in general and the Gospel in particular are said to be powerful. "...our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction." (I Thess. 1:5) (See also Romans 1:16-17; Jeremiah 23:29 and Hebrews 4:12) To illustrate the word's power, the reformers commonly called attention to the creative word that called into being the universe. That same God's word is not now a dead thing, but living and powerful, even though it is recorded on pages of print or spoken through instruments.

WHAT ARE THE SACRAMENTS?

Also to be numbered among the means of grace are the sacraments which are connected to the Word. As we consider the sacraments two questions present themselves. The first is simply: What are the sacraments? The second is: What is their relationship to the word?

By the time of the Reformation, the Roman Church had enumerated seven sacraments. In the Apology, Article XIII, Melanchthon begins:

Our opponents approve the statement that the sacraments are no mere marks of profession among men, as some imagine, but are rather signs and testimonies of God's will toward us, through which he moves men's hearts to believe. But they insist that we enumerate seven sacraments. We believe we have the duty not to neglect any of the rites and ceremonies instituted in Scripture, whatever their number. We do not think it makes much difference if, for purposes of teaching, the

enumeration varies, provided what is handed down in Scripture is preserved. For that matter, the Fathers did not always use the same enumeration.

If we define sacraments as "rites which have the command of God and to which the promise of grace has been added," we can easily determine which are sacraments in the strict sense. By this definition, rites instituted by men are not sacraments in the strict sense since men do not have the authority to promise grace. Hence signs instituted without God's command are not sure signs of grace even though they may instruct or admonish the simple folk. The genuine sacraments, therefore, are Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and absolution (which is the sacrament of penitence), for these rites have the commandment of God and the promise of grace, which is the heart of the New Testament. (Tappert, p. 211)

There is no doubt that Melanchthon saw absolution as being a sacrament. Luther, however, defined the sacraments more narrowly in the Large Catechism. "We have now finished with the three chief parts of our common Christian teaching. It remains for us to speak of our two sacraments instituted by Christ." (Large Catechism, Baptism. 1, Tappert, p. 436) What could be the reason for this obvious difference?

The simple answer is that Luther and Melanchthon had different definitions of sacrament. Already in his Letter to the Christian Nobility Luther had narrowed the sacraments down to three, but he continued to hedge about whether absolution could be considered a sacrament until in the Large Catechism he seems to have determined that only Baptism and the Lord's Supper had true external means added to the word. Melanchthon, however, never put much

emphasis upon the external means. His emphasis fell upon the command and the word. For him the rite or ceremony could serve as the sign. (See AC XXV.3 and Ap XII.40)

Fagerberg shows that the Medieval church defined sacraments in terms of "matter" and "form." Matter meant the visible sign, such as, water in Baptism. But matter was understood figuratively and could also be some kind of action such as contrition. By form was meant the words spoken in connection with the sacramental act which were understood to be the words of consecration. (Fagerberg, *Ibid.*, p. 163) While Melancthon always stuck with the figurative interpretation of forma, Luther kept moving toward a literal interpretation until he considered only Baptism and the Lord's Supper as sacraments. Thus by our accepted Lutheran definition there are only two sacraments. On the other hand, this does not mean we are to de-emphasize absolution as we shall have opportunity to see later.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE WORD AND THE SACRAMENTS

Before we consider the sacraments individually and then absolution, we will take a moment to examine the relationship between the word and sacraments. Luther laid great stress upon the visible signs. When these signs came under attack by the enthusiasts he was forced to say even more clearly that God works through these outward signs. The reason for his confidence in these signs is that they were commanded. In the Large Catechism he writes: "Thus we have considered the three things that must be known about this sacrament, especially that it is God's ordinance and is to be held in all honor. This alone would be enough, even though Baptism is an entirely external thing." (L. C. Baptism, 38. Tappert, p. 13) So the sign was important because it had the command of God. No man told us to baptize, but God did.

The other essential aspect is the Word of God, i.e., the creative word attached to the sacrament which consecrated it and created in it the Gospel. Such words were Matthew 28:19 for Baptism and the words: "This is my body," "This is my blood," and "Do this..." Paul defines baptism as "the washing with water through the word." (Eph. 5:26) In the Smalcald Articles, Luther says: "Baptism is nothing else than the Word of God in water, commanded by the institution of Christ; or as Paul says, "the washing of water with the word," or, again, as Augustine puts it, "The Word is added to the element and it becomes a sacrament." (Tappert, p. 310, S.A. III.V) He goes on to reject the teaching of Thomas Aquinas and the Dominicans on the one hand who "say that God has joined to the water a spiritual power," and on the other hand, Scotus and the Franciscans who taught that the washing away of sin takes place by God's will but not through the Word and the water. (Ibid.) In the Large Catechism, Luther repeats this contention: "This faith clings to the water and believes it to be Baptism in which there is sheer salvation and life, not through the water, as we have sufficiently stated, but through its incorporation with God's Word and ordinance and the joining of his name to it." (L.C., Baptism, 29; Tappert, p. 440) In the Small Catechism, he had said the same: "Baptism is not merely water, but it is water used according to God's command and connected with God's word (Matthew 28:19)." (Tappert, p. 348)

In regard to the sacrament of the altar, Luther says in the Large Catechism: "It is the Word, I maintain which distinguishes it from mere bread and wine and constitutes it a sacrament which is rightly called Christ's body and blood. There again he quotes Augustine's maxim: "When the Word is joined to the external element, it becomes a sacrament. Later he reiterates:

With this Word you can strengthen your conscience and declare: "Let a hundred thousand devils, with all the fanatics, rush forward and say, 'How can bread and wine be Christ's body and blood?' Still, I know that all the spirits and scholars put together have less wisdom than the divine Majesty has in his little finger. Here we have Christ's word, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' 'Drink of it, all of you, this is the new covenant in my blood,' etc. Here we shall take our stand and see who dares to instruct Christ and alter what he has spoken. It is true, indeed, that if you take the Word away from the elements or view them apart from the Word, you have nothing but ordinary bread and wine. But if the words remain, as is right and necessary, then in virtue of them they are truly the body and blood of Christ. For as we have it from the lips of Christ, so it is; he cannot lie or deceive." (L.C. Lord's Supper, 10, 12, 13 Tappert, p. 448)

Since the word was seen as giving power to the sacrament, it is easy to see why Melanchthon would say in the Apology (Art. XIII.5):

As the Word enters through the ears to strike the heart, so the rite itself enters through the eyes to move the heart. The Word and the rite have the same effect, as Augustine said so well when he called the sacrament 'the visible Word,' for the rite is received by the eyes and is a sort of picture of the Word, signifying the same thing as the Word. Therefore, both have the same effect. (Tappert, p. 212)

Later, in connection with the Mass (Article XXIV. 69-70), he says: "There are two parts to a sacrament, the sign and the Word....Therefore, the Word offers forgiveness of sins, while the ceremony is a sort of picture or 'seal,' as Paul called it (Rom. 4:11), showing forth the promise." (Ibid., 262)

THE SACRAMENTS

Having answered the questions: What are the sacraments? and What is their relation to the word? we will now give consideration to the sacraments and then absolution. It is basically quite simple to demonstrate the connection between the Spirit and Baptism. In the Small Catechism, Luther focuses first upon the command to baptize. (Mt. 28:19) In the Large Catechism (Tappert, 437.6), Luther emphasizes the importance of this command.

