

1974 REFORMATION LECTURES

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by

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THE IMPORTANCE OF THE REFORMATION FOR THE LUTHERAN CHURCH TODAY WITH REFERENCE TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE MEANS OF GRACE, THE CHURCH, AND CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

LECTURE I

- 1 The Reformation of Martin Luther is an event of church and secular history which took place in the first half of the 16th century, primarily in Germany. Even today there are churches throughout the world which call themselves by the name of the Church of Luther's Reformation, and which at least in a formal way claim for themselves the body of doctrine of the Lutheran Church, the Confessions contained in the Book of Concord of 1580. But most of these Churches calling themselves Lutheran understand their relationship to Luther's Reformation to be merely historical; they conceive of the Lutheran Confessions as documents developed historically and therefore they can be interpreted, as a body of doctrine, only from their historical context; this body of doctrine today is said to have only a limited relevance. Confessional Lutheran churches have turned into churches that still maintain certain Lutheran traditions, such as the formal liturgy, official acts, pastoral instruction and education, but are no longer interested in the strong commitment of the church's proclamation and doctrine to the Lutheran Confessions, because the statements of the Confessions, in their opinion, are expressions of their time and are no longer satisfactory to meet the problems and challenges of our days, and at best must constantly be updated.
- 2 But there are a few churches left which call themselves Lutheran not only because of a historical review or simply because they still have the Lutheran Confessions as part of their constitution. Rather, they see it as their chief objective according to Luther's understanding of the Reformation, firmly to stand on the Holy Scriptures and the Confessions derived from them, and in the doctrine and life of the church to conform to these norms. I believe I can say that those churches and synods of which we here are members belong among those just described. Therefore we may ask, indeed, must ask ourselves, "What is the significance of Luther's Reformation for a faithful Lutheran church in our time?" To answer this question honestly and decisively, it is not sufficient to emphasize the significance of Luther's

personality and the temporal blessings which have emerged as the result of his work. Much rather we must be concerned about the teaching of Jesus Christ and of His apostles which Luther once more brought to the light of day; we must be able to show that this teaching even today is the one which builds the Church and upholds it. Therefore this teaching is as vitally necessary and contemporary for the Lutheran Church of our day as for the time of the Reformation. This is what no doubt is meant by the subtitle that today still adorns the title page of "Der Lutheraner," published by the Missouri Synod: Gottes Wort und Luthers Lehr vergehen nun und nimmermehr ("God's Word and Luther's doctrine pure shall now and evermore endure").

- 3 No work of Martin Luther more clearly and forthrightly sets forth his teachings than do the Smalcald Articles (1535), which are part of the Confessions of the Lutheran Church. Luther regards these articles as his intellectual and spiritual testament and in their preface he writes as follows:

Nevertheless, I have decided to publish these articles so that, if I should die before a council meets (which I fully expect, for those knaves who shun the light and flee from the day take such wretched pains to postpone and prevent the council), those who live after me may have my testimony and confession (in addition to the confession which I have previously given) to show where I have stood until now and where, by God's grace, I will continue to stand.

Why do I say this? Why should I complain? I am still alive. I am still writing, preaching and lecturing every day. Yet there are some who are so spiteful--not only among our adversaries, but also false brethren among those who profess to be adherents of our party--that they dare to cite my writings and teachings against me. They let me look on and listen, although they know very well that I teach otherwise. They try to clothe their venomous spirits in the garments of my labor and thus mislead the poor people in my name. Imagine what will happen after I am dead.

(SA, Preface 3b-4)

With the Smalcald Articles Luther wants to prevent his teachings, which he drew from Holy Scripture, from being falsified after his death, and this seems to him all the more important, since while he was still alive, not only his ecclesiastical and theological opponents attempted to misinterpret and abuse his teachings, but also, within his own camp, false friends sought to cover up their heresies with the authority of Luther. Already at that time there were "false Lutherans". It is of some comfort for us to remember that it is not only today that all who call themselves "Lutheran" are Lutheran according to Luther's confession of faith.

- 4 Luther's Reformation is characterized by combat on two opposing fronts. On the one hand there is his battle against Rome; on the other his battle against the enthusiasts (Schwärmer). For this reason many theologians are of the opinion that the Reformation begun and carried through by Luther can be understood solely from his own times; and that in its judgments and results it can be applied only with some difficulty, if at all, to another era, such as our own. A number of so-called Lutheran theologians of our day constantly claim that Luther's basic question, "How do I get a gracious God?" which cannot be separated from his doctrine of justification, is so totally alien to modern man that it cannot be understood by him at all.

The Lutheran doctrine of justification, it is asserted, is therefore today existentially without foundation. To what kind of attacks on this article, by which the church stands or falls, such an opinion can lead, Helsinki 1963 made abundantly clear. As Luther engages in his double-front war against Rome and the enthusiasts, his theological insights, statements and findings are not time-bound; this war is one against false teachings which threatened the Church of Jesus Christ time and again before and after Luther's Reformation, against syncretism, and against enthusiasm which despises the Word as the only effective instrument of the Holy Spirit.

5 Luther's anthropology differs at its very beginning from that of the Roman Catholic Scholastics and the humanists, on the one hand, and the enthusiasts of every description on the other. Luther has rediscovered the anthropology of the Sacred Scriptures, and it is at this point that there is a division of the spirits right to our own time. For the image of man in the modern era has been a humanistic one ever since the days of the Enlightenment; that is to say, man is the centre of all things and he is the measure of all things, because according to the views of modern humanism man's intellectual and spiritual powers are fully intact, so that the fall into sin and original sin are relegated to the realm of mythology. It is in a way amusing, but also a somewhat frightening experience, especially of the century in which we live, that such an understanding of man's nature is open for almost any form of enthusiasm, which puts aside sober thinking and speaking and embraces fanaticism.