Observe, first, that these words contain God's commandment and ordinance. You should not doubt, then, that Baptism is of divine origin, not something devised or invented by men. As truly as I can say that the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer are not spun out of any man's imagination but revealed and given by God himself, so I can also boast that Baptism is no human plaything but is instituted by God himself. Moreover, it is solemnly and strictly commanded that we must be baptized or we shall not be saved. We are not to regard it as an indifferent matter, then, like putting on a new red coat. (See also 7-9)

The second passage used by Luther in the Catechism is the simple promise from Mark (16:16): "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." The third passage is taken from Titus 3:5-8: "He saved us, not because of righteous things we have

done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying." (Titus 3:3-8) In this passage St. Paul uses the instrumental preposition "DIA," "through" to show that we are saved through "the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit." To the Ephesians Paul writes that Christ cleansed the Church "by the washing with water through the word" (Eph. 5:26). If someone would argue that this washing is not Baptism, it would be necessary for him to show us some other New Testament washing. It is impossible to escape the conclusion that since there is no other New Testament washing, Jesus is also speaking of baptism when he tells Nicodemus: "I tell you the truth, unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John 3:5)

Furthermore, St. Paul teaches in Galatians 3:26-27 that "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were united with Christ in baptism have been clothed with Christ." The Baptists who make of baptism a human work must also say, then, that salvation is purely a human work, for here it says that sonship comes through faith in Christ and that the union with Christ is effected by Baptism.

We have the witness of Peter who told the Pentecost crowd which came seeking reconciliation with God: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven. And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call." (Acts 2:38-39) And if anyone still doubts, Peter comes right out with it in his first Epistle (3:21): "...this water

symbolizes baptism that now saves you also..."

We do well to heed the pertinent remarks of Luther quoted above where he reminds us that Baptism is God's idea and command for His Church and that he has attached to it wonderful promises which we should treasure. He further says:

In Baptism, therefore, every Christian has enough to study and to practice all his life. He always has enough to do to believe firmly what Baptism promises and brings--victory over death and the devil, forgiveness of sin, God's grace, the entire Christ, and the Holy Spirit with his gifts. In short, the blessings of Baptism are so boundless that if timid nature considers them, it may well doubt whether they could all be true. Suppose there were a physician who had such skill that people would not die, or even though they died would afterward live forever. Just think how the world would snow and rain money upon him! Because of the pressing crowd of rich men, no one else could get near him. Now, here in Baptism there is brought free to every man's door just such a priceless medicine which swallows up death and saves the lives of all men. (L.C. 41-43, Tappert, p. 441-442) (See also next paragraph)

Concerning the significance of baptism for daily life, we shall have more to say later when discussing penitence.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Briefly, we now turn our attention to the Lord's Supper to ascertain whether it can rightly be called a sacrament. As said earlier, when

considering the Lord's Supper, Luther began with the words of Christ emphasizing particularly the words: "This is my body" and "This is my blood." Singled out also were the words "for you." The benefits of the Lord's Supper are placed there by Christ's command through these words. "As in the case of Baptism, we shall first learn what is of greatest importance; namely, God's Word and ordinance or command, which is the chief thing to be considered. For the Lord's Supper was not invented or devised by any man. It was instituted by Christ without man's counsel or deliberation." So says Luther in the Large Catechism. (L.C. Lord's Supper, 1,2,4 Tappert, p. 447) In the Smalcald Articles he contends that both elements are to be dispensed because both were established and commanded by Christ who said both "Take, eat," and "Drink from it, all of you." (S.A. III.VI, Tappert, p. 311)

In the S.A., Luther avoids any consideration of the merits of transubstantiation, saying, "As for transubstantiation, we have no regard for the subtle sophistry of those who teach that bread and wine surrender or lose their natural substance and retain only the appearance and shape of bread without any longer being real bread, for that bread is and remains there agrees better with the Scriptures as St. Paul himself states, 'This bread which we break' (I Cor. 11:28)." (Ibid.) The Formula of Concord goes to greater lengths to refute transubstantiation and establish the personal union (e.g., S.D. VII, 35ff., Tappert 575f)

In his view of the Lord's Supper, Luther was faced with these two questions: How is Christ present in the sacrament? and When does his presence commence?

Luther's belief in the Real Presence was based upon exegesis of the Words of Institution as recorded by the three Evangelists and Paul.

(Mt. 25:26ff; Mk. 14:22ff; Lk. 22:19ff; and I Cor. 10 and 11) The incites he derives from his exegetical study of the texts are so compelling that the serious reader is left with the same choices as Luther himself: accept the words in their plain sense or overthrow the whole Scripture. (American Ed. Vol. 37. See also Sasse, 365) When challenged to prove the Real Presence, Luther answered with his view on the union of natures in the person of Christ. He summarized his approach in four points: "(1) Jesus Christ is in essence and nature true God and true man in one person; (2) the right hand of God is everywhere; (3) God's Word does not deceive us; (4) objects can be present at a given place in other ways than the 'local' mode which Zwingli recognizes." (Am. Ed. Vol. 37, p. 156) (See also Ibid., p. 214 and FC 586.93ff) In expounding the doctrine of the ubiquity of Christ in the universe, Luther was careful not to demonstrate more than the possibility of Christ's presence from this since he recognized the pantheistic connotations. He always insisted that Christ's presence in the sacrament was a special presence of the whole Christ.