6 Luther's anthropology, as I said, is Biblical anthropology. He sees man after the fall in the same manner that the Holy Scripture sees him. This becomes very clear in the Third Part of the Smalcald Articles, where at the very beginning Luther says the following about sin:

Here we must confess what St. Paul says in Rom. 5:12, namely, that sin had its origin in one man, Adam, through whose disobedience all men were made sinners and became subject to death and the devil. This is called original sin, or the root sin.

The fruits of this sin are all the subsequent evil deeds which are forbidden in the Ten Commandments, such as unbelief, false belief, idolatry, being without the fear of God presumption, despair, blindness--in short, ignorance or disregard of God--and then also lying, swearing by God's name, failure to pray and call upon God, neglect of God's Word, disobedience to parents, murder, unchastity, theft, deceit, etc.

This hereditary sin is so deep a corruption of nature that reason cannot understand it. It must be believed because of the revelation in the Scriptures (Ps. 51:5, Rom. 5:12f., Ex. 33:20, Gen. 3:6f.).

(SA, III, I, 1-3)

7 This Biblical image of man after the fall Luther necessarily sets against the official view of penance in the Roman Church and against the Sacrament of Penance itself. Luther's 95 Theses, which outwardly opposed the abuse of indulgences, basically opposed the Roman system of penance itself. Indulgences only represented the tip of the iceberg which could be seen, but underneath it was the tremendous

mass of the penitential system, the core of which consisted of satisfaction, i. e., human accomplishment. It was perfectly clear to Luther that the Roman Catholic understanding of penance was incompatible with the view of man in the Holy Scriptures. Concerning the false repentance of the Papists, he writes:

It was impossible for them to teach correctly about repentance because they did not know what sin really is. For, as stated above, they did not have the right teaching concerning original sin but asserted that the natural powers of man have remained whole and uncorrupted, that reason is capable of acting accordingly, and that God will assuredly grant his grace to the man who does as much as he can according to his free will.

From this it follows that people did penance only for actual sins, such as wicked thoughts to which they consented (for evil impulses, lust and inclinations they did not consider sin), wicked words, and wicked works which man with his free will might well have avoided. Such repentance the sophists divided into three parts--contrition, confession, and satisfaction--with the added consolation that a man who properly repents, confesses and makes satisfaction has merited forgiveness and has paid for his sins before God. In their teaching of penance the sophists thus instructed the people to place their confidence in their own works. Hence the expressions in the pulpit when the general confession was recited to the people: "Prolong my life, Lord God, until I make satisfaction for my sins and amend my life."

There was no mention here of Christ or of faith. Rather, men hoped by their own works to overcome and blot out their sins before God. With this intention we, too, became priests and monks, that we might set ourselves against sin.

(SA III, III, 10-14)

The work of man who has sinned and who therefore owes God restitution, or satisfaction, stands at the centre of the Roman view of penance. By this, faith which justifies us and holds to Jesus' saving work for us is excluded or at least pushed into a peripheral context. And even the mass, which in the penitential system of the Roman Church in the Middle Ages played such a large role, does not change this fact; for its primary aspect is seen to be the sacrifice which can be used for the expiation of sin here or in purgatory. That was the reason for the many private masses, the purpose of which was not communion but rather the offering of the sacrifice by the priest as propitiation for the sins of the person who asked and paid for the mass or for whomever else it was desired. Luther lets his article on the mass follow immediately upon the chief article on justification and sharply condemns the abuse of the mass under the Papacy.

The Mass in the papacy must be regarded as the greatest and most horrible abomination because it runs into direct and violent conflict with this fundamental article. Yet, above and beyond all others, it has been the supreme and most precious of the papal idolatries, for it is held that this sacrifice or work of the Mass (even when offered by an evil scoundrel) delivers men from their sins, both here in this life and yonder in purgatory, although in reality this can and must be done by the Lamb of God alone, as has been stated above.

(SA II, II, 1)

Thus the Mass also aligns itself within the Roman system of penance conceived of as a human work which man offers to God as propitiation for his sins.

- 8 Luther, on the contrary, proclaims penance which does not centre in man's work but rather in Christ's work, His substitutionary satisfaction, and which is effected through the preaching of Law and Gospel, and in which contrition leads to faith and not to satisfaction. Concerning this penance Luther says:

This repentance is not partial and fragmentary like repentance for actual sins, nor is it uncertain like that. It does not debate what is sin and what is not sin, but lumps everything together and says, "We are wholly and altogether sinful." We need not spend our time weighing, distinguishing, differentiating. On this account there is no uncertainty in such repentance, for nothing is left that we might imagine to be good enough to pay for our sin. One thing is sure: We cannot pin our hope on anything that we are, think, say, or do. And so our repentance cannot be false, uncertain, partial, for a person who confesses that he is altogether sinful embraces all sins in his confessions without omitting or forgetting a single one. Nor can our satisfaction be uncertain, for it consists not of the dubious, sinful works which we do but of the sufferings and blood of the innocent Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

This is the repentance which John preaches, which Christ subsequently preaches in the Gospel, and which we also preach.

(SA III, III, 36-39)

- 9 Penance as taught in the Holy Scriptures gives a certainty of salvation which the Roman system of penance could never give, since in that system one can never be sure whether we have done enough, either because of unconfessed sins or because of imperfect contrition.
- 10 Luther is fully aware that his teaching on repentance centers his main attack on the Roman Church, which, beginning with a false view of man, makes the work of satisfaction by man the basis of its dealing with souls.