As to when the Lord's presence commenced, there can be little doubt that Luther believed the Words of Institution created the presence when they were spoken. Thus he could speak of Christ's blood in the cup. "The cup is the New Testament because Christ's blood is in it," he writes in his Great Confession. (Emphasis added) (Am. Ed. Ibid., p. 321) This is the natural result of his high regard for the oral word of God. Fagerberg comments: "One can make good sense out of Luther's short statements in the L.C. only if the words of institution are interpreted as words of consecration. As we have already noted, the Word must make the elements into a sacrament, so that they are no longer ordinary bread and wine." (Ibid., p. 190) Fagerberg also says: "The fact that Christ is present in the bread and wine depends according to the L.C., upon His own command, for

He said in the words of institution that the bread 'is My body' and the wine 'is My blood.' Here as in its section on Baptism, L.C. quotes Augustine: 'Accedat verbum ad elementum et fit sacramentum,' that is, 'When the Word is joined to the external element, it becomes a sacrament.' Luther's thinking here was centered upon God's active Word of consecration, whereby bread and wine become something other than ordinary bread and wine." (Ibid., p. 186)

Again, Fagerberg dwells upon this issue:

The same idea is expressed as clearly in Von Abendmahl Christi. The words of institution, which contain the statement "This is my body," are divine words of command or consecration (heisselwort), which accomplish what they say. When the Lord's Supper is celebrated and the words of institution are read, Christ is present in the bread and wine in the power of these words. These words used in the first Lord's Supper were powerful words, Machtworte--they accomplish what they expressed. When Jesus said, "This is my body," it happened according to His saying, just as certainly as creation took place as a result of God's Word as reported in the first chapter of Genesis. On the basis of Christ's command, His body is present in the Lord's Supper, for everything that He says is His will does in fact take place. (Ibid., p. 188)

Köstlin, too, says:

Luther's response to the question, what is it that "brings into the bread" the body of Christ, corresponds perfectly with what has been observed in respect to the sacraments in general. The Word of God, uttered at the consecration of

the elements, has this power. It has such power, however, only by virtue of the command and appointment of Christ: "Do this," etc. This binds the other two things, i.e., the Word and the elements, together. (Köstlin, Ibid., p. 516)

Luther became so concerned about the elements themselves because on the one hand enthusiasts scorned the elements and on the other hand, the Romanists claimed that the presence of Christ was effected by the authority and power of the priest. Melanchthon, however, never got so interested in the elements. Even in his definitions of the sacraments he never referred to the elements, but only to the rites and ceremonies. His view of the Real Presence differed from Luther's in that he never really defined how or when Christ was in the sacrament or how he was connected to the elements. He contented himself to say that Christ was received together with the bread and wine during the sacramental act. He felt this was the view of the church fathers. Melanchthon's lack of interest in the elements shows itself even in the Augsburg Confession: "Our churches teach that the body and blood of Christ are truly present and are distributed to those who eat in the Supper of the Lord." (Art. X, Tappert, p. 34) But, to repeat, Luther's view was determined on the basis of exegesis. He observed that the word "This" refers to the bread. Jesus is saying: "This bread is my body." Therefore the elements cannot be separated from Christ even a little bit.

That for Luther the Real Presence meant that Christ was really "in, with, and under" the elements from the moment of consecration, is evident also from his discussion of adoration. He did not regard it as wrong to elevate or adore the cup so far as it was done in connection with the Supper itself. Köstlin says: "This Luther approved in view of the presence of the body of Christ and, at the same time, of the divine Word of promise,

adding the remark that we should at all times hear the Word, if not on bended knees, yet with humble hearts." (Köstlin, Ibid., p. 516)

Lutheran theologians preserved Luther's teaching that the Words of Institution effect the Real Presence in the Formula of Concord, S.D. VII. 75-82 (Tappert, p. 581, 582):

For the truthful and almighty words of Jesus Christ which he spoke in the first institution were not only efficacious in the first Supper but they still retain their validity and efficacious power in all places where the Supper is observed according to Christ's institution and where his words are used, and the body and blood of Christ are truly present, distributed, and received by the virtue and potency of the same words which Christ spoke in the first Supper. For wherever we observe his institution and speak his words over the bread and cup and distribute the blessed bread and cup, Christ himself is still active through the spoken words by the virtue of the first institution, which he wants to be repeated.....In the administration of Communion, the words of institution are to be spoken or sung distinctly and clearly before the congregation and are under no circumstances to be omitted.

It is to be carefully noted in this regard that both Luther and the Formula of Concord clearly state that the sacramental union of Christ with the bread and wine endures only during the act of distribution and the reception by the communicant. Köstlin says that Luther taught:

The sacrament was given us, not to be preserved and carried about, but to be eaten and drunk. More precisely, he would extend the time of the sacrament, or the sacramental act, until all have communed, the cup has been drained and the bread eaten, and the altar is deserted. He warns against distracting questions which may here arise. He declares, accordingly, that we should not be at all concerned to know whether the body of Christ is still present in the wafer as enclosed in the sacristy and carried about. (Köstlin, Ibid.)

This question is taken up in the Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article VII.86: "In this context 'use' or 'action' does not primarily mean faith, or the oral eating alone, but the entire external and visible action of the Supper as ordained by Christ: the consecration of words of institution, the distribution and reception, or the oral eating of the blessed bread and wine, the body and blood of Christ. Apart from this use it is not to be deemed a sacrament." (Tappert, p. 584-585) In this connection the practices in the Roman church of parading with bread and wine and baptismal water are condemned. In the Epitome, Art. VII. 40, among the list of things condemned we read this: "That the external visible elements of bread and wine in the holy sacrament should be adored..." (Tappert, p. 486)

SACRAMENTS ARE GOD'S ACT

In consideration of the sacraments one of the points stressed most persistently by Luther and the confessions is that they are God's work. Regarding the word, Kostlin says it was Luther's view that "Where the word is employed, there God Himself is present in the mouth of the speaker, to obliterate sin, death, and hell." (Köstlin, Ibid., p. 491)

The same was applied to the sacraments. Luther says in the Large Catechism: "To be baptized in God's name is to be baptized not by men but by God himself. Although it is performed by men's hands, it is nevertheless truly God's own act." (L.C. Baptism, 10; Tappert, p. 437)

Once again the reason it can unequivocally be called God's act is that God has commanded it and through his word gives it power and validity. Melancthon had taught the same in the Apology, Art. XXIV.17-18 defining the sacraments as God's act and distinguishing between sacraments and sacrifice. For proof he resorts again to God's promise:

The theologians make a proper distinction between sacrament and sacrifice. The genus common to both could be "ceremony" or "sacred act." A sacrament is a ceremony or act in which God offers us the content of the promise joined to the ceremony: thus Baptism is not an act which we offer to God but one in which God baptizes us through a minister functioning in his place. Here God offers and presents the forgiveness of sins according to the promise (Mark 16:16), "He who believes and is baptized will be saved." By way of contrast, a sacrifice is a ceremony or act which we render to God to honor him. (Tappert, p. 252)

This is a very important point not only because it is Scriptural, but because it is used to prove that the validity of the sacrament does not depend upon the character of the administrant. Nor does it depend upon the faith of the recipient. Even the ungodly receive the body and blood of Christ in the Supper, only they receive it to their condemnation.

SACRAMENTS MUST BE RECEIVED BY FAITH

On the other hand, it is always maintained that the Sacraments must be received by faith. In the Augsburg Confession Melanchthon states: "The sacraments should be so used that faith, which believes the promises that are set forth and offered, is added." (AC XIII.2; Tappert, p. 35) There is a slight difference here in the Latin and German translations, but both emphasize the need for faith.

In the Apology, Art. XIII.18ff, Melanchthon condemns the Roman doctrine of ex opere operato calling it "sheer Judaism to believe that we are justified by a ceremony without a good disposition in our heart, that is, without faith." Later he says: "Thus we teach that in using the sacraments there must be a faith which believes these promises and accepts that which is promised and offered in the sacrament. The reason for this is clear and well founded. A promise is useless unless faith accepts it." (Tappert, p. 213)

Luther's view is clear in the Large Catechism where he says: "My faith does not constitute Baptism but receive it." (L.C. Baptism, 53; Tappert, p. 443)

THE "SACRAMENT" OF PENITENCE-- CONFESSION and ABSOLUTION

We cannot rightly consider the sacraments without taking into consideration what Melanchthon calls "the very voice of the Gospel" (Apology XI. 2; Tappert, p. 180) and "the principal doctrine of the Christian faith." (Apology XXIV.46; Tappert, p. 258) In Apology XII.41 he writes: "Absolution may be properly called a sacrament of penitence." (Tappert, p. 187)

According to Melanchthon's view which considered a rite or ceremony sufficient to constitute the outward sign, Absolution was a sacrament for it had the command and promise of God. Luther, who progressively grew more impressed by the outward signs as a result of his dealings with the fanatics, came to limit the term sacrament to Baptism and the Lord's Supper, but he still maintained that Absolution was to be held in highest regard as a specific ordinance of the church. He eventually came to see confession and absolution as a consequence of baptism or "baptism in function."

The Reformation doctrine of penitence developed in opposition to the old sacrament of penance. Fagerberg traces the history of penance noting that it was only finalized at the Council of Florence in 1439. It consisted of three parts--contrition, confession, and satisfaction. Little emphasis was put upon the goal--absolution--so it remained mainly a work of man. The Lutheran doctrine of penitence consisted of two parts--contrition and absolution. The reformers were careful to note that penitence had two dimensions also, theological and psychological. It was theological because the sorrow and terror of conscience are both God's work through his holy law. "God is the active cause of contrition, not its object" as had been the case in the Roman sacrament. (Fagerberg, p. 209) However, God's work takes place within us and therefore can be evaluated both theologically (God's work through the law) and psychologically (inner grief and pangs of conscience). Emphasis was always placed upon God's part because of the medieval idea that in penance man prepared himself for the reception of God's forgiveness through these actions. Luther and the reformers insist that God through his Law prepares the heart for reception of grace. "The judgment of God which overtakes the old man in this life, resulting in the death of fleshly deeds, was identified by Luther with man's repentance." (Ibid., p. 211)

To the Reformers the second part of penitence, the Absolution, was even more clearly God's total work. Melanchthon says in the Augsburg Confession: "Our people are taught to esteem absolution highly because it is the voice of God and is pronounced by God's command." (emphasis added) (Art. XXV.3; Tappert, p. 61-62) And in the Apology, Art. XII.39-40 he says:

The power of the keys administers and offers the Gospel through absolution, which is the true voice of the Gospel. In speaking of faith, therefore, we also include absolution since "faith comes from what is heard," as Paul says (Rom. 10:17). Hearing the Gospel and hearing the absolution strengthens and consoles the conscience. Because God truly quickens through the Word, the keys truly forgive sin before him, according to the statement (Luke 10:16), "He who hears you, hears me." Therefore we must believe the voice of the one absolving no less than we would believe a voice coming from heaven. (Tappert, p. 187)

The teaching of Luther and the Confessions about absolution may be summarized as follows: (see K stlin, Ibid., p. 221-237)

(1) Absolution is the very essence of the Gospel. The Gospel is God's absolution of our sins.

(2) While the Office of the Keys is exercised through preaching and teaching and through a general pronouncement as well as in the sacraments, the most basic exercise of the Keys is in the absolution. In other words, to Luther the Office of the Keys was absolution. Thus in the Smalcald Articles, "the power of the keys" means absolution. (III.IV; Tappert, p. 310) See K stlin, p. 525-26 SA III. VIII.1.

(3) The Keys are given to man. It does not say, "Whatsoever I loose on earth..." but "Whatsoever YOU shall loose..." Men have this power because they speak God's word when they speak the Gospel.

(4) The absolution is not a human institution but "God's command." "Our people are taught to esteem absolution highly because it is the voice of God and is pronounced by God's command." (AC., XXV.3; Tappert, p. 61-62)

(5) The absolution is more than informative; it is an effective declaration, even if it were pronounced by the devil himself.

(6) While the declaration is never ineffectual, it must be received by faith.

(7) The absolution can be pronounced just as effectively by a Christian friend. Luther made much of the mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren calling it a real absolution, giving it the title "Amt" and placing it alongside the power of the Keys (absolution). (Smalcald Articles, III.IV, Tappert, p. 310)

(8) Nevertheless, Luther did not wish to undermine the office of pastor, the chief and publicly appointed confessor, who alone should hear confessions publicly and in the church.