With this repentance we overthrow the pope and everything that is built on our good works, for all of this is constructed on an unreal and rotten foundation which is called good works or the law, although no good work but only wicked works are there and although no one keeps the law (as Christ says in John 7:19) but all transgress it. Accordingly the entire building, even when it is most holy and beautiful, is nothing but deceitful falsehood and hypocrisy. (SA III, III, 39)

For Luther repentance is not built on the work of man but on God's work in Christ, and precisely because of that it occasions a constant battle of the Spirit-reborn man with the law of sin in his members. Already in his First Thesis Luther unmistakably expressed this view of repentance.

In saying, Repent, our Lord and Master Jesus Christ demands that the entire life of His believers on earth be a constant or never ending repentance.

In the Smalcald Articles he, in a way, further explicates this thesis.

In the case of a Christian such repentance continues until death, for all through life it contends with the sins that remain in the flesh. As St. Paul testifies in Rom. 7:23, He wars with the law in his members, and he does this not with his own powers but with the gift of the Holy Spirit which follows the forgiveness of sins. This gift daily cleanses and expells the sins that remain and enables man to become truly pure and holy.

(SA III, III, 39-40)

For Luther, ongoing repentance is therefore a sort of program for our Christian life, which is given to us and set before us with our baptism, as this is set forth in the Small Catechism, in rather classic form. To the question, What does such baptizing with water signify?, Luther answers:

It signifies that the old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts and, again, a new man daily come forth and arise, who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever. (SC, IV)

- 11 Even existentialist theology, as it is particularly represented in Germany, has a program or plan for the authentic Christian life as they conceive of it, namely, "to live as Jesus lived," "to believe as He believed." This program is not always proclaimed in precisely these terms, but the intentions are identical in their context with these expressions. Dorothee Sölle, for instance, writes in her book, "Die Wahrheit ist konkret" (Truth is Concrete): "All who wait are waiting for Jesus. That is to say, all who are really waiting wait not only for the above and not only for their private happiness. All who are really waiting, wait not for themselves, or for their conceptions of the future, but rather for something new, something we called the vividness of God. All who are waiting wait for the Kingdom of God, just like Jesus, the Kingdom which is non-objectively present. Waiting for Jesus therefore is nothing other than waiting as Jesus did (p. 49)."
- 12 Waiting like Jesus, living like Jesus, that is all Mrs. Sölle can give to the man on his road through life who subscribes to her "theology after the death of God."
- 13 Norman Perrin, Professor at the University of Chicago, describes in his book, "What did Jesus Really Teach?", the new position regarding the problem of the continuity between the Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ, as it is expounded by the two Bultmann disciples, Ernst Fuchs and Gerhard Ebeling, as follows:

To understand the "New Hermeneutic", it is helpful to note that it derived from the search for the continuity between the Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ, and in view of form criticism it is absolutely a quest for the continuity between Christ's message, as far as we can know it, and the kerygma that proclaims Christ. Fuchs and Ebeling introduced into this line of work the concept of "word event" or "Sprach-ereignis (language event), that means a reality which reveals itself in language (with obvious dependence on Heidegger's statement: Language is the home of Being), and here

it is particularly faith that is considered to be "language event". In the message of Jesus faith as such reveals itself as "language event", because Jesus Himself is a witness by virtue of a decision which He made in the face of the reality of God and the possibility of His own destiny. Since He is the witness of faith, faith expresses itself, that is, it manifests itself as "language event" in Jesus and particularly in His message. The continuity with the Kerygmatic Christ consists in this, that also in the kerygma faith is revealed as "language event"; this continuity is therefore particularly strong because the believer, in relation to the kerygma, also makes the authentic decision which Jesus made. So the witness of faith becomes the ground of faith, and faith as language event is the element of continuity between the message of Jesus and the kerygma of the post-apostolic community. (p. 263f.)

- 14 The continuity between the Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ, in the opinion of Fuchs and Ebeling, finds its most profound expression in this, "that the believer, in relation to the kerygma, also makes the authentic decision which Jesus made." In other words, the believer makes a decision as Jesus did, he believes as Jesus did. In the "language event", Jesus, as the Lord in which the Christian believes, is stylized down to a mere witness of the faith, but then in the same event He is once more elevated to be the ground of faith. But never mind "language event", in the final analysis in such a theology Jesus is nothing more than the witness of faith, an example and prototype of faith. The believer is to believe as He did. But such faith has no relation at all to the faith in Christ's work and merit for us, which according to the witness of the Scriptures alone justifies us, and of which Luther speaks in his chief article of the Smalcald Articles:

. . . that Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, "was put to death for our trespasses and raised again for our justification: (Rom. 4:25). He alone "is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). "God has laid upon him the iniquities of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). Moreover, "all have sinned," and "they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, by his blood" (Romans 3:23-25).

Inasmuch as this must be believed and cannot be obtained or apprehended by any work, law, or merit, it is clear and certain that such faith alone justifies us, as St. Paul says in Romans 3, "For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law" (Rom. 3:28), and again, "that God Himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26).

(SA II, I, 1-4)

- 15 Faith in Jesus, who did enough for us, who is the Lamb of God for us, -- that is what the Scriptures teach, that is what Luther teaches, and that is the Gospel. To believe as Jesus did, that is law, that is the work of man. The concept of faith in existential theology with all its subgroups is humanized. It looks upon man in such a way as if there had never been the fall into sin with all its consequences for man, and as if man were in the full possession of his powers and abilities.

Therefore man not only should live and believe as Jesus did; according to this theology he is said to be able to do so. That is why this theology is not governed by the Gospel, from God's grace in Christ for us, however much they may speak of the Gospel, but rather by the Law.