It was, therefore, not without a substantial reason that Luther, while allowing liberty for the exercise of the power of the keys, by laymen in private, yet did not desire to see the public ordinance of the confessional neglected, but, on the contrary, always represented the latter as the primary, orderly and regular method. Here, he held, we have particular persons, of whom we know that they have been

especially, and for each one among us, entrusted by God with the ministry of the keys; and that they have, furthermore, as office-bearers in the Church of Christ, a "particular commandment" for the rendering of such service. (Köstlin, Ibid., p. 530)

(9) For Luther absolution meant private or individual absolution. "Thus Luther applies the passage, John XX.23, and attributes the power of the keys also to the office of the ministry at large, although usually referring them specifically to private absolution....The Gospel is a general absolution." (Köstlin, Ibid., p. 225-26) Confessional booths were retained for the sake of private absolution, though no enumeration of sins was to be required. For that matter, private confession was optional, but it was urged because of its salutary effects. However, it is called a "valuable exercise, which none but unworthy Christians and coarse swine despise." (Ibid., p. 531) "It is chiefly for the sake of the absolution that Luther so earnestly commends the retention of PRIVATE CONFESSION as an ordinance of the Christian Church." (Ibid., p. 530) Fagerberg says that "The Symbols retained confession for the sake of private absolution." (Fagerberg, Ibid., p. 221) The confessions frequently refer to it as Absolutio privata (AC, XI.I; Ap. XII.100f, and SA III.VIII.2)

(10) The confessional, private confession and private absolution were retained for three reasons:

a. God's command. "Our people are taught to esteem absolution highly because it is the voice of God and is pronounced by God's command." (AC. XXV.3, Tappert, p. 61-62) In the Smalcald Articles, III.VIII.1, Luther equates absolution and the power of the keys and calls it an institution of Christ. "Since absolution or the power of the keys, which

was instituted by Christ in the Gospel..." (Tappert, p. 312) The command by which Christ instituted private absolution is "I give you the keys..." (Mt. 16:19) (See also Mt. 18:18 and John 20:23)

b. Their great consolation. In the Smalcald Articles Luther argues for "absolution or the power of the keys" because it is "a consolation and help against sin and a bad conscience...especially for the sake of the timid consciences..." (III.VIII, Tappert, p. 312) K stlin summarizes Luther's sentiments as follows:

But, in addition to the public preaching of the Word and the absolution which it already involves, private absolution retains for Luther an exalted and peculiar value, from the fact that in it forgiveness is imparted to me as one particular person--"privately, specially, individually." Thus I can here be right certain of it, as intended for me, and can grasp it for myself, whereas in the congregation it floats out over the whole assembly, and may, indeed, reach me with the rest, but I am still not so sure of it as when addressed to me alone. (K stlin, Ibid., p. 529)

c. Educational Value. The third reason why private confession and absolution was retained was that Luther found it such a good opportunity to quiz and teach the unlearned. Fagerberg shows that there were reservations about retaining confession because it is not to be found in the New Testament; because of the dread Roman practice of making the confessor a mediator between Christ and the sinner; and because of the fear of the misunderstanding, also common in Roman practice, that forgiveness is dependent upon "the candidness and completeness of the confession. In such cases the confession itself and not Christ would be the cause of

justification." (Fagerberg, Ibid., p. 222) This third point was stressed with special care for fear that the emphasis would shift from God's work (the absolution) to man's (the contrition and confession) and thus lead to work righteousness.

Fagerberg also says that "In spite of Luther, who unquestionably placed a high value on confession, (that is for the purpose of "private," "personal" or "individual" absolution) the practice soon disappeared." (Ibid., p. 224) Its disappearance was caused in large part by its tie with examination. Luther was always alarmed by the lack of Christian knowledge of the common people and used confession especially to examine the youth to ascertain their familiarity with the Lord's Prayer, Creed, etc. As a result more and more emphasis was placed on this instructive and judgmental role and less and less upon the absolution. "This could only contribute to the disappearance of private confession. What remained of penitence was its two other facets, the act of repentance itself and the general absolution." (Ibid., p. 225)

Nevertheless, we should not dismiss the topic of Absolution without giving thoughtful consideration to Luther's statement in the Smalcald Articles:

Since absolution or the power of the keys, which was instituted by Christ in the Gospel, is a consolation and help against sin and a bad conscience, confession and absolution should by no means be allowed to fall into disuse in the church, especially for the sake of timid consciences and for the sake of untrained young people who need to be examined and instructed in Christian doctrine.

However, the enumeration of sins should be left free to everybody to do or not as he will. As long as we are in the

flesh we shall not be untruthful if we say, "I am a poor man, full of sin. I see in my members another law," etc. (Rom. 7:23). Although private absolution is derived from the office of the keys, it should not be neglected; on the contrary, it should be highly esteemed and valued, like all other functions of the Christian church. (emphasis added) (S.A. III.VIII.1-2; Tappert, p. 312)

If when he instituted the Office of the Keys Christ intended especially private, personal or individual absolution, as the reformers certainly believed he did, then we are guilty of disregarding one of God's institutions. Perhaps some of the guilt which tortures people could be removed by this institution of Christ.

PENITENCE--A RETURN TO BAPTISM

We have shown earlier that Luther came to reserve the term "sacrament" for Baptism and the Lord's Supper alone. Absolution was excluded because it had no external sign. But beyond that, Luther eventually came to see confession as but a part of Baptism. In the Catechism Luther taught that Baptism is continued throughout life through penitence. Explaining the significance of Baptism in the Small Catechism he used the symbolism of the water to say that by "daily contrition and repentance" the old Adam should be drowned. Daily contrition and repentance are the practice of our Baptism in which we first drowned the Old Adam. "Thus the Christian life is nothing else than a daily Baptism, once begun and ever continued." (L.C. Baptism, 65; Tappert, p. 445) Later he says:

Here you see that Baptism, both by its power and by its signification, comprehends

also the third sacrament, formerly called Penance, which is really nothing else than Baptism. What is repentance but an earnest attack on the old man and an entering upon a new life? If you live in repentance, therefore, you are walking in Baptism, which not only announces this new life but also produces, begins and promotes it. In Baptism we are given the grace, Spirit, and power to suppress the old man so that the new may come forth and grow strong.

Therefore, Baptism remains forever. Even though we fall from it and sin, nevertheless we always have access to it so that we may again subdue the old man. But we need not again have the water poured over us. Even if we were immersed in water a hundred times, it would nevertheless be only one Baptism, and the effect and signification of Baptism would continue and remain. Repentance, therefore, is nothing else than a return and approach to Baptism, to resume and practice what had earlier been begun but abandoned." (L.C. Baptism. 74-79; Tappert, p. 445-446)

THE UNITY OF THE MEANS OF GRACE

Not only are the means of grace united in the Word, the Word being the chief ingredient in all; they are also one in function. All have the function of drowning and crucifying the Old Adam so that the New Man may come forth and live before God in that new life which he entered through Baptism. Thus, talk about a different function for Baptism and the Word as compared with Absolution and Lord's Supper is only partly legitimate. All the means of grace, if received in faith, are the undoing of the Old Man and the establishing of the New Man. And

since God in his marvelous grace has given to us these means by which the evil one is destroyed in us and the Spirit is given, we ought to flock to the means of grace with such frequency and persistence that if it were possible, we would keep God himself busied dispensing his blessing.

TO REJECT THE MEANS OF GRACE
IS TO REJECT JUSTIFICATION

Dr. Pieper in his *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. III, beginning on page 116, catalogs the false teachings on the means of grace showing that in every case to reject these means results in a theory of salvation by "infused grace" and in the toppling of Justification by grace. Rome, Calvin, the synergist, the enthusiast, neo-orthodoxy, neo-pietism, and all kinds of experience theology come out at the same place. Man becomes both able and duty bound to either prepare himself for the Spirit or actually save himself by means of so-called "infused grace."

Thus it cannot be stressed too much that we must all heed the redundant admonition of our Savior, "Whoever has ears to hear, let him listen." Our ideal must ever be thoughtful Mary who in simplicity sat at Jesus' feet. Furthermore, we must realize as the Brief Statement (p.) reminds us that:

Since it is only through the external means ordained by Him that God has promised to communicate the grace and salvation purchased by Christ, the Christian Church must not remain at home with the means of grace entrusted to it, but go into the whole world with the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments, Mt. 28:19,20....For the same reason also

the churches at home should never forget that there is no other way of winning souls for the Church and keeping them with it than the faithful and diligent use of the divinely ordained means of grace. Whatever activities do not either directly apply the Word of God or subserve such application we condemn as "new methods," unchurchly activities, which do not build, but harm, the Church.

To God Alone the Glory

-- R. M. Dale

HOW TO TREAT THE PASTOR

....let us bear in mind that he is still a man -- enlightened by the Spirit, it is true, but having also the evil flesh within him, privileged by God to carry out the most important assignment on earth, but having no sufficiency of his own to perform the task....

In Christian love his hearers will bear with him in his weaknesses, pray for him in his holy office, and, above all, humbly and penitently, willingly and cheerfully, lovingly and believingly hear the Word of God which he has drawn from the Bible and is offering them for the nourishment of their souls....

The Lutheran Pastor, Mark J. Steege,
ABIDING WORD I.

THE GREAT ECUMENICAL CREED

Dr. H. Sasse

THE GREAT ECUMENICAL CREED

On June 19, 1975, a remarkable service was held in the *Marktkirche*, the oldest and largest of the churches of Hanover. Clergymen of various churches, Eastern Orthodox (Greeks, Russians, Ukrainians, Serbians), Roman Catholics and Old Catholics, Lutherans and Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, and representatives of minor Protestant groups entered the crowded church in solemn procession. The Roman Catholic Bishop of Regensburg, Dr. Rudolf Graber, well known as one of the most conservative leaders of the Catholic Church in Germany, preached the occasional sermon from the pulpit from which otherwise the message of the Lutheran Reformation is proclaimed.

COMMEMORATING THE NICENE CREED

It was a memorial service to commemorate the 1,650th anniversary of the day when the First Ecumenical Synod accepted the Nicene Creed, the most important creed of Christendom which is common to all Christian churches with the exception of some modern communities which have abolished all creeds. Our Apostles' Creed, the old baptismal creed of the Western Church, as also the Athanasian Creed, are not known to the churches of the East. As we confess the Nicene Creed at every celebration of the Sacrament of the Altar, so it has been chanted in every Mass of the churches of the Catholic traditions throughout the world for many centuries.

* *THE LUTHERAN*, Australia, November 3, 1975

THE ANCIENT SYNODS OF THE CHURCH

A synod -- we should keep this in mind -- is not a parliament, but a solemn assembly of the Church dominated by the worship which is an essential part of such an assembly. In the ancient Church it was an assembly of bishops who represented their local churches whose chief pastors they were. Ministers of lower rank, as for example deacons, and laymen could be invited as guests, but without voting rights. Such "pastors' conferences," as we would call the ancient synods, were from the time of the second century regularly held on a provincial level to discuss and decide ecclesiastical and theological matters, often very important ones as, for example, the question as to which writings had to be regarded as the canonical books of the New Testament.

AN ECUMENICAL SYNOD

The synod of 325, however, was to be an ecumenical synod. The word *oikoumene* (Luke 2.1) denoted at that time the world as far as it belonged to the vast Roman Empire. To organize and to finance such an assembly was beyond the capacity of the Church, especially in an era of persecution. Who else could summon and arrange such a meeting? This was done by Constantine, one of the greatest rulers of all time. After years of civil war he had become the sole ruler of the empire and was faced with the task of reorganizing it. Constantine was not a Christian, but a friend of the Church. He had been enrolled as a catechumen, but was baptized only on his deathbed in 337. Otherwise a ruthless ruler, he had made the great decision to terminate the persecutions of the Christians which had been going on for centuries on a more or less local and temporal scale and had found its climax after the year 300 in the thoroughly organized attempt to eradicate the Church once and for all.

TURNING-POINT IN HISTORY

It was a turning-point of world history when Constantine decided to recognize Christianity and to use its religious and moral strength in building the new state. At the time of his conquest of the western provinces he had begun to favour the Church. To his great disappointment he discovered that the Church was divided. Two churches were competing in the African provinces, divided over issues of church discipline which had arisen in the persecution. His attempt to heal the split failed. In the following generations neither the wisdom and power of the rulers nor the endeavours of great theologians such as Augustine were able to restore the lost unity. It was a divided Church which later was extinguished in the onslaught of Islam. Constantine had a similar experience in the East after his final victory. There, also, Christendom was divided. Even in the city of Byzantium which was to be rebuilt as the "New Rome" and was then called Constantinople there were two churches, divided on matters of church discipline. This split was never healed.

DOCTRINE AT THE SEAT OF CONTROVERSY

But a far more serious problem turned up soon, a schism in which the most important doctrine, the very heart of the Church, was at stake. It began with a controversy at Alexandria, the second largest city of the empire. Alexander, its bishop, or "pope" as he was called, and as his successor is still called today, had, with the approval of the synod of Alexandria, excommunicated Arius, one of his presbyters, the parish priest of one of the big city churches. He was a popular preacher, a gifted poet and a learned man, though not a great theologian. In Antioch, at one of the few great theological schools, he had been trained in what was regarded as the most modern theology. Its aim was to make Christianity acceptable to the pagan academics of that time. One must keep in mind that

the Christian faith was no longer the faith of the lower classes. In the third century it had penetrated into highly educated circles and had won some outstanding academics who now tried to convert the adherents of the philosophy of that age.