16 This becomes especially clear in the case of Herbert Braun, who in the judgment of his lord and master (Bultmann) is the most consistent of his disciples. To explain Mark 13:13, "You will be hated by all for my name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved," which Braun significantly understands as a passage that talks about conversion, he states (Jesus, p. 66): "The seriousness of that faith by which conversion is meant here is clear and impressive for us, even though we can no longer accept this intensification brought on by the final end (which Jesus supposedly expected). In this seriousness of conversion Jesus is a Jew as far as his starting point is concerned: God is served through obedience. But Jesus goes beyond Jewish thinking as he frees this obedience from formal and juridical relationships, calls the individual to a decision of obedience and thus clothes his 'thou shalt' in an unheard of radicalism."

17 Radical obedience, that is conversion, that is repentance for Herbert Braun. Faith, trust in what the Son of God has done in our behalf, does not appear in his theology. Luther and Melancthon would say that the law causes despair or that it creates secure people. Herbert Braun and his disciples throughout the world do not look as if they are filled with despair. Rather they give the impression of secure people even though, or because they have made of God nothing more than an expression, and of man his own redeemer, as Braun clearly states at the end of his book on Jesus (p. 170):

The expression "God" in the realm of our thinking is ambiguous. Only the explanation given to it in the Gospels makes it unequivocal. Here "God" ceases to be an outside authority that compels man by means of fear. Man learns to accept himself, as poor and evil man he learns to obey; this manner and means to judge oneself and to live from that is what is meant when the Jesus tradition mentions "God". The use of this word is indeed unimportant, measured by the content and explanation which are connected with this word.

18 Jesus becomes the teacher of a true humanity who teaches man to accept himself, to obey, to judge himself and to live accordingly. Man frees himself from his misery; at the most man will accept "God" as an expression, and since fall into sin and original sin are in any case expressions belonging to the realm of mythology, man's powers and abilities are sufficient to carry out what the Jesus tradition teaches and demands.

19 The image of man in such a theology is quite clear: Man is able to do what he must, or to say with Kant's imperative, "You can because you must." But this stands in radical opposition to the Bible's understanding of man, and Luther's as well, as we saw above. And if we at this point ask ourselves the question to which our topic addresses itself, "What is the Significance of the Reformation for the Lutheran Church of our Day?" then the answer will have to be: the Biblical

doctrine of man in his sinful perversity and in his inability to do what God demands of him, with which Luther opposed the semi-Pelagian view of man among the Scholastics and in German Humanism; this Biblical doctrine prevents us from recognizing as harmless the theology of the New Humanism, as it is represented by the entire Bultmann School, or even from regarding this theology as acceptable for the Lutheran Church and its theology. It is "New Protestant heresy," as Prof. Peter Brunner once called it in a lecture at Heidelberg. And as regards the Roman Church and its theology after Vatican II, we should not become victims of our illusions. Rome's image of man has not changed basically, and the Roman Church has become at best more liberal, but not more Lutheran.

LECTURE II

20 Luther's battle with the enthusiasts is of immense contemporary value for us, for, as I have already indicated, the view of man as held especially by existential theology is open to all forms of enthusiasm: from the Theology of Revolution right up to the complete throwing together of all religions. Luther's frontline stance against the enthusiasm of the Schwärmer is found in the Smalcald Article on Confession:

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. Thus we shall be protected from the enthusiasts--that is, from the spiritualists who boast that they possess the Spirit without and before the Word and who therefore judge, interpret, and twist the Scriptures or spoken Word according to their pleasure. Münzer did this, and many still do it in our day who wish to distinguish sharply between the letter and the Spirit without knowing what they say or teach. The Papacy, too, is nothing but enthusiasm, for the Pope boasts that "all laws are in the shrine of his heart", and he claims that whatever he decides and commands in his churches is spirit and law, even when it is above and contrary to the Scriptures or spoken Word. All this is the old Devil and the old serpent who made enthusiasts of Adam and Eve. He leads them from the external Word of God to spiritualizing and to their own imaginations, and he did this through other external words. Even so, the enthusiasts of our day condemn the external Word, yet they do not remain silent but fill the world with their chattering and scribbling, as if the Spirit could not come through the Scriptures or the spoken word of the apostles but must come through their own writings and words. Why do they not stop preaching and writing until the Spirit Himself comes to the people without and before their writings since they boast that the Spirit came upon them without the testimony of the Scriptures? . . . In short, enthusiasm clings to Adam and his descendants from the beginning to the end of the world. It is a poison implanted and inoculated in man by the old Dragon, and it is the source, strength, and power of all heresy, including that of the Papacy and Mohammedanism. Accordingly, we should and must constantly maintain that God will not deal with us except through His external Word and sacrament. (SA III, III, 3-10)

21 Particularly in our day it has again become clear what truth there is to Luther's words. Enthusiasm is embedded, so to speak, in every natural man and repeatedly breaks out in the Church, particularly when the opinion prevails in a church that the preaching of Law and Gospel can no longer deal with the problems of man in our day and with the structures of modern society; when the church despises the external Word, as Luther calls it.

22 By means of two examples I want to make clear to you how an enthusiasm of that kind, which has separated itself from the Word of Scripture, shows itself particularly in church circles. On the fourth anniversary of Martin Luther King's assassination, April 4, 1972, a world conference on revolution without violence began at Driebergen, Netherlands, in which 60 people from 27 different nations took part. The initiator of the conference was the Brazilian bishop Dom Helder Camara, who a year ago received the Peace Prize of the German Publishing Industry. In addition, the archbishop of Utrecht, Cardinal Alfrink, as well as a Buddhist monk by the name of Thich Nhat Hang from Vietnam participated (Reported in "Evangelische Kommentare", Vol. V, 1972, p. 286). One of the discussion groups at this conference in its working paper formulated their task in this world as follows:

It is our pressing task to change the structures of oppression. Our spirit and our methods will be inspired by non-violence--for the reason that the new structures should not be violent in their turn. In this way our spirit and our methods will be liberating from their foundation.