A STRANGE CHRISTOLOGY

Applying this philosophy to the Christian faith, Arius and some of his fellow students, even among the bishops of the East, had developed a strange Christology. They taught that Christ, the Word of John 1.1, was "divine," and should be called Son of God, but only in a figurative sense. He was the first and highest creature through whom God had created the world. This spiritual creature had assumed in Jesus a human body, but not a human soul. Alexander realized that this was the end of the Christian faith. Christianity would lapse into paganism if such doctrine was tolerated, for no creature can be our Saviour. Christ would become a mythological being, neither God nor man, and the entire liturgy of the Church in which He is worshipped would be one great lie. Expelled from Alexandria, Arius went to the East, seeking and finding allies among the bishops who had been trained at Antioch. His doctrine was even approved by a synod at Antioch. So the controversy began to develop into a real schism which threatened to divide the Church even more seriously than the controversies on matters of church discipline. This was clearly seen not only by Alexander. Even the emperor began to realize that the existence of the Christian Church and with it the well-being of the empire was at stake.

CONSTANTINE CALLS A GREAT SYNOD

Constantine decided to do all in his power to settle the dispute at a "Great Synod." He summoned the bishops of all provinces of the empire and even from some mission fields beyond the borders to a synod to be held at Nicea, a city in northern Asia Minor, south of his residence at Nicomedia.

He owned a palace there which could accommodate a large assembly. More than 300 attended! He treated them as his beloved and honoured guests. Many still bore the marks of persecution. He himself played a role of a humble catechumen and interfered only occasionally by giving advice. Minor matters of practical importance such as the date of the Easter festival and questions of church constitution were settled without difficulty.

THE GREAT DOCTRINAL ISSUE

The main concern was the great doctrinal issue. It soon became evident that what was required was a unanimously accepted creedal statement on the person of Christ. Such a statement was accepted with only a few opposing votes on June 19, 325. It is the first form of the Nicene Creed. Arius had many sympathizers among the bishops, but it soon became clear that what the vast majority wanted and the Church needed was an unambiguous confession of the divinity of the Saviour. The Church, of course, had creeds especially for use at Baptism. They differed locally, though the great truths of the faith were confessed in each of them. Traces of such early creeds are still extant in our liturgy, for example, in the Great Gloria which we sing in the Sunday service or in the Te Deum which originally was used at the Eucharist, while our Apostles' Creed, the baptismal creed of the Western Church, was unknown in the East. One such creed was reaffirmed and augmented mainly by the addition of a word which Constantine himself favoured and which then became the watchword of Christian orthodoxy, the famous *homoousion*.

WATCHWORD OF CHRISTIAN ORTHODOXY

"We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things.... And in one Lord Jesus Christ (compare 1 Corinthians 8.4), the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only begotten, that is, of the substance (essence) of the Father, God of God, Light

of Light (Hebrews 1.3), very God of very God, begotten, not made, of one substance (*homoousion*) with the Father, through whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down and was made flesh, and became man.... And in the Holy Spirit."

It is clear what the new term, *homoousion*, means. It expresses the full divinity of Christ who is eternal God as is the Father. Alexander could be satisfied, especially since at the end of the creed the views held by Arius and his friends were solemnly anathematized.

CONTROVERSY CONTINUES

At first it seemed that the split in the Church had been avoided. The condemnation of Arius was expressly upheld and the few bishops who still supported him were compelled to give up their sees. However, it soon became evident that the decision could not be regarded as final. Many of the bishops had not been able to understand the subtle distinctions and the scholarly words used. They were simple country parsons who could preach to their flocks, administer the Sacraments in the small congregation or diocese, and celebrate the liturgy. Deeper theological studies lay outside their ministry, so they left it to their "more learned" brethren to make the decisions -- which is always a dangerous thing.

St. Paul had to fight the pride of people who rightly or wrongly regarded themselves as great theologians. "Knowledge puffs up," he said, and pointed out that God has revealed His mysteries not to the great scholars of the world, but to the "foolish." All really great theologians have known that. Luther said that one must first become a good fool in Christ before one can philosophize without danger. Thus the controversies went on after Nicea. The proud friends of Arius had accepted the *homoousion* because His Majesty wanted

that. But they were already well versed in the art of interpreting any word in their sense.

SUBSEQUENT GENERATIONS FACE THE ISSUE

A real theological problem arose among the bishops who did not deny any full divinity of Christ, but found a certain danger in the doctrine of Alexander and his theological adviser, the learned deacon Athanasius who had accompanied his bishop to Nicea and in 328 became his successor. Could not *homoousion* be understood in such a way that the distinction between the person of the Father and the person of the Son would vanish? This would contradict the passages of the Gospels in which Father and Son are clearly distinguished. How can Gethsemane and the cry on the cross be taken seriously if Father and Son are of one substance? This was to become the issue of the theology of the subsequent generations.

POLITICAL INTERESTS AND THE CHURCH

Meanwhile, the fact that it had been the wish of the emperor which had introduced the *homoousion*, began to create the troubles under which the Church had to suffer for several generations. The political interests of the empire demanded the unity of the Church. If this unity could not be reached by Nicea and its creed, other methods might be more successful. When Constantine realized that the adherents of Arius had been stronger than he had believed, he sought a reconciliation with them. He went so far that he even demanded and achieved reinstatement of Arius in his office. This was refused by Athanasius who was now the Patriarch of Alexandria. He now became the leader of orthodoxy, who would not yield to the wishes of Constantine and the rulers who followed him. All attempts to settle the matter by political means or by church/political compromises failed. It is no exaggeration to state that the unshakable firmness of this man saved the Church in the terrific fights of the

4th century. When he fell into disgrace at the imperial court he went into exile and was replaced by a loyal, patriotic creature of the emperors. He spent years in exile, either in the deserts around Egypt, in Rome or in Germany (Trier). He left his flock to the care of the great shepherd in heaven and trusted in Him who would lead the Church into all truth.

THE STRUGGLE OF THE CHURCH

It would be beyond the scope of this article to describe the details of the struggles in which the Church sometimes seemed to perish. It was only when Julian, who had lapsed into paganism and wanted the Church to perish by its own inner struggles, had become the ruler of the empire that the Church regained its freedom. A free synod, not influenced by political powers, at Alexandria in 362 was the turning-point. Again the greatness of Athanasius became evident. This staunch defender of the *homoousion*, this unshakable character was able to come to an agreement with those who in serious and thorough theological work had found another solution to the great problem of Nicea.