23 Here we have a distinctly naive faith in the ability of their own spirit and their own method, which we can only call humanistic credulity. There is not a word about the Holy Spirit who can and does change human hearts. This is naive enthusiasm which in the end will stand speechlessly confronting the flaming ocean of violent revolution which they helped to light. And all this is included under the widely spanning arch from Rome right into Buddhist Asia.

24 The second, even more significant example: At the World Mission Conference in Bangkok, 1973, among other things the following was proclaimed (from "Evangelische Kommentare", Vol. VI, 1973, p. 489):

We have to overcome the dichotomy in our thinking between soul and body, person and society, humanity and creation. We must learn that the battles for economic justice, political freedom, and cultural renewal are elements in the total reconciliation of all of creation. They are elements in the common history of God and man, elements in the ongoing battle to destroy the powers of evil, "until death is swallowed up in victory" (I Cor. 15:55).

25 The quotation from I Corinthians cannot disguise the fact that here, by means of an enthusiastic view of history and society, universalism holds sway, which at one time Origen taught, but never the Old or New Testaments. Supposedly, they want to address the whole man, in body and soul, in person and society. All previous missionary work is charged with having been concerned only with the soul of single individuals, which is a deliberate distortion of the facts. They, however, are concerned only with the body of man and society, and here the forces of evil are seen to be less in demonic powers in and around man than in capitalist structures of society. What a wonderful anti-missionary spirit. Of it we can only say with Luther that "it is a poison implanted and inoculated in man by the old Dragon".

26 The Lutheran Church in our day has need of Luther's warning against enthusiasm, and of his analysis that it consists in despising the Means of Grace in

Word and sacrament, which in the final analysis is a despising of the Holy Spirit; this enthusiasm expresses itself in the vocal preaching of one's own spirit. The significance of the Reformation for the confessional Lutheran Church in our day is not fully set forth in what I have been able to show here, but I hope I was successful, beginning with Luther's Biblical view of man, in pointing to the immense danger which threatens the Church in the New Humanism; and also in pointing out the Means which God places into our hands, His Word and sacrament as they are witnessed to and given to us in the Holy Scriptures and in the Confessions of the Church.

27 The definition of the Church in the Augsburg Confession, Art. VII, which we all know, is:

It is also taught among us that one holy Christian Church will be and remain forever. This is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel.

In this definition the Church, described as the assembly of all believers, is indissolubly connected with and recognized by the Means of Grace, which are the pure preaching of the Gospel and the distribution of the sacraments in accordance with the Gospel. That the Augsburg Confession calls the one holy Christian Church the assembly of all believers is not an unheard novelty over against the creeds of the ancient Church that were still current at that time; rather The Augsburg Confession adopts this definition of the Church from the Apostles' Creed, where the Church is already referred to as communion, or congregation sanctorum. This, Melancthon, in the German text of the Augustana, translates as "assembly of all believers". This assembly of all believers is unthinkable for the Augsburg Confession without the pure preaching of the Gospel and the distribution of the sacraments in accordance with the Gospel, that is, of baptism and the Lord's Supper. The reason this is unthinkable for the Augsburg Confession is that it is only through the Gospel in word and sacrament that true faith in the heart of man is created by the power of the Holy Ghost, and in this way, through these means, the assembly of all believers, the one holy Church, comes into existence and is preserved. This is clearly expressed in Article V of the Augustana:

To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, He gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where He pleases, in those who hear the Gospel.

The Word and the sacraments are, according to the Lutheran Confessions, the means by which God the Lord in the Holy Spirit builds and maintains His Church.

28 For us the decisive question is this: Whether these statements of our Confessions have an adequate Scriptural basis on which they stand, or whether this is merely a more or less new definition of the Church in conscious opposition to the Roman Catholic view of the Church. Leonhard Goppelt, New Testament scholar of a more conservative stripe at Munich, who died recently, sets down in his essay "Church Fellowship and Altar Fellowship according to the New Testament" the following:

Because the meal is the sacrament for the church, one of the prerequisites for properly receiving the meal is belonging to the church, having become a member of it through proclamation and baptism. Didache 9:5 sets down, that only the baptized may participate in the Lord's Supper. After what we have set down above, this is not only an order practiced already in New Testament times, but has an objective foundation. Already I Corinthians 10:1-4 . . . expresses the belonging together of baptism and the Lord's Supper. The leveling of the existence of our churches into an almost permanent mission situation cannot be allowed to blot out this New Testament differentiation: Missionary proclamation and baptism, according to Acts 2:41-42, is to lead into the Church, teaching and Lord's Supper serve to maintain and strengthen the Church. The presently accepted concept of the Church which is purely one of event, where the Church is always only said to happen, is contrary to the New Testament, for it certainly always connects the Church with baptism.

And shortly thereafter Goppelt summarizes as follows:

The Church is constituted not only, as has been shown up to this point, through the sacrament but also, in fact, primarily through the Word.

- 29 That Goppelt is correct in saying this, in my opinion, two passages of the New Testament prove, which interestingly he did not make use of in his investigation, namely, Ephesians 2:20 and Romans 10:17. Eph. 2:20 we read, "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone"; and in Rom. 10:17, "So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ."
- 30 The Church of Jesus Christ is not built upon the person of the apostles and prophets but on their preaching, their Word which points to Christ and proclaims to us salvation from God in Him. The one holy Christian Church is built upon the prophetic and apostolic preaching, which works faith in Christ in the hearts of the hearers and thus creates the assembly of believers, and this is already the witness of the New Testament.
- 31 It is the accomplishment of Werner Elert to have pointed out for the time immediately following the close of the New Testament canon, by the formula like expression in the Apostles' Creed, sanctorum communio (toon hagioon koinonia) that the ancient Church of East and West had not forgotten the indissoluble connection between the one holy Church and the Means of Grace. Elert writes in his book, "Eucharist and Church Fellowship" (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, p. 9f.).

But what is meant by sanctorum communio (toon hagioon koinonia) if not the church? The usual Western interpretation as we have seen is a communion of holy persons. Sanctorum is then the genitive of sancti. To be in harmony with this, toon hagioon must be the genitive of hoi hagioi. This, however, is most unlikely since

it stands parallel with and between remission of sins and resurrection and since both of these are coupled with a genitive of things. Further, since there is no grammatical connection between *sanctorum communio* and *sancta ecclesia*, we would be forced to conceive of a communion of holy persons alongside the church. Such a thought is utterly foreign to the whole early church. That *sanctorum communio* stands as an independent item immediately following *ecclesia* can only be explained if it means something other than the church, that is, other than persons. *Sanctorum* is, then, the genitive not of *sancti* but of *sancta*, and *toon hagioon* the genitive not of *hoi hagioi* but of *ta hagia*.

Modern research has often suggested this but so long as the Latin is regarded as original, it will be no more than a suggestion. In Latin there are many apparent or actual synonyms of *communio*, all of which are used with a genitive of persons. In Greek, however, things are different. Here the combination of *koinonia* with a genitive of persons is a rare exception, the combination with a genitive of things the rule. The only question is whether there is a satisfactory explanation for *ta hagia* as the form from which the genitive *toon hagioon* is derived. This, however, is no more than a rhetorical question. Before the distribution at every Eucharist every early Eastern Christian heard the call *ta hagia tois hagiois* and knew exactly what was meant. *Ta hagia* is not a plural but a dual form referring to the consecrated elements. Accordingly the *koinonia* means the *koinonia* of Eucharist, and the whole phrase refers to the Lord's Supper. In Latin, therefore, the *sancta* of the phrase *sanctorum cummunio* do not refer, as some scholars have suggested, to the sacraments but to the consecrated elements, and the whole phrase to the Sacrament of the Altar. The reference of the phrase is sacramental. That a sacrament should also be mentioned in the Creed is not extraordinary. In other Eastern confessions Baptism is mentioned at this point.

32 What Elert here delineates by the example of the ancient Greek Church is equally applicable to the Latin-speaking Church in the West, as he shows right after the quotation we just heard. The formula *sanctorum communio* therefore refers to the Sacraments, the Means of Grace, and clearly proves the relationship to the concept of the Church in the New Testament.

33 It is only through Word and Sacrament that the Church comes into existence and grows, the congregation of those who believe, and therefore can only be recognized unequivocally by these signs. This was forgotten in the Church at a rather early date, because the view of the Church as an episcopal church became the dominating element. The most important witness for this is Cyprian, martyr bishop of Carthage, in the middle of the Third Century, whose statements about the Church have become topical once again through the *Constitutio de Ecclesia* at Vatican II. We bring two of his statements:

You must know that the bishop is in the Church and the Church in the bishop.

The Church is founded upon the bishops.

Cyprian was a bitter enemy of the Roman Pope's claim to primacy in the Church, but he could not prevent that in succeeding centuries his thoughts served as foundation for a hierarchical understanding of the Church, at whose head stood the Pope. Thomas Aquinas formulates it in this way:

The supreme Pontiff is the head of the whole Church.

And he gives a basis for this claim in Aristotelian logic:

An authority is most fully complete when exercised by one person.

The Church as body of Christ of which Christ is the Head is pushed aside by the pyramid of bishops and cardinals, the summit of which finds expression in the Papacy. Cyprian's idea, that Church is manifested in the assembly of all bishops ("the one Church of Christ is spread over the whole world in many members, just as the one episcopal body finds diffused expression in the multitude of many bishops in agreement") once more is taken up in the Reform Councils of the 15th century, but this thought, too, misses the New Testament understanding of the Church as creation of the Holy Ghost through preaching, baptism and Lord's Supper. In its place it puts the idea of apostolic succession. The understanding of the Church held by Luther and the Lutheran Reformation signifies a radical break with the prevalent views on the Church in his day, both with the hierarchical Roman view as well as the conciliar-Cyprianistic one. Luther reaches back to the understanding of the Church as it is in the New Testament and held by the early ancient Church. This break becomes clear at the Leipzig Disputation with Eck in 1519. Luther at that time made the revolutionary statement that not only popes but also councils could and did err.

34 The concept of the Church which the Lutheran Reformation set against the concept then prevalent we already saw in Articles VII and V of the Augsburg Confession, where the Church is shown as creatura verbi et sacramentorum. This understanding becomes once more quite clear in Article VII of the Apology to the Augsburg Confession, where paragraph 28 reads:

In accordance with the Scriptures, therefore, we maintain that the Church in the proper sense is the assembly of saints who truly believe the Gospel of Christ and who have the Holy Spirit.

In this connection, the Apology refers to the Office of the Ministry, which according to Augustana V is instituted by God Himself for the maintenance of faith through Word and sacrament, as an office which represents Christ, the Lord of the Church Himself in its service of proclaiming the Word and the administration of the sacraments, regardless of the worthiness or unworthiness of the individual bearer of the office.