A NEW SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

A new school of thought had developed in Cappadocia in eastern Asia Minor, represented by great churchmen and theologians such as Basil the Great and Gregory of Nyssa. They had come to the conclusion that the Son is equal with the Father. When the question arose whether the *homoousion* of 325 could be also understood in this way, Athanasius was ready to give in. The debate was not, as one sometimes reads and as the pagan critics put it, about the addition of an "i" (*homoousion* or *homoiousion*) but about the recognition of a twofold understanding of the divinity of the Son. One can say with Athanasius of one substance with the Father or of equal substance with the Father (*Homoios* in these debates never means *similar*, but always *equal*).

In this sense the decision of Nicea was reaffirmed. The Arians, of course, remained excluded, but the full divinity of Christ was recognized. *Homoousion* could now be understood as expressing not the oneness, but the equality of Father and Son.

TWO FORMS OF THE CREED

At Alexandria the question had arisen whether the *homoousion* had to be extended also to the Holy Spirit. This was recognized. Thus the way was paved for another Great Synod at Constantinople in 381, which accepted the Nicene Creed in a new form. It is the text which we confess in all Christian liturgies, the first creed which gave expression to the Christian doctrine of the blessed Trinity. Scholars used to call this second form the "Constantinopolitanum." But the Church has always called it the Nicene Creed which thus exists in two forms, that of 325 and that of 381, both being regarded as of equal meaning and importance.

FIFTY YEARS AFTER STOCKHOLM

Why do Christians in Germanu, France, and other countries commemorate Nicea and its creed in 1975? A 1,650th anniversary is not usually the occasion for a jubilee. But it is exactly fifty years ago that one of the great ecumenical world conferences was held at Stockholm -- the Nicea of Ethics, as the then Archbishop Söderblom, of Upsala, called it. His idea was that the unity of Christendom can never be reached by discussion of dogma. "Doctrine dijides, service unites" was one of the slogans of that time. Let us abstain from doctrinal discussions and controversies and rather unite in common service. What we all can do is follow Christ in common service to mankind, in carrying out the great commandment of love which our Saviour has left to all His disciples. "Follow Me!" in unselfish care for the poor people, in fighting hatred and the spirit of war, in improving the moral climate of the world. Nothing must be said against this program of Life and Work.

NICEA OF ETHICS -- NICEA OF DOCTRINE

However, in the five decades which have elapsed, it has become clear that the Nicea of Ethics is not possible without the Nicea of Doctrine. Certainly, we all must follow Christ. But why just Him? Innumerable millions in Asia hear the voice of other great leaders and follow Buddha as their teacher of the holy eightfold path of salvation from the sufferings of this world. Follow me! was his admonition. Is there salvation? Yes, but you must do it yourself. You must follow me and keep my commandments. "Strive unremittingly," were the last words he addressed to his weeping disciples.

"MY LORD AND MY GOD!"

"Let not your heart be troubled," said Jesus when He took leave of His disciples. "Believe in God, believe also in Me..... I am the way, and the truth, and the life." He had not only admonished them to follow Him, but had also asked them: "Who do you say that I am?" He demanded the confession of faith: "Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven" (A.V.). The answer of His disciples, their confession and the confession of all His disciples was: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Even the doubting Thomas had to confess: "My Lord and My God!" This is the confession of Nicea.

THE CRISIS OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

That Christians of many denominations today repeat the old confession can readily be understood. Our age is an age of uncertainty and doubt. The doctrinal substance of the Christian faith is rapidly vanishing in all churches. This is the underlying reason for what is called "the crisis of the Ecumenical Movement." Every revival of the faith began with the rediscovery and reaffirmation

of the old creed. Not only our Agusburg Confession, but also the confession of the Reformed churches begin with the reaffirmation of the great decision of Nicea. As all the churches of the 16th century, even Rome, had to reject the "new Arians," so today we have to fight the most dangerous form of Arianism which has ever appeared in Christendom. No great heresy ever dies completely. It comes back again and again, dressed in the latest philosophical fashion of the time. So we also have to fight the great enemy of the Christian faith. Are we prepared for that?

"GOD IN THREE PERSONS, BLESSED TRINITY"

"In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Thus our Christian life began at our Baptism when for the first time we confessed the faith through the mouth of our parents and godparents.

"In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Thus every Sunday service begins as it calls us back to our Baptism.

"In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Thus will our funeral service begin as we leave this world to see, by the grace of God, the glory of Him who is *God in three Persons, blessed Trinity.*

Strong and effective preachers, though they differ widely in mold and manner, have this in common: they believe greatly in preaching.

Sermon power is linked with these five specifics: content, pertinence, rapport, conviction, and overtones.

-- Paul S. Rees

BOOK REVIEW

The Craft of Sermon Construction, William E. Sangster.
Grand Rapids, Michigan. Baker Book House,
1974. \$2.95.

Here is a very interesting and helpful book on sermon preparation and delivery. It is, of course, not Walther's "Law and Gospel" in doctrinal content but it does point out some good mechanics of getting the sermon across to modern man.

With the title's metaphor, "Craft," the necessary hard work that goes into the production of a successful sermon is emphasized but the way he tells it, it is exciting work. "Being a serious theologian, ...he exults in doctrinal preaching. He laughs at the idea that it must be dull, and he positively scorns the suggestion that it is unrelated to daily life," (p. 156.)

A high point in the book is his presentation of the sermon structure type, "Faceting," pp. 87-92: "Study a well-cut gem. Usually, there is a fine central facet, around which the smaller ones are gracefully arranged. Move up to that central, shining, lustrous face. Let the light gleam from that at the last. Hold that finest, most moving truth before them as you close," (p. 91). His four other structural divisions are: Exposition, Argument, Categorizing, and Analogy.

Whether the reader be an experienced preacher who wants to sharpen his homiletical skills or a newcomer to the pulpit who is in the process of

selecting the effective tools for building his sermonic edifices, here is a challenge. Interestingly, he rules out the "conversational method" as impossible before a crowd of people, the constant three main divisions as boring if never varied, and the slavish use of an introduction (sometimes it's better to simply start right out without any flourishes).

-- N. B. Harstad

There exists a close connection and communication between Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end. For Sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is con-signed to writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, while Sacred Tradition takes the word of God entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the apos-tles, and hands it on to their successors in its full purity. Thus, led by the light of the Spirit of truth, they may in proclaiming it preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known.

Consequently it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Both Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence.

-- Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Reve-lation, II, 9, DOCUMENTS OF VATICAN II.