When the sacraments are administered by unworthy men, this does not rob them of their efficacy. For they do not represent their own persons but the person of Christ, because of the church's call, as Christ testifies (Luke 10:16). "He who hears you hears Me". When they offer the Word of Christ or the sacraments, they do so in

Christ's place and stead. Christ's statement teaches us this in order that we may not be offended by the unworthiness of ministers.
(Ap. VII, 28)

From these statements in the Apology it becomes clear, beyond what we have said up till now, that in the Lutheran Confessions the Means of Grace are not made to depend on the Office of the Ministry, but rather that the Office serves the Means of Grace and receives its dignity solely from Christ's Word and sacrament.

35. For the Lutheran Confessions the Means of Grace are the sole marks to indicate where the one holy Christian Church is present and where it is not. The concept of the Church in the Lutheran Confessions is not a spiritualistic or idealistic one, but a concrete and tangible one, bound to Word and sacrament.

We are not dreaming about some Platonic republic, as has been slanderously alleged, but we teach that this Church actually exists, made up of true believers and righteous men scattered throughout the world. And we add its marks, the pure teaching of the Gospel and the sacraments. (Apol. VII, 20)

36. Just as the holy Christian Church is not a spiritualistic or idealistic entity because of the Means of Grace, so it is not an organization of the world, comparable to a political establishment.

The Church is not merely an association of outward ties and rites like other civic governments, however, but it is mainly an association of faith and of the Holy Spirit in men's hearts. To make it recognizable, this association has outward marks, the pure teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments in harmony with the Gospel of Christ. (Apol. VII, 5)

There is the one holy Church in this world solely through the pure teaching of the Gospel and the distribution of the sacraments according to the Gospel by the power of the Holy Ghost. But the Gospel in Word and sacrament is as little of this world as the Church which it creates and maintains, for the Gospel does not bring about worldly organization but justifying, saving faith, and this faith in concrete reality and not mere hope for something that is to come.

But the Gospel brings not the shadow of eternal things but the eternal blessings themselves, the Holy Spirit and the righteousness by which we are righteous before God. (Apol. VII, 15)

LECTURE III

- 37 For the Lutheran Confessions the result is, as a seemingly compelling necessity, that the problem of unity within the Christian Church, which means the question of church fellowship, can be decided only from the proper use of the Means of Grace.

For it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian Church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word. (CA VII, 2)

Again we ask, as we did once before when we heard the definition of Church in the Augsburg Confession: Is the understanding of true unity in the Christian Church, that is, of church fellowship, as we are confronted with it in Augustana VII, in conformity with the statements in the New Testament or not? The passage of the New Testament which doubtlessly speaks most decisively about unity, henotes, in the Church is Ephesians 4:3f. -- "Be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all." The unity in the Spirit in the one Church here is bound to the one Lord, the one faith, and the one baptism. The indissoluble connection between church fellowship and the Means of Grace cannot be spelled out any clearer.

- 38 Unity in the Spirit and in faith for the New Testament is not possible without unity in doctrine and proclamation. II John 9f. we read:

Anyone who goes ahead and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God; he who abides in the doctrine has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into the house or give him any greeting.

The same line of thought is found in Galatians 1:6f. --

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you in the grace of Christ and turning to a different gospel--not that there is another gospel, but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed.

Another gospel, false teaching, breaks the unity in the Spirit, destroys church fellowship. This the New Testament teaches, and this is what the ancient church thought and how it acted.

39 It is the task of the confessions, of dogma, to maintain the unity of doctrine and with it the unity in the Spirit, and at the same time to reject false teachings. Already in the New Testament we come across creedal formulas that prove this. For instance, I John 4:2f. --

. . . every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God.

And also I Corinthians 12:3 --

Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus be cursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit.

A right confession is a guarantee for the unity of the Church; and doctrine contrary to the confession destroys unity. This statement holds true for the New Testament as well as for the ancient church. Werner Elert, one of the recognized experts on the ancient church, in his essay, "Lord's Supper and Church Fellowship in the Ancient Church" (Koinonia, p. 72-73) makes this point:

Dogma wants to express pure teaching and therefore always contains a polemical element. Whoever demands orthodoxy in the Church or from the Church must be prepared for divisions, for conceptually orthodoxy presupposes the possibility of heterodoxy. At the moment, for instance, when the formula "Creator of heaven and earth" is taken as part of the baptismal creed, the contrast to all Gnostic groups as well as to Marcion became very clear and also unbridgeable. This contrast holds true to our day. But that is only one side in this matter. The dogmas of the ancient church do not claim to be only theologoumena, theological opinions, but rather obligatory statements of the whole Church. As doctrine they are obligatory standards for the teachers of the Church; as a confession they are obligatory standards for all who include themselves in the "we confess" or the "we believe" with which all doctrinal decrees of the synods begin. For this reason they do not provoke only divisions but also effect unification. It is part of orthodoxy, so says Basil The Great, to have homodoxy. . . . The confession is a statement of faith as a confession to that which is believed. It is not the subjective act of believing, but the objective content of faith is what makes for unity. For this reason the unity of the Church is most seriously wounded by heresy, much more seriously than by divergences in discipline. Because homodoxy in dogma is the basic presupposition for church fellowship, the ancient Church is merciless in the exclusion of heterodoxy. The problem of what is orthodox and what is heterodox is the theme for its development of dogma. Asking who is orthodox and who is heterodox leads to the problem of church fellowship. It is clear that answering the first question is the indispensable prerequisite for answering the second.

40 The Augsburg Confession also demands orthodoxy and homodoxy as presupposition for church fellowship, for the "satis est" in CA VII-- "ad veram unitatem ecclesiae satis est consentire de doctrina evangelii et de administratione sacramentorum" --this "satis est" is not meant in a limiting or weakening sense looking to the whole of Christian doctrine, but rather solely looking to human traditions and ceremonies:

It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian Church that ceremonies, instituted by man, should be observed uniformly in all places. It is as Paul says in Eph. 4:4-5, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism."

(CA VII, 3-4)

41 It is both interesting and significant that the Leuenberg Concord, which in the European area is to make possible and theologically acceptable, church fellowship between Lutheran, Reformed and Union churches, in its preamble seems to begin with the same presuppositions as we just delineated them on the basis of Augustana VII. In the preamble we read:

The Lutheran and Reformed Churches as well as the union churches derived from them, also the related pre-Reformation churches of the Waldensians and the Bohemian Brethren which agree with this concord, on the basis of their doctrinal discussions have determined a common understanding of the Gospel, as it is set forth in detail here following.

This makes it possible for them to declare and realize church fellowship. Grateful that they have been led closer to one another, they confess at the same time, that the quest for truth and unity in the Church is also connected with guilt and suffering. The Church is founded alone upon Jesus Christ, who gathers and sends it by granting His salvation through proclamation and the sacraments. It is a Reformation insight that therefore agreement in the right teaching of the Gospel and in the right administration of the sacraments is necessary and sufficient. The participating churches receive their understanding of church fellowship from these Reformation criteria, as is set forth hereafter.

42 So far, so good. How does this agreement look in the pure teaching of the Gospel and in the right administration of the sacraments, as it is laid out in the succeeding paragraphs of the Leuenberg Concord? Just a few examples on this from Section II of the Leuenberg Concord, headed "The Common Understanding of the Gospel". In Paragraph 10 it is said:

God calls through His Word in the Holy Spirit all men to turn and to believe and grants the sinner who believes His righteousness in Jesus Christ. Whoever trusts the Gospel is justified before God for Christ's sake and freed from the accusation of the Law. He lives in daily repentance and renewal together with the church in praising God and in serving others, certain

that God will complete His reign. Thus God creates new life and in the midst of the world makes the beginning of a new humanity.

All this sounds Biblical and Lutheran and we are hardly tempted to dispute any of it. But if we read the conclusions which in the succeeding paragraph are drawn from what was just said, our positive reaction will quickly change.

This message frees Christians for responsible service in the world and prepared to suffer in this service. They recognize that the will of God, which demands and gives, covers the whole world. They stand up for earthly justice and for peace between individual people and among the nations. This necessitates the search, together with other people, for reasonable, objective criteria and participation in their application. They do this in reliance on the fact that God preserves the world and as owing responsibility to His judgment.

To these statements I can only repeat what I have already said in Lutherischer Rundblick (Vol. XX, p. 198, 1972) --

Leuenberg unabashedly preaches social gospel, cheerfully mixes the functions of law and gospel, confuses the Kingdom of Christ with the world, and despatches Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms. . . . We can only note that whoever establishes church fellowship on the basis of such an understanding of the Gospel cannot claim that he was led by Reformation criteria. Whoever claims this nevertheless, as Leuenberg does, must accept the charge of theological counterfeiting. Such an understanding of the Gospel has nothing to do with the one apostolic Gospel by which the one holy Christian Church lives.

43 Of equally grave deviation from the New Testament witness and the Lutheran Confessions are the statements of the Leuenberg Concord on the Lord's Supper. In Paragraph 8 it is said:

In the Lord's Supper the Risen Jesus Christ gives Himself in His body and blood given for all through His word of promise with bread and wine. He gives Himself unconditionally to all who receive bread and wine; faith receives the meal for salvation, and unbelief for judgment.

Peter Brunner, one of the supporters of the second draft of the Leuenberg Concord, holds most serious reservations against the final draft which we just read. His chief point is: The change in the text of the document at the end of the statement on Communion in Par. 18 can put into question its very function as a concord. (Lutherische Monatshefte, Vol. XIII, 1974, p. 90). Brunner rightly points out that "the talk is now merely about reception of a meal and no longer about receiving that which Jesus Christ gives unconditionally to all" who receive this meal, to the believers as well as the unbelievers, namely, His body and His blood. We could multiply the examples in which the Leuenberg Concord deviates from the

proper teaching of the Gospel and the proper administration of the sacraments. Therefore we must judge, that the Leuenberg Concord does not look for the unity of the Church, which finds its expression in church fellowship, in the proper use of the Means of Grace, but rather in doctrinal compromises which soften the pure teaching of the Gospel. These are open to modern heresies, particularly by which the Church dissolves into the world and in which the eschatology of the Holy Scriptures is remodeled to a worldly standard and into an entity that comes to its realization in this world.

44 But the true Church and its Means of Grace desire to build the Kingdom of God, they want to save man from eternal damnation and lead them to eternal salvation. The Gospel in Word and sacrament creates and maintains the Church, and a proper use of the Means of Grace is the precondition for the true unity of the Church, for exercising church fellowship. It is particularly our churches and synods, which regard it as their chief task to proclaim the Word of God clearly and purely according to the Lutheran Confessions and to administer the holy sacraments according to the institution by our Lord, that should not rest -- whether it be here in the United States or in Europe or wherever in this world -- until they have made fully visible the true unity of the one holy Church, which is based on the proper use of the Means of Grace, notae ecclesiae, by full mutual practice of church fellowship.

45 I want to conclude my remarks regarding the significance of the Means of Grace for the Church and Church Fellowship by citing Thesis XI of the so-called Overseas Theses from the year 1961:

The notae of the Church are all-decisive. Everything in the Church has to be in relation to them. But this is hindered by presumptuous judgments or declarations regarding faith or unbelief of other people. It is enthusiasm in one's judgment to rely on personal faith (fides qua) and love, because faith is hidden and love is changeable. Both, in the final analysis, take place within man. The Means of Grace, on the other hand, are objective, certain and tangible. Since they are God's own Means we must always look for them and draw from them the line of division between the orthodox church and heterodox church bodies.